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Local Government Case Study:  
*City of Chula Vista*

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### **Background**

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- Location: San Diego County
- Population: 174,319 (Census 2000)
- Contact: Willie Gaters, Environmental Resource Manager  
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### **Summary**

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Chula Vista is the 19th largest of California's 471 cities, according to the California Department of Finance. The city replaced green traffic signal lights with light emitting diode (LED) lamps, and enacted an extensive public awareness and education campaign that provided residents with a free home energy audit, energy efficiency compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) and information on energy rebates. The city's efforts resulted in a 15 percent reduction in citywide energy use in 2001.

Referenced in Local Government Guides:

- #2, "Reduce Energy Use in Local Government Facilities Through Efficiency Improvements"
- #4, "Promote Energy Conservation and Efficiency Through Public Services, Incentives and Technical Assistance"
- #5, "Target Low-Income and Senior Populations for Energy Conservation"

### **Plan**

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City staff developed a City Energy Plan to protect the city, residents and businesses from the high cost of and unreliable supply of energy.

The city's Special Operations Manager made an assumption that street and traffic lighting were the major energy users and targeted reducing lighting and other "street" energy consumption first. Staff performed the following:

- Evaluated energy consumption and cost data for street lighting and traffic signal lights and evalu-

ated available retrofit options (green LED for traffic signal lights).

- Calculated potential energy savings (1.1 million kWh/year).
- Identified retrofit budget (\$425,000).
- Identified available incentives for lighting retrofit through California Energy Commission (CEC), Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) (\$337,031).
- Determined city's investment (\$88,000).
- Calculated return on investment (\$74,000/year).
- Proposed retrofit project to city council for approval.

The city manager wanted to support local businesses and residents with energy conservation. The second component of the energy reduction plan was performing free energy audits throughout the summer (May to September), informing residential and commercial businesses of various retrofits and energy-efficient products. Staff did the following:

- Developed residential and small business lighting retrofit goals with target date (retrofits for 1,500 homes and 20 small businesses by September 2001).
  - Evaluated available retrofit options (CFLs and fluorescents).
  - Identified resource requirements based on goals (\$150,000 for staffing and supplies and a lighting contractor for small businesses).
  - Identified outside and in-house funding sources (recycling revenue).
  - Identified available incentives for lighting retrofits through SDG&E (various amounts for small businesses; no incentives for residential).
  - Proposed retrofit project to city council for approval.
  - Presented proposal to SDG&E (SDG&E provided four auditors and 1,000 CFLs).
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## **Programs: Efficiency**

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✓ **Street lighting:** Replaced green incandescent traffic signal lights with LEDs. Completed retrofit project in April 2001.

## **Programs: Public Outreach**

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✓ **Brochures:** Created and sent brochures between May and June to more than 50,000 Chula Vista homes and businesses. “Responding to the Energy Crisis: Reducing Exterior Lighting at Local Businesses” provided suggestions on how to reduce energy use by 50 percent and described penalties for noncompliance. An “Energy Conservation Resource Guide” for residents provided sources for conservation information, tips and safety procedures for blackouts.

✓ **News release:** Published a news release in the local newspaper and an article in the city newsletter (mailed to all households), developed an Energy Conservation Brochure, developed displays for various city libraries and conducted weekend exchanges.

✓ **Free equipment:** Provided energy Power Planners valued at \$50 to residents for older refrigerators. Energy planners are plug-in devices that regulate motor operation and reduce motor operating temperature and power consumption. For various 115-volt refrigerators, the planner not only extends the life of a motor, but can also reduce energy by 18 to 33 percent ([www.energysmart.com/fan.htm](http://www.energysmart.com/fan.htm)).

✓ **Free CFLs:** Intern energy auditors gave residents CFLs and detailed information about local utility retrofit rebates and CEC rebate and alternative power programs. Interns replaced up to eight incandescent bulbs with fluorescent

bulbs in more than 1,500 homes and 20 small businesses by September 2001.

## **Programs: Technical Assistance**

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✓ **Energy audits:** In March of 2001, the operations manager trained four interns to conduct energy audits throughout the summer months (April-September 2001). SDG&E auditors and a private lighting contractor assisted the interns. SDG&E provided training materials.

## **Program: Incentives**

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✓ **Grants:** Provided small businesses with up to \$2,500 in mini grants for lighting retrofits.

## **Budget and Finance**

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The budget for street and traffic signal lighting retrofit was \$425,000. CEC, CPUC and SDG&E provided \$337,031 in incentives, making the city’s investment \$88,000. Return on investment was estimated to be \$74,000/year.

The budget for energy audit and business incentive programs was \$150,000, which went toward staffing and supplies and a lighting contractor for small businesses. The city used revenue from its recycling program to finance the program.

## **Results**

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In November 2001, Chula Vista estimated it would reduce total energy consumption in 2001 by more than 15 percent when compared with the year before. The city’s free energy audit program was a success: 1,500 homes were audited. Also, 20 mini grants of up to \$2,500 were provided to small businesses.