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Green initiatives expand

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Sustainable San Mateo County and San Mateo Acting Responsibly Together are expanding their green initiatives by conducting home-energy audits and encouraging residents to keep track of their carbon footprints.

SSMC teamed with a San Francisco contractor to complete a comprehensive energy audit on one of its board member's Redwood City home to prove what changes can be made to reduce a home's energy consumption.

In the city of San Mateo, SMART recently became the first of many cities to partner with Carbon Conscious, a customized program designed to assist cities with lowering carbon footprints.



Thomas Levinson/Daily Journal
Jeffery Liang, a green building coordinator at RecycleWorks in San Mateo, gets his temperature taken with a thermal imager.

The Carbon Conscious movement is helping local governments address recent state legislation that requires cities to meet greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

The two groups have no affiliation with each other but share a common goal — to educate the public on the impact of climate change and how to prevent it.

SSMC Boardmember Stephani Scott recently allowed a contractor, San Francisco-based Sustainable Spaces, to access her home to conduct the energy audit.

"Homes produce roughly twice as much carbon emissions as passenger cars. With a focus on economic recovery, jobs and energy savings, a concerted effort to fix our existing infrastructure is being recognized as one of the most effective means to achieve these goals," said Matt Golden, president and founder of Sustainable Spaces. "We applaud Sustainable San Mateo County for their efforts on behalf of the community and are thrilled to share our expertise."

A home energy audit can help people reduce energy consumption and create a healthier home environment, said Kari Binley, executive director of SSMC.

Sustainable Spaces suggested about \$8,000 in changes to the Scotts' home to improve energy consumption by 20 percent.

"The primary prescription that we suggested for the Scotts included building [air] sealing and attic insulation improvements, a whole house fan, duct sealing, high efficiency air filtration and floor insulation with icynene spray foam," said Chris McClellan of Sustainable Spaces.

"You don't have to make big changes to decrease your carbon footprint," said Christina Gilmore, management analyst in San Mateo's Community Development Department.

Gilmore encourages people to stop buying large cases of water and to carry your own bag when shopping.

"You don't have to buy a hybrid car or go solar to make a difference. Little things can be done on a daily basis that can have a big impact on energy efficiency," Gilmore said.

San Mateo is asking residents and businesses to visit the carbon counter online to create a benchmark for

their carbon footprints. After changing some simple behaviors, residents are encouraged to log in and take the short survey again to see how much they have lowered their personal impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

These initiatives follow the city of San Mateo's plans to put solar panels on the roof of the Main Library and conduct its own energy audits on about 600 homes.

The San Mateo Union High School District is also in the beginning stages of reducing its energy costs by considering solar power.

San Mateo residents interested in reducing their carbon footprint should check out:
www.cityofsanmateo.org/smart/carboncounter

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