



Community Environmental Council

# Green Business Case Study

Sustainability makes good business sense

## The Towbes Group, Corporate Offices

SANTA BARBARA, CA



**Water baseline (per month):** 20,800 gallons

**Water saved (per month):** 8,500 gallons

**Water cost savings:** 41%

**Electricity baseline (per month):** 19,300 kWh

**Electricity saved (per month):** 4,900 kWh

**Electricity cost savings:** 25%

**Waste diversion rate (prior to certification):** 33%

**Waste diversion rate (after certification):** 71%

**Waste efficiency improvement:** 38%

**T**he Towbes Group has a motto – “do the right thing, even when no one is looking.” The company’s commitment to integrity, quality and sustainability has made it a leader in real estate investment, development and property management for over 50 years. After achieving certification from the Green Business Program of Santa Barbara County in July of 2010, Towbes Development Project Manager Craig Minus hopes that the Santa Barbara community will be paying attention. He is especially proud of the internal

changes that significantly reduced energy costs and minimized the company’s environmental footprint.

Like many other businesses, the Towbes Group wanted to make a difference, but lacked the resources to do so. The Green Business Program facilitated a step-by-step program to reduce the company’s environmental impact and utility bills. Prior to certification, the corporate office consumed over 19,000 kWh of electricity per month. The company was able to take advantage of

“Changing the light bulbs was a no brainer. You can do a lot in your daily actions.” – Craig Minus



Southern California Edison's Energy Management Assistance Program, which allows businesses to have their lighting replaced for free. "Changing the light bulbs was a no brainer," Craig said, "You can do a lot in your daily actions."

The Towbes Group also installed programmable thermostats in order to improve energy efficiency and office comfort, and replaced the corporate office's old air conditioning system with an evaporative cooler and economizer. Craig noted that more than ever, employees are making a concerted effort to turn off lights and other electronic devices when they are not being used. The result was a 25 percent decrease in the company's costs for energy.

Towbes employees also took the initiative to overhaul their waste management system. "We had recyclables flowing over the recycling bins into the trash bins," Craig said. By increasing the number of recycling bins and reducing the number of trash bins (which cost five times more), the company saved \$192 a month.

The Towbes Group's corporate office also tackled water consumption. The largest change came from older, high water use toilets to high-efficiency 1.28 gallons per flush toilets. This change helped reduce water use by more than 8,500 gallons per month and cut the company's bill by 41 percent.

Company employees also decided to vote with their dollars and purchase



*The Towbes Group installed these new LED overhead lights in their conference room. They continue to investigate new technology options for lighting office spaces.*

products that were manufactured with sustainability in mind. They switched from normal printing paper to recycled-content paper. They also transformed their break room by replacing outdated paper plates and cups with reusable ones.

The company is determined to continue its efforts towards sustainability. According to Craig,

"We hope to pass the newfound culture onto other businesses and clients." You may see the Towbes Group staff cruising about in their electric car, known around the office as "Towbie." Their efforts have been so successful that they have inspired the company to seek certifications through the Green Business Program for a number of their commercial and residential properties.