

BEACON

SPOTLIGHT  
AWARD

WINNER

BEST PRACTICE  
ACTIVITIES



# City of San Diego

Sustainability Best Practice Activities



**ILG** INSTITUTE FOR  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT<sup>SM</sup>  
*Promoting Good Government at the Local Level*

# City of San Diego

California communities are leading the fight against climate change. From small projects to large-scale programs, cities and counties are making great strides to create healthy, sustainable and economically prosperous communities. Participants in ILG's Beacon Program serve as leaders in this effort, making measureable contributions to reducing energy and greenhouse gas emissions, and sharing their sustainability best practices.

This document represents a collection of activities your agency has completed in 10 areas of sustainability. While local governments have a wide range of choices available to address climate change, these activities represent the unique opportunities and values in your community. These voluntary actions are essential to achieving California's goals to save energy, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and create more sustainable communities.

## SPOTLIGHT AWARD

Areas of Accomplishment		SILVER LEVEL	GOLD LEVEL	PLATINUM LEVEL
	Agency GHG Reductions		2020 (16%)	
	Community GHG Reductions		2017 (17%)	2020 (24%)
	Agency Energy Savings		2020 (15%)	
	Natural Gas Savings		2020 (14%)	
	Sustainability Best Practice Activities		2020	
	Beacon Vanguard Award		2020	

Cities and counties throughout the Golden State should be proud of the accomplishments made through the hard work, innovation and collective community action. The Institute for Local Government applauds your achievements and thanks you for your continued participation in the Beacon Program.

The Beacon Program is sponsored by the Institute for Local Government and the Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative (SEEC). SEEC is an alliance between three statewide non-profit organizations and California's four Investor-Owned Utilities. The Beacon Program is funded by California utility ratepayers and administered by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, San Diego Gas and Electric Company, Southern California Edison and Southern California Gas Company under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission.



# Energy Efficiency and Conservation Activities

## Silver

1. San Diego upgraded 4,785 streetlights to energy efficient light-emitting diodes (LED).

## Gold

2. The city operates the San Diego Green Business Network to support businesses in improving energy and water efficiency, reducing waste and improving air quality. The program offers members no-cost energy assessments, community recognition and awards, educational workshops and networking opportunities and marketing support.
3. The City of San Diego Environmental Services Department and Sony Technology Center-San Diego joined forces to promote the "Green Schools" program. This program teaches students about energy use, air pollution, and global climate change, while helping nonprofit organizations that have been heavily impacted by the current energy supply shortage. In a pilot project, Rancho Bernardo High School students conducted a lighting audit and coordinated a lighting retrofit at the Sherman Heights Community Center. Sony donated money to help the students purchase energy-efficient lighting fixtures and the services of Amtech Lighting to conduct the lighting retrofit. As a result, the Community Center's monthly electricity bill is expected to drop 35 percent.

## Platinum





# Water & Wastewater Systems Activities

## Silver

1. Pure Water San Diego has achieved a significant milestone in using proven water purification technology that cleans recycled water in order to produce safe, high-quality drinking water. In July 2019, the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board gave Pure Water conditional acceptance to release highly purified water to surface water reservoirs. This acceptance represents a first under new state regulations and paves the way for other agencies in California and elsewhere in the country to permit similar projects. By 2035, Pure Water will provide one third of San Diego's water supply locally, reducing the reliance on imported water sources.

## Gold

2. In 2014, the city changed its rate structure to add an additional tier to its single family residential water rates in order to recognize and encourage water conservation (usage at 0-400 cubic feet).
3. The city is developing an Outdoor Landscaping Ordinance to encourage water efficiency and conservation.

## Platinum





# Green Building Activities

## Silver

1. Through a grant from the California Energy Commission, the city of San Diego is working on a multi-year project to upgrade three libraries to zero net energy. This project will demonstrate how all buildings can generate more power on site and reduce overall energy consumption.

