

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



Minnesota
GreenStep Cities

www.MNGreenStep.org



**oh
wow**

SUMMARY

The April 2021 - April 2022 reporting year brought us the second year-long COVID pandemic but GreenStep Cities and Tribal Nations did not appear to be deterred by it! There were 146 city and tribal nation participants in the program, covering 52% of the state's total population (see [page 2](#)).

Braham, Mora, and New Prague joined the program at Step 1 and 41 other cities advanced to Steps 2 or 3 or maintained their Step 4/5 status (see [Page 4](#)). Across all participants, 186 new best practice actions were reported on the website across all 29 Best Practices (see [Page 5](#)). This year, 6 cities reported Step 4 metrics for the first time (see [Page 6](#)).

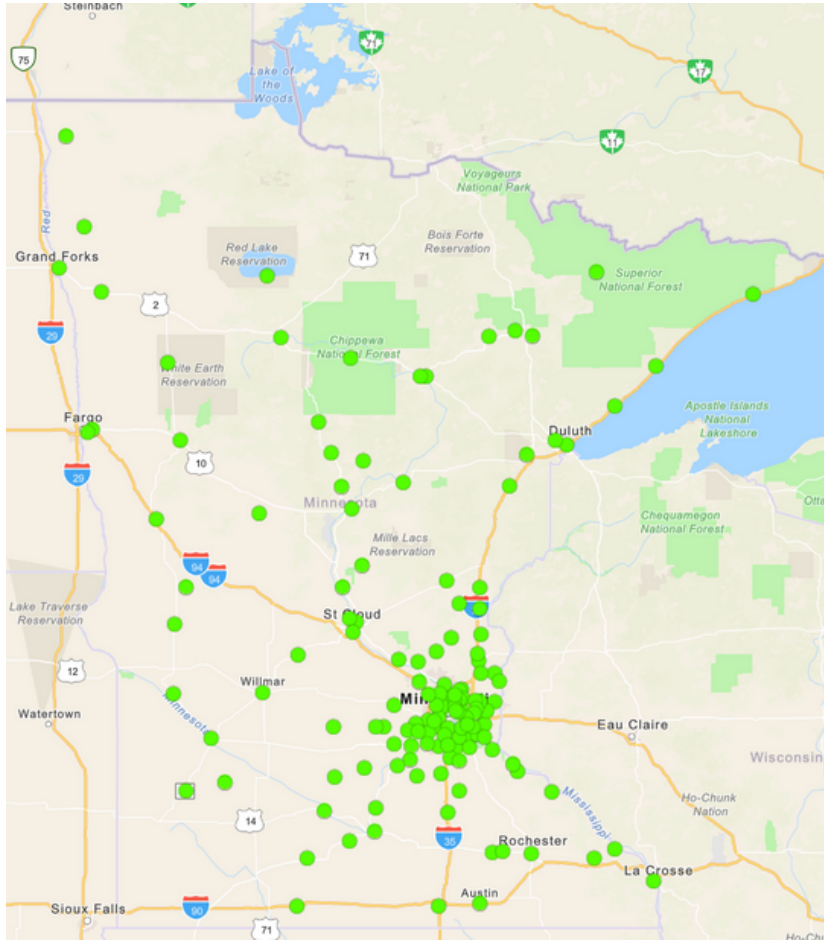
We were able to host 9 virtual workshops that covered multiple topics, delivered 21 GreenStep road signs, and saw over 15 local news stories published about GreenStep participants and their great work (see [Page 7](#)).

Congratulations to the **City of Savage** for moving up **THREE** steps in one year! Savage **achieved Steps 3, 4, and 5** between April 2021-April 2022.

The GreenStep program is continuously looking for ways to improve. This year we launched the new Minnesota Sustainability Index and Assessment Files. We were also back at the 2021 Minnesota State Fair with a new exhibit (see [Page 8](#)). The GreenStep Cities program hosted a GreenCorps member this year who is assisting us with additional improvements (see [Page 10](#)).

We look forward to seeing what the next year brings!

PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



146 Cities and Tribal Nations participate in the program

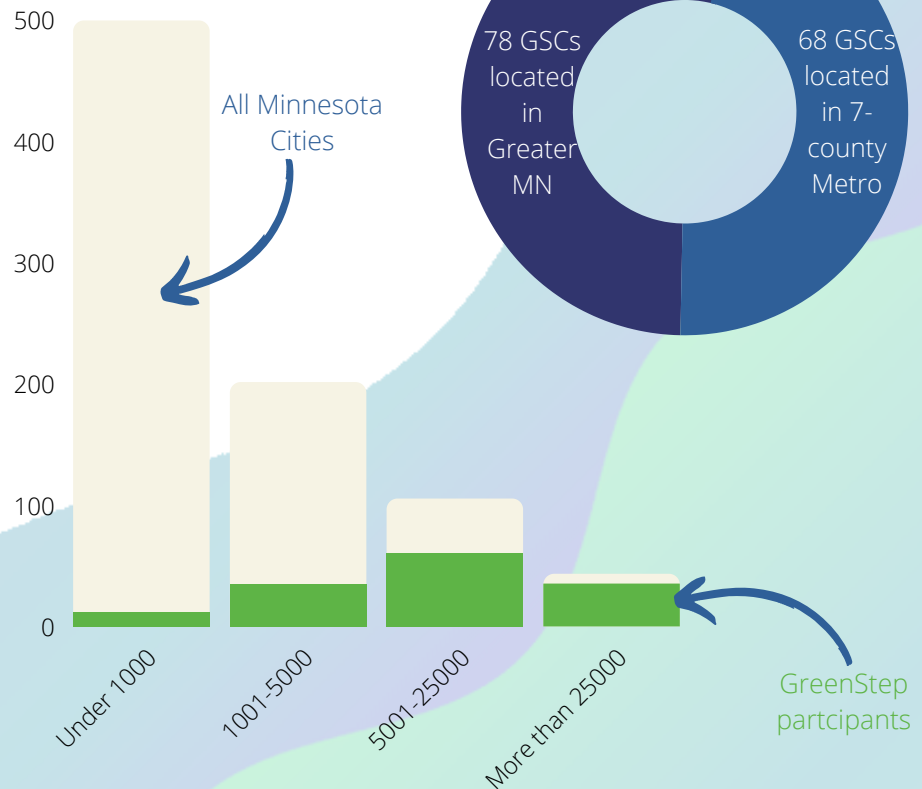
52% of the state's population live in a GreenStep City or Tribal Nation

16% of Minnesota's 854 cities are a GreenStep City

20% of GreenStep Cities are at the highest Step - Step 5

Program Participants:

- are large (St. Paul, pop. 311,527) and small (Hewitt, pop. 251)
- are located in 59 of the state's 87 counties (68%)
- include areas of environmental justice concern: 75 participants include at least one census tract with populations of:
 - at least 40% of people reported income less than 185% of the federal poverty level (74 communities)
 - 50% or more people of color (22 communities)
 - federally recognized tribal areas (5 communities)



Of all Minnesota cities, 82% of the largest (25,000+ pop.) and 13% of small and medium (under 25,000 pop.) cities participate.

Provides **public recognition** of the good work being done by Minnesota communities

We are **continuously improving** - there is no shortage of potential ideas!

Best Practices are user-centered and tailored to Minnesota communities

We are **able to do a LOT** (with the program) **with a LITTLE** (amount of resources)

Support is geared toward **Minnesota communities across the state — small-to-large**

Communities **save staff time** in researching proven, peer-reviewed actions

Communities are **supported by a peer network** and encouraged to learn from each other

Individual **local actions add up** to support statewide goals

SUSTAINABILITY
is the norm

so What?

PROGRAM BENEFITS

Voluntary metric reporting showcases **specific community-level outcomes**

Participants choose their own path and have the **flexibility and control** over their participation

Sustainable communities build **economic development and local economies**

We provide support for **community education and outreach**

Action happens at the **local level**

Communities **save money** by implementing cost-effective actions



GreenStep
Cities

2022 Step Advances!

Total unique communities
advancing a step in 2022:

44

That's 30% of total
GreenStep participants!

