



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
**Water Department**

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## ***How to Help Your HOA Save Money and Water***

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**SAN DIEGO** – One of the many costs associated with buying or renting a home is a monthly fee paid to the Homeowner's Association (HOA) to cover the cost of maintaining common landscaped areas within the community. Many San Diego residents don't realize just how much the water usage in these common areas directly affects their HOA fees. To help reduce water usage, the City of San Diego's Water Department is encouraging residents and HOA board members to participate in the free *Commercial Landscape Survey Program (CLSP)*.

"Our studies indicate that more than half of the water used by San Diegans goes towards irrigating landscapes," states Dan Carney, Landscape Architect and Program Manager for the City's Water Conservation Programs. "If we can help communities learn how to water their landscapes more efficiently and prevent over-watering, then we create the potential to save a considerable amount of water – water which could be saved and stored for future supply needs."

The CLSP is provided free of charge to commercial, industrial and institutional Water Department customers in the City of San Diego. Qualifying properties must have more than one acre of landscaped property. The expert services of the program include an audit of the irrigation system, a written evaluation of the irrigation system's performance, aerial photos of the property, color photos of areas to improve, practical advice and water-saving recommendations, a water-use budget for the upcoming year and an irrigation controller schedule for each month. Properties previously surveyed have reported water savings of more than 20 percent.

Dr. Howard Dawson, Rancho Bernardo resident and Board Member for the Chapala HOA, searched for ways to save money for his community. Based on advice from their landscape company Jim Vitale Landscape Maintenance Inc., he signed up for the Water Department's Commercial Landscape Survey Program. "Landscaping costs have always been a big problem for us," stated Dr. Dawson. "Our erratic water bills helped us narrow down the problem to irrigation. We were spending \$40,000 a year to irrigate 3 ½ acres of lawn, 4 acres of slopes, and 400 trees. If we could decrease that amount by at least 10 percent, that's a big savings. We hired a new property management firm and a new landscape company to help make some adjustments, but that still wasn't enough. That's when we decided to sign up for the survey."

In December 2004, the Water Department conducted a thorough survey of the 151-unit Chapala community. The City's highly trained irrigation specialist identified potential water savings in several areas including: types of sprinkler heads, overlapping of sprinklers, water pressure, slopes, and irrigation schedules.

“The survey was performed in a very professional manner,” noted Dr. Dawson. “Our next step as a Board is to review all of the recommendations and the detailed report (which identified a potential 40 percent water savings), to identify if we can cover the costs of installing some of the recommended fixtures. Some of them are expensive, but we're hoping to create a phased plan that would allow us to implement some of the recommendations immediately.”

To help offset costs associated with some of the water-saving fixtures recommended through CLSP, the City of San Diego Water Department will soon offer survey participants the opportunity to apply for financial incentives for the installation of such fixtures. Only survey participants are eligible to receive incentives, which will include vouchers for weather based irrigation controllers and cash rebates for efficient irrigation equipment such as sprinklers, valves and water pressure regulators.

According to Dr. Dawson, “I would absolutely recommend other HOAs to take advantage of this free service. Not only is this program going to help save money, but it's a great way to do something good for the environment, especially since water is such a precious commodity.”

*The Commercial Landscape Survey Program is provided free of charge to commercial, industrial and institutional customers of the City of San Diego Water Department. The program is made possible through funding provided by the San Diego County Water Authority and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. To schedule a survey, or for more information, please call 619-570-1999, or e-mail [water@sandiego.gov](mailto:water@sandiego.gov). If you live outside of the City of San Diego and would like to schedule a survey, please call 1-888-271-0800.*