



## Energy into renewable & alternative energy

### What's working

#### **There's a lot of interest in renewable and alternative energy.**

- Minnesota is the No. 1 customer participating in wind energy purchases, and 7,600 Minneapolis customers have signed up for wind source energy.
- Minnesota is host to many solar programs and initiatives.
- Commercial energy conservation programs — especially lighting — are going well.

#### **Energy mini-grants generate interest.**

- Minneapolis is one of the few cities that offer mini-grants for energy.
- Mini-grants generate great ideas and community interest. Minneapolis has had innovative outcomes and lots of participation.

#### **Minneapolis is a leader in alternative transportation.**

- Public Works just took delivery of its first two electric cars, in addition to the mayor's Prius. It also has hybrids and retrofitted diesel vehicles.
- The City's strong land use designs promote biking, walking and taking public transit.
- Bus ridership is high, and we're seeing hybrid buses on dense routes.
- Our light-rail line investment is paying off.
- Biking in Minneapolis is fabulous. One-fourth of bike commuters bike to work year-round. Thirty buildings have shower facilities.
- Some businesses are paying for employees' walking shoes or are encouraging their staff to take the light rail to the airport.
- The car-sharing — HOURCAR — program is wonderful, and it will soon have a solar car charging program.

### What isn't working

#### **The City is not emphasizing efficiency enough.**

- The City goes too soon to renewables when focusing on conservation would result in more green value. Conservation isn't very sexy, but it saves a lot of money.
- Residential energy conservation programs are underused; they're probably only at one-tenth of capacity. We need a new approach.

#### **Minneapolis can't go it alone on carbon reduction.**

- If the City does this on its own, it's hard and expensive. If we work statewide and partner with Xcel Energy, we could get better results.
- We spend a lot of time developing things when we could be expanding upon what others have done already.
- We need a tighter focus on what we want to achieve.

- The City's goal of 10 percent use of renewable energy is a challenge. We need a more explicit legislative agenda.

#### **We haven't made energy conservation a routine part of the development process.**

- All energy use can be modeled, but very few people do this when planning to remodel or build new.
- Developers come to Development Review after the building has been designed. Alternative or renewable energy isn't a City requirement.
- Constructing better buildings is seen as a sideline business rather than a mainstream business. It's new and people don't understand it.

#### **We could do more to promote biking.**

- We need more bike racks, bike parking and showers. Private buildings could do better.

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### What should be done next

#### Get information to builders and remodelers.

- Get to the developers, architects and investors who are modernizing and constructing buildings *before* the design is done. Find ways to systematically direct builders to existing services before it's too late to rethink building design.
- Share success stories (e.g., how much money a business saved by reducing its carbon dioxide footprint) to convince businesses to do more.
- Create an information clearinghouse to make it easier for the average person to find out what can be done. If everyone had information, more would happen.

#### Make constructing better buildings a mainstream activity, not just a nice-to-do activity.

- Make energy efficiency part of the review and permitting processes. Require an energy audit as part of the development review process.
- Reduce process barriers and eliminate old government rules that don't make sense anymore.
- Provide incentives to builders and remodelers to meet the State's 2030 efficiency goals for architecture.

#### Generate interest in energy savings.

- Find ways for businesses to tout their energy-saving accomplishments. Create a buzz.
- Place a comparison graph in utility bills to show customers what makes financial sense.

#### Do more to encourage alternatives to driving.

- Encourage buildings to share shower facilities for bike commuters.

- Offer bike sharing.
- Provide transit passes to people invited to meetings.

#### Create and utilize partnerships.

- Partner with or lobby the State for incentives or policy changes.
- Advisory committees should look at the State's solar energy policy and explore new ways to finance solar.
- Seek out larger economic players.
- Minneapolis should be a cheerleader for communities and encourage community partnerships.
- Be a better partner with Xcel Energy. There's a public perception that energy companies aren't our friends — we should help break down that barrier.
- Coordinate efforts on big infrastructure improvements. If the City is tearing up a street, it's an opportunity for Xcel Energy to make improvements.

#### Look at the big picture.

- Put a price on carbon so that solar is cheaper than coal. On-site solar would happen more readily if we'd view the whole picture and look to the future.
- Replace energy-generation with energy-value and view it as a business opportunity. When we have good metrics, we can articulate long-term proposals.
- Understand that green job generation is in insulation and retrofitting. These entry-level jobs are great opportunities for young people.
- Make the Hiawatha Line substation more efficient.

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*“There’s a huge buzz about renewables, however, there’s more buzz than reality. We think we’re doing more than we are.”*

*- Clean energy advocate*

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