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Bridgeport implements energy efficiency plan with utility partners and regional business council

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Bridgeport, CT The flurry of economic development and urban revitalization across the city has cultivated a renewed interest in updating municipal, residential and commercial properties to be more efficient and sustainable. Since 2018, city officials have partnered with United Illuminating (UI), Southern Connecticut Gas (SCG) and the Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC) to encourage a sustainable future for businesses and municipal buildings in the city, which boasts the highest population in Connecticut.

The city hosted a press event at the Ralphola Taylor Community Center (RTCC) YMCA on January 30 - Shown (from left) are: Dan Onofrio, BRBC president and CEO; Gary Pattavina, energy engineer at UI; BRBC chair Patrick McDonnell, VP of regulatory affairs at UI; Michael Gresko, director of sustainability for the city of Bridgeport; Carmen Colon, VP of Bridgeport YMCA; Edward Johnson, RTCC YMCA program staff; Ken Neal, RTCC YMCA Youth and Family coordinator; and David Stevenson, Ph.D., president and CEO of Central Connecticut Coast YMCA.

Energy upgrades were made to eight fire stations, the Klein Memorial Auditorium and city hall, saving the city roughly \$72,000 in annual energy costs. Through the combined effort of UI, SCG and BRBC, continued savings enables the city to take on additional energy-efficient projects slated for 2020 and 2021, including initiatives with the Board of Education (BOE), Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) and South End Community Center. The city stands to save hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional annual energy costs.

The city has become an energy leader over the past seven years, using the resources of the Connecticut Green Bank, the C-PACE energy conservation program for businesses and the utility-provided incentive programs. Connecticut municipalities are able to leverage financial incentives and support programs for energy-efficient upgrades and new construction through the Energize CT initiative, with expertise and guidance provided by local utilities. Upgrades can include everything from new lighting and lighting controls, the replacement of heating and cooling systems or boilers to the installation of building system controls, as well as adjustments to streamline operations or upgrade equipment.

“Conserving energy and modernizing the infrastructure in our city is part of our Master Plan for Bridgeport,” said mayor Joe Ganim. “These upgrades meet our goals to increase energy efficiency in the buildings and operations of the city as well as coordinating with local businesses to increase efficiency. These upgrades will save the city considerable money over the long-term and ultimately benefit the taxpayers of Bridgeport.”

The city is touting the benefits of recent and upcoming projects to help promote use of the energy efficiency incentives also available to local businesses. According to city officials, low interest loans and grants have also been awarded to local businesses in record numbers over the past few years. Part of the city's comprehensive three-year plan to modernize its energy infrastructure will include working closely with the BRBC and UI/SCG, subsidiaries of AVANGRID, Inc., leveraging energy efficiency incentives and zero percent loan programs available through the Energize CT initiative.

“Having these incentives available to Bridgeport as a municipality and to a plethora of its businesses supports the marketability and value for current and prospective businesses,” said Pat McDonnell, chairman of the BRBC and a senior executive at UI/SCG. “Lowering the cost of managing property and in turn lowering costs of doing business in town is a win for everyone.”

According to East End Neighborhood Revitalization Zone president Keith Williams, the improved lighting, heating and air conditioning is much needed for both the health and safety of the children and residents who use the Ralphola Taylor Community Center YMCA, while supporting their efforts to revitalize the neighborhood. Energy efficiency projects scheduled include indoor and outdoor LED lighting, an energy controls management system, a new high efficiency boiler for heating and two new rooftop air conditioning systems.

“Municipalities, like businesses, are always looking for ways to cut spending and save on annual expenditures. Providing them with guidance to upgrade their energy systems helps them to maintain a healthier operations budget overall,” said McDonnell.

Energy efficiency incentives will also help make upgrades possible at Black Rock Senior Center, Sylvan Ave. Senior Center, the old Wheeler School that now houses a daycare and health clinic, and several older schools in need of modern energy systems.

“Municipalities across Connecticut can enhance the effectiveness of energy efficiency efforts by training staff on energy benchmarking of facilities. Understanding how each building is performing in real time can help identify opportunities where they can save significant money by making additional energy efficiency improvements,” said Elizabeth Murphy, supervisor at AVANGRID.

Businesses looking for more information on energy efficiency programs provided by UI and SCG can visit BusinessEnergyCT.com.