

## The MN GreenStep Cities 29 Best Practices

Of the 29 best practices, I highlighted (in yellow) the three that I believe could best be addressed by the PTRC. Details about those are listed afterwards. The actions highlighted in green are ones that the city has already reported to the GreenStepCities program; those in orange are ones that I believe we could possibly consider moving forward.

### Buildings and Lighting

#### 1. Efficient Existing Public Buildings

Benchmark energy and water 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 residential, not-for-profit and commercial 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 redevelopment and repurposing of existing buildings.

### Land Use

#### 6. Comprehensive Climate and Energy Plans

Build public support and legal validity to long-term infrastructural and regulatory strategy.

#### 7. Resilient City Growth

Increase financial and environmental sustainability by enabling and encouraging walkable housing and retail land use.

#### 8. Mixed Uses

Develop efficient land patterns that generate community health and 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 & Complete Streets

Create a network of green complete streets that improves city quality of life, public health, and adds value to surrounding properties.

#### 12. Mobility Options

Increase 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 to improve health and environmental outcomes.

### 16. Community Forests and Soils

Add city tree and plant cover that conserves topsoils and increases community health, wealth, quality of life.

### 17. Stormwater Management

Minimize the volume of and pollutants in rainwater runoff by maximizing green infrastructure.

## **18. Parks and Trails**

Increase active lifestyles and property values by enhancing the city's green infrastructure.

### 19. Surface Water

Improve local water bodies to sustain their long-term ecological function and community benefits.

### 20. Efficient Water and Wastewater Systems

Assess and improve city drinking water and wastewater systems and related facilities.

### 21. Septic Systems

Implement an environmentally sound management program for decentralized wastewater treatment systems.

### 22. Sustainable Consumption and Waste

Increase waste prevention, reuse and recycling, moving to a lower-consumption, more cyclical, biological approach to materials management.

### 23. Local Air Quality

Prevent generation of local air contaminants so as to improve community health.

## **Resilient Economic and Community Development**

### 24. Benchmarks and 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

Expand a greener, more resilient business sector.

### 26. Renewable Energy

Remove barriers to and encourage installation of renewable energy generation capacity.

## **27. Local Food**

Strengthen local food production and access.

### 28. Business Synergies and EcoDistricts

Network/cluster businesses and design neighborhoods and developments to achieve better energy, social, economic and environmental outcomes in service of a more circular and equitable economy.

### 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.

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## **Design for Natural Resource Conservation {BP No. 10}**

Adopt development ordinances or processes that protect natural systems and valued community assets.

### Best Practice Actions

1. Conduct a Natural Resource Inventory or Assessment (NRI or NRA); incorporate protection of priority natural systems or resources such as groundwater through the subdivision or development process.
2. For cities outside or on the fringe of metropolitan areas, conduct a build-out analysis, fiscal impact study, or adopt an urban growth boundary and a consistent capital improvement plan that provides long-term protection of natural resources and natural systems, and agricultural practices outside the boundary.
3. For cities within metropolitan areas, incorporate woodland best management practices addressing protection of wooded areas into zoning or development review.
4. Adopt a conservation design policy; use a conservation design tool for pre-design meetings with developers and for negotiating development agreements in cities with undeveloped natural resource areas.
5. Preserve environmentally sensitive, community-valued land by placing a conservation easement on city lands, and by encouraging/funding private landowners to place land in conservation easements.
6. Conserve natural, cultural, historic resources by adopting or amending city codes and ordinances to support sustainable sites, including roadsides, and environmentally protective land use development.
7. Support and protect wildlife through habitat rehabilitation, preservation and recognition programs.

**1 star:** Report city actions that strengthen the ecology for birds, pollinators, other wildlife and for native plants; for example, replacing a dam with a spillway/rapids to restore and enhance fish passage and habitat.

**2 star:** Register and begin work on completing actions in the Bird City MN program, Bee City USA, or/and the Community Wildlife Habitat program.

**3 star:** Be recognized as a Bird City Minnesota, Bee City USA, or/and a certified Wildlife Habitat.

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## **Parks and Trails {BP No. 18}**

Increase active lifestyles and property values by enhancing the city's green infrastructure.

