



BEACON
 SPOTLIGHT
 AWARD
 WINNER
 BEST PRACTICE
 ACTIVITIES



City of Visalia







Sustainability Best Practice Activities

City of Visalia

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			
	Community GHG Reductions			
	Agency Energy Savings		2015 (11%)	2019 (70%)
	Natural Gas Savings			
	Sustainability Best Practice Activities		2015	
	Beacon Award			

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. The City of Visalia established a dedicated Natural Resource Conservation Division (NRCD) within the city's Administration Department. The division focuses on a wide range of sustainability issues, including energy efficiency and generation, water conservation, reducing GHG emissions, waste minimization and diversion, brownfields redevelopment, and community education on all these issues.

Gold

2. The City of Visalia maintains a comprehensive website that serves as a community resource and gateway for the range of conservation and sustainability issues in the city.
3. In 2009, the city created a revolving conservation fund as a mechanism to provide grant matching funds and financing for EE/RE and related projects that otherwise would have no ready source of funding. The fund is replenished by incentives and energy savings accrued through the projects it supports.

Platinum

4. The city maintains over 150 service accounts, including 45 city owned facilities in Energy Star Portfolio Manager to benchmark and monitor facility energy use.
5. In 2012, the city completed a comprehensive energy audit of all of its major facilities. This audit led to the prioritization of energy efficiency retrofit projects that were accomplished through our EECBG and CEC loan projects.
6. In 2012, the city developed an Energy Action Plan, which provides a foundation and serves as a blueprint for ongoing energy efficiency activities.





Water & Wastewater Systems Activities

Silver

1. In response to a persistently declining water table, but well in advance of any significant drought, Visalia's city council approved Visalia's first Water Conservation Ordinance in 1989, a significant proactive step that was well ahead of its time. The city has maintained and strengthened this ordinance over the years in response to continued tightening water supplies, implementing Stage 3 restrictions in 1992 and Stage 4 in 2014. The city's Natural Resource Conservation Division currently has two FTE on active educational and enforcement patrol throughout the city to help ensure compliance with the ordinance.

Gold

2. City staff actively provides educational outreach to service clubs, organizations and schools regarding water conservation, composting and recycling. Through May of 2015, the city provided 71 presentations resulting in 991 educational contacts. In addition, approximately 250 people attended our annual Earth Day celebration in April.
3. The city has implemented a groundwater overdraft mitigation ordinance, which imposes a groundwater mitigation fee on new development. It also imposes a groundwater impact fee on all residential, commercial and industrial water suppliers. These fees are used by the city to construct and improve groundwater recharge facilities and to purchase water for groundwater recharge. As a result, the city purchased and recharged over 6,000 acre feet of water in 2010.

Platinum

4. The city is mid-way through a \$140 million upgrade of our Water Conservation Plant to convert 100% of the city's wastewater to high-quality tertiary treated recycled water. Some of the recycled water will be used to irrigate the city municipal golf course and adjacent park land, but the majority will be delivered to a local irrigation district for unrestricted irrigation of crops. In exchange, the irrigation district will provide imported water to the city in wet years to bolster the city's groundwater recharge program.
5. The city has been a leader in integrated regional water management planning with other agencies in the groundwater subbasin. For example, the city has led the process of creating a Sustainable Groundwater Agency in cooperation with other local agencies.





Green Building Activities

Silver

1. The city provides information about green home improvement options on its website.

Gold

2. The city has created dedicated pages to educate commercial builders about green building and LEED certification on the city website.
3. The city has been pursuing significant green retrofitting, primarily focused on increasing energy efficiency, in city facilities including the transit center, several fire stations, airport facilities, offices, community centers, recreational facilities, the senior center, the corporation yard, parking structures and administrative offices. Expenditures on these efforts have exceeded \$500,000.

Platinum

4. In 2006, the city designed and constructed the police substations in districts one and two to be highly resource-efficient. Construction included rice bale walls, extensive use of natural lighting and low water use native landscaping.