Step 1:

- Braham
- Mora
- New Prague

Step 2:

- Brooklyn Park
- Carver
- Circle Pines
- Faribault
- Hackensack

Step 3:

- Kasson
- North Branch
- **Savage**

Step 4:

- Apple Valley
- Bloomington
- **Coon Rapids***
- Duluth
- Eagan
- Eden Prairie
- Elk River
- Falcon Heights
- Fridley*
- Golden Valley
- Hopkins*
- Hutchinson

Step 5:

- Apple Valley
- Bloomington
- **Coon Rapids***
- Duluth
- Eagan
- Eden Prairie
- Elk River
- Falcon Heights
- Golden Valley
- Hutchinson

- Inver Grove Heights
- Isanti
- Jordan
- Mahtomedi
- Maplewood
- **Marshall***
- Minnetonka
- Moorhead
- New Brighton
- **Nisswa***
- Northfield
- Oakdale
- Red Wing
- Rochester
- Roseville
- Saint Anthony Village
- Saint Louis Park
- **Savage***
- Shoreview
- South St. Paul
- Woodbury

- Inver Grove Heights
- Isanti
- Jordan
- La Crescent*
- Mahtomedi
- Maplewood
- **Marshall***
- Minnetonka
- Moorhead
- New Brighton
- Nisswa
- Northfield
- Oakdale
- Red Wing
- Rochester
- Roseville
- Saint Anthony Village
- Saint Louis Park
- Savage*
- Shoreview
- South St. Paul
- Woodbury

bold - indicates a city that progressed
more than one step this year
* - indicates a city that has reached Step 4
or 5 for the first time



Notable Actions reported this year:

- **Brooklyn Park saved an estimated \$253.84/year by switching 64 light fixtures to LED** at their Operations & Maintenance Facility in 2020.
- **Carver purchased a plug-in electric vehicle** for their building inspector in 2021.
- **Carver uses non-potable surface/rain water to irrigate** the city's largest park and an adjacent neighborhood. The park was able to continue to be irrigated during a watering ban during the summer 2021 drought which avoided damage to the vegetation.
- **Circle Pines** has 13 parks located in their city of just 2 square miles. That means that **100% of residents live within a ten minute walk of a city park.**
- **Hackensack completed a First Street reconstruction project** in 2021 which included new sidewalks and improve pedestrian safety, bump-outs, 25 diverse trees planted, decorative LED street lighting, a public EV charger, and stormwater management.
- **La Crescent was the 1st in the Midwest to adopt a Solar Ready Home Certification** that incentivizes property owners to make low-cost installations of the infrastructure needed to make buildings solar-ready.
- The **Maple Grove Library** was designed to meet **SB 2030 guidelines and is LEED Gold** compliant.
- **New Ulm completed 20 lighting upgrades** between 2018-2021 that resulted in a first 5-year savings of 49.1 kW, 152,819 kWh, and \$18,211 — that's an average payback of 3.4 years.

- **North Branch was designated a Telecommuter Forward! Community** in 2021 after the city used COVID-19 relief funds to expand high-speed internet access through wireless towers.
- **Rush City provides plastic film recycling drop-off locations for residents** (coordinated by Rush City Green Team and Rush City Area Chamber of Commerce). 10 collection bins in 2021 provided over 20,000 pounds of plastic to be used in the making of composite decking.
- **Stillwater** received a **Bird City** designation in 2020.
- The **Green Business Directory hosted by Sustainable Stillwater** lets shoppers align their values by choosing businesses with green, sustainable, and resilient products and practices, and recognizes green businesses.
- **Wyoming is saving \$1,400/year** (approximately) **by switching to digital materials** for all council, board, and commission meetings.

4931

Total cumulative
actions for all
cities

Actions are
reported at
the 1-, 2-, or 3-
star level

903

Total actions
reported at the
3-star level

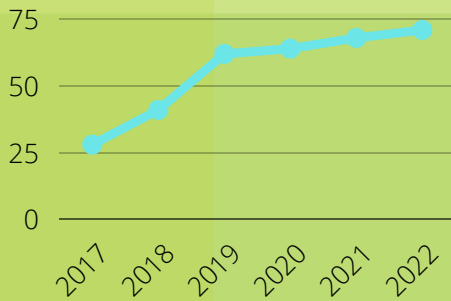
186

New actions
reported this year

STEP 4&5 METRICS

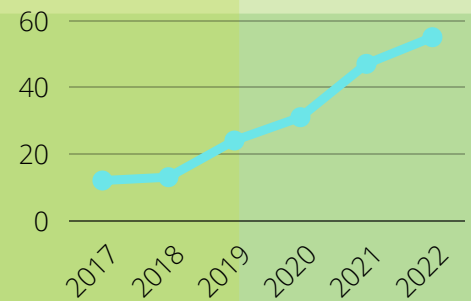
6 cities reported Step 4 metrics and 4 cities reached Step 5 or the first time this year!

