



Energy Coaches help Taqueria La Hacienda to cut energy bills while improving safety and comfort

SMALL BUSINESS ENERGY COACHING PARTNERSHIP



GREAT PLAINS INSTITUTE



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Contact Energy Smart from the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce at 651-292-4657

Miguel Zagal knows a good opportunity when he sees it. Back in 2015, Zagal, owner of Minneapolis restaurant Taqueria La Hacienda, boosted the energy efficiency of his business through upgraded lighting. Now Zagal is going even further to increase the energy efficiency of his restaurant through continuing work with the Small Business Energy Coaching Program, a partnership of Lake Street Council, Great Plains Institute, and the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce’s Energy Smart Program.

Located on East Lake Street, Taqueria La Hacienda is a popular restaurant serving authentic Mexican cuisine. Zagal received an energy assessment of the restaurant, with an “Energy Coach” from the Lake Street Council coordinating with an Energy Efficiency Specialist from the Energy Smart Program. The team toured the business looking for opportunities to improve operation, replace equipment, and upgrade systems. Zagal started with [upgrading lighting to LEDs](#) at the restaurant, which saves more than \$1,600 each year. That initial efficiency project was so successful that Zagal has gone on to make additional investments—upgrading the kitchen hood ventilation system and installing LED lighting in the parking lot and restaurant exterior—to achieve even greater energy savings.

At every step in the process, the Small Business Energy Coaching Program has been critical to success. “It was very important,” Zagal says, “I remember when I was approached, and I was very skeptical about making changes and how much it would cost. They convinced me to do it. I wouldn’t have been able to do it without their help. They make it very easy.”

Kitchen Ventilation: Savings and Improved Comfort

By upgrading to a Demand Controlled Hood Ventilation (DCHV) System in the kitchen, Zagal is saving nearly \$3,500 annually on energy costs. The estimated total investment was \$16,400. However, after rebates and grants were applied, Zagal only had to pay \$9,320 meaning a savings of more than 30% on the new system. Because of the energy savings, the project will pay for itself in less than two years.



New energy-efficient lighting at Taqueria La Hacienda looks great and helps to save the restaurant money on energy bills.

“It makes a big difference in the kitchen, especially during slower times like breakfast,” Zagal says. “Before, the hood was running constantly, but now the efficient system saves energy by cycling down when the grill isn’t running.” It’s paying off with better comfort for staff too, because the new system keeps the kitchen cooler. “With better equipment, I save money, and do my part to conserve energy and help the environment—so everyone is winning.”

Project Snapshot

Annual Savings: \$3,494.91

Project Costs: \$16,400

Utility Rebates: \$3,080

Grants: \$1,500

Final Costs (minus funding): \$9,320

Payback: 1.6 years

Annual Energy Savings: 10,535 kWh and 4,259 therms

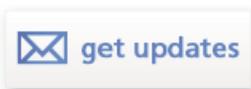


LED Exterior Lighting: Improved Safety

On weekends, Taqueria La Hacienda is open 24 hours, but at night the parking lot was too dark. Investing in LED lights to brighten the exterior has improved safety. "My employees immediately noticed the difference," Zagal says. And off-duty police that Zagal hires for increased security noted the improvement outside the restaurant. Rebates and incentives saved more than 30% on the total investment. Even though the payback time is much longer, the increased safety is well worth it, Zagal says.

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