

Eucalyptus Hill Homeowners Association is the 2015 City of Santa Barbara Water Hero

Every year, the City of Santa Barbara Water Conservation Program honors an individual, business, or organization that has gone above and beyond in their water conservation efforts and serves as an example of resource efficiency in our community. This year, the Eucalyptus Hill Homeowners Association has been awarded the 2015 Water Hero Award for their extraordinary efforts saving water outdoors with water wise landscaping and efficient irrigation.

The Eucalyptus Hill Homeowners Association (HOA) was established in the early 1970s. Originally, the HOA had a large communal lawn area, and therefore, high water bills. The Association saw value in water wise landscaping and took actions to retrofit their communal areas. But that's not all. If you were to take a stroll within the HOA, you would see water wise plants in every front yard and even a few rain gardens.



Barbara Calder, resident and Planning Committee member

"I think the value to the community is, as a whole, we feel a part of the water savings efforts for the City," said Mary Lu Edick, who is on the Eucalyptus Hill HOA Board of Directors and a realtor in the Santa Barbara area. About the old lawn areas, she added, "I've always heard that the landscaping looked too old fashioned. I think it helps property values overall."

The Eucalyptus Hill HOA began their landscaping upgrade project in late 2014. By November of 2015, they had replaced nearly 5,000 square feet of lawn with a beautiful water



Mary Lu Edick, long time resident and HOA Board Member

wise landscape, increased the efficiency of the irrigation system by utilizing drip irrigation, installed a weather-based irrigation controller, and participated in the City's Smart Landscape Rebate and Free Sprinkler Nozzle programs. Once plants are established, the new landscape is projected to use 65% less water than the old lawn.

Barbara Calder, resident and former Chairman of Architecture, helped initiate this project. "We

formed a committee and we looked at options and decided that *just* replacing the lawn wasn't going to work... so then we approached the Board with: can we do more?" Barbara and the Planning Committee worked with landscape architect Erin Carroll and landscape contractors



This side by side shows the transition from green lawn to gold lawn to a permanent water wise landscape.

Cold Springs Landscapes to create a plan and install the new landscaping. The landscape plan, along with education, helped get the Board and 27 homeowners excited and engaged with the project.

“We ripped out all the spray heads from the old lawn, installed the new drip valves, and put in a new backflow preventer and pressure regulator. The pressure here is really high, and drip systems like lower pressures. We also put in a smart irrigation controller and weather sensor on the side of the clubhouse,” explained Erin Carroll. The communal landscape now has a wide variety of water wise plants including blue atlas palm, cycads, oak trees, western redbud, and California natives.

Overall, these plants have transformed the landscape by adding an abundance of color, flowers, and creating an ecosystem rich with birds and butterflies. In addition to making long-term efficiency upgrades, they have set an example for other homeowners associations to follow in their path. As Barbara Calder said, “The most rewarding part is to see it! I think the finished job is beautiful and I think the community as a whole has been very positive.” Congratulations, Eucalyptus Hill Homeowners Association for being a Water Hero!

