



Engineering

CITY OF HOPKINS

Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and Council Members
Mike Mornson, City Manager

From: Mikala Larson, Sustainability Specialist

Date: May 07, 2024

Subject: Sustainability Update

PURPOSE

Staff will present the yearly update on sustainability initiatives and accomplishments across departments. The update will encompass recent efforts and awards, grant tracking, and updates on ongoing initiatives. This is for information only; no action is needed.

INFORMATION

Recent Efforts

Electric Vehicle and Equipment Procurement

The City of Hopkins Public Works has procured its first electric vehicle, a 2024 F150 Lightning pickup truck, which is expected to arrive in Spring 2024. The vehicle will be used by the Streets Department at work sites or to haul crew around, and it will have a mounted arrow board to direct traffic. The vehicle replaces an old traffic pickup truck. The City qualified for a free Ford Pro AC Charger system to charge the vehicle, which has been installed at Public Works. The charger and software that staff signed up for allows for usage monitoring and setting charging time to off-peak times, which reduces cost and demand on the grid. Public Works has also procured an electric zero-turn mower that will be used in all parks. Staff has used the new mower twice so far this year and report that it's enjoyable and comfortable to use, easy to operate, and very quiet. Additionally, starting in 2021, the Public Works department has switched over to 100% battery operated power tools, including chainsaws, weed whips, blowers, and pull saws. Staff report that the switch was a great decision that reduces maintenance needs on the tools while increasing ease of operation and user experience, in addition to having positive environmental benefits liked improved air quality.

Hennepin County SCORE Multifamily Funding

Hennepin County receives funding from the state's Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) for the development and implementation of waste reduction and recycling programs. SCORE funds are based on revenue received by the State of Minnesota from the solid waste management tax (SWMT) on garbage services and are subject to change based on the SWMT revenue received by the state and funds allocated by the legislature. The City of Hopkins opted-in for the first time to receive Hennepin County SCORE Multifamily funding. The City is estimated to receive over \$11,000 in 2024 to conduct education to residents at multifamily properties. The funding

will create opportunities for connecting with property owners and residents at multifamily properties to engage about the City's solid waste ordinance and share education about waste reduction.

Partners in Energy (PiE) Energy Action Plan

The City of Hopkins Energy Action Plan is proposed to be adopted by the City Council at the May 7, 2024 City Council meeting. The Energy Action Plan documents a vision for Hopkins's energy future, including community-defined goals to generate positive impacts for residents, businesses, and the environment by saving energy, reducing costs, and avoiding greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan proposed for adoption is the culmination of more than a year's work by the Hopkins Energy Action Team, consisting of community members, city staff, members of Hopkins boards and commissions, and the Mayor, who participated in a series of workshops to develop energy-related goals and chart out a plan of action to achieve them. The planning process was made possible through Xcel Energy's Partners in Energy Program, which provides subject matter expertise, project management, and implementation support to communities that are selected for the program.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning

The City has been actively engaged in a variety of pedestrian and bicycle planning initiatives to respond to the needs of residents, expand transportation choices, and create connections that enable residents to comfortably incorporate active, economical, and sustainable transportation into their daily routines. Recent and current initiatives include community engagement and the pursuit of external funding to add a grade-separate bicycle facility to 17th Avenue when it gets reconstructed, applying to renew Hopkins's status as a Bike Friendly Community through the League of American Bicyclists' recognition program, securing a \$15,000 grant through Hennepin County Active Living to develop an End-of-Trip Facilities Plan, updating the Hopkins Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, and applying for a 2024 Safe Streets for All grant for the development of a Safety Action Plan for the City of Hopkins.

Shared Micromobility Programming

In 2023, staff from the cities of Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Golden Valley partnered to enter into a contract with Spin scooters to provide shared scooters for rental within the three cities. After a successful 2023 season, staff began discussions about renewing the contract with Spin for 2024 and to extend the program for a term of three years. Shortly after initiating those discussions, it was announced that Spin's parent company, Bird, Global, Inc. filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Due to the uncertainty surrounding Spin's financial viability and ability to continue providing quality service, staff from the three partnering cities agreed to issue a request for proposals for shared micromobility providers. No bids were received. For this reason, no shared scooter service will be available in Hopkins in 2024. Staff will continue to monitor and look for opportunities to bring service back to Hopkins, including the potential to collaborate on a future request for proposals with a broader coalition of cities, including St. Louis Park, Golden Valley, Minneapolis, and St. Paul in 2025.

