



**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

<b>AGENDA SECTION</b>	NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS
<b>MEETING DATE</b>	MARCH 23, 2026

<b>ITEM:</b>	<b>Sustainable Purchasing Policy</b>		
<i>Presenting Item: Ursula Brandt, City Planner</i>			
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b> Community Development		<b>BY/DATE:</b> Mitchell Forney / March 23, 2026	
<b>CORE CITY STRATEGIES:</b>			
_Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity		<u>X</u> Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	
_High Quality Public Spaces		_Resilient and Prosperous Economy	
_Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone		_Inclusive and Connected Community	

**BACKGROUND**

Over the past year and a half, the Sustainability Commission has worked closely with City staff to develop a Sustainable Purchasing Policy. This policy is intended to move the City forward in incorporating sustainability into its purchasing and procurement practices while also supporting the City’s GreenStep Cities goal of achieving Step 3 in 2026.

The Sustainability Commission began this work by reviewing the City’s current purchasing policy and evaluating sustainable purchasing policies used by other communities. Using these examples, the Commission developed a framework that integrates sustainability considerations into the City’s existing purchasing practices. Staff then reviewed the draft policy and provided feedback to ensure that it would align with operational workflows and be practical for implementation across departments.

Unlike a traditional purchasing policy that immediately changes procurement requirements, this Sustainable Purchasing Policy is designed as a guiding framework. The policy establishes focus areas, reporting expectations, and long-term goals that will allow City staff and the Sustainability Commission to gradually integrate more sustainable practices into purchasing decisions over time. This approach allows the City to advance sustainability goals while ensuring staff have the flexibility to transition practices in a manageable and effective way.

**SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS**

At its March 10 meeting, the Sustainability Commission voted to recommend that the City Council approve the Sustainable Purchasing Policy. While purchasing procedures are typically implemented administratively, staff felt it was important to recognize the significant work completed by the Sustainability Commission and City staff by formally presenting the policy to the City Council for consideration. Council acknowledgment also helps reinforce the City’s commitment to sustainability initiatives and the GreenStep Cities program.

---

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommend approval of the Sustainable Purchasing Policy as presented and amendment of the City's current Purchasing Policy to incorporate the Sustainable Purchasing Policy and its appendices.

**RECOMMENDED MOTION(S):**

MOTION: Move to approve the Sustainable Purchasing Policy as presented and direct staff to amend the City's existing Purchasing Policy to incorporate the Sustainable Purchasing Policy and its appendices.

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Sustainable Purchasing Policy

**CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS**  
**PROCEDURES MANUAL**

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**PURCHASING POLICY**

**Section 4.01, Page 1 of 3**

**Revision: March 10, 2026**

**PURPOSE**

To assure that all expenditures are made efficiently by approved methods and only for authorized purposes, and that compliance with this policy is documented.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all activities of the City, the Economic Development Authority (EDA), the Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and to any fiscal agent activities conducted on behalf of other entities. It applies to activities under Joint Powers Agreements with appropriate modifications as necessary. As these activities form a single reporting entity (the City) under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, all references in this policy to city titles, such as City, city council, city manager, etc. are defined to include the equivalent titles from all of these entities, such as EDA, EDA commissioners, EDA executive director, etc.,

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

The City purchasing process is decentralized, with division heads primarily responsible for budgeting, ordering, receiving, and classifying goods and services to meet both their division's objectives and the requirements of this policy. Division heads may delegate procedures required under this policy to staff as appropriate. Exceptions to this decentralization are the goods and services obtained through the City's internal service funds; the Municipal Service Center, Facilities Maintenance, Information Systems, and Risk Management, which have purchasing responsibilities for their respective activities. Additionally, occupancy and supply expenditures for city hall are centralized within a department of the General fund. The responsibility of the finance director under this policy is quality control in the broad sense, including timely processing, communication, and compliance monitoring.

**RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR EXPENDITURE**

Only the city council has the authority to authorize (appropriate) resources to be available for expenditure, through their actions to adopt or amend budgets at the fund level.

