Minnesota GreenStep Cities

Welcome! Guide

Steps for Starting the program – for new and transitioning staff

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Overview

GreenStep Cities is a free assistance program for all Minnesota cities that supports and recognizes implementation of 29 sustainability best practices.

The best practices focus on cost savings, quality of life and energy use reductions that encourage a culture of innovation. Over 100 cities and (including some tribes), large and small, encompassing over 40% of the state's population, have joined and become Step One cities in this voluntary program, which was launched by the League of Minnesota Cities at their June 2010 conference. See the city council resolution through which your city became a Step One city on your city's public GreenStep page, linked to at **https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/allCities.cfm**

Cities that implement a minimum number of best practices within the five categories below will be recognized as Step Two and Step Three GreenStep cities. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more specific actions from a list of four to eight actions. A city's accomplishments are recognized on the GreenStep website. Measuring city performance metrics will garner Step Four & Step Five recognition.

Visit **www.MnGreenStep.org** to learn more about this program, to see what cities have accomplished, and to understand how your city can become involved.

What Now?

Training Materials

Whether you are a new GreenStep City or you are transition to a new GreenStep City Coordinator, these training materials should help you get started.

- An Introduction to GreenStep Cities (Video to come!)
- GreenStep Cities 101 Workshop Video and PowerPoint
- How do I enter data into the GreenStep Cities admin page? See a 12-slide PPT titled "Data entry onto the GreenStep Web Site" under Sample Reporting Forms on the VIEW DOCUMENTS tab on your city's admin page

Where is Your City Currently at?

For those of you transitioning into a GreenStep Cities Coordinator position, be sure to get to know what your city has already accomplished and where to go from here.

- Locate your city on the website to see what has been accomplished to date.

- Once on your city's page, see the *City Assessment Files* and *City Performance Metrics* for more information and where your city is currently at and how to get to the next steps.
- GreenStep Cities Coordinators are asked to take an annual survey describing the work completed that year and what next steps the city may be interested in taking. As needed, to get a copy of the survey results from previous years, contact Alexis Troschinetz, CERTs Behavior Change & Metrics Coordinator.

Why is your city participating?

Becoming a GreenStep City has many benefits. Every city has a different reason for being an active GreenStep City.

Consider the reasons why your city is a GreenStep City and share these with city staff, elected officials, and community volunteers and civic groups.

__ **Is a continuous improvement pathway** for cities to "go green," becoming more sustainable and resilient.	__ **Will save city staff time** in researching proven, cost-effective actions for cutting energy use, decreasing the city's carbon footprint, and accomplishing other sustainability goals that exceed regulatory requirements.	__ **Will save cities money** and deliver a stream of multiple environmental, social and financial benefits; will help cities explore how to spend the same amount of money smarter.
__ **Is a home-grown, independent program tailored to Minnesota cities** and provides maximum flexibility and choice in how to implement a proven best practice.	__ **Provides over 3,000 reports** on how Minnesota cities are taking action, making it easy to learn from and contact peer cities so as to jump-start actions in your own city.	__ **Opens up special opportunities** for funding and technical assistance, available mostly to GreenStep cities because the GreenStep program focuses on existing GreenStep cities.
__ **Maps out how to follow-through** on the various commitments cities may have made, such as the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, signed by over 40 Minnesota cities, and on the Minnesota Legislature's aggressive Next Generation Energy Act.	__ **Provides leadership and action roles for community** members, businesses and institutions so as to stretch limited city funds and strengthen a civic culture of engagement and innovation.	__ **Continuously prompts** program participants – like an exercise coach would! – to maximize opportunities to accelerate sustainability actions.
__ **Provides public recognition** of the good work being done by Minnesota cities.	__ (add your own)	__

The Steps

Step 1

Build Community Knowledge and Interest

Approve a city council resolution to work toward GreenStep Cities recognition

Post Initial background information on the GreenStep Cities website

Getting Started

- Testimonials: Cities share their experiences in the MN GreenStep Cities program
- Notable Accomplishments: GreenStep Cities 2010-Present
- Fact sheet
- Determine into which category your city fits.
- Become familiar with GreenStep best practices.
- Talk with key people and organizations in your city.
- Invite, as needed, a GreenStep program representative to your city.
- Conduct a brief inventory of completed, planned and desired best practices.

Adopt a Resolution

- Use the sample resolution.
- Introduce a resolution to the city council.
- Specify a GreenStep coordinator and a few best practices to implement.
- E-mail your city resolution and GreenStep contact information to the MPCA.

