



**Leon County**  
Board of County Commissioners  
301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301  
(850) 606-5302 www.leoncountyfl.gov

**Leon County**



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 14, 2010

CONTACT: Jon D. Brown  
Public Information Officer  
(850) 606-5300

### **County Kicks Off Leon Energy Assistance Program** *Pilot Program to Provide 100 Free Home Energy Audits*

One of the most efficient and economical means of energy conservation and lowering utility bills is weatherization. Properly protecting a home and its interior from the elements can reduce energy consumption and optimize energy efficiency year round.

Leon County hosted a kickoff event for its new weatherization initiative, the Leon Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), Wednesday morning to introduce a program that will enable property owners to finance energy efficiency improvements.

"This is a win-win-win," said Leon County At-Large Commissioner Cliff Thael, the driving force behind the creation of LEAP. "Participants save on their utility bills and gain a more comfortable living space; economic stimulus will occur by putting members of the construction trade back to work; and the County is promoting the reduction of greenhouse gases – all helping to create a more sustainable community."

The LEAP initiative, inspired by a growing national trend, will be the first of its kind in Florida and will occur in two phases: a pilot program, which will provide up to 100 free home energy audits, followed by the potential for a fully implemented program.

The 100 pilot participants will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis, and it will take roughly three months to complete all 100 audits. The energy audits will be conducted by qualified inspectors and will result in a list of deficiencies, as well as opportunities to reduce energy consumption.

"The primary purpose of LEAP is to enact meaningful energy reduction efforts," said Maggie Theriot, Leon County Sustainability Manager. "The energy audit will allow a property owner to make an informed decision regarding which energy efficient improvements to make, resulting in the biggest bang for their buck. Everyone knows about small changes you can make, such as swapping your standard light bulbs for compact fluorescents, but this program will focus on large-scale enhancements."

Pilot participants will be surveyed to determine their desire for a low-interest loan, up to \$7,000, to implement many of the audit findings and recommendations. If a minimum of one-third of the pilot participants express interest in pursuing the loan, a full loan program will be implemented.

(More)

There are no credit qualifications to participate in the program, and a LEAP loan is not dependent on one's equity in the home, as the loan is affixed to the property, not to the owner. Additionally, there is no commitment of tax dollars invested, so assessments are placed only on applicant's properties who have applied for, and been approved for, the program.

To qualify, participants must be property owners who live within the target area and not be City of Tallahassee utility customers. The City has its own energy audit program. Additionally, participants must be current on their mortgage, not delinquent on property taxes and have no history of bankruptcy or foreclosure.

Eligible improvements include caulking; weatherstripping; air duct sealing; insulation of walls, roof and floor; heating, ventilating and air conditioning controls; replacing windows and doors; lighting upgrades; installation of a water or pool heater; rainwater harvesting units; cooling or reflective roof systems; and solar photovoltaics.

Homeowners will need to provide proof of property ownership and document that the structure exists when the application is submitted. After an energy audit is scheduled, an auditor will determine opportunities for energy reduction and make prioritized recommendations. The property owner will then be required to obtain three quotes from licensed contractors.

For more information regarding LEAP, or to apply for the pilot program, contact the County's Office of Sustainability at (850) 606-5300 or by e-mail at [Sustainability@leoncountyfl.gov](mailto:Sustainability@leoncountyfl.gov).

###