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Grossmont schools to save \$70M with green projects



Photo courtesy of Grossmont Union High School District

Fourteen energy battery storage systems have been installed on nine Grossmont Union High School District campuses, providing annual energy cost savings of \$128,000.

By Mark Armao

Capitalizing on school construction bonds, the Grossmont Union High School District has undertaken several construction, modernization and energy-management projects in the past four years that are projected to save the district more than \$70 million in utility costs over the next 25 years, according to a news release.

Proposition U and Measure BB have funded the installation of high-performance cooling towers, new turf fields and the demolition of outdated structures to make way for energy-efficient buildings.

The ramped-up efforts at the district's 12 high schools and one adult education facility have enabled the district to cut its annual electricity and utility costs by nearly \$2 million, according to the district.

"Utility costs are generally the second-largest budget item after employee salaries," said Tim Glover, GUHSD superintendent. "By reducing the energy use of our buildings, employing innovative technologies to help us be better stewards of our natural resources, and improving how we as employees can help conserve energy, we can effectively improve those bottom-line costs."

The district has also taken advantage of funding it received through Proposition 39, the Clean Energy Jobs Act, and via power-purchase agreements that enable third-party providers "to leverage and pass along savings from rebates and other incentives that the district itself cannot directly take advantage of as a public agency," according to the release.

Energy-efficient projects funded through Prop 39 include outfitting classrooms and other facilities with advanced HVAC systems, installing high-efficiency lighting and installing solar carports at nine campuses.

"By tapping into a variety of innovative conservation tools and best practices, and leveraging them with utility incentives, GUHSD is seeing dramatic utility cost savings," said Lindsey Danner, GUHSD's energy manager. "We are constantly exploring and validating strategies and technologies to help us further reduce consumption and costs."

The district recently implemented the use of a novel energy-storage technology for walk-in coolers and freezers that uses a specially formulated gel pack, resulting in an 18 percent reduction in consumption, according to the release.

Other green projects have included the consolidation of electrical service to fewer meters, which saves an estimated \$404,909 per year, and the installation of 14 battery systems at nine school sites, saving \$128,000 per year.

"We are making it a priority to invest in sustainability concurrent with the investment in our school facilities," said Scott Patterson, deputy superintendent for business services. "It's important to demonstrate to the community that we are not only good stewards of taxpayer dollars but also effective caretakers of natural resources."

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