Visit your [Log-in Page](#)

- Enter simple background information about your city.

Education and Planning

- As needed, educate city staff and officials about sustainability.
- Convene a small working group.
- Specify implementation action(s) and a few lead people.
- Prepare a simple work plan for implementing selected best practices.

Step 2

Document the previous implementation of, and/or newly implemented 4, 6, or 8 [best practices](#), depending on a city's GreenStep Category designation.

- Refer back to your city's [category](#).
    - Category C cities need to implement ANY 4 BP's.
    - Category B cities need to implement ANY 6 BP's.
    - Category A cities need to implement ANY 8 BP's.
- Implementing a particular [best practice action](#) may take a day or years.
- Be alert to opportunities to complete multiple best practice actions at once.
- Check back with the city council as needed.
- Report yearly to community members.

As your work proceeds, give us [feedback](#) on the program.

Step 3

Implement 8, 12, or 16 [best practices](#) and complete a handful of specific high-impact actions, depending on a city's GreenStep Category designation.

- See Step 2
    - Category C cities need to implement ANY 4 BP's.
    - Category B cities need to implement ANY 6 BP's.
    - Category A cities need to implement ANY 8 BP's.
- IMPORTANT: Step 3 has certain [requirements that each category must meet](#) to receive recognition.

Step 4

Measure and report a minimum number of core and optional metrics for the previous calendar year.

- Download the Step 4 and 5 Metrics entry spreadsheet.
- Enter metrics required for Building & Lighting, Transportation, Land Use, Environmental Management, and Economic & Community Development.
- Use the metric guidance documents by clicking on each metric header.
- Watch the guide to entering Step 4/5 data video.
- Report the metrics spreadsheet to the GreenStep coordinator at the Great Plains Institute: Abby Finis, afinis@gpisd.net.

Step 5

Improve three eligible city performance metrics measured in Step 4.

- Download the Step 4 and 5 Metrics entry spreadsheet.
- The green boxes indicate metrics that are eligible for Step 5 recognition if a city shows improvement between year 1 and year 2.
- Use the metric guidance documents by clicking on each metric header.
- Watch the guide to entering Step 4/5 data video.
- Report the metrics spreadsheet to the GreenStep coordinator at the Great Plains Institute: Abby Finis, afinis@gpisd.net.

Understanding the Website

Home Page

News – See what events are coming up on the calendar or new resources available

Newsletter – If not already, sign up for the quarterly GSC newsletter and see archived Newsletters

Benefits – What are the benefits of joining GSC and implementing BPs?

Who can help? – Find professional contacts – Best Practice Advisors - to assist you for each BP

About Page

- History and development
- GreenStep Program Partners and program funders

Best Practices

- Make planning and tracking easier: <u>download this spreadsheet</u> that lists all unique actions – approximately 175 – for all 29 best practices
- What are Step 2 and 3 <u>Recognition Minimums</u>?
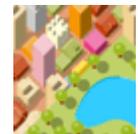- Search actions related to specific topics

[water conservation ▼] [Filter]

Buildings and Lighting

1. Efficient Existing Public Buildings: Benchmark energy usage; identify savings opportunities in consultation with state programs, utilities and others to implement cost-effective energy and sustainability improvements.

2. Efficient Existing Private Buildings: Provide incentives for energy, water and sustainability improvements in existing buildings/building sites.

3. New Green Buildings: Construct new buildings to meet or qualify under a green building framework.

4. Efficient Outdoor Lighting and Signals: Improve the efficiency and quality of street lighting, traffic signals and outdoor public lighting.

5. Building Redevelopment: Create economic and regulatory incentives for redeveloping and repurposing existing buildings before building new.

Land Use

6. Comprehensive Plans: Build public support and legal validity to long-term infrastructural and regulatory strategy.

7. Efficient City Growth: Promote financial and environmental sustainability by enabling and encouraging walkable housing and commercial land use.

8. Mixed Uses: Develop efficient and healthy land patterns that generate community wealth.

9. Efficient Highway- and Auto-Oriented Development: Adopt commercial development and design standards for auto-oriented development corridors and clusters.

10. Design for Natural Resource Conservation: Adopt development ordinances or processes that protect natural systems and valued community assets.

Transportation

11. Living Streets: Create a network of green complete streets that improves city quality of life and adds value to surrounding properties.
12. Mobility Options: Promote active transportation and alternatives to single-occupancy car travel.

13. Efficient City Fleets: Implement a city fleet investment, operations and maintenance plan.

14. Demand-Side Travel Planning: Implement Travel Demand Management and Transit-Oriented Design in service of a more walkable city.