Waste Reduction and Recycling Activities

Silver

1. The city was an early adopter of residential source separation and curbside recycling and green waste collection. Curbside residential recycling collection began in the late 1980s and curbside green waste collection began in the 1990s.

Gold

2. In 2010, the city began encouraging residents to place non-protein based food waste and other organics in their green waste collection bins. Also in that year, dedicated food waste collection began in the downtown restaurant district. Through city led efforts, the program has recently expanded to include all of the 22 elementary schools in the city. The schools have switched to compostable fiberboard food trays to help facilitate this. City staff developed these programs and provided training to administration and staff, teachers and students at each school site. These programs will divert over 2.1 million pounds of waste from landfills per year and save on disposal costs for participating businesses and schools.
3. The city hosts quarterly "Dump On Us" days, which provide residents the opportunity to drop off household items including white goods, mattresses, e-waste, universal waste, and household hazardous waste for disposal or recycling free of charge.

Platinum

4. The city provides a free green waste drop off service over several weeks in the spring and fall. In addition, bins are placed at multiple locations around town the week after Christmas, where residents can drop of their Christmas trees.
5. Tree trimmings from city parks are chipped, ground and reapplied to park land as mulch and ground cover. This results in decreased water use and improved weed control and park aesthetics.
6. The city operates a free household hazardous waste collection facility that is open to the public every Saturday. In 2014, the facility received hazardous and universal wastes from 1,869 households for safe and legal recycling and disposal.
7. The public is encouraged to drop off used household batteries at 119 free collection locations around the city.





Climate-friendly Purchasing Activities

Silver

1. City policy requires that environmental considerations be incorporated in purchasing and procurement decisions. All office paper used includes recycled content.

Gold

2. The scoring matrix for a 2015 RFP for a city brownfield cleanup project awarded additional points to proposers implementing policies demonstrating environmental stewardship, including green purchasing. Implementation of green remediation strategies is also a required component of the cleanup project.
3. The city has teamed up with the neighboring municipalities of Tulare and Porterville to purchase street lights which are currently leased from the Southern California Edison. Once city-owned, the lights will be retrofitted to LED. Collective purchasing allows for more efficient procurement at lower cost, and provides the opportunity to “green” the street lamp inventory more efficiently.

Platinum





Renewable Energy and Low-Carbon Fuels Activities

Silver

1. The city adopted the Visalia Solar Strategy in 2013. This guides and informs the city's planning for renewable energy generation. The city is currently generating over 700 kW through existing PV solar systems installed at our corporation yard and solid waste operations facilities. Another 1 MW is planned as a component of the water conservation plant upgrade.

Gold

2. The city began participation in the Solar Roadmap Program in 2013.
3. The city is participating in the Energy Sage, with a dedicated website allowing interested parties to obtain comparable quotes for installation of rooftop solar in the community.

Platinum

4. The city is a current participant in the Sustainable Energy Roadmap. Through this collaboration, the city hopes to develop a streamlined permitting process for residential rooftop solar installations.
5. The city is proactively taking steps to streamline permitting of residential solar installations.
6. Through our Vi-Cycle Program, the city procures refurbished bicycles from community partners and provides them to the business community for a nominal fee. Purchasers then use the bicycles for short errands or deliveries, providing employees with health benefits and reducing VMT.
7. Most of the city transit buses and solid waste hauling fleet are powered by CNG.





Efficient Transportation Activities

Silver

1. Visalia Transit maintains a comprehensive website designed to facilitate the riding process and increase ridership. The city also maintains a telephone “Greenline”, a single phone number through which callers can access comprehensive regional routing and scheduling information for Visalia Transit and other local connection transit agencies. Visalia Transit also maintains a strong presence on several social media platforms.

Gold

2. Visalia Transit operates several social buses, which are wifi equipped to allow riders to access the internet while traveling, increasing the attractiveness of riding the bus, and increasing ridership.
3. During the summer season, the city operates several daily round trip trips to Sequoia National Park on the Sequoia Shuttle. The Visalia shuttle stops at several local hotels and connects visitors to the separate shuttle bus system inside the park, allowing travelers to visit and explore the park without needing a private vehicle. 9,381 people road the shuttle in 2014, resulting in a significant reduction of GHG emissions.