**EXPENDING AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

The primary authority to award purchases of specific goods and services to specific vendors resides with the city council. By resolution, the city council has delegated this authority to the city manager for expenditures up to \$25,000 per invoice, for time-sensitive change orders to contracts awarded by the city council, and for certain items listed below that do not require preapproval under this policy.

By this policy, the city manager delegates this authority to their designee as required, and delegates authority for expenditures up to \$5,000 per invoice to each division head and their respective designee (if any), but only for each of their respective division operations. This authority only extends to resources that have first been made available (budgeted) by the city council (see above).

Expenditures exceeding the authority of the division head require documented preapproval by the city manager or their designee, or by the city council if over \$25,000. Exceptions not requiring preapproval include goods and services for resale, refunds, routine utility and internet services, and emergency purchases. This preapproval is documented using the City's purchase order system, unless payment is issued through the City's payroll system.

City council approval of membership in the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) is considered preapproval for premiums billed by the LMCIT. City council approval of bargaining agreements and pay rates, together with City ordinance 3.102(B) delegating hiring authority to the city manager, is considered preapprovals for all wages and payroll taxes, but not for benefit contracts, for all positions authorized by the city manager.

#### **AUTHORIZED CREDIT CARDHOLDERS AND PETTY CASH CUSTODIANS**

Authorization as a named credit cardholder or a petty cash custodian is not authorization to expend funds. These are only authorizations for certain forms of tender. Purchases made using these tender types still require *expenditure* authorization, as described above.

#### **PROCUREMENT**

Purchasing must be conducted in a manner to promote fair and open competition, and in accord with all local, state, federal, and grantor requirements applicable to City resources. This applies to all aspects of seeking and selecting offers, quotations, proposals, contracts, and even to purchasing goods and commodities only available at open market pricing. Promoting fair and open competition includes efforts to solicit offers from local, regional, small, minority, disability, and women-owned businesses, as well as including the qualification as one of these business types as one of the various factors considered in the overall evaluation of vendor offers.

The procedures required to document this fair and open competition are proportional to the dollar amount of the purchase. Those procedures are listed in [Appendix A](#). In addition, by formal commission the City has established sustainability guidelines that apply to all procurement of goods and services. Those guidelines are listed in Appendix B.

#### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Employees are required to provide notice to the finance director of any conflicts of interest prior to entering into transactions on behalf of the City. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract or other purchase if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict of interest would arise when the employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediately family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has financial or other interest in or a tangible personal benefit from a firm considered for a contract or other purchase.

Officers, employees, and agents of the City must neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from vendors, contractors or parties to subcontracts, or those seeking to be vendors, contractors or parties to subcontracts.

#### **ALLOWABLE COSTS**

All expenditures must be for a public purpose, as described in [Appendix C](#). Certain compliance procedures required by this policy when purchasing under federal grant awards are also described in [Appendix C](#).

Additionally, all expenditures not included in the City's general fund must be for the same purpose as the non-general fund in which they are included. Under state statute, restrictions or obligations imposed by grantors or donors on the use of grants or contributions are only allowable if authorized by a resolution approved by a super-majority (4/5) vote of the city council.

#### **DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR PAYMENT**

For purchases made by check or electronic funds transfer, documentation of compliance with this policy shall be submitted to the finance department prior to payment using established procedures. For purchases made by City

credit card, this documentation plus the monthly cardholder statement shall be submitted to the finance department in the calendar month the cardholder statement is issued. For purchases made by petty cash, this documentation must be provided to the custodian immediately following the purchase and then submitted by the custodian to the finance department when the petty cash fund is periodically closed out. Additionally, this policy requires the finance director to provide reports of all disbursements for city council review regardless of form of payment.

MN statute requires payment of obligations within 35 days of the latter of the completion date or the vendor invoice date (10 days for liquor purchases.)