Step 4 and 5 cities received feedback on their reported metrics in a newly updated template.



The percent of **LED streetlights** owned by the city and utility have increased to an average of 70% in 2020 from 14% in 2016 (Metric 1.4)

An average of 95% of residents in reporting cities **live within one mile of a bike route** (4.2); 78% **live within ¾ mile of transit route** (5.8); 86% **live within ½ mile or 10 minute walk of parkland**. (8.3)



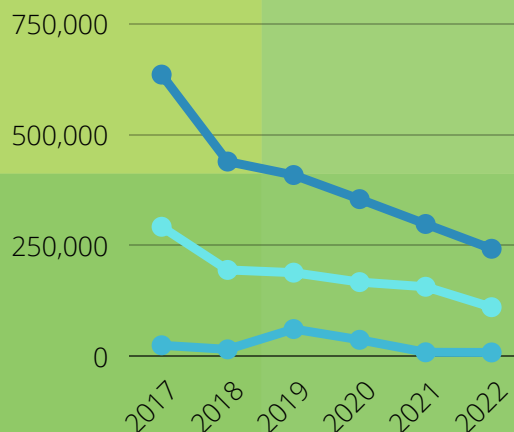
Cities report owning or leasing 54 **electric vehicles in the city fleet**; up from just 28 in 2018. (Metric 3.5)

WHAT DO THE METRICS TELL US?

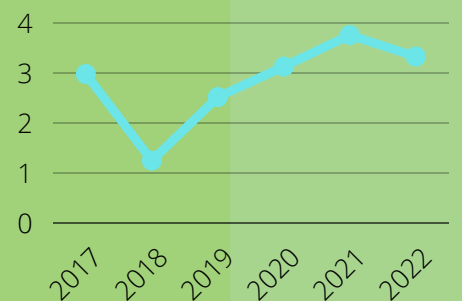


Cities reported planting a total of 8,273 **new trees** in their communities, an increase for 19 Step 5 cities. (Metric 8.6)

Cities reported adding 322 **affordable housing units** throughout their communities. (Metric 7.6)



All cities with **Regional Indicators Initiative** data (33) show a decrease in 2020 reported **city-wide travel emissions**; 17 show a decrease in **waste emissions**; and all 28 with data show a decrease in **energy emissions** (Metrics 17.1-17.3)



Cities reported an average of 3.34 pounds of **solid waste generated** per city resident/per day, a slight decrease over 2021 metrics. (Metric 13.1)

See more metric summary & individual city accomplishments on our [Recognition](#) page.

See how cities compare on 21 key metrics in the [Step 4 & 5 Metric Dashboard](#).

2022 Program Accomplishments!

We hosted **9 virtual workshops** that included 275 attendees (and 725 registrants were sent the video recording):

- April 2022: Sustainable Built Environment Practices
- February 2022: Community Solar Subscriptions & Green Power Purchasing Programs
- January 2022: All About B3
- December 2021: Engaging Green Businesses in Your Community
- November 2021: New Approaches to Parking Management
- October 2021: RETAP Celebrates 20 Years!
- October 2021: How City Commissions can Advance Sustainability
- September 2021: Equitable Community Engagement
- September 2021: Maintaining Green Infrastructure

The **Climate Smart Municipalities** program continued to work with **6+** GreenStep Cities Duluth, Elk River, Morris, Rochester, White Bear Lake, and Warren partner with 6 cities in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany

- The network continues to grow by adding counties, St. Cloud, and the Region 9 Development Commission
- The Minnesota delegation visited North Rhine-Westphalia in September, 2021 and the German delegation visited Minnesota in May, 2022



MN GreenStep Cities is a **Sustainable States Network** Member:

- Lola Schoenrich and the Great Plains Institute is the Network Coordinator
- Kristin Mroz was elected to serve as co-chair of the network from December 2020-present
- The network held a virtual gathering in December, 2021 with over 75 attendees
- The network hosts regular learning opportunities and cohorts for member programs

SUSTAINABLE STATES network
Shared Vision. Local Impact.

