

Case Study: Old Mountain Jewelry & Gift, Parachute

By Cam Burns/CLEER



Parachute store, building owner finding savings with energy efficiency, upgraded equipment

Parachute's Chris Beasley is finding just how much money he can save through energy efficiency and upgraded energy-using equipment.

Beasley owns Old Mountain Gift & Jewelry store and is a co-owner of the Chrisco LLC building—a small building in downtown Parachute—where the gift store is located. Through a combination of energy efficiency upgrades and renewable solar energy, he and his fellow building co-owners have been able to cut their electricity use in the building to zero.

"We've been able to wipe out our entire electric bill on a year-round basis," Beasley said. "At certain times of the year we're creating surplus electricity and putting power back onto the grid. At other times,



Chris Beasley in front of his Old Mountain Jewelry & Gift in Parachute, Colo.
Photos by Cam Burns

we might use a little more power [electricity]. I occasionally have a month where there'll be a \$30–40 electric bill. But considering we've been able to improve the comfort for our tenants greatly, it's definitely a major payoff."

Beasley got help with paying for the energy efficiency upgrades through Garfield Clean Energy, which has additional funding available for home and business owners

until August 31.

Beasley got interested in energy efficiency two years ago, when he saw a presentation by Rob Morey of CLEER (Clean Energy Economy for

Lessons Learned

- Many HVAC systems run inefficiently
- LED lighting can save considerable amounts of energy and money
- Rebates are available for most lighting retrofits, commercial and residential, as well as many other upgrades

The Upgrades

- New high efficiency HVAC units
- New LED lighting throughout the store
- Additional insulation
- Rooftop solar electric system

the Region), which runs Garfield Clean Energy. The Town of Parachute is a partner in Garfield Clean Energy, which helps home and business owners like Beasley.

With Morey's help, Beasley researched available rebates. Beasley quickly realized both his businesses—Old Mountain and the Chrisco building—were perfect candidates for saving energy and money.

Morey helped Beasley get an energy audit from Xcel Energy, which offered advice on what projects would help him reduce energy use. Xcel Energy made a dozen recommendations for the building, but Beasley and his partners only did a few, simply because some were impractical while some were already done.

Beasley and his partners in the Chrisco building—which houses a restaurant (El Tapatio), Beasley's gift store, a liquor store, and several offices—had a 15-kilowatt solar panel system installed on the roof several years ago. In 2011, through the Garfield Clean Energy Challenge, they added highly efficient air economizers to old HVAC system. Economizers regulate and optimize the amount of outdoor air brought into a building for the purposes of cooling and ventilation. They can cut energy use by 30 percent or more, depending on where and how they're used.

In his own business, the gift store, he also did a major lighting retrofit and a minor insulation upgrade.

The combination of the rooftop solar system and the more efficient heating/cooling system has allowed

the Chrisco building to achieve net zero electricity use (which excludes the restaurant and gift store).

His two businesses received a total of \$8,865 in rebates from Garfield Clean Energy/CLEER, and a rebate of \$3,000 from Xcel Energy.

The cost of the HVAC upgrade for the Chrisco building was about \$15,000. "It was pretty expensive to put it all in, but I think we'll see a return on that because we're offsetting an average utility bill of about \$160 a month."

In addition, Chrisco gets a check each month for \$100 to \$130 per month from Xcel because the solar panels are helping to generate carbon credits for Xcel.

The solar system on the roof cost more than \$70,000, but he was able to find grants and credits through both Xcel, the State of Colorado, and the federal government to cover nearly all its cost. His out of pocket cost was \$14,500.

Beasley has been so impressed by the energy savings at his store and building that he recently signed up for a 10-kilowatt system at his home, which was done through a solar leasing plan. His utility bill at home was \$120 a month. With solar leasing, it's \$60, and will remain about half its former size for the length of the



Chris Beasley hangs items in his gift shop

lease—20 years.

"Our tenants are more comfortable and that's the key to being in business," he said. "The investment can be fairly expensive, but if you take the long view that you're getting rid of your utility bill, and those bills are going to rise. I'm becoming a huge proponent of some of these leasing systems."

For more information about Garfield Clean Energy and available rebates, contact CLEER at 704-9200.

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