

Energy Efficiency and Alternative Energy

Situation Assessment

With growing energy needs and growing energy prices, the City of Laredo is focusing on developing energy efficiency programs that will help the City as well as our citizens and businesses find innovative ways to conserve energy as well as increase energy efficiency. The City of Laredo, which is a formula-eligible local government, has, through the support of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program, implemented a well-rounded energy program that utilizes alternative energy projects and energy efficiency programs to create jobs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve greater energy efficiency. The City's effort was published at the U.S. Mayor Newspaper (November 7, 2011, VOL. 78, ISSUE 17) as the best practice. This project created new green job, reduced the greenhouse gas emissions, provided energy efficiency and conservation.

Background

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 appropriated \$3.2 billion for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program to assist local and state governments to develop and implement a comprehensive energy efficiency strategy which emphasizes a bottom-up, community-based approach in helping the nation meet its energy and climate protection goals. Under the EECBG program the City of Laredo received \$2.1 million in funding. The Environmental Services Department has developed a general plan for distribution/use of these funds in the following categories: Planning/Administration, Retrofit/Rehab Projects like upgrading downtown street lights with LED lights, upgrade of the HVAC system for the Health department, Energy Efficiency revolving loan fund (RLF) for the citizens, and Alternative Energy Projects like installation of the solar array system in two buildings, purchase of solar trash cans for the downtown business districts.

Several years ago, the City of Laredo took the lead in developing alternative fuel options by building a Compressed Natural Gas or CNG fueling station to service the City's transit busses. Just recently, thanks to two Texas State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) grants, the facility was upgraded to handle not only the buses, but also, purchase 10 vehicles to add to the growing fleet of CNG vehicles (57+ and growing). These conversions will save the City over \$120,000 in fuel savings per year. Additionally, a pump was added for the general public so that individuals or companies driving CNG vehicles in Laredo can fuel up at that station at a cost significantly lower than gas or even diesel vehicles. With the abundance of natural gas in the Laredo area, this is one project that officials hope the community embraces, as well.

Additionally, the City has implemented a 38.6 kW solar array and 2.4 kW wind turbine at the Environmental Services Department as a project for other City facilities and as a showcase project for local residents and businesses. Another cutting-edge project the City is working on is extracting methane from the City's Landfill for reuse or power generation as well as a sludge to energy project at the City's South Laredo Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Developing projects and opportunities to go green, save energy costs, reduce energy used and have a positive impact on the environment by protecting natural resources is a priority for the City of Laredo. Future projects include reducing carbon footprint from City buildings by saving

taxpayers' money, taxpayers and citizens will also find ways to save a little green by going green in very real ways.

Solution

The City of Laredo would respectfully requests to reauthorize funding of the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. Moreover, the City is interested in any other grants/loans for alternative energy/ waste-energy projects.

Target Agency

Department of Energy

Contact

John Porter

Acting Environmental Services Director

619 Reynolds St.

Laredo, Texas 78040

Phone: (956) 794-1650

Fax: (956) 727-7944

Email: jporter@ci.laredo.tx.us