



Main Street Stimulus: Shovel ready & dirt cheap

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The Green Homes program - an energy efficiency retrofit program for existing single family homes - is shovel ready and dirt cheap. It fits the criteria of federal recovery dollars by cutting energy use and emissions, saving taxpaying

homeowners money and creating local green collar jobs. Moreover, money expended by the public sector is recouped to finance further work. In other words, this is a government program that actually pays for itself. Now that is change we can breathe in.

American homes are well built but inefficient. They leak significant amounts of energy, contribute to global warming and cost homeowners thousands. When energy was cheap and we were unaware of the impacts of global warming, this kind of waste could be overlooked. Today, however, it represents a great opportunity for our nation to simultaneously address economic and environmental problems in a cost-effective manner.

The Green Homes program, which has been operational in Babylon, N.Y. since last October, has removed the barriers to making houses more energy efficient. First and foremost, the homeowner assumes no new debt and pays no money up front, other than the nominal cost of the energy audit which is folded into the cost of work. The maximum term of the obligation is ten years at 3% interest for administrative overhead. Should the energy efficient house be sold before term, the balance is passed along to the new homeowner. Green Homes structures the monthly benefit assessment, in most cases, to be less than the energy savings. Babylon pays town-certified contractors up to \$12,000 for the energy saving work, which includes measures like weatherstripping, air sealing, insulation, and boiler replacements. If the house is already tight, the Green Homes program will pay for the installation of solar. Homes are made more comfortable and affordable and Green Homes makes it easy.

Babylon is able to finance this program from our reserve waste fund owing to an expanded definition of solid waste to include energy waste, by dint of its carbon content. The Town allocated \$2 million for the pilot program which will cover 275 homes. Another \$.5 million has been allocated for solar installations, but financing will only be provided to homes that have been tightened up. Once the work is complete, the house will receive a green certificate of occupancy affirming its efficiency. This will enhance the value of the house which will not be subject to reappraisal. For more details about the program go to www.TheBabylonProject.org.

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