

Profile



John Snell, John Manning and Mike Sherman of Rebuild Boston

Rebuild Boston Pushes for Better City Housing

Rebuild Boston Energy Initiative, one of the first Rebuild America partnerships, has carved its niche by using energy efficiency as a catalyst for revitalizing economically distressed neighborhoods of Boston. To date, the partnership has helped facilitate the increased energy efficiency of more than 13 million square feet of new and retrofitted facilities in the City.

From the beginning, Rebuild Boston was a broad-based effort involving city government, utilities, and energy services companies and community-based organizations belonging to its lead partner, the Northeast Energy Efficiency Council (NEEC).

Finding its Niche

The partnership hit its stride by targeting residences and small businesses that were under-served by existing programs – emphasizing those in distressed areas who were served least of all, says Mike

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Rebuild Boston partners pose at Noah's Ark mural. Front row from left: Kate Bennett, Boston Housing Authority; Jean Cummiskey, PhD, Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources; and Caitriona Cooke, Conservation Services Group. Back row: Bruce Johnson, Energy Management; Harold Raymond, Design & Development Consultants; John Dalzell, Boston Office of Business Development; John J. Parisi, Jr., Honeywell DMC Services; and Charles Wheeler, NORESCO.

Sherman, one of Rebuild Boston's leaders. Sherman is part of a triumvirate that leads Rebuild Boston. Joining him are energy consultants **John Manning** and **John Snell**. All three are with the Peregrine Energy Group.

The partnership's goal is to make energy and water efficiency, balanced with the need to maintain comfortable, healthy and sustainable environments, a routine practice in construction, rehabilitation, operations and maintenance activities. To reach this goal, each of its leaders tend to specialize in one or two initiatives: Sherman's focus is on economic development and mixed-income redevelopment; Snell's area of concentration is public housing and indoor air quality; and Manning collaborates with utilities and other players involved in the design and assessment of energy-efficiency programs. They backstop one another with complementary roles and a mutually supportive work style, says Sherman.

NEEC's involvement in several Massachusetts gas and electric utility energy-efficiency collaboratives has helped the partnership make important contacts. Boston Edison and Boston Gas joined with NEEC early on as Rebuild Boston partners to help design economic development programs for distressed neighborhoods. This gave the partnership some guidance in achieving its goals.

Rebuild Boston then began developing linkages with programs such as Main Streets Boston, which is operated by the Boston Office of Business Development. Main Streets had established relationships with the same business owners the utility programs were targeting. With the help of Rebuild Boston, utility energy-efficiency services became a readily available resource for Main Streets participants and Manning notes that by the end of 1999, more than 70 Main Streets Boston projects included utility-funded energy-efficiency components.

these costs, Rebuild Boston and the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) have made long-term commitments to upgrade the energy efficiency of more than 15,000 apartments under the auspices of the BHA. Over the past four years, they have developed a viable performance contracting mechanism and the capacity to implement these improvements. The more than \$17 million in performance contracts currently underway will generate more than \$27 million in savings over 10 years, according to Snell. Further improvements will also address indoor air quality for improved health and resident comfort.

Rebuild Boston is also involved in efforts to provide rehabilitated housing and new affordable housing for low-to-moderate-income families. The partnership works with private and tenant co-developers to ensure that energy-efficiency measures are not eliminated in the redevelopment process, according to Sherman. So far, Rebuild Boston has helped facilitate energy-efficiency upgrades in more than 600 low- and moderate-income housing units.

Early Intervention

The partnership also assisted the Boston Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) in revising its standard housing plans to conform to the lion's share of the ENERGY STAR® specifications. Rebuild Boston and DND are now working on a list of projects to target during the next two years to promote early intervention in project design.

"It's relatively easy to get individual energy-efficiency projects completed, especially where Rebuild Boston can provide a lot of ongoing support and attention to ensure project success," Sherman says. "It is a great deal more difficult to move to the point where a sponsoring agency or business incorporates energy efficiency as a basic feature of its activities, particularly if there is no continuing monetary or technical support or 'cheerleading' from the outside."

Rebuild Boston has evolved into a series of sub-partnerships organized around substantive areas such as public housing, affordable housing, economic development, indoor air quality and housing rehabilitation.

"There is a natural progression from concerns like improving energy efficiency in the apartments of low-income people to beginning to deal with pervasive problems related to poor indoor air quality like the extremely high incidence of asthma and other respiratory diseases," Snell says.

Rebuild Boston continues to emphasize community economic development in the enterprise zones and hopes to be part of the first large-scale retail development in the Roxbury neighborhood in more than a generation. The partnership is also about to begin to develop several new partnerships in other parts of the state through a grant from DOE's State Energy Program Special Projects in cooperation with the Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources.

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Partnering with BHA

Studies show that energy and water costs typically consume about 22 percent of a public housing authority's budget. To mitigate