Minimum required documentation to be provided by the purchasing division includes:

- A description of the purchase, sufficient to determine allowability under this policy
- Documentation of the procurement procedures performed to comply with this policy
- Pre-approval by the city manager or city council when required by this policy
- An itemized vendor invoice or contract prepared to reasonable standards
- The date the goods or services were received
- Approval by the division head or their designee responsible for the purchase
- Classification (account coding) to:
  - A fund for which the purchasing division has budgetary responsibility, and in which budgeted resources are still available at the date of the goods and services were received
  - A department applicable to the use of the purchase
  - A line item applicable to the object of the purchase
  - Other coding as may be required for project reporting or other purposes
- Asset information required for purchases triggering the City's asset capitalization policy

Invoice approval within the City's accounting system by the division head responsible for the purchase, or by their designee, is deemed to certify the goods or services were received as invoiced, or as corrected on the invoice, that the documentation attached or included by reference for the minimum requirements above is valid and complete, and that to the best of their knowledge the purchase is in compliance with all applicable aspects of City policy.

### **NONCOMPLIANCE**

No agent or employee shall have the authority to bind the City to any contract or purchase except as provided by this policy. Any contract or purchase made on behalf of the City which is not in compliance with this policy and its established procedures shall be deemed unauthorized. Any person making an unauthorized purchase may be liable for payment, restitution and/or further disciplinary action. Any obligation incurred by any City employee for any purpose not authorized in the budget or for any amount more than the authorized amount is considered a personal obligation of the person incurring the expenditure.

**CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS**  
**PROCEDURES MANUAL**

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**PURCHASING POLICY**

**Section 4.01, Appendix B**

**Revision: 2026**

**APPENDIX B– SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES FOR PURCHASING**

**Purpose**

The goal of this policy is to encourage purchasing that reflects the City’s commitment to being an environmental and sustainability leader. This policy may be amended or superseded in the future to also include broader aspects of sustainability. These aspects may include, but are not limited to, local sourcing, ethical business practices, responsible treatment of workers, child labor prevention, human rights, safety and wellness, fair trade, transparency, economic equality and social justice. By including environmental considerations in our procurement decisions, we will remain fiscally responsible while promoting practices that improve public health and safety, reduce pollution, and conserves natural resources.

This policy for purchasing is adopted to promote environmental factors such as:

- Conserving natural resources
- Reducing energy use and purchasing energy from local renewable sources when possible (wind, solar, hydro, etc.)
- Minimizing environmental impacts such as pollution
- Minimizing use of water
- Reducing or eliminating toxins or toxic materials that create hazards to workers and our community
- Supporting strong recycling markets and creating demand for repair work (appliances, equipment, etc.)
- Reducing materials that are landfilled and incinerated
- Creating a model for successfully purchasing environmentally preferable products that encourages other purchasers in our community to adopt similar goals

Promote fiscal factors such as:

- Decreasing lifecycle costs by acknowledging and incorporating full cost accounting (purchase, maintenance, disposal, staff time, and labor)Minimizing waste and its associated costs (disposal costs, depreciation of assets, etc.)

## Responsibilities

All City departments are responsible for implementation of this policy and to ensure their respective employees and contractors are fully aware and supportive of the City's policy to purchase environmentally preferable goods and services. All departments are suggested to:

- Evaluate environmentally preferable products, whenever practical, to determine the extent to which they may be used by the department and its contractors.
- Facilitate data collection on purchases of designated environmentally preferable products by the department in order to assist the City Sustainability Coordinator.

The Sustainability Commission Staff Liaisons will administer this policy. Each department head will have the responsibility of ensuring adoption within his or her department and report any issues to the above party.

### RACI Matrix

**R = Responsible** – who does the work

**A = Accountable** – who is accountable for the actions/results of the work

**C = Consulted** – Involved in work only by providing input/guidance

**I = Informed** – not involved in work but need to be aware

Task	City departments	City council	Community members	Vendors/suppliers
Research sustainable alternatives for existing city purchases	R, A	I	C, I	R
Research sustainable alternatives for new city purchases	R, A	I	C, I	R
Enforce policy compliance in city purchases	R, A	I	I	R
Measure and evaluate compliance/effectiveness of policy	R, A	I	I	I

## Measurement & Evaluation for Sustainability

The City Sustainability Commission Staff Liaisons will work with all city departments to prepare an annual update to the Sustainability Commission and City Council, covering:

