



is a proud partner of
MN GreenStep Cities



Q&A

What is MN GreenStep Cities?

MN GreenStep Cities is a voluntary challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability and quality-of-life goals. It is a continuous improvement program that is free and managed by a public-private partnership.

How does it work?

MN GreenStep Cities serves as a framework for cities and is based on 28 best practices. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more actions at a 1, 2 or 3-star level, from a list of four to eight actions. These actions are tailored to all Minnesota cities, focus on cost savings and energy use reduction, and encourage civic innovation. Achievement of 1st, 2nd, or 3rd step status is based on the number of best practices and actions completed by the city.

What is the presence of MN GreenStep Cities across the state?

59 cities in Minnesota are participating in this program. Among these cities, 24 are Step 2, and 11 have achieved Step 3 designation.

What is its history?

In 2007, Minnesota's Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) held regional listening sessions around the state to discuss community-based energy opportunities and the state's Next Generation Energy Act of 2007. The idea was raised of creating a sustainable cities program, free to cities, that would challenge, assist and recognize cities that were "green stars." This idea was taken up by the 2008 Legislature, which directed the MPCA, the Division of Energy Resources at the Minnesota Department of Commerce, and CERTs to recommend actions cities could take on a voluntary basis. Representatives from dozens of cities, non-profit organizations, businesses and state government agencies provided the outline for what has been developed as the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program, which began in June 2010.

The 28 GreenStep Best Practices

Buildings and Lighting

- 1. Efficient Existing Public Buildings:** Benchmark energy usage, identify savings opportunities, and work with 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 structures.
- 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 of street lights, traffic signals and outdoor public lighting.
- 5. Building Reuse:** Create economic and regulatory incentives for redeveloping and repurposing existing buildings before building new.



Land Use

- 6. Comprehensive Plan and Implementation:** Adopt a Comprehensive Plan and tie regulatory ordinances to it.
- 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-Oriented Development:** Adopt commercial development and design standards for highway corridors.



- 10. Conservation Design:** Adopt development ordinances or processes that protect natural systems.

Transportation

- 11. Complete Green Streets:** Create a network of multimodal green streets that add value to the 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. 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. Efficient Stormwater Management:** Minimize the volume of and pollutants in rainwater 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 Facilities:** Assess and improve city drinking water and wastewater 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.

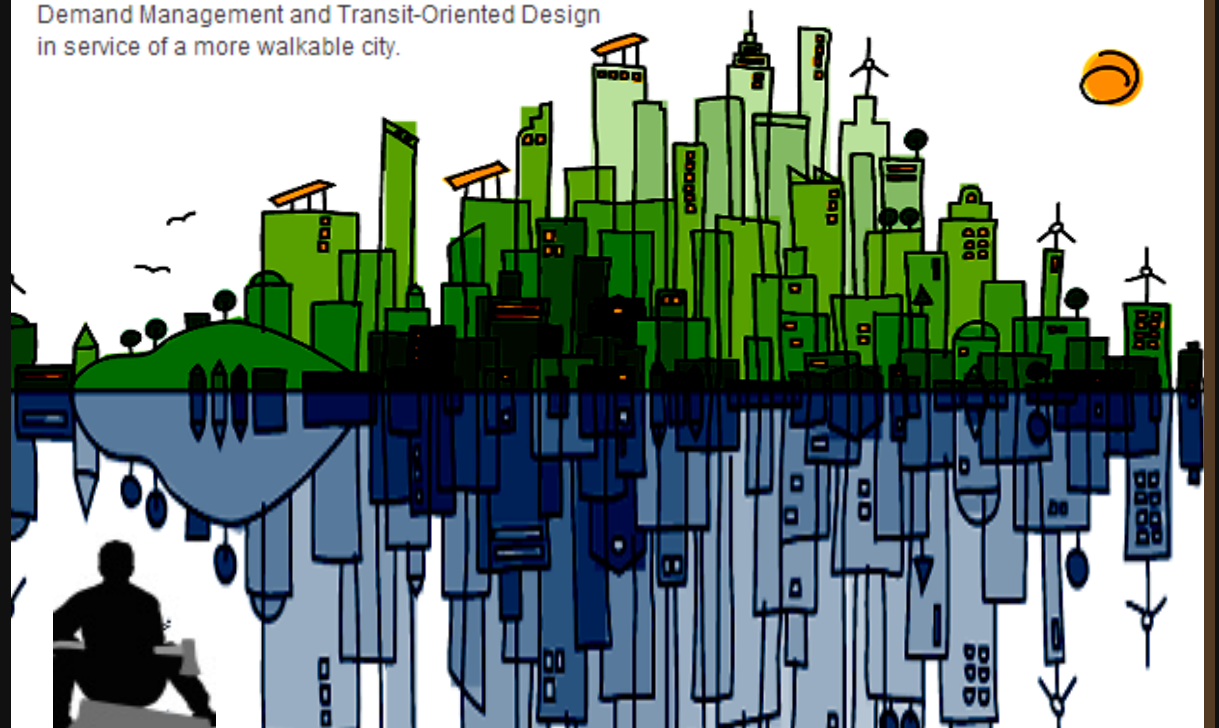


Economic and Community Development

- 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.





