

Successful Homeowners, Strong Communities

HARTFORD-Buying a home in Hartford will soon be easier, especially for first-time homebuyers and improving the value of a home will be possible for more people than ever before.

The Community Renewal Team's Homeownership Assistance Center, or HAC, opening this month will provide assistance and resources for people buying and rehabilitating their homes. Its goal is to increase homeownership in the city and help revitalize communities.

"The goal is to improve the value of owner-occupied homes in

the city, especially in the Blue Hills Avenue neighborhood, and to help people buy a home and succeed at homeownership," said CRT President/CEO Paul C. Puzzo.

"We're offering a unique mix of services and resources. It's a very exciting program."

Services for people buying a home include one-on-one pre-homeownership counseling, including credit and debt counseling and an explanation of the costs of buying and maintaining a home. Information will also be provided on the roles of those involved in

the home-purchase process, fair housing laws, and real-estate closings.

Additionally, the HAC will conduct an energy audit and help homebuyers rehabilitate their home, if needed. Buyers within 80% of median income, or \$53,280 for a family of four, may be eligible for up to \$7,500 of grant assistance for energy-efficiency improvements, including windows and refrigerators, furnace and boilers, and lighting.

Home renovation services for existing homeowners include finding grant or loan programs, conducting an energy audit and suggestions for energy-saving improvements, assistance finding and dealing with contractors, and a final inspection prior to final payment to ensure work is done properly.

Located at CRT's Neighborhood Services Center at 1229 Albany Avenue, the HAC can also be reached by calling (860) 560-HOME.

CRT is among a group of four sites nationally in a three-year pilot program; an additional four sites will be added in each of the next two years. CRT's partners and funders are Northeast Utilities, the Ford Foundation, Fannie Mae, and the Housing Education Resource Center.

The Community Renewal Team, Inc. is a community action agency providing services in Hartford and Middlesex counties to help low-income and disadvantaged people become self-sufficient and to ensure their basic needs are met. Founded in 1964 as part of the War on Poverty, the agency's programs now include Early Care and education, including Head Start; Meals on Wheels; homeless shelters and supportive housing; employment training; elderly nutrition; energy,

weatherization, and housing assistance; criminal justice services; positive youth development.