- Status of this policy's implementation
- Informal data on purchases of environmentally preferable products
- Financial implications of the policy, if any
- Overall accomplishment and challenges
- Recommendations for the future

## Sectors and Focus Areas For Sustainable Purchasing & Procurement

### A. Purchased Energy

#### A.1. Conservation

The City will prioritize energy-saving purchases such as:

- Energy performance contracting and tracking for existing buildings
- Installation of more efficient technologies such as LED lighting for buildings and grounds
- Daylight or motion sensor lighting
- HVAC control systems
- Passive solar heating / shading

#### A.2. Renewable Electricity

The City will make every effort to purchase renewably generated electricity in all of its accounts, when economically feasible. The city should seek to understand the cost of fully eliminating its electricity-derived carbon footprint and establish goals to reduce energy consumption over the coming decades. Current means of becoming carbon-neutral include but are not limited to:

- Participation in Xcel Energy's Windsource program
- Participation in the Partners in Energy program
- Large-scale solar energy purchasing agreements
- Small-scale 'community solar' projects
- The purchase of carbon offsets (as a last resort when energy savings cannot be realized locally)

#### A.3. Purchased Fossil Fuels

The City will make every effort to offset the environmental impacts of its purchased fossil fuels when economically feasible. The city should understand the cost of offsetting its carbon emissions originating from: 1) natural gas, 2) gasoline, 3) diesel / fuel oil. Current means of becoming carbon neutral with respect to fossil fuels include but are not limited to:

- Natural gas performance contracting for existing buildings
- Participation in CenterPoint Energy's Green Balance Program
- The planned purchase of higher efficiency or plug-in electric vehicle fleets
- Fuel switching from natural gas to renewables for buildings and infrastructure
- The purchase of carbon offsets

### B. Source Reduction

The City will actively seek out and purchase products that are durable, long lasting, reusable or refillable, when possible. The City will encourage vendors/suppliers to take back and reuse pallets and packaging materials such as plastic bags, cardboard and similar materials.

### **C. Recycled Content Products**

100% post-consumer recycled content is strongly preferred if fiscally possible (within a 10% of typical cost) for printing paper, office paper, paper products, and janitorial commodities. Any non-recycled paper content should be certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

### **D. Electronics**

Where applicable, energy-efficient Information Technology equipment will be purchased with the most up-to-date energy efficiency functions. When necessary, suppliers or manufacturers will train equipment operators and maintenance personnel in the proper enabling and use of energy efficient and sleep mode functions on their equipment. All appliances and products purchased by the City and for which the US EPA Energy Star certification is available will meet Energy Star certification. Typically, this would include lighting, heating, exhaust fans, water heaters, computers, exit signs, and appliances such as refrigerators, dishwashers and microwave ovens. When Energy Star labels are not available, use energy efficient products that are in the upper 25% of energy efficiency as designated by the Federal Energy Management Program.

The city will consider rechargeable battery systems for common household sizes: AA, AAA, etc. Disposable batteries will only be purchased if no rechargeable option exists or if there are significant reasons why a rechargeable battery system is suboptimal.

When outdoor lighting needs replacement, the city will increase efficiency through fully shielded lights (not just horizontal cutoff), LEDs 3000 Kelvin or less to promote warmer lighting with smart controls following these principles:

- All light should have a clear purpose and consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and their habitats.
- Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of light beams so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.
- Use the lowest light level required and be mindful of surface conditions as some can reflect more light into the night sky than intended.
- Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.
- Use warmer color lights whenever possible to limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue violet) light to the least amount needed.

### **E. Water Conservation**

The City shall purchase U.S. EPA WaterSense-certified products whenever practicable. This includes, but is not limited to, high-performance fixtures like toilets, waterless urinals, low-flow faucets and aerators, and upgraded irrigation systems.

### **F. Green Cleaning**

#### **F.1. Green Cleaning Roles & Responsibilities**

The City's Facilities Maintenance Supervisor will be responsible for implementing and maintaining green cleaning processes and products to ensure all City buildings are maintained in a clean and sustainable manner. This role should also collect and report feedback from City staff on the efficacy of these efforts and opportunities for improvement.

