**32 High-Impact Policy Options for Low-Carbon Cities**

While Minnesota has made significant strides to mitigate climate change - renewable energy now accounts for 21% of in-state electricity generation - we missed the Legislature’s 2015 greenhouse gas emission target and will miss the 2025 target without additional work. ***Fully one-third of these state GHG emissions will be determined by and occur within cities***. 32 action options, focused on **policies cities can choose to adopt**, are recommended by the MN GreenStep Cities program for city consideration. Analysis shows that these 32 actions deliver (1) significant GHG reductions, (2) long-term and (for many actions) short-term cost savings, and (3) sustainability co-benefits such as improved quality of life for community members and environmental benefits such as improved local ecosystems. Actions supportive of these policies - such as community sustainability education and engagement, and work with the local school district and businesses - are included on the GreenStep web site.

See online model ordinances, policies and related resources linked to each policy option below. Each option is a unique GreenStep best practice action, whose number is noted.

**Building Policy Options**

* For existing buildings
  + [**Use the State’s B3**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=1&aid=714) public building benchmarking tool to target energy-efficiency improvements {*1.1*}
  + [**Require commercial building energy benchmarking**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=2&aid=723) (using Hennepin Co. registry) to incentivize energy- efficiency improvements averaging 1.7% per year {*2.3*}
  + [**Require Truth-in-Housing**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=2&aid=723) residential reporting to incentivize and better price more energy-efficient housing {*2.3*}
  + [**Dedicate residential/commercial improvement**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=2&aid=726) funding for energy efficiency and renewables {*2.6*}
* For new buildings
* [**Require the Sustainable Buildings 2030**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=3&aid=731) state energy standard for city, and/or commercial/industrial, and/or residential properties that {*3.3*}
  + receive city financial support, and/or
  + require city regulatory approval (planned unit developments, conditional use permits, rezonings, variances)
* Proposed State Legislation to **Enable MN Cities to adopt a uniform stretch code**

This provision was included in the House Energy/Jobs Bill in 2019 but not approved) with support from Minneapolis, St. Louis Park and other cities. <https://fresh-energy.org/whats-happening-at-the-legislature-march-update/> The 2016 EQB CSEO report quantifies the financial, energy and carbon savings of new residential and commercial buildings in MN being built to meet SB 2030 standards.

[https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/content/climate-change](https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/content/climate-change  )

**Land Use Policy Options**

* For one or more zoning districts
* [**Increase urban residential density**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=7&aid=754) with accessory dwelling units, single-resident occupancy units, smaller lots, multi-family buildings by-right, senior housing, co-housing, low square-footage houses / apartments {*7.2*}
* [**Increase urban commercial density**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=7&aid=755) by adopting floor-area ratio minimums/bonuses, zero lot-line setbacks {*7.3*}
* [**Adopt mixed-use zoning**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail.cfm?bpnum=8)/require mixed-use PUDs and/or a form-based zoning code/overlay district {*8.0*}
* [**Stage city-edge development**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=10&aid=771) with an adequate public facilities (concurrency) ordinance {*10.2*}
* [**Zone for rural residential**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=10&aid=773) clusters; adopt density bonuses, authorize transfer/purchase of development rights {*10.4*}

**Transportation Policy Options**

* For living streets
* [**Adopt a complete streets policy**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=11&aid=775) that includes street design standards & maximizes urban tree canopy {*11.1*}
* [**Expand transit**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=12&aid=786) / transit hub coverage and use over time to meet increasing mode-shift targets {*12.6*}
* [**Improve bike/walk**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=12&aid=781) infrastructure over time, by means such as lane reconfigurations (road diets), to meet increasing mode-shift targets {1*2.1*} and {*11.6*}
* For downtown, commercial nodes, corridors
* [**Reduce or eliminate parking minimums**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=14&aid=793) and/or add parking maximums {*14.1*}
* [**Price curb & structured parking**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=14&aid=793) to aim for a 15% vacancy rate in parking spaces on each block, and favor electric vehicles and for pay-per use vs. monthly contracts in lots, ramps {*14.1*}
* [**Allocate boulevard & curb space**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail.cfm?bpid=6) for bike parking and vehicle passenger pick-up/drop-off as part of planning for shared mobility services (bus, taxi, Uber, Lyft) and (shared) autonomous vehicles {*6.0*}
* [**Adopt a travel demand management / transit-oriented development**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=14&aid=796) ordinance {*14.4*}
  + [**Require electric vehicle charging**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=3&aid=732) capacity (at least conduit) in new commercial/single, multi-family developments and require the installation of charging stations to mirror the regional electric vehicle adoption rate {*3.4*}
* [**Prioritize fiber**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=12&aid=785) telecommunications infrastructure {*12.5*}

**Carbon Sequestration and Waste Reduction Policy Options**

* + [**Adopt urban tree canopy**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=16&aid=808)coverage and diversity goals that increase over time {*16.3*}
  + [**Implement organics collection**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=22&aid=846) (residential food and yard waste) and associated composting {*22.5*}
  + [**Provide food waste prevention assistance and**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=24&aid=861) food waste management assistance to help restaurants, to help food stores rescue food for food shelves, to help make food-to-hogs arraignments, and to increase food waste composting {25.2}
  + [**Increase materials reuse**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=22&aid=845)with dedicated city staff time and funding to support second-hand/repair stores, Fix-it Clinics, organized garage sales, organized scavenging before large-item trash collection, Community Education classes {*22.4*}
  + [**Adopt a construction and demolition waste ordinance**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=12&aid=894) that requires a level of recycling and reuse for building materials {*22.8*}

**Energy Supply Policy Options**

* For city operations
  + [**Increase renewable energy**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=15&aid=799)purchases/installed generation capacity over time to meet a net-zero greenhouse gas goal; purchases via community solar gardens, renewable energy credits or other means; generation via solar panels and anaerobic digestion, on city buildings and at waste-water treatment plants {*15.2*} and {*26.5*}
  + [**Adopt a sustainable purchasing policy**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=16&aid=798)that prioritizes energy-efficient, low-impact products and services, such as electric vehicles, for city operations {15.1} and {13.3}
* For community-wide
  + [**Adopt wind energy and/or biomass ordinances**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=25&aid=868)that allow, enable or encourage appropriaterenewable energy installations {*26.1*}
  + [**Certify as a solar-ready community**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=25&aid=884), including an expedited permit process for residents and businesses to install solar energy systems {*26.7*}
  + [**Participate with utilities**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=2&aid=721)in their energy-efficiency/renewable energy programs for residential customers {*2.1*}
  + [**Adopt a Property-Assessed Clean Energy**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=25&aid=870)resolution to facilitate commercial energy-efficiency / renewable energy financing {*26.3*}
  + [**Assess district energy/co-generation**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=25&aid=873) system options on a periodic basis for feasibility {*26.6*}
  + [**Adopt (if a municipal utility)**](https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us/bestPracticesDetail_actions.cfm?bpid=6&aid=752)accelerating targets for renewable energy generation to meet a net-zero greenhouse gas goal {*6.5*}

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Options selected from a review of:

* *Best Practice Actions* and *City Action Reports* (MN GreenStep Cities program: 2019) at <https://greenstep.pca.state.mn.us>
* *Climate Solutions and Economic Opportunities* (MN Environmental Quality Board: 2017) at <https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/content/climate-change>
* *High Impact Practices* (Urban Sustainability Directors Network: 2019) at <https://www.usdn.org/public/page/6/Projects>
* *Drawdown Solutions* (Project Drawdown: 2017) at<https://www.drawdown.org/solutions-summary-by-rank>

(6/6/19)