## Gold

2. In pursuing its CAP goals, the San Diego City Council passed the Building Energy Benchmarking Ordinance in February 2019. The ordinance requires commercial buildings over 50,000 square feet and multifamily and mixed-use buildings greater than 50,000 square feet and with 17 or more residential accounts to submit energy data to the city using a free tool called ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager®.
3. The city's Commercial Resources webpage provides tips to aid businesses in increasing energy efficiency through landscaping and use of shade, "green" design features, combined heat and power systems, solar power on rooftops, water, gas and ventilation and engineering requirements.

## Platinum







# Waste Reduction and Recycling Activities

## Silver

1. San Diego operates one of the largest municipally-run composting sites in California: the Miramar Greenery. The city installed a covered aerated static pile system that can now process 20,000 tons of food waste and 20,000 tons of green waste at the Greenery. The addition of an aerated static pile composting system was identified in the city's Zero Waste Plan as one of the key strategies to help increase the city's waste diversion rate to 75%.

## Gold

2. The City's Zero Waste Plan was approved and adopted unanimously by City Council on July 13, 2015. The Zero Waste Plan lays out strategies to divert 75 percent of all trash by 2020, 90 percent diversion by 2035 and an ultimate goal of zero waste by 2040.
3. The city was awarded a grant from The Recycling Partnership.

## Platinum

4. The city received a CalRecycle Illegal Dumping Education Grant.
5. Commercial Food Scraps Composting Program: the city partners with 80+ hotels, restaurants, grocers, schools, hospitals, and corporate and retail dining centers to compost their food waste at the Miramar Greenery. This program was recently expanded with a \$3 million grant from the CalRecycle Organics Infrastructure fund. The city has begun composting food waste and yard trimmings at the Miramar Greenery landfill using Sustainable Generation SG Mobile™ Systems with GORE® Covers. At capacity, the enclosed operation can compost 40,000 tons/year of food waste and yard trimmings
6. Through contracts with local environmental nonprofits, the City hosts workshops on composting at home and zero waste lifestyle habits. Educators also deliver in-school presentations on composting and waste reduction.





# Climate-friendly Purchasing Activities

## Silver

1. As of 2018, city operations have 41 compressed natural gas (CNG) waste trucks, 87 EVs and 70 hybrid vehicles.

## Gold

2. In 2016, the city municipal fleet transitioned to 100% renewable diesel to help meet the Climate Action Plan goal of reducing municipal fleet greenhouse gas emissions.
3. The city manages a virtual warehouse where departments are encouraged to list office furniture that they no longer use so that other departments can instead have it.

## Platinum

4. The Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program (EP<sup>3</sup>) requires city departments to consider products that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products that serve the same purpose.





# Renewable Energy and Low-Carbon Fuels Activities

## Silver

1. In partnership with the cities of Chula Vista, La Mesa, Encinitas and Imperial Beach, San Diego created the second-largest community choice program in California. San Diego Community Power purchases clean energy on the open market at more competitive rates for residents and businesses. This move will help the city reach its renewable energy goal by 2035, a decade ahead of the state's goal.

## Gold

2. The city offers a Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program for residents to invest in home improvements like solar energy, insulated windows or desert-friendly landscaping. The PACE loans are attached to the property, paid back through tax bills and are passed along to the next owner when the property is sold.
3. The city has numerous facilities with on-site renewable generation, including 1) combined heat and power generation using landfill gas or digester gas at Metropolitan Biosolids Center, Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant and North City Water Reclamation Plant; 2) hydroelectric generation at Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant ocean outfall; and 3) PV systems at water treatment facilities, libraries, recreation centers and fire stations. Two of the largest PV systems, at the Alvarado Water Treatment Plant and the Otay Water Treatment Plant, produced a combined 2,400 MWh of electricity on-site in 2018.

## Platinum

4. In 2018, the city deployed 3.5 megawatts of solar photovoltaics across city facilities.







# Efficient Transportation Activities

## Silver

1. To promote active transportation, the city constructed 8,800 linear feet of sidewalk and added or improved 42 miles of bike lanes.

## Gold

2. 64 electric vehicle charging stations sited throughout the city are energized and ready for public use.
3. Construction on the first phase of the Downtown Mobility Plan is complete. The first phase redesigned three streets with protected bike lanes. These new lanes provide a right-of-way designated exclusively for bicycle and scooter travel. The second and third phases of the Downtown Mobility Plan cycle track network will be completed over the next three years.