### **F.2. Cleaning Products and Materials**

Cleaning products should meet one or more of the following standards:

- Green Seal GS-37, Green Seal GS-40
- EPA Safer Choice Standard.
- Hand soaps and hand sanitizers contain no antimicrobial agents except where required by health codes and other regulations (food service and health care requirements) and meet Green Seal GS-41.
- Hand sanitizers meet UL 2783 standard for Instant Hand Antiseptics.

### **F.3. Cleaning Contracts & Services**

Strategies for reducing toxicity should be included in contracted cleaning activities:

- Cleaning staff and building occupants are supplied with safe cleaning chemicals that meet the sustainability criteria described in the purchasing guidelines above.
- Hard floors, including tile, concrete, and wood surfaces, are cleaned with only environmentally friendly cleaning products.
- Microfiber cloth and other sustainable, high-performance cleaning techniques replacing traditional cleaning activities.
- Ionized water-only surface cleaning devices used as much as possible.

Strategies for conserving energy, water, and chemicals used for cleaning:

- Manual-powered equipment and cleaning strategies used whenever practicable to reduce the energy and water used by powered equipment and typical cleaning strategies.
- Cold water used when possible, to reduce energy used to heat hot water.
- Vacuum filters and other applicable equipment changed/cleaned frequently to enable air flow and reduce the energy consumption of the equipment.
- When cleaning chemicals are necessary, the operating procedures for chemical dilution are followed to ensure that the minimum amount of cleaning chemical is used.

Training plan and tracking plan for water, energy, and toxic chemical usage:

- A training plan is developed to ensure all new staff understands this policy.
- Every time a toxic chemical is used at most City buildings managed by Facilities Maintenance Division, it should be reported to the Columbia Heights Facilities Maintenance Supervisor with a record of which chemical was used, where it was applied, and the reason for its use (exceptions may be granted by the City Sustainability Coordinator). At the present time, the Rec Center and Park Buildings will be exempt from this requirement.

### **G. Waste Minimization**

To reduce the amount of landfilled/incinerated waste, the City will:

- Require vendors to eliminate packaging or use the minimum amount necessary for product protection, to the greatest extent practicable.
- Prioritize the purchase of items in packaging that are reusable, recyclable or compostable when suitable uses and programs exist. Take reasonable measures to verify packaging before purchase, including contacting the seller to request low-packaging options.
- Encourage vendors to take back and reuse pallets/packaging materials.
- Ask suppliers of electronic equipment, including but not limited to computers, monitors, printers, and copiers, to take back equipment for reuse or environmentally safe recycling when Columbia Heights discards or replaces such equipment, whenever practicable.
- Collect recyclable materials from purchases in all City buildings and properties (paper, glass, metal, plastic, etc.) and ensure delivery to proper facilities for processing
- Provide feedback and recommendations to suppliers for packaging and product improvements to reduce waste (e.g. no plastic wrap or tape)

## **H. Landscape Maintenance and Materials**

The City of Columbia Heights will strive to make sustainable and environmentally preferable decisions in all forms of landscaping and grounds installation and maintenance whenever practicable. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Designing for resilience
- Reducing maintenance requirements
- Optimizing the life cycle of materials and products
- Minimizing fossil fuel use
- Minimizing use of toxic chemicals and other environmental contaminants
- Preventing the spread of harmful diseases, pests, and invasive species
- Reducing transport of landscape debris whenever possible
- Installing native and locally grown plants and materials

### **H.1 Landscape Maintenance Equipment**

Maintaining landscapes has historically favored the use of equipment reliant upon fossil fuels for mowing, weed whipping, and other typical activities. Once existing equipment has reached the end of its useful life, those responsible for purchasing replacements shall explore electric options and transition the fleet away from fossil fuel-powered equipment whenever comparably functional equipment is available. Landscapes that require frequent additions of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides are to be phased out wherever possible.

### **H.2 Lawns**

As parks and other city-owned lands are redesigned, landscapes shall be examined for opportunities to transition underutilized lawn spaces away from turf and towards lower-maintenance native landscape types that reduce the need for mowing and continual purchase of gasoline and other fossil fuels.

