County of Santa Barbara

Energy and Climate Action Plan

2016 Featured Stories

Prepared by:

Community Services Department

Energy and Sustainability Initiatives Division

Energy & Sustainability Initiatives

County of Santa Barbara

Built Environment (BE)

Making Residential Homes More Energy Efficient

The Energy and Sustainability Initiatives Division of the Community Services Department continues to operate the tri-county emPower Central Coast program to assist homeowners in completing energy upgrades by accessing utility incentives, local financing, qualified contractors, and expert assistance. To date, emPower has educated and assisted roughly 20,000 customers, more than 1,000 of whom have completed an Energy Coach assessment (275 in 2016) and 162 of whom have applied for emPower financing. The program's 37 participating contractors report 246 customers have completed an energy upgrade project totaling $4.5M in project income ($1.1M in 2016) and averaging 29 percent energy savings per project.

Green Business Certification of Naomi Schwartz Building

The Green Business Program certifies local businesses that are interested in greening their daily operations. The program provides training and on-site visits to help businesses—and public agencies—through the certification process.

The Naomi Schwartz Building, home to the Resource Recovery & Waste Management and Water Resources Divisions of the Public Works Department, was awarded its Green Business Program recertification in March 2016.

Waste Reduction (WR)

Moving Ahead with the Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project

On December 13, 2016, the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors approved the final contracts necessary to move forward with the long-awaited Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project. The Project includes the development of facilities that will process municipal solid waste (MSW), recyclables, and organic materials at the County-owned and operated Tajiguas Landfill.

According to Public Works Department Director Scott McGolpin, "There is no other project we have planned that will make as big an impact and is crucial to achieving the goals of the climate action plans for the region."

The project is expected to process an estimated 155,000 tons of MSW and 35,000 tons of recyclables each year, increasing the county's recycling rate to over 85 percent and resulting in an estimated reduction of 110,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide each year.

Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)

Supporting the Sustainable Communities Strategy with Transit

Santa Barbara County Association of Government's Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) focuses on transit-oriented and infill development and includes an enhanced transit strategy. The enhanced transit strategy seeks to apply new transit funding capacity to transit improvements supportive of the SCS's land use component. Several such transit improvements are now being implemented.

The Low Carbon Transit Operations Program provides funding for transit projects that demonstrate a reduction in GHG emissions. The program is funded with cap-and-trade revenues. Since the program first began funding projects in 2015, several transit services supporting the SCS's implementation have been improved or expanded. These projects include: increased frequency of service on several MTD routes; expanded Saturday and new Sunday service on the Guadalupe Flyer; and new Saturday service on the Wine Country Express, Breeze Route 100, Breeze Route 200, and the Clean Air Express. Each of these projects reduces emissions and is supportive of the SCS's enhanced transit strategy.

Transportation (T)

Expanding Alternative Fuel Use in the Tri-County Region

The Planning & Development Department utilized grant funding from the California Energy Commission to prepare the Central Coast Alternative Fuel Ecosystem Project. The plan is intended to guide the development of policies and infrastructure within Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties to enable increased use of alternative fuel vehicles (e.g., electric, hydrogen, natural gas, and biofuels).

Renewable Energy (RE)

Expedited Plan Review for Residental Rooftop Solar

The Building and Safety Division of the Planning and Development Department offers a ten-day expedited and electronic plan review for qualified small residential rooftop solar energy systems. A contractor can submit 11x17 plans via email for review and approval. This streamlines the permit process and saves applicants time and money.

Large-Scale Solar Array Project in Cuyama

In 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved the Cuyama Solar Project, a 40-megawatt solar array. When construction is finished in 2017, the solar project will generate enough energy to serve approximately 16,000 California homes and will displace more than 30,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually. That's like taking 6,000 cars off the road for a year!

Agriculture (AG)

Improving Irrigation Systems on Local Farms

The State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program offers financial assistance for farmers to install efficient irrigation systems to save on water and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Cahuma Resource Conservation District received a total of $785,655 in 2014 and 2015 for projects that are estimated to save 160 million ga llons of water annually.

Educating Strawberry Farmers about Water Efficiency

The California Strawberry Commission hosts English and Spanish educational workshops to provide Santa Barbara County strawberry farmers with the knowledge to design and maintain efficient irrigation systems. Strawberries remain the number one agricultural commodity in Santa Barbara County, which is one reason why helping strawberry farmers adopt water-efficient strategies is a priority. The 2015 Strawberry Production Manual has more information on best management practices.

Government Operations (GO)

Improving Water Efficiency in Los Alamos Park

Los Alamos Park has approximately 404,000 square feet of turf and is one of the county's biggest water consumers. Prior to the mandated watering restrictions brought on by the prolonged drought, Los Alamos Park expended $33,000 per year for water. The Board of Supervisors approved funding for the Parks Division of the Community Services Department to replace the old irrigation system with a more efficient state-of-the-art system.

The high-efficiency system has been in operation since May 2016 and is expected to save the Parks Division approximately 30 percent in avoided water costs per year.

Land Use Design (LUD)

Expanding Low-Income Apartments for Seniors

The Heritage Villas Apartments in Lompoc is a recently constructed adult living community. Phase II of the community was completed in 2016 and includes 80 low-income senior apartments, with community amenities such as walking trails, a common meeting area/dining hall, dog park, and community garden. The Heritage Villas Apartments are surrounded by existing development within and near the city of Lompoc, limiting the need for long-distance travel and thereby reducing vehicle greenhouse gas emissions.

Encouraging Affordable Housing Through Zoning

In 2016, the Planning and Development Department continued implementing policies and programs from the 2015-2023 Housing Element that are intended to encourage affordable and special needs housing production. Recent changes to the Residential Zone allow affordable, senior, and special care housing developers to achieve the maximum building density allowed under current zoning. Increased density can encourage more active forms of transportation and use of public transit in support of the LUD core strategy.

Water Efficiency (WE)

Certifying Green Gardeners

There were 29 Green Gardener graduates from the Spanish and English classes at Santa Barbara City College in fall 2016. These graduates are certified and trained in water-wise, waste-free sustainable landscaping. A new Advanced Green Gardener Class was offered for the first time in spring 2017.

Promoting Climate-Appropriate Landscaping

At the Watershed Wise Homeowner Workshops in May 2016, attendees learned the basics of how to replace lawn with a climate-appropriate, watershed-wise garden. The workshops covered plant selection, rainwater harvesting, greywater, and a hands-on design exercise with local landscape professionals.

For more information about the County of Santa Barbara's progress implementing its Energy and Climate Action Plan, download the 2016 Progress Report at: https://www.countyofsb.org/sustainability