We provided **ongoing outreach and education** throughout the year that included:

- 4 quarterly e-newsletter mailings sent to an audience of 1,484 contacts
- 100 messages sent through LMC's MemberLink email listserve for GreenStep Coordinators
- 159 posts led to an average 39 users reached and 1.67 engagements per day on Facebook
- 146 tweets led to an average of 168 impressions per day on Twitter
- 68 members are connected through the private LinkedIn group
- 21 road signs delivered to 4 cities
- Over 15 state-wide/local media articles and news stories mentioning GreenStep communities were published



We returned to the **Minnesota State Fair**, masked, but in person this year with a new exhibit! In partnership with the Department of Commerce Energy Office, Clean Energy Resource Teams, and the MN Pollution Control Agency, the exhibit showcased the GreenStep program and shared examples of the great sustainability work being done by cities and tribal nations.

19 volunteers from GreenStep Cities and program partners spent a morning or afternoon at the fair to chat with fair-goers visiting the Eco Experience building.

GreenStep on a Stick!

MN STATE FAIR

Among the exhibit features:

- Say hello to the life-size cut-outs of mayors, staff, and other community leaders from Bloomington, Granite Falls, Hackensack, Hutchinson, La Crescent, Prairie Island Indian Community, and Richfield and learn how their communities are working in the areas of clean energy, transportation, water, waste, and forestry.
- Check out a NEW 6'x6' floor display that describes the GreenStep Cities, Tribal Nations, and Schools programs — including maps, benefits, and ways to join.
- Watch rotating videos that highlight the GreenStep program and specific communities — and maybe even some fun trivia about your community!



Danielle Cabot, Communication Coordinator at the League of Minnesota Cities, volunteering at the GreenStep State Fair exhibit.

2022 PROGRAM UPDATES

Minnesota

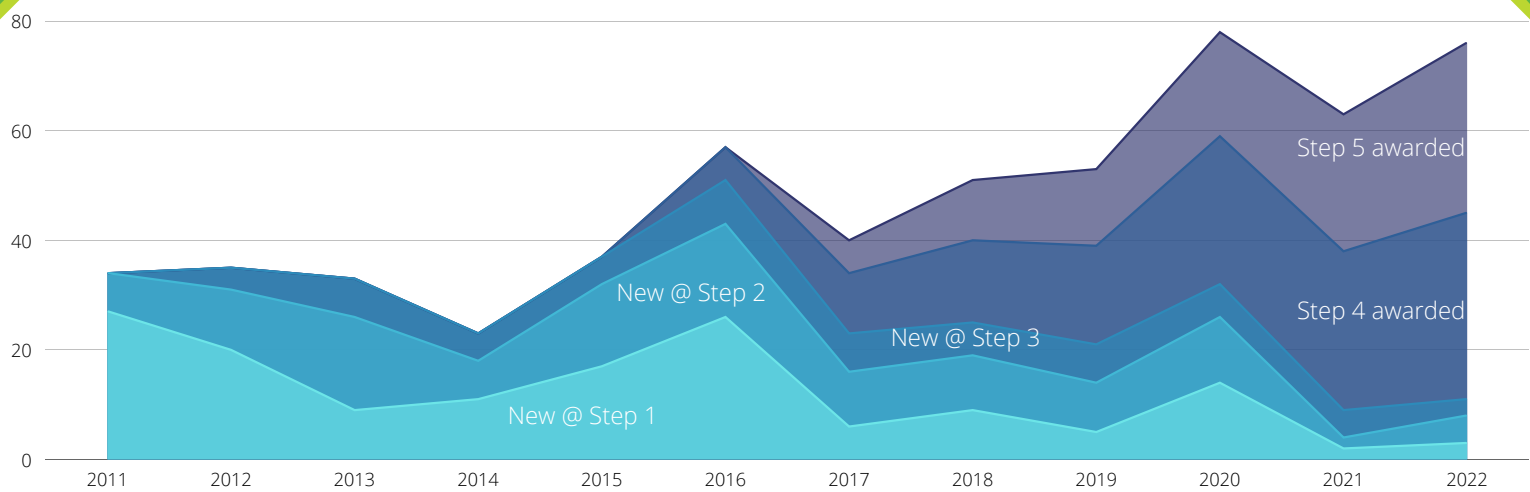
Sustainability Index

We launched the [Minnesota Sustainability Index](#) in 2022 to provide an overview of governmental units in Minnesota who have analyses, goals, and/or plans related to climate, energy, and equity. The index includes local, tribal, regional, and statewide examples and hyperlinks to materials. We were thankful for the help from Emily Lobato (University of Minnesota intern), our GreenCorps member, the MPCA data team, and many partners and communities to gather this information!

