



MINNESOTA
GREENSTEP CITIES

About Us

History and development

During fall 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 (see the report to the Minnesota Legislature).



Representatives from dozens of cities, non-profit organizations, the University of MN, businesses and state government agencies provided the outline for what has been developed as the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program, which began in June 2010. As a non-regulatory program, GreenStep learns from Minnesota cities and assistance providers, and continually refines the best practice actions and the resources for taking action. The program also benefits from contact with over fifteen other GreenStep-like programs across the nation, and helped create the national Sustainable States Network in 2015.

The GreenStep Cities Steering Committee adopted this Racial Equity and Inclusion Statement in 2020:

The GreenStep Cities program supports Minnesota communities in building resilient and inclusive communities that meet the needs of Black, Indigenous, people of color and other populations historically harmed by environmental injustice and the disparities that result from exclusionary practices.

Accomplishments

Learn more about the programs accomplishments and city reflections:

- Annual Program Report, 2022
- Annual Recognition: See new step accomplishments, notable actions and metrics, and more
- Video: GreenStep Cities - Decade of Growth
- Infographic *10 Years of GreenStep Impacts & Accomplishments*
- Read city stories in the Community Highlight series
- Video: City Reflections on 10-Years



Strategic Plans

- 2020 Strategic Plan (PDF): Includes information and background about the GreenStep Cities program, recent initiatives focused on climate and equity, stakeholder feedback, as well as recommendations, priorities, and strategies for the future of the GreenStep Cities program.
- Green STEP Into the Future Report (and 2-page summary): Leveraging the value of sustainability challenge, assistance, and recognition programs - A report of the GreenStep Cities, Tribal Nations, and Schools programs and a discussion on ways to expand outreach and impacts.





Program Awards

In May 2012 the GreenStep Cities program received awards in the categories of Sustainable Communities and 2012 Partnership of the Year from the Minnesota organization Environmental Initiative. The awards honor partnerships, inspire other organizations to create similar projects, and encourage collaborative approaches to environmental problem solving. Over 340 attendees at the awards dinner voted among the 15 finalists nominated for the 2012 Partnership of the Year.



In 2016 the Humphrey Institute School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota presented GreenStep with a State Government Innovation Award: one of ten awards to recognize state government entities engaged in innovation and service redesign.

Partner organizations

Of the organizations that created the 2009 report to the Legislature, this working group below meets monthly as the GreenStep Cities steering committee, contributing time and funding to implement the GreenStep Cities program.



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Program funders

In addition to staff time and funding contributed by the state agencies above to work on the GreenStep program, the partner organizations contribute valuable time and expertise.

Partner programs

The Minnesota GreenStep Tribal Nations program, launched in 2014 as a pilot program to the GreenStep Cities program, is a free and voluntary statewide best practices framework, community of practice, and recognition program for tribal nations and communities located in Minnesota to reduce environmental impact and costs, and improve health and well-being of tribal members and staff.

The Minnesota GreenStep Schools program, launched in 2020, is a free and voluntary statewide best practices framework, community of practice, and recognition program for public and private K-12 schools and districts to reduce environmental impact and costs, improve health and well-being of students and staff, and provide effective environmental and sustainability education.