



**SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION MEETING**

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|-----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>AGENDA SECTION</b> | <b>NEW BUSINESS</b> |
| <b>MEETING DATE</b>   | MAY 13, 2025        |

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|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| <b>ITEM:</b>  | <b>Xcel Energy Partners in Energy – Energy Action Plan</b>                    |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |
| <b>DEPARTMENT:</b>  | <b>Community Development</b>  | <b>BY/DATE:</b> Andrew Boucher – City Planner |   |   |  |   |   |   |
| <p><b>CORE CITY STRATEGIES:</b> <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an “X” in front of the selected text below)</i></p> <table> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Healthy and Safe Community</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Thriving and Vibrant Destination Community</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Equitable, Diverse, Inclusive, and Friendly</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong Infrastructure and Public Services</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Trusted and Engaged Leadership</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainable</td> </tr> </table> |   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy and Safe Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Thriving and Vibrant Destination Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Equitable, Diverse, Inclusive, and Friendly | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong Infrastructure and Public Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Trusted and Engaged Leadership | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Healthy and Safe Community   | <input type="checkbox"/> Thriving and Vibrant Destination Community           |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Equitable, Diverse, Inclusive, and Friendly  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strong Infrastructure and Public Services |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trusted and Engaged Leadership   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sustainable                               |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |

**BACKGROUND**

City staff and the Energy Action Team have spent the last year or so participating in Xcel Energy’s Partners in Energy program contributing towards the creation of a City Energy Action Plan. The Energy Action Team is composed of city staff, elected officials, board and commission members, faith leaders, landlords, and other involved community residents.

Over the course of five workshops, the Energy Action Team drafted a vision statement striving to be a leader on energy, equity, and sustainability by providing resources for all community members and stakeholders to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy, save money, and strengthen community connections to improve community resilience. The team developed four focus areas that are considered the top priorities and these include: Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy, Reducing Energy Burden for Low-Income Residents, and Beneficial Electrification.

Some noteworthy statistics that came out of the first workshop include:

- Median age of 37; 48% of the population is a race other than white; 27% of residents speak a language other than English.
- Median household income is \$70,470 with median home value being \$242,100 and a poverty rate of 13%.
- 86% of housing units were built before 2000 with ¾ of the 9,216 units built before 1980; 69% of these are single-family houses and 34% of the total housing units are renter-occupied.

Other important factors that weighed into the development of the focus areas include but are not limited to:

- 87% of premises in Columbia Heights are residential, but 63% of energy use is from residential and the remaining 37% is from the commercial and industrial sector.
- Residents spend about \$1,700 annually on fuel costs on average or \$142 per month; many residents face high energy burdens with 41% of households earning less than 60% of AMI.

Currently, there is an average of 684 residents and 39 businesses that participate in Xcel Energy efficiency programs each year; CenterPoint Energy programs have 1,860 residents and 26 businesses that participate

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each year. If a single home participated in two different programs, that is counted as two participations for the year. Commercial and industrial participants have savings that are more than 10 times the savings for residential participants.

Other renewable energy program information includes two types of renewable energy options for residents and businesses either on-site programs (solar rewards or net metering from solar panels on rooftops) or through subscription programs (Renewable\*Connect Flex). Columbia Heights has 500 residents and 9 businesses that subscribe to Renewable Connect Flex. There are 17 businesses with on-site solar, and 16 businesses subscribe to community solar gardens. There are also 199 electric vehicles registered within the City and there are limited numbers of Level 2 chargers available for public use.

In the second and third workshops, the team identified community assets, or the resources available in Columbia Heights that can help make the Energy Action Plan successful. Some examples of programs that are provided include: building assessments to help a business review and understand their energy use, rebates for high-efficiency equipment to reduce upfront costs, programs to provide guidance and support on building an energy efficient building, demand management and rate options to help reduce bills, renewable energy and electric vehicle programs. The team also identified stakeholders, champions, communication channels, trusted places and groups, and the audiences to be engaged and set an overall community-wide goal using the SMARTIE method based on levels of ambition, timeline, and defined metrics:

“Columbia Heights will increase energy program participation by 30% between 2025 and 2030. This will save the community an estimated \$4.6 million and increase energy savings 63% by 2030.”

In this workshop, strategies, barriers, and benefits were discussed and some strategy examples were defined as; assisting residents in understanding and participating in on-site solar, encouraging businesses to undergo lighting retrofits, connecting seniors with low-income energy programs, and having residents take advantage of insulation rebates.

The fourth workshop focused on developing strategies based on enthusiasm, scarcity, and prioritization before the final workshop evaluated these strategies as either “core” high-priority actions that can be implemented right away or “stretch” strategies which are longer-term initiatives with lower immediate priority. The strategies were then evaluated on an x-axis/y-axis graph based on feasibility and impact.

The team then gave elevator pitches about the strategies they were most passionate about, why and how each strategy should be implemented. The strategies that were pitched focused on multi-lingual outreach to connect people with programs, audits, rebates, and energy assistance; recognize and showcase success stories across the city; support local businesses with energy efficiency improvement; centralize resources on the city webpage; and identify opportunities for beneficial electrification including addressing EV charging.

The Energy Action Team held a virtual feedback session and provided feedback on the plan to confirm that it reflects the work and priorities from the workshops. The next steps are to bring the Energy Action Plan to the June 2, 2025 City Council Work Session and formally adopt the plan at the June 9, 2025 City Council meeting.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**RECOMMENDED MOTION(S):**

MOTION: Move to give a positive recommendation to the Energy Action Plan and that the Council Liaison, Rachel James, introduce the plan at the June 2, 2025 City Council Work Session and direct staff to proceed with preparing the plan for the June 9, 2025 City Council meeting.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

- Workshop Notes
- Energy Action Plan