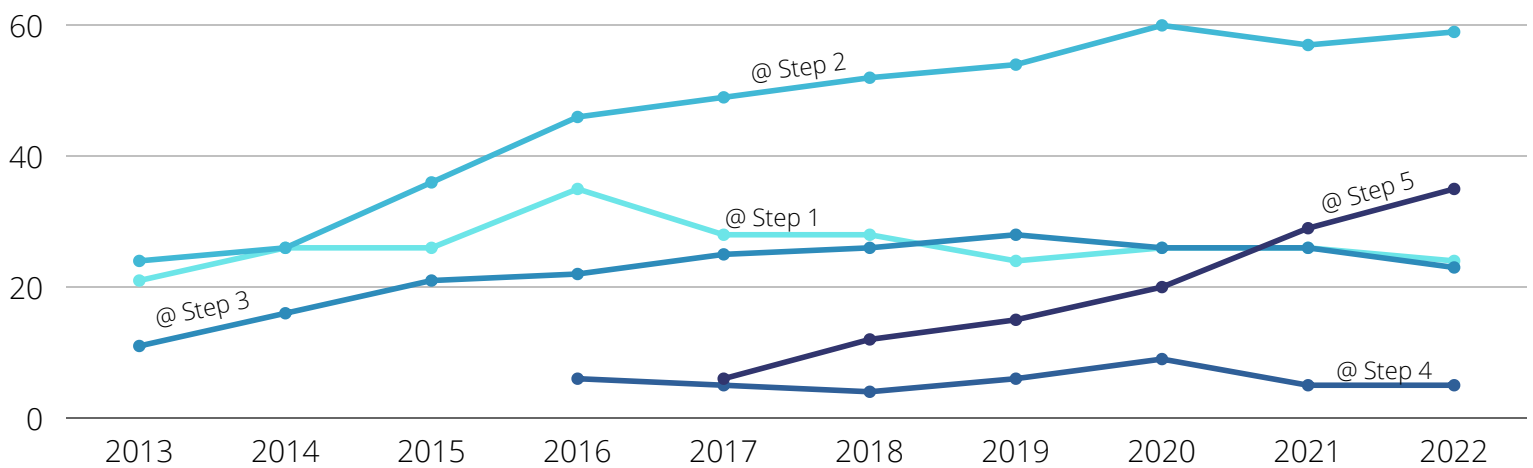
Updated Action Assessment Files

In order to assist program participants see their efforts over time and provide guidelines for how to get to the next step, we updated the city and tribal nation Assessment Files. The files may have increased from 2 to 30 pages but the feedback was positive and the improvements will be useful in sharing community achievements with staff, electeds, and community members. Thank you to Lucy Gregersen (University of Minnesota intern) who formatted and updated this new file!

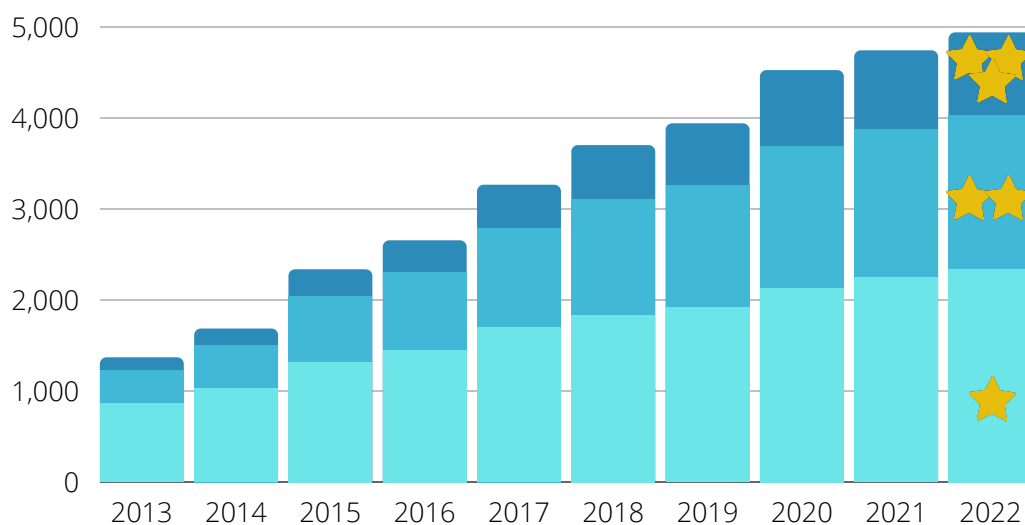
Trend-Setting



Annual GreenStep Community Recognitions



Total GreenStep Communities by Step



That's 4931 total actions!