Platinum

4. Visalia Transit operates the downtown trolley, which allows the public to ride for free to different downtown locations. During the holiday season, the routes are expanded to include the major shopping centers in town so that riders can complete all their holiday shopping without needing to use personal vehicles.
5. The city has received Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program grant money to install six electric vehicle charging stations in public parking lots downtown.
6. The city has received grant money to operate regular shuttles between the city, the Visalia Airport, Fresno Yosemite International, and Fresno State University to provide public transit options to important regional centers. The city is also served by Amtrak (bus), allowing access to the nationwide Amtrak system and other public transit networks and airports in other cities.
7. The city has received CMAQ funding to coordinate traffic signals on primary thoroughfares to decrease wait times and idling. These changes are calculated to result in GHG emission reductions of over 10.5 kg/day.





Land Use and Community Design Activities

Silver

1. The city's newly adopted General Plan adheres closely to principles of transit-oriented development with a focus on reducing vehicle miles traveled and minimizing sprawl.

Gold

2. The city council adopted a Climate Action Plan component of the General Plan, which details how the city intends to reduce GHG emissions within the targeted time frames.
3. Initial design planning is currently underway for a new 248 acre East Regional Park and GW Recharge Project. Community input is encouraged and ongoing to ensure multi-use functionality for the different recreational and social needs of the community.

Platinum

4. Growth in the city has historically been controlled so as to maintain the downtown district as the geographical and cultural heart of the city. Mixed used development is planned as part of the East Downtown Plan. Heavy industry is concentrated in the Industrial Park northwest of town.
5. Recent upgrades were made to the nearby Plaza Park interchange to facilitate easy truck access to SR 198 and SR99, decreasing congestion, idling and GHG and criteria air emissions.
6. Visalia maintains an extensive network of bike lanes and multi-use trails extending throughout the city. With the downtown transit center at the center of the community, and bicycle racks on all buses, multimodal connectivity allows for active transportation throughout the city.





Open Space and Offsetting Carbon Emission Activities

Silver

1. The city maintains over 885 acres of park land and open space to provide recreational and relaxation opportunities for our residents. Based on the Visalia Bikeways Plan, the city also maintains an extensive network of bike lanes and trails throughout the city.

Gold

2. The city is engaging the public in its planning for a new 248 acre east side park and groundwater retention basin. The park is envisioned to be multi-use and to include interpretive exhibits about sustainability, water conservation, and native landscaping.
3. Visalia has been a Tree City USA member for 32 years.

Platinum

4. The city has a specific ordinance to protect the signature tree of our area, the valley oak (*Quercus lobata*).
5. The city hosts two regular farmer's markets each week, Saturday mornings on the south side of town, and Thursday evenings downtown. These markets provide the public opportunity to purchase fresh, locally grown produce for healthier living. Local sourcing of food also decreases the environmental impact of purchasing the food, decreasing GHG emissions from storage and transportation.





Promoting Community and Individual Action Activities

Silver

1. The city has sponsored the Visalia Environmental Committee, a citizen's advisory committee that advises the city council on environmental and sustainability policy, since 1990. The city also sponsors citizen committees focused on waterways and trails, parks and recreation and landscaping, among others.

Gold

2. The city maintains several low water use landscaping/demonstration gardens around town, along with other resources the public can access to learn how to modify their landscaping to be more appropriate for our climate and the drought.
3. The city and the Visalia Environmental Committee are responsible for organizing Visalia's annual Earth Day celebration. The event is an opportunity for the public to gather and learn about earth friendly and sustainable practices, including GHG reductions that they can incorporate into their daily lives. The event also includes community improvement projects including tree planting, river cleanup and park landscaping improvements.

Platinum

4. The city's Natural Resource Conservation Division provides sustainability and environmental awareness education to K-12 classrooms and to the public in general through presentations to civic organizations, church groups, homeowners associations, etc., and by staffing booths at a variety of community events throughout the year.





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