### Best Practice Actions

1. Make improvements within your city's system of parks, offroad trails and open spaces.
2. Plan and budget for a network of parks, green spaces, water features and trails for areas where new development is planned.
3. Achieve minimum levels of city green space and maximize the percent within a ten-minute walk of community members.
4. Adopt low-impact design standards in parks and trails that infiltrate or retain all 2 inch, 24-hour stormwater events on site.
5. Create park/city land management standards/practices that maximize at least one of the following:
  - a. Low maintenance turf management; native landscaping; organic or integrated pest management; pollinator/monarch-safe policies.

**1 star:** Introduce low/no mow areas into parkland; proactively manage invasive species; collect recyclables; install an environmental learning/demonstration garden/site; use compost as a soil amendment. List food garden plots in city parks under BPA 27.3; report electric utility vehicles under BPA 13.2; report Lawn to Legumes activity under BPA 2.6

**2 star:** Introduce low/no mow areas into parkland AND utilize organic or integrated pest management; certify through the MPCA at least one city staff person at Level 1 in turf grass BMPs; collect compostables; plant a pollinator garden and/or adopt a pollinator habitat policy.

**3 star:** Provide sources of non-potable water, or surface/rain water, for parkland irrigation; require all city-licensed turf grass services to have staff certified at Level 1 in MPCA turf grass BMPs; transition to all-electric equipment; introduce sheep/goats to keep grass mowed/invasives at bay; raise honey on city land/buildings; other innovative methods.

- b. Recycling/compostables collection; use of compost as a soil amendment.
- c. Sources of nonpotable water, or surface/rain water, for irrigation.

6. Certify at least one golf course in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program.

7. Document that the operation and maintenance, or construction / remodeling, of at least one park building used an asset management tool, the SB 2030 energy standard, or a green building framework.

8. Develop a program to involve community members in hands-on land restoration, invasive species management and stewardship projects.

**1 star:** Create an annual event (can be in cooperation with other organizations) or ongoing 'adopt a park' effort for volunteer trash cleanup of open space, buckthorn removal, etc. for parks or selected public open space areas; educate community members about invasive species. Report gardens plots in city parks under BP 27.3

**2 star:** In addition to cleanup and removal of exotics (1 Star), engage community members in annual restoration of natural areas (replanting shoreland buffers, restoring prairie, etc.).

**3 star:** Create and fund an annual city-wide event for cleanup and restoration, engaging residents in most neighborhoods and creating a public promotion around the event; coordinate the use of unused public land for seasonal community use (pop-up parks, gardens, art, etc.).

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### **Local Food {BP No. 27}**

Strengthen local food production and access.

#### Best Practice Actions

1. Protect working landscapes - agriculture and forestry - by adopting an ordinance or incentivizing one or more of the following:

- a. An agriculture and forest protection district.
- b. A local food production district.
- c. Incubator farms, emerging farmers, and land access.

2. Facilitate creation of home/community gardens, chicken & bee keeping, and incorporation of food growing areas/ access in multifamily and residential developments.

3. Create, assist with and promote local food production/distribution within the city:

- a. A farmer's market or co-op buying club.
- b. An urban agriculture business or a community-supported agriculture (CSA) arrangement between farmers and community members/employees.
- c. A community or school garden, orchard or forest.

**1 star:** Summarize what exists in the city: a farmer's market, urban ag businesses, school garden, etc.

**2 star:** Report on supportive actions taken by the city such as use of city land for a farmer's market, garden plots in city parks, rooftop gardens, hiring a garden/market coordinator, supporting season extension techniques such as hoop houses or greenhouses; a winter farmer's market; donations from markets/gardens to food shelves.

**3 star:** Report a permanent conservation easement on a school forest, orchard, garden; report on percent of housing units within a 1 mile of a healthy food source (farmer's market, community garden, CSA drop point, and stores with an NAICS code of 445110 or 445230); convert top level of a parking ramp for a local food growing business; support a mobile food market to bring healthy food to people.

4. Measurably increase institutional buying and sales of foods and fibers that are local, Minnesota-grown, organic, healthy, humanely raised, and grown by fairly compensated growers.

5. Assess, plan for, and enhance the community's local food system.