Total Best Practice Actions Reported



Emily

HARTWELL

2021-2022
GREENCORPS MEMBER

Emily will complete here service at the end of this summer. Hire her!

Emily (she/her/hers) joined the GreenStep team in August of 2021 as a Minnesota GreenCorps member. Members serve full-time for 11 months (or 1,700 hours) with public and non-profit host sites around the state.

Emily is serving in the 'Air Pollutant Reduction' topic area and her workplan includes the development of a new program to challenge, assist, and recognize local efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for a changing climate.

Emily is a great colleague! She has supported almost all of the year's monthly workshops, conducted research and organized the data for the new Minnesota Sustainability Index, hosted GreenStep tables at the Fond du Lac Iskigamizige-Giizis Pow Wow and the Rush City Earth Day event, and coordinated multiple advisory committees to provide feedback on the development of her new program.

FUN FACT!



Emily is always sure to share at least 1 cheesy joke per day.

FUN FACT ABOUT THE FUN FACT!

That's ironic because Emily doesn't even eat cheese since she eats a vegan diet.



Emily's table set up for the Rush City Earth Day event in April, 2022

14 MN GreenCorps members are serving in GreenStep participating communities during the 2021/2022 service year, supporting multiple sustainability efforts and actions



2022 ANNUAL SURVEY

At the beginning of each calendar year, the GreenStep Cities and Tribal Nations program distributes an online survey to participating communities. The survey gathers information about overall program use and satisfaction, helps participants identify program offerings, and encourages participants to share their accomplishments and feedback.

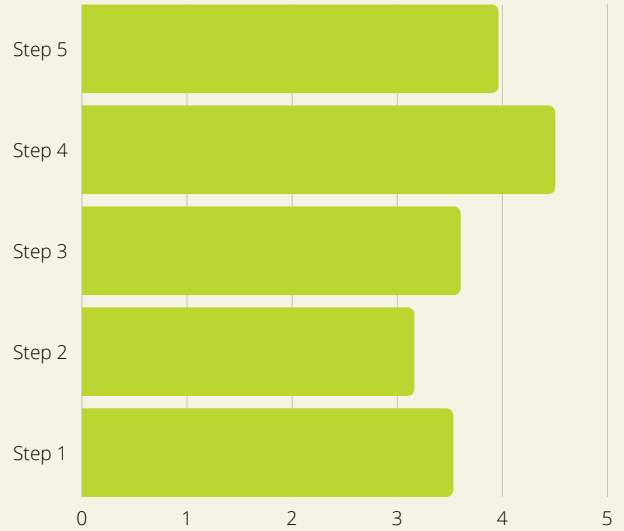
	Total	Response	Percent Response
All Communities	144	103	72%
Metro Communities	76	57	75%
Greater MN Communities	68	46	68%

We heard disproportionately from communities that are larger, in the metro, and are at a higher step.

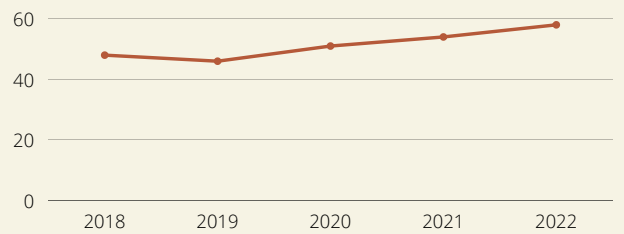
The website and GreenStep Newsletter continue to be the most used resources while monthly workshops have declined slightly. Category A (largest) communities use the CERTs regional coordinators, workshops, and MemberLink most frequently, while Category B&C communities are more likely to use social media and guidance documents.



Category A (largest) participants show more satisfaction with the program (4.1/5) than Category B&C participants (3.7/5)



Participants at higher steps (4 & 5) reported higher satisfaction with their participation than those currently at Steps 2 and 3. Category A (largest) participants also reported higher satisfaction with their involvement than Category B & C communities.



The percent of participants with at least 1 Green Team has increased to 58%. Category A (largest) participants tend to have a commission with a charter while Category B&C participants have more community led or staff only teams.

