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Illinois Finance Authority Announces Community Geothermal Planning Grant Recipients

CHICAGO – The Illinois Finance Authority (IFA), in its role as the Illinois Climate Bank, is pleased to announce \$731,575 in Community Geothermal Planning Grant awards to three organizations advancing innovative, community-scale geothermal heating and cooling projects across Illinois. The award recipients include:

- **City of Vandalia** - \$243,200
- **Elevate Energy** - \$238,375
- **Oak Park Residence Corporation** - \$250,000

The Community Geothermal Program was designed with the goal of serving 1,100 Illinois households and reducing carbon pollution by 15,099 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent by 2030. The Program is funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG), which aims to develop and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution.

Together, these three selected grants represent Phase One of IFA's \$16 million Community Geothermal Program. The planning grants will support awardees as they evaluate, design, and prepare community geothermal systems that provide efficient, low-emission heating and cooling for neighborhoods and districts. Funding may be used for technical analysis, engineering and design, financial modeling, community engagement, and implementation planning needed to prepare projects for future deployment. Phase One recipients will be well-positioned to apply for the larger Phase Two Pilot and Project Deployments Grants to be released by IFA later this year.

Ultimately, the three selected projects demonstrate the broad potential for community geothermal across Illinois — from small communities and historic downtowns to affordable housing developments and dense urban neighborhoods — while advancing clean energy initiatives, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy affordability, and strengthening community resilience.

“Congratulations to these three recipients. These projects will help communities reduce carbon pollution, and advance innovative clean energy solutions.” **said IFA's Interim Executive Director Ximena “Six” Granda.** “The Authority is proud to support these investments in a more sustainable future and look forward to the lasting benefits they will bring.”

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Community Geothermal Planning Grant Recipients

City of Vandalia

The City of Vandalia will advance planning for a district-scale geothermal network serving more than 240 homes, three schools, a hospital, several municipal facilities, and commercial buildings within the community. Building upon an existing feasibility study, the project will complete engineering and design, financial and governance planning, community engagement activities, and implementation strategies needed to prepare a community-wide geothermal system for future construction.

“Receiving this grant is an exciting step forward for Vandalia and our community,” **said Mayor Doug Knebel of Vandalia.** “This project gives us the opportunity to explore a reliable energy solution that could lower long-term utility costs, strengthen local infrastructure, and improve comfort for residents and businesses. We’re excited to explore an energy approach that has already delivered proven results in other communities and institutions, while creating long-term benefits for Vandalia residents and businesses.”

Read more about the City of Vandalia’s community geothermal plans [here](#).

Elevate Energy

Elevate Energy, in partnership with the Chicago Housing Authority and a multidisciplinary team of engineering, research, and utility partners, will develop a community geothermal plan for the Trumbull Park Homes public housing community on Chicago's South Side. The project will evaluate a neighborhood-scale geothermal network serving approximately 465 public housing units while exploring future connections to nearby community assets, including Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Park District facilities. The planning effort will integrate engineering analysis, financial modeling, workforce development, resident engagement, and environmental justice considerations to create a scalable model for equitable neighborhood decarbonization.

“We’re excited to announce a new collaboration with the Chicago Housing Authority, along with geothermal and decarbonization partners dbHMS and the Illinois State Geological Survey at the University of Illinois, to explore bringing community-scale geothermal solutions to Trumbull Park Homes,” **said Elevate CEO Dr. Anne Evens.** “This project represents a powerful vision for clean energy, one where neighborhoods are not left behind, but instead help lead the transition to healthier, more affordable communities. Community geothermal demonstrates what’s possible when we invest in people and ensure residents directly benefit from the clean energy investments shaping their communities.”



Oak Park Residence Corporation

Oak Park Residence Corporation (OPRC), working alongside the Village of Oak Park and numerous community partners, will advance planning for the Madison-Austin Geothermally Interconnected Community (MAGIC) project. The proposed network would connect multifamily housing, commercial buildings, and community facilities within a three-block neighborhood while creating a scalable geothermal system designed to reduce emissions, improve building performance, and support long-term neighborhood sustainability. Planning activities will include engineering design, financial analysis, community outreach, and partnership development needed to prepare the project for future implementation.

“We had initiated a similar proposal with this same project team a few years ago in conjunction with a federal grant process, including Village of Oak Park, Slipstream, Architectural Consulting Engineers, Terra Engineering, and Oak Park Apartments. We are really grateful to have now been selected by the Illinois Climate Bank and the Illinois Finance Authority to develop this plan,” **said OPRC President, David Pope.** “Both the Residence Corporation and Oak Park more broadly have a well-earned reputation for innovation and leadership on these and other issues. We’re pleased to be partnering with this great team and with the ICB and IFA to once again push the boundaries in making leading-edge, top-quality, and efficient housing affordable and available to everyone.”

The Illinois Finance Authority anticipates opening Phase Two of the Community Geothermal Planning Grant funding in late 2026. Additional information regarding program eligibility, application materials, and funding availability will be posted on the Illinois Climate Bank website when the Notice of Funding Opportunity is released.

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About the Illinois Finance Authority:

The IFA is a nationally-recognized conduit issuer in the tax-exempt financing market and the commercial property assessed clean energy financing market. Pursuant to the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act of 2021, IFA is designated as the Climate Bank of the State. Learn more at il-fa.com and illinoisclimatebank.com.