

PROFILE: GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC UTILITIES

ENERGY CONSERVATION: IT'S IN GRAND RAPIDS' NATURE



"Projects that can be completed quickly and offer a fast payback are most attractive to customers. Lighting and some HVAC controls, such as variable speed drives on pumps or fans, are pretty common projects for existing facilities. In new construction, customers have more opportunities to design energy efficiency into facilities."

Doug Eli,
Energy Analyst
Energy Insight, Inc.



GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

The lobby of the Timberlake Lodge in Grand Rapids, Minn., blends rustic charm with cutting-edge, energy-saving technology. Its towering stone fireplace, striking wooden beams, and welcoming earth tones are illuminated by state-of-the-art LED fixtures and bulbs. LEDs also brighten the facility's hallways, restaurant, event center, pool area, parking lot, and a growing number of guest rooms.

Timberlake Lodge is just one of many businesses in Grand Rapids that are enjoying the benefits of high performance products and systems that save energy and lower monthly utility costs—thanks to tools and incentives offered through the Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission (GRPUC) with help from Energy Insight, Inc.

GRPUC and other electric utilities in Minnesota are mandated to set annual energy-saving goals of at least 1.5 percent of retail sales and to spend a minimum of 1.5 percent of gross operating revenues on conservation improvement programs (CIPs).

Energy Insight has delivered CIP services for GRPUC since 2012.

Energy Insight personnel connect the municipal utility's commercial customers with information and rebates to complete energy-saving projects that make business sense. They conduct business facility assessments, provide design assistance, calculate energy and cost savings, and process rebates. They also assist GRPUC with its annual CIP reporting requirements. This includes compiling all spending and savings data for each of the utility's energy conservation programs and filing the necessary paperwork and CIP documentation with the State.

"We are a mid-sized utility that is large enough to need these types of programs, but small enough that we don't have dedicated staff (to deliver them)," said Julie Kennedy, general manager, GRPUC. "Energy Insight has been wonderful in really managing our entire conservation improvement program. To date, we have focused primarily on commercial, but we are close to adding a residential energy audit program."

GRPUC provides electric distribution to about 7,200 customers, including both commercial and residential. In the past five years, Energy Insight has helped the municipal utility issue 144 commercial conservation rebates totaling more than \$400,000. Qualifying projects have helped a broad range of Grand Rapids businesses and organizations avoid nearly 8.75 million kWh per year and lower peak demand by a combined 1,525 kW.

No business is too big or too small to benefit from energy efficiency. Participating GRPUC customers range from a large healthcare provider to local churches, schools, hotels, supermarkets, and major retailers. Some are referred to Energy Insight through the utility, others go through their contractors or contact Energy Insight directly.

Jesse Hawk, maintenance manager of Timberlake Lodge and the adjacent Super 8 hotel, was referred to Energy Insight by his lighting contractor, Dan Schmidt Lighting, Inc. Now, he regularly contacts Energy Insight's Doug Eli, who delivers CIP services for GRPUC, to get savings calculations and rebate estimates before beginning new projects.

"When I want to replace a section of lighting, I give Doug a call, and he gets back to me with answers and paperwork pretty quickly," said Hawk. "The rebates are pretty important. They definitely have helped us move ahead with projects."

Energy Insight also helped Timberlake Lodge analyze and secure rebates for a system that allows each room's HVAC unit to be monitored and controlled independently for maximum efficiency.

Zion Lutheran Church is another GRPUC customer benefiting from energy efficiency and CIP resources. Energy Insight conducted an initial lighting audit and helped the church get rebates for LED lighting upgrades. HVAC controls currently being installed at Zion Lutheran Church may also qualify for CIP rebates.

"(The lighting audit and recommendations) were extremely helpful for a church organization like ours," said Pastor Ben Buchanan. "Working through committees and councils, people want to have information to guide decisions. Lighting was kind of a no-brainer. The rebates and payback made it appealing to all involved."



(Left) Doug Eli of Energy Insight works closely with Julie Kennedy, general manager of Grand Rapids Public Utilities Commission, to deliver CIP rebates and services to the municipal utility's customers. (Right) LED lights welcome guests to the lobby of the Timberlake Lodge.

"Projects that can be completed quickly and offer a fast payback are most attractive to customers," said Eli. "Lighting and some HVAC controls, such as variable speed drives on pumps or fans, are pretty common projects for existing facilities. In new construction, customers have more opportunities to design energy efficiency into facilities."

"Our energy efficiency program originally was driven by mandates, but, now, it is more of a community endeavor," Kennedy said. "There are a number of local groups interested in the culture of conservation."

Not surprising for a city surrounded by lakes and forests that boasts this official slogan: "It's in Minnesota's Nature."



7935 Stone Creek Drive, Suite 140
Chanhausen, MN 55317

T: 952.767.7455 E: info@EnergyInsightInc.com

www.EnergyInsightInc.com