3.9/5

OVERALL SATISFACTION
WITH THE PROGRAM

72%

RESPONSE RATE

93

PARTICIPANTS REQUESTED
ASSISTANCE

15 specific offerings provided by partners for 2022 were highlighted in the survey. Hosting a Homeowners Workshop with Rethos was the most requested offerings.

Program Partners

The GreenStep Cities program is coordinated through a Steering Committee of 9 partner organizations:

- Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)
- Great Plains Institute (GPI)
- Izaak Walton League - MN Division (IWL)
- League of Minnesota Cities (LMC)
- Minnesota Department of Commerce (Commerce)
- Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Rethos
- Urban Land Institute Minnesota (ULI)

Learn more about the program partners in the 2022 Partners Profile

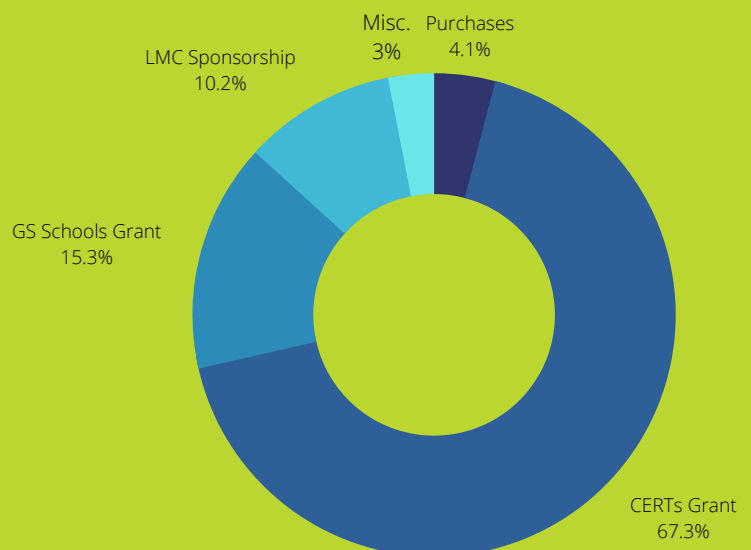


PROGRAM \$\$\$

The GreenStep Cities program had a budget of \$50,000 in Fiscal Year 2022 (June 2021 to June 2022) provided by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. This funding was used for:

- Purchasing GreenStep Cities Road Signs
- Purchasing a new photo backdrop banner
- Regional Outreach Grant to Clean Energy Resources Teams
- Phase III Grant to GreenStep Schools program
- Sponsorship for LMC Conference and 2022 award blocks

In addition to staff time and dedicated funding contributed by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, all partner organizations contribute valuable time and expertise.



ABOUT US

Vision: Environmental sustainability is the norm for all Minnesota cities.

Mission: GreenStep Cities encourages and supports cities' efforts for substantive action and achievement of their sustainability goals through the implementation of best practices and sharing of metrics and outcomes.



2013 Annual Award Ceremony

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 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 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, the University of Minnesota, 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.

Those recommendations are contained in the report, [Minnesota GreenStep Cities](#).

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.



Minnesota
GreenStep Tribal Nations



Minnesota
GreenStep Schools

Join GreenStep!

ARE YOU A COMMUNITY LEADER?

Elected officials, commission/committee members, and other community leaders can help their city, tribal nation, or school/district join the GreenStep program. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- Make a list of the sustainable accomplishments your community has already made.
- Request a presentation from GreenStep staff for your staff or public meeting.
- Develop a “green team” of staff and/or community leaders to build knowledge and interest.
- Consider sustainability in community planning efforts like comprehensive and strategic plans.
- Connect with a neighbor city, tribal nation, or school/district that is already a GreenStep program participant.
- Visit the [GreenStep websites](http://www.mngreenstep.org) to learn more about the programs, benefits, and next steps.

ARE YOU A COMMUNITY RESIDENT?

Residents and community leaders can help their city, tribal nation, or school/district join the GreenStep program. Here are some suggested to get you started:

- Make a list of why a sustainable community is important for you to live or work in.
- Request a meeting with a council member/ mayor or administrative/environmental staff.
- Speak at a public meeting.
- Take part in community planning efforts like comprehensive and strategic plans.
- Take a leadership role by joining a commission, committee, council, or other opportunity.
- See if there are other residents in your community interested in starting a community sustainability group.
- Write an op-ed in the local newspaper about how GreenStep can help your community be more sustainable.



Minnesota GreenStep