Sustainable Building Policy

At the direction of the City Council from the December 19, 2023 meeting, staff is developing a draft sustainable building policy which will hold new development to higher sustainability and energy efficiency standards when projects meet certain criteria. This criteria can include things like whether the project is receiving financial assistance from

the City or when a project is over a certain size. Beginning in May, City staff will hold a series of planning workshops to further develop a draft policy which is expected to be brought before Council in fall of 2024. These workshops will be facilitated by subject matter experts at the Center for Energy and Environment and were made possible through funding from Hennepin County. In addition to delivering on goals contained in the Hopkins 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the City Council's 2023 Strategic Action Plan, this plan will also build on the City's success in leveraging new development to advance sustainability by negotiating for sustainable project elements through the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process.

Sustainability Specialist Position

The City of Hopkins created a full-time Sustainability Specialist position to dedicate more resources and capacity to the City's sustainability work, including managing existing sustainability programs, researching and implementing new sustainability programs, applying for grant funding, and applying for and maintaining status in recognition programs. The new position is situated within Public Works, and reports to City Engineer Eric Klingbeil. The City of Hopkins hired Mikala Larson to fill the Sustainability Specialist position.

Sustainability Work Plan

The Sustainability Specialist is working with local consultant, Local Climate Solutions, to develop a work plan to guide and prioritize sustainability work. The plan will include ongoing and new initiatives and will be replaced in the future in the event of adoption of a climate action plan. The work plan is being developed, and the Sustainability Specialist will return to a future City Council meeting with a draft for Council to provide feedback.

Recent Awards

Charging Smart Silver Designation

In Spring 2023, the City of Hopkins was one of 50 communities accepted in the Charging Smart program, formerly known as EV Smart, through the Great Plains Institute (GPI) in partnership with the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) and Department of Energy (DOE). This program, similar to Green Steps Cities or SolSmart is a points-based recognition program, which helps cities prepare and promote electric vehicles and electric vehicle infrastructure. Staff submitted an application in February 2024 to be considered for a designation through the program. The City of Hopkins was one of two communities to receive Silver designation, and part of the first nine communities to receive designations through the program in the nation.

GreenStep Cities Step 5

The City has maintained its Step 5 recognition status in the GreenSteps Cities Program. In order to maintain this designation, the City must report on all required metrics, and improve in three or more Step 5-eligible metrics. This is the second year in a row the City has achieved Step 5, and this achievement marks the final recognition step in GreenStep Cities. Step recognition will be celebrated at the League of Minnesota Cities conference, along with receiving an award block to commemorate the City's achievement.

Tree City USA Community

In 2024, the City of Hopkins received Tree City USA status for the second year in a row. Tree City USA is a program which recognizes the City for ongoing efforts related to

expanding and maintaining the tree canopy. Participation in Tree City USA requires the community to celebrate Arbor Day annually with a proclamation and celebration. During this year's Arbor Day celebration on Thursday, April 25th, staff from Public Works and local contractor Heritage Shade Tree unveiled newly planted trees and new tree grates along Mainstreet, and gave residents a presentation on the benefits of trees and general tree information.

Grant Tracking

Climate Pollution Reduction Grants

The Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) program, made possible by the Inflation Reduction Act passed in 2022, provides grants to states, local governments, tribes, and territories to develop and implement ambitious plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution. City staff submitted three applications for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants in partnership with other municipalities. Applications include Create a Regional Electric Vehicle Carshare Service, Equitable Residential Decarbonization, and Twin Cities Commercial Energy Efficiency.

Elective Pay

The Inflation Reduction Act, passed in 2022, established a mechanism called elective pay (also known as direct pay). Elective pay allows applicable entities, including tax-exempt and governmental entities that would otherwise be unable to claim certain credits because they do not owe federal income tax, to benefit from some clean energy tax credits. City staff are tracking the elective pay guidelines in order to take advantage of the opportunity with future projects.