Environmental Management

15. Sustainable Purchasing: Adopt environmentally preferable purchasing policies and practices.
16. Urban Forests: Add city tree and plant cover that increases community health, wealth and quality of life.
17. Stormwater Management: Minimize the volume of and pollutants in stormwater runoff.

18. Parks and Trails: Support active lifestyles and property values by enhancing the city's green infrastructure.

19. Surface Water Quality: Improve local water bodies.

20. Efficient Water and Wastewater Systems: Assess and improve city drinking water and wastewater systems and related facilities.

21. Septic Systems: Implement an effective management program for decentralized wastewater treatment systems.

22. Solid Waste Reduction: Increase waste reduction, reuse and recycling.

23. Local Air Quality: Prevent generation of local air contaminants.

Economic and Community Development

24. Benchmarks & Community Engagement: Adopt outcome measures for GreenStep and other city sustainability efforts, and engage community members in ongoing education, dialogue, and campaigns.
25. Green Business Development: Support expansion of the city's green business sector.

26. Renewable Energy: Remove barriers to and encourage installation of renewable energy generation capacity.

27. Local Food: Strengthen local food and fiber production and access.

28. Business Synergies: Network/cluster businesses to achieve better energy, economic and environmental outcomes.

29. Climate Adaptation and Community Resilience: Plan and prepare for extreme weather, adapt to changing climatic conditions, and foster stronger community connectedness and social and economic vitality.

Steps 1-5

- A summary of the actions needed to progress steps

Recognition

- Annual summaries of city recognition, BPAs completed, notable accomplishments by cities
- Individual city photos from the annual June League of Minnesota Cities GreenStep recognition event
- GreenStep Award Sponsors

All Cities

- Click on city name to see city contact and background information and detail on completed actions
- See which cities have implemented which best practices

Ordinances

- Model ordinances listed by the 5 Best Practices

City Log-In

- Select City
- Enter Password
- How do I enter data into the GreenStep Cities admin page? See a PowerPoint titled "Data entry onto the GreenStep Web Site" under Sample Reporting Forms on the VIEW DOCUMENTS tab on your city's admin page

Contacts

- Online contact form to GreenStep Cities coordinator
  - Ask questions to better understand the GreenStep Cities program
  - Clarify where to find different types of resources on the web site
  - Request a personal visit to your city
  - Ask for help in connecting volunteers to needed work in GreenStep cities
  - Send in your GreenStep City resolution and city contact information via e-mail
  - Get help documenting your accomplishments online
  - Make suggestions for improving the GreenStep program
  - Report errors on the web site and identify broken web links
- Contact information (phone and email) for the GreenStep Cities co-directors

Resources

Staff and Partners

The GreenStep Cities program is a partnership of many state agencies, organizations, and volunteers. Get to know them all, below.

Minneapolis Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) • Co-Director (Philipp Muessig) • Best Practice Advisors • Approves Best Practice Actions entered on website	*Great Plains Institute (GPI)* • Co-Director (Abby Finis) • Monthly Workshop Coordinator • Steps 4 and 5 Assistance	*Environmental Quality Board (EQB)* • Local Government Coordinator (Kristin Mroz) • Connecting state agency and organizations to community needs
League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) • Annual Awards Ceremony at LMC Conference • Provide model ordinances, policies, and other resources • Provide networking between cities and local government organizations	*Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)* • Best Practice Advisors • Statewide assistance with energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy technologies and practices for homes, businesses, and local institutions • Communications for GreenStep (website, newsletter, stories, etc.) • Regional Coordinators provide 1-on-1 assistance to communities	*Department Of Commerce (COMM)* • Division of Energy provides information and assistance related to energy technology • Provide financial and technical assistance • Assistance in energy efficiency and weatherization
Izaak Walton League (IWLA) • Provide assistance in outdoor conservation of natural resources • 1-on-1 assistance with Greater MN communities	*Preservation Alliance of MN (PAM)* • Promote connection between people and historic places, promoting community vitality • Downtown revitalization	*Urban Land Institute MN (ULI)* • Provide assistance with community land use and real estate development

Contact Us

Data Entry Assistance

Who can help your city enter GreenStep Cities reporting data? GreenStep Cities use a number of resources to enter in information for the GreenStep Cities program. We find that this may be the most time consuming and tedious part of being a GreenStep City.

