

Slipstream and partners receive Buildings Upgrade Prize to design and launch Cream City Climate Challenge in Milwaukee

The new initiative will support community-scale decarbonization projects in Milwaukee's historically disadvantaged communities.

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Milwaukee, Wis. – This month the U.S. Department of Energy announced Slipstream as one of the 45 Phase 1 winners in the [Buildings Upgrade Prize](#) (Buildings UP), which provides cash prizes to support the transformation of existing buildings into more efficient communities. As one of the winners within the Equity-Centered Innovation pathway, Slipstream and its partners received \$400,000 to design and launch the Cream City Climate Challenge, a program to inspire weatherization and electrification and improve health and safety outcomes for the City of Milwaukee's historically disadvantaged communities (DACs).

In addition to the Buildings UP prize, Slipstream and its partners received a \$100,000 grant for work that complements the project from the [Daybreak Fund](#), which supports nature-based projects that weave together solutions to climate change, water quality, and social equity problems in the Western Lake Michigan region.

The partners funded by the Buildings UP prize include the City of Milwaukee's Environmental Collaboration Office (ECO), Walnut Way, WestCare Wisconsin, EcoBalance Technologies, BlocPower, and Slipstream. Together, the team will develop a community-scale approach to implementing carbon reduction and green infrastructure improvements among multifamily, special-purpose, and small commercial buildings in Milwaukee's DACs.

The team's initial work will focus on houses of worship (HOWs) and their members in the Sherman Park neighborhood—the second to be designated under the city's [ECO Neighborhoods Initiative](#). The Sherman Park Community Association is also receiving a grant from the Daybreak Fund to ensure the community is meaningfully engaged in the project.

As trusted resources in the community, Sherman Park's HOWs are in a unique position to host informational events and serve as showcases for the benefits of efficient electrification technologies such as air-source heat pumps. The project team will also provide training and capacity-building support to contractors currently serving Sherman Park residents and their neighbors, expanding the ability of local contractors to perform high-quality heat pump installations.

With this pilot as a foundation, the Cream City Climate Challenge will eventually expand to a city-wide initiative to address the harmful impacts from a history of disinvestment and environmental injustice in DACs throughout the City of Milwaukee.

“The Cream City Climate Challenge is a winning effort. There are important climate goals that we all

must achieve. Every step forward is noteworthy,” Mayor Cavalier Johnson said. “I am particularly pleased with the collaborative effort involved in receiving the Buildings Upgrade Prize.”

As the project lead, Slipstream will serve as project manager, administer funds to team members, and support the development of the program’s contractor engagement and training components.

“Slipstream is honored to receive this prize on behalf of our partners in the Cream City Climate Challenge,” said Sandra Henry, President and CEO of Slipstream. “Ideas like this can help transfer the power to transform buildings to the communities who know what they need the most to benefit from the clean energy future.”

The scope of Slipstream’s involvement in Buildings UP will be seen in two additional communities—Chicago and the Twin Cities—where Slipstream will support local winning teams.

In Chicago, [Imani Village](#) and [Affordable Community Energy Services](#) received a Buildings UP prize to develop replicable clean energy strategies that build community wealth. In the Twin Cities, a team led by [Community Power](#) and [Cooperative Energy Futures](#) will build and train a network of multilingual community-based energy navigators to support residents throughout the home retrofit process and match them with the appropriate program and financing resources to meet their needs.

About the Buildings Upgrade Prize

The [Buildings Upgrade Prize](#) (Buildings UP) provides more than \$22 million in cash prizes and technical assistance to support the transformation of existing U.S. buildings into more energy-efficient and clean energy-ready homes, commercial spaces, and communities. Buildings UP is an [American-Made Challenge](#) funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Building Technologies Office and administered by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

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About Slipstream

[Slipstream](#) discovers, tests, and scales climate solutions in buildings and communities. The 501(c)3 nonprofit organization is headquartered in Madison, Wis. with offices in Chicago and staff across the U.S. Slipstream's solutions include research, inclusive program design, and workforce development.

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