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## USC becomes first 'AGZA Certified Green Zone' University in the nation

LOS ANGELES — The University of Southern California (USC) has become the first “AGZA Certified Green Zone<sup>®</sup>” university in the United States. Under the leadership of Erik Diaz, Landscape Supervisor at USC, the Facilities Planning and Management department transitioned from fossil fuel-powered equipment to advanced battery electric equipment for routine grounds maintenance. The project was conducted through a program provided by California’s South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) and the American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA), an independent education, training, and certification agency.

Mr. Diaz and the facilities department were no strangers to battery electric equipment. The department’s Planning and Management crews had already replaced more than 70% of their gas-powered handheld tools – blowers, trimmers, saws -- with battery-powered tools to mitigate noise. The extra effort to become a AGZA Certified Green Zone began in 2018. With AGZA’s guidance, the department was able to replace large gas-powered powers with battery electric and robotic mowers systems for some of its mowing operations, and also replace the remaining handheld tools with battery electric alternatives.



Alejandro Benitez demonstrates the electric leaf blower now used on the University Park Campus. (USC Photo/Gus Ruelas)

***“This project makes the air safer for USC’s students, faculty, staff and the community at large.”***

The Environmental Landscape Footprint (ELF™), generated with Quiet Communities, Inc. (QCi) as part of the AGZA Green Zone program, estimates that the transition will result in annual reductions of 89 tons of

greenhouse gases (equivalent to taking 18 cars off the road) and 15 tons of toxic exhaust, including ground level ozone and fine particulate matter. In addition, the transition significantly reduces noise, operating costs, fuel spillage, and toxic and non-recyclable waste and improves conditions for the crews working daily to maintain USC's grounds.

"This project makes the air safer for USC's students, faculty, staff and the community at large," said SCAQMD Board Member Michael Cacciotti, "It's not surprising to see USC leading this effort in the Los Angeles area. I'm proud that SCAQMD's Lawn and Garden Incentive Program was able to help USC take the extra steps to reach this important certification milestone."

The AGZA Green Zone Certification Program provides education, training, certification, and metrics to achieve sustained transitions to low impact grounds maintenance practices using cleaner, quieter battery electric and people powered tools. The goals are to achieve measurable reductions in air pollution, noise pollution, fuel spillage, and toxic waste associated with the use and maintenance of internal combustion equipment, leading to improvements in health and environmental quality. Programs are available to municipalities, schools, homes, public lands, businesses, and other organizations.

**To learn more, visit the AGZA web site at [www.agza.net](http://www.agza.net) or call 310-779-9785 for more information.**



Ramón Guerra keeps the grass trimmed. (USC Photo/Gus Ruelas)



Scott Viramontez trims the hedges in Alumni Park. (USC Photo/Gus Ruelas)



*Quiet Communities, Inc. (QCi) is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the public health, the environment, and quality of life for everyone -- children, families, seniors, minorities and disadvantaged -- by reducing noise and related pollution.*