On city-owned properties, whenever new lawns are installed or existing lawns require reseeding, the standard lawn seed mixture shall be low-maintenance turf comprised of mixed fescues and low growing pollinator-friendly flowering species, wherever high-maintenance Kentucky bluegrass-based turf is not required.

The City shall not utilize herbicides, pesticides, or fertilizer on lawns except where it is deemed necessary to maintain quality turf for athletics or other active uses. Fertilizer shall only be purchased after soil testing to

confirm optimal nutrient quantities for that specific location and application shall be in accordance with Minnesota Department of Agriculture guidance for responsible use of fertilizers.

### **H.3 Other Landscapes**

Native plantings, natural areas, and open spaces shall be maintained to prioritize native species and protect pollinators wherever practicable. Invasive species shall be controlled by hand or mechanical pulling wherever possible in order to limit purchasing, storage, and application of toxic chemicals. Burning, mowing, and grazing shall be utilized strategically where practicable to reduce spread of unwanted species and limit the need for chemical application. When deemed necessary by qualified professionals, chemical herbicide or pesticide selection must be informed by Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) best practices and other relevant agency guidance. Application must be conducted by trained individuals in a targeted and strategic manner.

Purchasing of trees, plants, and seed shall favor native and climate-adaptable species from within no more than a 175-mile range. All plants purchased or installed by the City or subject to City ordinance requirements shall be free of neonicotinoids.

When purchasing landscaping materials that have the potential to harbor weeds, disease, pests, or prohibited or invasive species, employ due diligence in sourcing to prevent their spread within our community. Soil, compost, plants, and mulches purchased for use on City property or distributed for resident use shall be treated or otherwise certified free of jumping worms, weed-seed, and other potential contaminants wherever possible, or inspected prior to distribution and application.

Erosion control blankets and other erosion control products shall be 100% biodegradable and wildlife-friendly wherever possible. Stakes, staples, and other installation hardware shall be wood or otherwise biodegradable rather than plastic.

### **H.4. Maintenance Contracts**

The City of Columbia Heights will ask our vendors and suppliers, in contract terms, to use environmentally preferable equipment, materials and techniques in all forms of landscaping and grounds maintenance when practicable.

## **I. Producer Responsibility**

The City of Columbia Heights will, whenever practicable, favor products that are manufactured by companies that take financial and/or physical responsibility for collecting, recycling, reusing, or otherwise safely disposing of their products and packaging at the end of their useful life.

## **J. Sustainability of Investments**

Whenever practicable, the City of Columbia Heights will avoid making investments in which the city and its employees stand to profit from the extraction, sale, transportation or consumption of fossil fuels or other known environmental hazards. The city will seek out a plan to divest current financial assets held in fossil fuels and reinvest these assets in more sustainable investment areas, such as clean energy when practicable.

## **K. Future Focus**

This policy is intended to be a living document that will serve the City for years to come even while sustainability standards evolve. Future policy topics may include but are not limited to: guidelines on fleet vehicles, purchased

landscape materials and services, city building retrofits, city infrastructure service and material procurement, and purchased energy.

## L. DEFINITIONS

**Environmentally preferable products and services** as defined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) means products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared to competing products and services that serve the same purpose. This applies to raw material acquisition, as well as product manufacturing, distribution, use, maintenance, and disposal.

The following attributes should be considered when determining whether a product or service is environmentally preferable:

