Minnesota GreenStep Cities

Public Officials Guide

Steps for Starting and Continuing the Program

For new and transitioning elected officials, appointed commission/committee/board members, and volunteer members

4/3/2020

Table of Contents

Quick Resource Guide

GreenStep Cities 101 Workshop Video and PowerPoint	What category is my city in?	Step 2 and 3 requirements that each category must meet to receive recognition
Watch the guide to entering Step 4 and 5 data video	Step 4 and 5 Metrics webpage	Contact Us
Search actions related to specific topics	What are other cities doing?	

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 120 cities and several tribal nations, encompassing over 44% of the state's population, have joined this voluntary program, launched at the 2010 League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) conference. See the city council resolution through which your city became a Step 1 city: https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/allCities.cfm

Cities that implement a minimum number of best practices across the five categories below will be recognized as Step 2 and Step 3 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 and each year at the LMC annual conference. Measuring city performance metrics will garner Step Four & Step Five recognition.

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

What is a Public Official?

For the purpose of this guide, a public official is any elected council member or appointed committee, commission, or board member. This guide will also be helpful for any volunteer citizen, student, staff, business, or other community group that works with the GreenStep Cities program.

If the public official or volunteer member is directly working on GreenStep Cities reporting, please see the Welcome! Guide (https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/media/466), which goes into more detail about the city log-in page and reporting guidelines.

Why be a GreenStep City?

Cities and Tribal Nations see a number of [benefits](#) to becoming a GreenStep City. Examples include:

- A **Minnesota-specific program**, explicit to the needs and make-up of our communities.
- A **continuous improvement program** for cities to *keep track* of their actions but also a program that is continuously improved to be *up-to-date* and maintain a challenge to our communities.
- A **one-stop shop** for staff, officials, and citizens to identify best practice actions and resources. This *saves staff time and effort*.
- A **cost-saving tool** that delivers a stream of financial benefits including grant, loan, and rebate opportunities. In addition, many sustainable actions that communities take will save money over time!
- **Access to a 'special network'** that opens up special opportunities such as funding, pilot programs, and technical assistance. Being a GreenStep City may also support your community in a competitive application processes.
- An **economic development-recruiting tool** for sustainable and environmental conscious businesses to your community.
- A **guide to creating a more healthy and livable community** which aids in overall citizen quality of life.
- Provides **public recognition** of the sustainable work your community is doing!

Getting Started

Training Materials

Whether you are a new GreenStep City or you are transitioning as a new public official, these training materials will help you get started.

- GreenStep Cities 101 Workshop Video (https://mngreenstepcities.blogspot.com/2019/12/december-2019-greenstep-cities-workshop.html)
- Monthly Workshops and Archives (https://www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-greenstep-cities-18017175524)

Where is Your City Currently at?

For those who are transitioning as new public officials, be sure to get to know what your city has already accomplished and where to go from here.

- Find your city on the GreenStep Cities website to see what has been accomplished to date. (https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/allCities.cfm)
- 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.

The Steps (https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/steps.cfm)

Step 1

Step 1 is the easiest! Decide that your city wants to commit to being a GreenStep City and you have already achieved a step. Start by building community knowledge and interest by hosting public meetings or having a presentation by GreenStep Cities staff. Review testimonials from other cities and get to know the program.

Next, write up a resolution (we have a sample resolution), introduce it at City Council, and vote "Yes"! This step will also need to identify one GreenStep Cities Coordinator (city staff, community member, public official, etc.) and encourage a few best practices to start implementing.

Finally, your new GreenStep Cities Coordinator will be tasked with posting initial background information on the GreenStep Cities website as well as educating city staff, public officials, and the community about the GreenStep Cities program.

Step 2

Your city will need to implement 4, 6, or 8 Best Practices, depending on your city's category designation (visit your city's home page to see the category at https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/allCities.cfm).

- 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. It is possible to complete multiple best practice actions at once. The GreenStep Cities Coordinator will complete the action by posting on the city's log-in page.

Step 3

Similar to Step 2, your city will need to implement 8, 12, or 16 Best Practices, depending on your city's category designation (visit your city's home page to see the category at https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/allCities.cfm).

- Category C cities need to implement ANY 8 BP's.
- Category B cities need to implement ANY 12 BP's.
- Category A cities need to implement ANY 16 BP's.

Step 3 has certain [requirements that each category must meet](#) to receive recognition. These are actions that have been identified as priority and are expected for all GreenStep Cities to take. The GreenStep Cities Coordinator will complete the action by posting on the city's log-in page.

Step 4

Steps 4 changes tone to measure and report a minimum number of core and optional metrics for the previous calendar year. Metrics required for Building & Lighting, Transportation, Land Use, Environmental Management, and Economic & Community Development are outlined in the [Step 4 and 5 Metrics](#) spreadsheet. The GreenStep Cities Coordinator will review the metrics, collect data from city/county staff and utilities, and report annually, using the spreadsheet.

Step 5

Similar to Step 4, Step 5 also uses the [Step 4 and 5 Metrics](#) entry spreadsheet. However, Step 5 requires that improvements are being made in targeted areas between year 1 and 2, etc. The GreenStep Cities Coordinator will fill out the form for the Step 4 data and indicate improvements, annually.
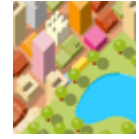
Best Practices

Get to know the Best Practice categories, below. This may help guide decision making under a number of city departments as well as budgeting processes. Each Best Practice has a number of sepecific actions. Each of those actions are assigned 1, 2, or 3 stars, based on the difficulty level.

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.

Resources

Staff and Partners (<u>https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/aboutProgram.cfm</u>)

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

Contact Us

Data Entry Assistance

GreenStep Cities use a number of resources to enter in information for the GreenStep Cities program. GreenStep Cities staff and help guide you on resources for any of these options.

1. Dedicate a city staff person to update data for GreenStep Cities.
2. Hire a part-time staff person or coordinate a shared staff person.
3. Hire an Intern.
4. Apply for a MN GreenCorps Member.
5. Coordinate with local youth.
6. Coordinate with local citizen volunteers.

Social Media and News

Track the latest GreenStep news and add your own at:

Facebook @mngreenstep

Twitter @GreenStepCities

Email listserve – a resource for GreenStep Cities Coordinators to connect (contact Kristin Mroz to be added)

Newsletter – a quarterly review of GreenStep Cities achievements, stories, updates, and news

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.

Recognition (https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/recognition.cfm)

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 Kristin Mroz with any suggestions.
- Write a newsletter story for your city's newsletter.
- Write press release to your local paper to let your community know about it.
- Follow GreenStep Cities on Facebook and Twitter. We will happily share your story!
- Create a GreenStep Cities webpage on your city website.

Want to Know Even More?

GreenStep Cities staff and partners are always available for an email, phone call, or in-person visit. Let us know how we can help answer questions, facilitate an internal city discussion, or facilitate an entire community discussion.

Find the detailed Welcome! Guide at https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/media/466

Find our contact information at https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/contact.cfm.