

# Cleantech San Diego marks its 10th anniversary

When the U.S. Metro Clean Tech Index debuted in 2012, San Diego ranked 11th out of the nation's top 50 metropolitan areas. Five years later, San Diego has ascended to No. 4 on the index.

That is attributable in no small part to Cleantech San Diego, which celebrated its 10th birthday in June and which has positioned the San Diego region as a global leader in the cleantech economy. *The Daily Transcript* asked Cleantech San Diego President and CEO Jason Anderson five questions.

**Happy diamond anniversary. Can you take us back to Cleantech San Diego's start-up?**

The organization was founded in 2007 by leaders from the private, public, and academic sectors who recognized a growing cleantech industry as the next great economic opportunity for the San Diego region. Cleantech San Diego's founders were guided by the premise that sustainable business practices are viable only if they make financial sense. Directed by this principle for the past ten years, we have seen the San Diego region prove time and again that investment in a low carbon economy reaps benefits for innovation, business, collaboration, education, and the environment.

**How far has San Diego's cleantech sector come since 2007 in terms of the number of companies, jobs, and overall contribution to the regional economy?**

A recent study commissioned by Cleantech San Diego finds there are more than 3,000 cleantech businesses in the San Diego region, creating 38,000 jobs with an economic impact of \$6.8 billion. By comparison, when Cleantech San Diego conducted a similar study 10 years ago, only 125 cleantech businesses were identified in the region. This



JASON ANDERSON

growth is also reflected in the makeup of Cleantech San Diego's membership, which includes more than 115 businesses, universities, governments, and nonprofits committed to advancing sustainable solutions for benefit of the economy and the environment.

**Your organization is very much involved with the local school districts. How did that come about?**

Cleantech San Diego's K-12 Schools Sustainability Strategy Collaborative was formed four years ago in response to the California Clean Energy Jobs Act (Proposition 39) to fund energy efficiency upgrades at schools. To help San Diego schools gain maximum benefit from these funds, Cleantech San Diego and San Diego Gas and Electric organized the program to expedite the process and foster the sharing of energy efficiency and clean energy best practices between San Diego's 45 school districts. To date, San Diego is among the top funded counties in California with \$94 million approved for energy efficiency projects at 391 schools, second only to Los Angeles County, which has more than double the number of school districts.

**Cleantech San Diego has undertaken other important initiatives in recent years. Can you tell us about some of the more noteworthy?**

Together with our members, Cleantech San Diego has spearheaded a number of projects and initiatives over the years that have helped solidify the region's position as a global leader in the cleantech economy and will support its growth for years to come. Cleantech San Diego is engaging the startup community to help secure the future of the region's cleantech economy.

Since 2009, Cleantech San Diego has pushed for the conversion of regular streetlights to more energy efficient LEDs. To date, 75,000 LED streetlight retrofits have been deployed across San Diego County that resulted in 30 million kWh in annual energy savings, 12,700 metric tons of carbon dioxide eliminated, \$30 million in economic development, and \$4 million in annual taxpayer savings.

In addition, this also included installation of 3,000 LED street lights with adaptive controls that were installed in downtown San Diego – one of the first deployments of this technology in the country. That early pilot has since led to the larger smart street lighting project announced earlier this year by the City of San Diego in partnership with Current powered by GE, AT&T, and Intel.

This next deployment of 14,000 energy efficient streetlight retrofits and 3,200 smart sensors will be the world's largest city-based Internet of Things platform using streetlights.



**Five Questions**  
Jason Anderson  
President and CEO

Image/The Daily Transcript

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In 2011, Cleantech San Diego launched our Smart Cities San Diego initiative, which has gained significant traction in recent years by facilitating the deployment of new technologies that are saving energy, water, and money at landmark locations like the City of San Diego, the Port of San Diego, the City of Chula Vista, the San Diego International Airport, the City of Solana Beach, and at PETCO Park. These high-profile cleantech deployments have advanced the San Diego region's position as a global smart city leader, brought increased attention to the region as a test bed for cleantech business solutions, and attracted business from large technology companies such as Qualcomm, GE, AT&T, Black & Veatch, CH2M, and Itron.

As part of our smart cities efforts, Cleantech San Diego also focuses on advancing the integration of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure across the region. The San Diego region is currently home to nearly 25,000 electric vehicles and 1,144 public charging stations at 412 locations and last year San Diego hosted the world's largest electric vehicle test drive event during National Drive Electric Week. Cleantech San Diego's newest electric vehicle initiative, EV Forward, is an informational website and video that promotes the fun and benefits

of an EV lifestyle in San Diego with the goal of educating drivers about their options and getting more San Diegans behind the wheel of an EV.

In 2016, Cleantech San Diego was awarded a grant from the California Energy Commission to help energy entrepreneurs bring their innovations to market with support from nine regional partners through the new San Diego Regional Energy Innovation Network. This program is transforming the San Diego region's ability to foster cleantech innovators with breakthrough technologies that benefit California ratepayers. Only a few months in, the program already has interest from more than 50 energy entrepreneurs and is helping the first 13 accepted companies to accelerate their technology development.

**What do you foresee for Cleantech San Diego over its next 10 years?**

If the last 10 years are any indication, we will continue to be fortunate to be part of a community in San Diego that values innovation, sustainability, and collaboration. Driven by this forward-thinking spirit, our stakeholders in technology companies, government, academia, nonprofits are committed to shaping a positive clean energy future for San Diego and the world that will carry us into the next decade and beyond.