

Office of Governor Deval L. Patrick

Contact: Kyle Sullivan, Becky Deusser, Kim Haberlin - 617-725-4025  
Kofi Jones (EOHED) - 617-788-3652

June 30, 2009

#### PATRICK-MURRAY ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES 'COMMUNITIES COUNT' INITIATIVE IN SPRINGFIELD

State partnership will leverage more than \$6 million in federal and state dollars to create jobs and stabilize neighborhoods

SPRINGFIELD - Tuesday, June 30, 2009 - As part of the Massachusetts Recovery Plan to secure the state's economic future, Governor Deval Patrick and Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray today announced a new state partnership with local communities that will leverage federal and state dollars to help create jobs, stabilize neighborhoods hit hard by foreclosures and offer resources for businesses during the economic downturn.

The Massachusetts Communities Count initiative will leverage more than \$6 million in state, federal, and local resources. Communities Count will be launched in Springfield's South End Neighborhood, and duplicated in communities that have developed comprehensive revitalization plans.

"This initiative is a comprehensive and innovative approach to leveraging all available resources in order to insure that we are fighting the effects of foreclosure, creating job opportunities, and bringing long term economic prosperity to our cities and towns," said Governor Patrick.

"Our cities and towns are filled with diverse neighborhoods that are the lifeblood of this great Commonwealth," said Lieutenant Governor Tim Murray, "The Communities Count Initiative is a wonderful way to ensure that our neighborhoods can offer improved quality of life and economic opportunities for all of our residents."

Communities Count will build on Springfield's South End Revitalization Project by dedicating \$1 million for the acquisition, rehabilitation, and redevelopment of foreclosed and vacant properties in Springfield's South End District.

"I thank Governor Patrick and Lt. Governor Murray for their ongoing commitment to the City of Springfield," said Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno. "These announcements address important needs of urban cities."

The Patrick-Murray Administration will work with federal, local and private partners to allocate roughly \$5 million to Springfield for weatherization assistance and upgrades to 500 low-income households over the next three years. These funds will also help create green job opportunities for the city and region. Two regional energy companies, Western Massachusetts Electric Company and Bay State Gas Company, are partnering in this effort.

"Partnership is truly the key to robust economic development of our region," said Peter J. Clarke, president and chief operating officer of Western Massachusetts Electric Company. "WMECO is pleased to support the administration's policy initiatives for strengthening our communities; by leveraging the resources of government and private industry, we can improve the quality of life in our communities and create long term opportunities necessary for sustained success."

Recognizing that public parks are essential to the health and economic well-being of urban areas, Springfield has been awarded a designation as a Gateway Cities Park Program city, allowing for environmental clean-up, planning and assessment, design, construction and other park related expenditures.

Keeping with the Patrick-Murray Administration's commitment to create opportunities for young people throughout Massachusetts, Communities Counts will fund two unique and collaborative youth work programs. Springfield Partners in Community Action and YouthBuild will create a youth energy conservation/efficiency employment program in the city's South End neighborhood.

"The 'Communities Count' initiative brings together the key ingredients of our mission here at Springfield Partners," said Paul Bailey, executive director of the Springfield Partners in Community Action. "Thanks to this collaborative effort, we will be able to empower people, and assist in helping individuals attain self-sufficiency and economic stability."

ROCA, a youth development organization committed to assisting young people, will partner with Hampden County Sheriff Michael J. Ashe to provide workforce, job readiness, education, and life skills for self-sufficiency training for high-risk youth, who will in turn perform community improvements in the South End neighborhood. Both of these programs will be funded by DHCD's federally-funded Community Services Block Grant program.

"We enthusiastically embrace this collaboration and are very excited about working with ROCA on this project, particularly working with high risk youths," said Sheriff Ashe. "This partnership is so important for Springfield and we very much appreciate this opportunity."

"ROCA is excited to work with the Patrick-Murray Administration and the Hampden County Sheriff's Department in the new Communities Count Initiative," said ROCA executive director Molly Baldwin. "This type of community engagement will have a life long impact on Springfield's youth."

The Communities Count initiative will bring millions of dollars in resources to Springfield, resulting in dozens of long-term job opportunities. The state's Office of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, in partnership with the Black Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the Allied Chamber of Commerce will also be bringing a Workshop for Small Businesses in Springfield, and the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation will host a Foreclosure Help Workshop in Springfield on July 23rd at the Chestnut Middle School.

Investments in housing and job opportunities are critical components of the Patrick-Murray Administration's Massachusetts Recovery Plan, which combines state, federal and, where possible, private efforts to provide immediate and long-term relief and position the Commonwealth for recovery.

"This is a great initiative for which I applaud the Governor and his administration. It is critically important that we provide the tools to help communities with the current economic situation, particular in communities like Springfield whose residents certainly need to avail themselves of this help," said state Rep. Angelo Puppolo.

"I am very pleased that the Patrick Administration continues to prioritize the needs and concerns of the people of Springfield; and I look forward to a continued good working relationship with the Administration on behalf of the "City of Home," said State Rep. Cheryl Coakley-Rivera.

###