



Minnesota GreenStep Cities: A Pathway to Sustainability

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Minnesota GreenStep Cities

A report to the Minnesota legislature regarding Green Star award expansion and a program proposal to assist local governments in taking the next step to implement carbon reductions and other environmental actions



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A voluntary program for all MN cities to support and recognize implementation of 27 sustainable development best practices focusing on energy efficiency and cost savings that lead cities beyond compliance and encourage a culture of innovation.



- **MPCA, OES, CERTS** – submitted report to 2009 Legislature
- **League of MN Cities** – key collaborator
- **Co-developers** –
 - Great Plains Institute
 - Urban Land Institute-MN/Regional Council of Mayors
 - Center for Energy & Environment
 - Izaak Walton League – MN Chapter



Pilot & Interested Cities

- Bloomington, Edina, St. Louis Park, Falcon Heights, Victoria, Apple Valley
- Grand Rapids, Pine River
- Austin, Luverne, Mahtomedi, Northfield, Bemidji, Red Wing, Coon Rapids, S. St. Paul, Appleton, Grand Marais, Vadnais Heights

The urgency felt by the Regional Council of Mayors

This century presents new challenges
we can't ignore



Energy
insecurity

+



Climate
change

=



New
solutions

Urgency felt by the Legislature: 2007 Next Generation Energy Act



- Cut global warming: 80% CO₂ cut by 2050 (15% by 2015)
- Add renewable energy: 25% by 2025
- Cut use of fossil fuels /person: 15% by 2015
- Cut utility demand: 1.5%/yr.

A challenge, assistance and recognition



- 27 best practices
- A person to advise on each
- Cities, their community members and businesses
- 'Low-doc' flexible program
- Web-based learning network

27 Best Practices in 5 Categories

- Buildings & Lighting
 - Land Use
 - Transportation
 - Environmental Management
 - Economic and Community Development
-
- *Some BPs cost \$, some save \$, many spend existing \$ smarter*





Outcomes: healthy, resilient communities

- Cheaper-to-operate (green) buildings
- Ecological infrastructure; low-impact development
- Cleaner water, air, viable habitat
- Lower costs to government, business, educational institutions and citizens
- Walkable, bikeable communities and healthier citizens and businesses
- Transportation options that connect jobs & housing
- Local food production
- Local renewable energy production
- More local, green jobs



Sample Best Practices

- *Construct new buildings to meet or qualify for a Green Building standard.*
- *Adopt development ordinances or processes that protect natural systems.*
- *Improve the efficiency of city street lighting and signals.*
- *Prevent stormwater generation and contamination.*



More Best Practices

- *Increase city tree and plant cover.*
- *Adopt an environmentally preferable purchasing policy.*
- *Strengthen local food production and access.*
- *Use assistance programs for green business and job development.*



Best Practices Action Options for Trees

- Qualify as a Tree City USA, or
- Adopt MN TreeTrust/Boonestro *tree planting standards* as city policy, or
- Budget tree plantings to reach 75% residential canopy cover @ 15 yrs., or
- Enact street design standards that incorporate street trees
 - *Existing programs, policy, performance, budgeting, education/facilitation*



City Council Resolution to Enter Program

- Identify a GreenStep contact person
- Plan to involve community members, civic and educational organizations and businesses
- Pick a few best practices to start on
- Commit to implement a minimum number of required and optional GreenStep best practices

Other Program Elements

- Focus on energy efficiency
- Continuous improvement structure
- Draft best practices online April 2010
- Recognize participation at June LMC conference
- Possible pairing of a GreenStep City participant with a Climate Change Corps and/or a GreenCorps member





Solid waste addressed in several best practices

- Building Reuse
- New & Existing Buildings: rehab using a green building standard
- Land use BPs: > density, < infrastructure needing repair
- EPP
- Solid Waste Reduction