

City Builds on Success of Waterwise Conservation Program by Making Pilot Project Permanent

SANTA FE, October 5, 2022 — The Governing Body voted unanimously last week to approve a contract with the Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) that makes permanent the Certified Waterwise pilot project that has helped Santa Fe businesses realize extensive water savings. The SFCC is the City's education partner in the program, providing training, education, and auditor certification.

In 2018, Mayor Alan Webber laid out a goal of making Santa Fe the most sustainable city in the country and the City's water division has taken effective action, with participation by many local businesses and partners. In the last four years, the Certified Waterwise program pilot project has saved 2.1 million gallons of water per year. It is estimated that tens of millions more gallons can be saved by Santa Fe businesses who take advantage of the program's free water usage assessment, which includes checking for leaks, replacing aerators and other devices. Participants receive a comprehensive report with recommendations on potential equipment and operational changes for further water saving opportunities. To date, a museum and 73 restaurants, five hotels, 31 small businesses in two shopping centers have had water efficiency assessments. They have learned that saving water also shows up in your bottom line.

The Governing Body vote on September 28 was preceded by a presentation detailing the City's broader conservation plan by Water Conservation Manager Christine Chavez, who says: "I encourage more businesses and institutions to become Certified Waterwise. At the same time, residents can support conservation efforts by patronizing Waterwise businesses. And residential customers can monitor their home consumption and efficiency by using the Eye on Water app. As Mayor Webber says, our best source of water is to save the water we've got."

Find information about how to participate in all of these water-saving opportunities at savewatersantafe.com.

Councilor Carol Romero-Wirth, Chair of the Water Conservation Committee, says: "This is just the beginning of the water savings we can realize in the commercial sector. The Waterwise program represents impactful work originating out of the City's Water Conservation Committee and Water Conservation Office in collaboration with our community partners. Working together we can achieve further water savings with smart water conservation efforts."

Along with the City's Water Conservation Office, the Committee, and the SFCC, the Certified Waterwise program was developed in partnership with the Santa Fe Green Chamber of Commerce and KuelWater.org.

The program recently received an EPA WaterSense endorsement and the City was credited as the most sustainable mid-size city in the U.S. by Green Builder Media in 2020: “Perhaps no city in the U.S. has a greater stake in water conservation than Santa Fe, and public officials have shown exceptional leadership on that front.”

The Waterwise program is being expanded to include funding for outdoor irrigation assessments in partnership with YouthWorks and will train the next generation of water professionals through a landscaping assessment pilot project in the Nava Ade neighborhood.

Businesses that would like to learn more about participating in the Certified Waterwise Business program are urged to contact Glenn Schiffbauer at the Santa Fe Green Chamber of Commerce: (505) 501-0222; glennschiffbauer@gmail.com.