GreenStep Cities Best Practice		Requirements for Category A City	Bemidji's Implementation Status
Buildings & Lighting	1 Efficient Existing Public Buildings	Required (Action 1 and 2)	In progress (Action 1 in progress, Action 2 newly added)
	2 Efficient Existing Private Buildings	Optional (at least two actions)	
	3 New Green Buildings	Optional (two actions)	
	4 Efficient Building & Street Lighting and Signals	Chosen (two actions required)	Completed (Action 4 and 8)
	5 Building Reuse	Optional (at least one action)	
Buildings & Lighting BPs Completed/Required		2	1
Land Use	6 Comprehensive Planning and Implementation	Required (Action 1 and 2)	In Progress (Action 1 and 2)
	7 Efficient City Growth	Optional (at least one action)	
	8 Efficient and Healthy Development Patterns	Chosen (two actions required)	Completed (Action 1, 2, and 3)
	9 Efficient Highway-Oriented Development	Optional (at least one action)	
	10 Conservation Design	Optional (at least one action)	
Land Use BPs Completed/Required		2	1
Transportation	11 Complete Green Streets	Required (Action 1 plus two additional)	Completed (Action 1, 5, and 6)
	12 Mobility Options	Required (at least two actions)	Completed (Action 1 and 2)
	13 Efficient City Fleets	Optional (at least two actions)	
	14 Demand-Side Travel Planning	Optional (at least two actions)	
	Transportation BPs Completed/Required		2
Environmental Management	15 Environmentally Preferable Purchasing	Required (Action 1 plus one additional)	In progress (Action 1)
	16 Urban Forests	Required (at least two actions)	Completed (Action 1 and 6)
	17 Efficient Stormwater Management	Required (at least one action)	In progress
	18 Parks and Trails	Optional (at least three actions)	Completed (Action 1, 2, and 8)
	19 Surface Water Quality	Optional (Action 4 plus additional)	
	20 Efficient Water and Wastewater Facilities	Optional (Action 1 and 2, plus additional)	In Progress
	21 Septic Systems	Optional (at least one action)	Almost Completed
	22 Solid Waste Reduction	Optional (two actions)	
	23 Local Air Quality	Optional (at least two)	
Environmental BPs Required/Completed		3	2
Economic & Community Development	24 Benchmarks & Community Engagement	Required (Action 1 and 2)	In Progress (Action 4 complete)
	25 Green Business Development	Required (at least two actions)	In Progress
	26 Renewable Energy	Optional (two actions)	Complete (Action 1 and 2)
	27 Local Food	Optional (one action)	Completed (Action 3)
	28 Business Synergies	Optional (Action 2, 3, or 4)	
Development BPs Required/Completed		2	2



Our Progress

The Bemidji community has been working very hard on the adoption of a number of best practices. So far, Bemidji has adopted best practices 4, 8, 11, 12, 16, 18, 26, 27.

Best practice 21 is nearly complete.

Best practices 1, 6, 15, 20, 24, and 25 are in progress.

To earn 3rd Step designation, we need to implement 16 best practices of which we already have completed 8.

The table to the left shows a more detailed layout of our progress. The column on the far left indicates the category of best practice. The second and third columns from the left show the name of the best practice and its numeric counterpart. The next column explains the requirements for a Category A city such as Bemidji. The column closest to this text signifies the completion status of the best practices.

History of GreenStep Cities in Bemidji

On January 18, 2014, the first-ever GreenStep Cities Celebration commenced at Brigid's!

On December 16, 2013, representing the City's Sustainability Committee, Erika Bailey-Johnson, Bemidji State University's Sustainability Coordinator, and Sara Dennison, BSU's third GreenCorps member, give a report on MN GreenStep Cities to the City Council. At this meeting, the City Council asked Sustainability Committee to present on a quarterly basis.

On June 6, 2013, Bemidji was awarded second step designation, work begins to determine how to throw the first-ever GreenStep Cities Celebration.

In August 2012, Caitlyn Schuchhardt, Bemidji State University's second MN GreenCorps member begins her service term in the Sustainability Office with Erika Bailey-Johnson and is tasked to continue the MN GreenStep Cities efforts of the Sustainability Committee of the previous year. The Bemidji community adopts a number of the 28 best practices and strides toward second step designation.

On Feb. 6, 2012, Resolution No. 5647 was passed authorizing the city of Bemidji to participate in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities Program and is awarded first step designation.

In October of 2011, Brett Cease, a member of the MN GreenCorps begins his service term under the guidance of Erika Bailey-Johnson the Sustainability Director at Bemidji State University. During his term, the Sustainability Committee in presents MN GreenStep Cities program to the City Council.

Interest in GreenStep Cities began when information from a Back2Basics workshop in Pine River, a GreenStep Cities presentation at a workshop in Grand Rapids, and insight from the Bemidji and surrounding area made its way to our community.



Snapshot of Sustainability Projects in Bemidji

Blandin Leadership Initiative

BSU Biomass Project
Luekens aquaponics project

Certified Wildlife Habitats

CERTs Forum

Community Food Shelf Initiatives
Community Gardens

Comprehensive Planning

Energy Efficiency Projects

Future UMACs host

Grease Waste Education

Indigenous Environmental Network
Initiatives

LEED Building Design

Local Foods Initiatives

Nice Ride

Partnerships with surrounding community

Rail River Folk School Initiatives

Recycling

Renewably Energy Projects
-Solar Garden
-Financing (CERTs Project)

Traditional Skills Workshops at BSU

Sustainability Minor at BSU

Sustainable Energy Technology Program at
NTC

Sustainable Homes Tour

Sustainable Landscaping Projects

Sustainable Tuesdays

Shoreline Restoration Projects

& more!

The Future of MN GreenStep Cities is YOU!

Please share your vision for sustainability in Bemidji by:

1. Filling out a short survey on the table below.
2. Sharing your voice at Sustainability Committee meetings the first Wednesday of every month at City Hall at 6:30-8:00.
3. Emailing Michelle Miller @ michelle.miller@ci.bemidji.mn.us to be added to the Sustainability Committee's email list.
4. Contacting one of the folks below:

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