- **Available locally:** one or more businesses within the county/city or immediate surrounding areas can provide goods and services in a timely manner, and in sufficient quantity and quality to meet a specific department/agency need at a competitive cost.
- **Bio-based:** commercial or industrial products (other than food or feed) that utilize plant-based contents and residuals but does not include products made from forestry materials.
- **Biodegradable:** the ability of a substance, material, or product ingredient to readily decompose by the action of microbes. Being biodegradable does not mean that it is also compostable, however. While a biodegradable item may break down into smaller bits, these components may not be able to provide any nutrients when used as compost. For that reason, 'compostable' is preferred.
- **Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) free:** the family of compounds of chlorine, fluorine, and carbon. CFCs contribute to the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer, and have been used as an ingredient for refrigerants, solvents, and for blowing plastic-foam insulation and packaging. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer calls for complete elimination of CFC production.
- **Compostable** – capable of undergoing aerobic biological decomposition in a compost system, such that the material becomes visually indistinguishable and breaks down into carbon dioxide, water, inorganic compounds, and biomass.
- **Dioxin-free and furan-free** – a group of chemical compounds that are classified as persistent, bio-accumulative, and toxic by the Environmental Protection Agency.
- **Durable, reusable or refillable**
- **Energy efficient:** a product that is in the upper 25% of energy efficiency for all similar products, or that is at least 10% more efficient than the minimum level that meets Federal standards.
- **Energy Star** – the US EPA's energy efficiency product labeling program: <http://www.energystar.gov>
- **Heavy metal free (i.e. no lead, mercury, cadmium)** – products, materials, or ingredients that do not contain detectable or functional levels of toxic metallic elements.
- **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)** – the self-assessing system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council designed for rating new and existing commercial, institutional, and high-rise residential buildings. Credits are earned for satisfying defined criteria and standards. Different levels of green building certification are awarded based on the total credits earned.
- **Light Emitting Diode (LED)** – a highly efficient and long-lasting form of interior & exterior illumination.
- **Low toxicity** – a chemical or material property indicating a minimal capacity to cause adverse health effects or environmental damage under typical exposure conditions.

- **Low volatile organic compound (VOC) content** –
- **Made from renewable products** – items manufactured from natural, bio-based materials that replenish themselves quickly, typically within a human lifespan (e.g., wood, plants, agricultural crops) rather than finite resources like petroleum.
- **Mindful of material types and lifecycles:**
  - **Post-consumer Material** – a finished material which would normally be disposed of as a solid waste, having reached its intended end-use and completed its life cycle as a consumer item, and does not include manufacturing or converting wastes.
  - **Post-consumer recycled material** – material that has been discarded for disposal or recovery, having completed its life as a consumer item, and is used as a raw material for new products.
  - **Pre-consumer Material** – material or by-products generated after manufacture of a product is completed but before the product reaches the end-use consumer.
  - **Recovered Material** – fragments of products or finished products of a manufacturing process, which has converted a resource into a commodity of real economic value, and includes pre-consumer and postconsumer material but does not include excess resources of the manufacturing process.
  - **Remanufactured Product** – any product diverted from the supply of discarded materials by refurbishing and marketing said product without substantial change to its original form.
  - **Reused Product** – any product designed to be used many times for the same or other purposes.
- **Mindful of packaging use and disposal**
  - **Reduced packaging** – reducing the quantity of materials used to package a product while ensuring its protection and integrity during transport and storage.
  - **Reduced landfill and incineration of materials** – the strategic, intentional minimization of waste sent to landfills or thermal treatment facilities, prioritizing waste prevention, reuse, recycling, and composting.
- **Polystyrene-free:** commonly known as Styrofoam, non-recyclable packaging material
- **Recycling**
  - **Recyclable** – a material or product that can be reprocessed, remanufactured, or reused.
  - **Recycled Content** – the percentage of recovered material, including pre-consumer and postconsumer materials, in a product.
  - **Recycled Content Standard** – the minimum level of recovered material and/or postconsumer material necessary for products to qualify as recycled products.
  - **Recycled Product** – a product that meets the City’s recycled content policy objectives for postconsumer and recovered material.
- **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions** – the intentional, strategic, and practical measures taken to decrease the number of heat-trapping gases released into the atmosphere.
- **Refurbished/able to be refurbished** – restoring a used item to a functional and aesthetically renewed state, extending its life and reducing environmental impact.
- **Source Reduction** – the net reduction in generation of waste and toxic constituents.
- **Water efficient (water-saving products):** products in the upper 25% of water conservation for all similar products, or at least 10% more water-conserving than the minimum level that meets the Federal standards

Benchmarks:

- City of New Brighton: <https://www.newbrightonmn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1910/New-Brighton-Climate-Action-Plan-110723>
- City of St Louis Park: <https://www.stlouisparkmn.gov/business/zero-waste-packaging-ordinance>