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Clinton Tours Town He Calls Role Model

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WASHINGTON BUREAU

Sunnyvale, Calif. — President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore yesterday took their "reinventing government" sales tour to this Silicon Valley city of 121,000, a briskly well-managed place that has become to public administration what Vatican City and Mecca represent to religion.

Clinton and Gore stopped at a high-tech lighting firm that has hired youths trained in a city-run skills program. From there, the motorcade took them to a community center where Clinton met laid-off defense workers retraining for new careers. The president said he was "just overwhelmed by the work that's been done here in Sunnyvale, basically to continuously provide more services at lower costs."

While it's considered a town where government works, Sunnyvale isn't particularly known for job training. What sets Sunnyvale's government apart is its 20-year-old, business-style system of budgeting services and rewarding managers based on results. The White House decision to structure Clinton's visit around jobs surprised city leaders who considered it a strained attempt to make political points in recession-weary California. Still, Mayor Patricia Castillo welcomed the presidential visit as "very electrifying."

Singled out in Gore's National Performance Review report as a model of efficiency, the Sunnyvale style of government has drawn official visitors from Sweden, Australia, Britain and other countries.

In an illustration of how reinvented government works, City Manager Tom Lewcock, 47, took home a \$7,000 bonus over his \$120,000 salary last year because the 10 department managers (who got their own 10 percent bonuses) met or exceeded thousands of quantified goals approved by the seven-member city council.

The 250 uniformed public safety officers, whose duties alternate between serving as cops and firefighters, responded to emergency calls within five

minutes 90 percent of the time last year.

At the automated city library, readers found the book they wanted 75 percent of the time. Park workers repaired vandalism within three days 90 percent of the time. Repairs on balky traffic signals were started within one hour.

Despite a low crime rate, suburban name and expansive parklands, Sunnyvale isn't paradise. It's a San Francisco Bay-area industrial city, the increasingly crowded home of 338 layoff-prone semiconductor, aerospace and biotechnology firms. Middle-income engineers — "brainware folks," Lewcock calls them — predominate in its population, which is 6 percent black, 15 percent Hispanic and 15 percent Asian minorities.

The city's \$70-million general-fund budget has been cut by 15 percent in five years of defense retrenchments, drooping sales-tax collections and state legislature takeaways. Yet Sunnyvale's governing methods have kept it out of the red, with city workers' hourly productivity up by 38 percent. Sunnyvale has managed things with 35 to 40 percent fewer employees than similar cities, no service cuts, no employee layoffs, no tax hikes.

For bringing it off, Sunnyvale was featured in the David Osborne-Ted Gaebler book, "Reinventing Government." Word about Sunnyvale also was relayed to Washington by a former mayor of the city, John Mercer, now Republican counsel to the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee. He helped make "outcomes-based budgeting" the basis of the Government Performance and Results Act that Clinton signed in July. It requires federal agencies to design five-year strategic plans and annual goals for every program.

Can Sunnyvale's success be transplanted to the \$1.6 trillion federal government? "It took us fifteen years to completely develop this system in Sunnyvale," Larry Stone, a council member and former mayor, said. "You must not have these expectations that government is going to be revolutionized overnight. It won't be."