1. **Dedicate a city staff person to update data for GreenStep Cities.**
   This may be the GreenStep Cities Coordinator, a communications staff, administrative staff, or any other position that can take the time to get to the know the GreenStep Cities BPAs and is also familiar with the environmental and sustainable work the city is doing. It is recommended to include this duty in the staff member's annual job duties and/or workplan.

2. **Hire a part-time staff person or coordinate a shared staff person.**
   Cities like Grand Marais have hired staff to coordinate GreenStep Cities and other sustainability/climate work for as little as 4 hours/week, a very minimal cost to the city. Another possibility it to coordinate with a local city, county, or organization to co-hire a staff person to work on GreenStep Cities and other environmental efforts.

3. **Hire an Intern.**
   A GreenStep City intern can serve as the city's champion to complete the initial online recordkeeping, kick start a plan for future activities, and familiarize city staff with the program. See the GreenStep Cities Intern Manual for assistance on how to find an intern, how to set up their work plan, etc.

4. **Apply for a MN GreenCorps Member.**
   GreenCorps members are coordinated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency as part of the AmeriCorps program. Members work in host communities full time for 11 months on environmental issues. Members can assist GreenStep Cities with specific Best Practices and reporting. Cities need to provide a workspace for the member; AmeriCorps covers salary and benefits. Applications are typically due early spring with members starting in early fall of each year.

5. **Coordinate with local youth.**
   This may be a partnership with a local high school class, environmental club, or honors association. Connecting with students or staff may foster assistance with implementing Best Practice Actions, reviewing and analyzing data and reports, or entering GreenStep Cities data and reporting metrics.

6. **Coordinate with local citizen volunteers.**
   Your city may already have an organized environmental or sustainability commission which can assist the GreenStep Cities advancement and members may offer to assist with data and metric entry. Your city may also have a non-government citizen group that would be interested in assisting the GreenStep Cities Coordinator. If your city does not have an environmental-related group in place, think about starting one or finding one or two champion citizens in your community that would be interested in participating with the GreenStep Cities program.

Online

- [Log-in](#) to add information on best practices completed.
- Determine into which [category](#) your city fits.
- Current [GreenStep Cities](#)
- The 29 [Best Practices](#)
- The [Steps](#)

Social Media and Listserve

Track the latest GreenStep news and add your own at:

[Facebook](#) @mngreenstep

[Twitter](#) @GreenStepCities

Email listserve – a resource for GreenStep Cities Coordinators to connect. If you are not receiving a listserv message roughly once per month let [GreenStep Cities](#) know.

Communities – Who's doing it?

One of the best ways to get feedback before starting a Best Practice Action is to see how other communities have implemented the action.

- View the [Best Practice Action](#) that you are interested in by clicking on the name of a best practice, and then clicking on the text of the action. The "Who's doing it" tab will display the GreenStep Cities that have taken the action, along with resources for taking the action and examples of city actions that warrant a 1-star (good) rating, a 2-star (better) rating, or a 3-star rating (best).
- Click on the name of the city for the description of their Best Practice Action.
- GreenStep Cities are always willing to help out another GreenStep City! Use the contact information listed to reach out the city staff who can assist you with questions, planning, implementation, and other questions.
- Alternatively, use the GreenStep Cities email listserve. Occasionally, GreenStep staff and partners will send out important information like upcoming events, deadlines for funding, or other resources. This listserve can also be used as a communication tool between GreenStep cities!
  - Note: If you reply-all, your email will be sent to everyone on the list. If you need to contact the sender, email them directly.

Reporting and Recognition

Reporting

Once a Best Practice Action or Metric is ready to report, use the following tools. Direct any questions to the contacts below.

- **Step 1**: Share the City Council Resolution with Philipp Muessig, philipp.muessig@state.mn.us
- **Steps 2-3**: Add Best Practice Actions by Logging-in to your city's account and using the online forms
- **Steps 4-5**: Report the metrics spreadsheet to Abby Finis, afinis@gpisd.net

Recognition

Your hard work has paid off! Get recognized for any achievements in the following ways:

- Attend the annual GreenStep Cities Awards Ceremony at the League of Minnesota Cities Conference (June).
- Let GreenStep Cities write a story about your project success! Contact Dan Theide with any suggestions.
- Write a newsletter story for your city's newsletter. See samples under VIEW DOCUMENTS on your city's GreenStep admin page.
- Write press release to your local paper to let your community know about it. See samples under VIEW DOCUMENTS on your city's GreenStep admin page.
- Follow GreenStep Cities on Facebook and Twitter. We will happily share your story!
- Create a GreenStep Cities webpage on your city website.