Colorado Becomes First State to Install a Solar PV System Under DOE’s Weatherization Program

By JIM SMITH, Realtor

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) was created by the Department of Energy (DOE) in 1976 during OPEC’s oil embargo to help low-income Americans save on their energy costs. Over its 40-year history, the WAP has become increasingly sophisticated in the types of weatherization it will fund, starting out with caulking and weather stripping, then adding insulation, and, most recently, installing solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to reduce energy costs for financially stressed homeowners. Colorado is the first state to take advantage of this expansion of WAP, completing its first 2-kW installation Aug. 15 on a home in Colora-

do Springs. A second system is being installed now.

The agency serving Denver and Jefferson County is the Energy Resource Center. The program is administered by eight weatherization agencies serving different parts of Colorado. The agency serving Denver and Jefferson County is the Energy Resource Center.

According to Joseph Pereira of the Colorado Energy Office, “The impact of this project is threefold. It addresses energy burden by reducing both home heating and electric costs; it enhances opportunities for distributed generation; and it demonstrates the viability of rooftop solar offerings for low-income households. We appreciate the Department of Energy’s receptiveness to this innovation in the program and the forward-thinking efforts of our partners at Energy Resource Center as we explore the best use of solar to assist those in need.”

In addition to rooftop solar panels, that first home in Colorado Springs received insulation, storm windows, low-flow showerheads, LED bulbs and an Energy Star refrigerator. Those improvements will save the homeowner an estimated $600 per year in energy costs.

Although there are income limits ($48,500 for a family of four) a homeowner also qualifies if he or she is on SSI, SNAP, or LEAP, or if he/she receives help from any of four other assistance programs.

For more metro area info, visit Energy Resource Center’s website at www.erc-co.org or call (720) 236-1321. Email address is DENinfo@erc-co.org.