



Springfield officials praise federally funded energy efficiency program

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By **Peter Goonan, The Republican**



An infrared image of a commercial building provided by Sagewell Inc. Thermal imaging technology will be used to evaluate the energy efficiency of 45,000 homes in the greater Springfield area through a pilot program launched by the state Department of Energy Resources.

SPRINGFIELD – City and state officials gathered this week to praise a three-year pilot program that will assist area homeowners in evaluating the energy efficiency of their homes, aided by thermal imaging, and then help them make improvements.

The state Department of Energy Resources is overseeing the pilot program in Springfield and six other area communities, and has nearly completed the use of **van-mounted thermal imaging** to analyze the energy efficiency of approximately 45,000 homes, said Ian J. Finlayson, manager of buildings and climate programs for the state agency.

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, City Councilor Clodovaldo Concepcion, and several city

department heads praised the program during a press conference with Finlayson at City Hall on Tuesday, saying it should be of great help to homeowners trying to reduce their energy costs and utility bills.



Domenic Sarno

In addition to Springfield, the program targets Palmer, Belchertown, Hampden, Wilbraham, Longmeadow and East Longmeadow. Finlayson said the state will work with local officials in the seven communities to further publicize the program in coming months.

“It is a chance for homeowners to learn about energy efficiency opportunities,” Finlayson said. “We think this could be huge.”

The thermal imaging is the first phase of the program, costing about \$325,000 from within a \$2.6 million, three-year federal grant.

The state uses Sagewell Inc. of Woburn to measure heat loss on the outside of houses, identifying where additional insulation and sealing can occur. The imaging is done during the nighttime hours, using equipment mounted on a

hybrid van, with results shared with homeowners. The imaging can be followed by energy assessments through the **Mass Save program**, officials said.

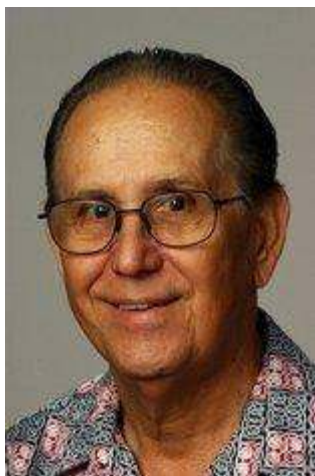
The state will also provide training in the spring and summer for home energy assessors and building contractors that wish to participate in the program, along with interested homeowners and real estate agents.

The program helps homeowners evaluate and choose energy conservation improvements, assisted by existing and expanding rebates and zero-interest loans, Finlayson said.

The state will also establish a list of contractors online.

The program is expected to leverage an additional \$8 million to \$10 million in energy conservation funding from the utilities and private sector, he said.

There is no obligation by homeowners to follow recommendations.



Clodo Concepcion

Residents can contact Sagewell via email at **optout@sagewell.com**, or by calling (888)-586-1726, if they wish to “opt out” by having images of their homes deleted.

In Palmer, some town councilors had expressed concern about the thermal imaging component, citing privacy concerns. Councilors delayed its implementation in Palmer because they wanted to make sure that there would be a way for residents to opt out of the program, which the state provided.

Acting Town Manager Patricia A. Kennedy said the **opt-out information is on town’s website**.

In addition to reducing costs, energy measures can improve the value of a house, Finlayson said.

Concepcion, who also serves as president of the **Sixteen Acres Civic Association**, said he supports any initiative that is “beneficial to the community and especially to senior citizens.”

*Staff writer **Lori Stabile** contributed to this report.*

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