## Platinum

4. In April 2019, City Council approved regulations for shared mobility devices (SMDs). These regulations are intended to increase safety and provide the city with data to inform future mobility planning and investment. In order to prevent SMDs from being staged on sidewalks, more than 510 parking corrals were added to city streets in neighborhoods with high SMD usage.
5. Funded by SANDAG, MoveFreeSD is an educational campaign implemented in partnership with the San Diego County Bicycle Coalition and Circulate San Diego. Through hosting CicloSDias, "transit for fun" events, bike safety classes and walk audits, the city aims to encourage people to consider walking, bicycling or transit as their preferred form of transportation.





# Land Use and Community Design Activities

## Silver

1. With the goal of creating a cleaner San Diego for future generations, the City of San Diego's Climate Action Plan calls for reducing 2010 levels of all greenhouse gas emissions (12.9 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e) 50% by 2035.

## Gold

2. The city eliminated parking requirements for new multifamily developments within a half-mile of a public transit stop.
3. In October 2019, the city released a draft Mobility Action Plan to address changing mobility needs and improve access to opportunities for all San Diegans. The plan builds upon existing policies and programs and outlines priorities, actions and goals for a safe and low greenhouse gas emission transportation future. The establishment of a Mobility Division is also being considered to work across all departments in the City as a champion for mobility innovation and implementation. The Mobility Division would monitor and report on identified goals, actions and policies.

## Platinum

4. The city completed a Sea Level Rise Vulnerability assessment in July 2019, which identifies vulnerabilities of city assets and public trust resources to future flooding and erosion. Potential adaptation strategies to address these vulnerabilities are listed in the assessment's report, along with relative costs and timeframes of each measure. This sea level rise vulnerability assessment and future resiliency plans are pivotal steps in planning for climate change impacts in the region.





# Open Space and Offsetting Carbon Emission Activities

## Silver

1. In 2018, the city continued commitments to expanding urban tree canopy by planting 1,089 trees and trimming/maintaining 22,856 trees.

## Gold

2. April 26, 2019 marked the inaugural citywide Arbor Day Event. Nearly 100 native and drought-tolerant trees were planted by volunteers throughout Balboa Park.
3. When a tree must be removed, staff make sure nothing goes to waste. Trees to Treasures is a program with Friends of Balboa Park that takes downed timber and dead trees and uses the wood to create unique products for sale. Profits are used to plant new trees in Balboa Park.

## Platinum

4. Balboa park planted over 600+ climate appropriate trees in a 3 year initiative with grant money provided by CAL-FIRE.





# Promoting Community and Individual Action Activities

## Silver

1. In 2019, San Diego established the nation's first-of-its-kind Climate Equity Index (CEI) to measure the level of access to opportunity residents have within a census tract, and assess the degree of potential impact from climate change to these areas. The CEI provides a tool to measure inequity, allowing the city to prioritize areas with the least access to opportunity and begin dismantling historic barriers that have caused disparities in Communities of Concern.

## Gold

2. City staff are conducting stakeholder outreach in developing Climate Resilient SD which aims to address the city's vulnerabilities to impacts of climate change and identify potential adaptation measures. Extensive public outreach is planned to ensure the plan has input from residents and business owners on potential adaptation strategies.
3. The city of San Diego is working with I Am My Brothers Keeper, GRID Alternatives, the San Diego Foundation, Climate Action Campaign and the Center for Sustainable Energy to ensure that the benefits of work related to the Climate Action Plan are shared with the communities who need it the most. The partnership engages communities in Southeast San Diego through a Climate Ambassadors for Environmental Justice educational program and energy efficiency analysis specific to mobile home parks.

## Platinum

4. In August 2019, the city partnered with City Heights Community Development Corporation for Transit & Tacos at Fair@44 where attendees shared their thoughts on the region's transportation system to help shape future investments.







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1400 K Street, Suite 205  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
916-658-8208  
[www.ca-ilg.org](http://www.ca-ilg.org)