Energy Futures

The Energy Future Grants (EFG) from Department of Energy provides financial assistance and technical assistance to support local, state, and Tribal government-led partnership efforts that will help scale local strategies that increase resiliency and improve access to affordable clean energy. The City of Hopkins joined a proposal with a coalition of cities led by City of St. Paul to create an innovative new model, Remodel/Unburden, for a cold-climate residential energy transition that can be tailored to local circumstances and implemented at the community level. The coalition has received initial notice that the Energy Futures Planning Grant has been awarded for this proposal.

Metropolitan Council Water Efficiency Grant

Staff applied to receive nearly \$50,000 for water efficiency rebates for residents and commercial properties. The rebates could be applied for eligible products, like Water Sense and Energy Star certified toilets, dishwashers, or showerheads. The City will be notified of award status later in the year.

MPCA Local Climate Action Grant

The 2023 Minnesota Legislature set aside funds for local climate action grants to help communities across Minnesota reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for climate change. Staff applied to receive nearly \$50,000 from the program to conduct a climate action and resiliency plan that centers community engagement and environmental justice. The City will be notified of award status later in the year.

Ongoing Initiatives

B3 Benchmarking

The City has partnered with B3 Benchmarking, a program funded by the MN Departments of Commerce and Administration, since 2006. B3 Benchmarking offers energy modeling, ENERGY STAR scores, target tracking, and dynamic reporting to help the City understand building energy performance. Data comes from Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy. City staff is updating the City's data through the B3 Benchmarking software and will continue to explore ways to leverage the platform further.

Energy Efficiency Upgrades at City Buildings

Public Works makes it a practice to consider energy efficiency upgrades when considering new projects or equipment replacements. Most recently, staff installed a high efficiency rooftop unit on the Fire Station, which will help save energy and money.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

The City oversees three Level 2 electric vehicle charging stations. Two are owned by the City and located in the municipal parking ramp. The third is operated by ZEF Energy and is located near Driskill's Downtown Market. City staff is exploring options for electric vehicle charging stations in Hopkins, including funding availability and feasibility of expanding the charging network.

Heat Vulnerability Study

The Heat Vulnerability Study was made possible by a grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) in the amount of \$49,568. The Study assessed the climate vulnerability of properties along both the Blake Road and Excelsior Boulevard corridors. These areas are currently identified by the Metropolitan Council as areas which are extremely vulnerable to extreme heat and have less than the ideal tree canopy. In Spring 2023, the City, in partnership with LHB and Local Climate Solutions, developed and shared an online tool that documents the Heat Vulnerability Study including current conditions, community sourced recommendations, and solutions leveraged by similar communities experiencing the same conditions. City staff continue to utilize the findings from the Heat Vulnerability Study to make decisions about programs, educate community members, and apply for grant funding.

Hopkins Climate Solutions Fund

The Hopkins Climate Solutions Fund (HCSF) was established in 2023, driven by inquiries from residents and businesses regarding incentive opportunities for sustainable improvements such as solar, EV infrastructure and energy system improvements, and direction from City Council to develop a green cost share program for sustainable property improvements. Staff worked with local consultant, Local Climate Solutions, to develop an equity-centered program that focuses on providing incentives for items which are likely to have the greatest impact on resiliency. The program takes into consideration existing rebates from utility providers Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy, and planned State and Federal rebates and tax credits as part of the IRA legislation passed in 2022. In 2023, \$150,000 of ARPA funds were allocated to fund the program.

HCSF will be available to the community for its second year in 2024. \$200,000 of franchise fees are budgeted for the program. The program structure will remain the same, with three separate buckets of funding for income-qualified residential, residential, and commercial projects respectively. Ten technologies are available for income-qualified residential and residential applicants, including a Home Energy Squad

Planner visit, insulation and air sealing, electric panel upgrade, cold climate air source heat pump system, heat pump or tankless water heater, solar energy system, or an electric bike. There are six eligible technologies available for commercial projects including LED lighting upgrades, solar energy system, Level 2 electric vehicle charging equipment, or an electric bike. The program follows the Justice 40 initiative and allocates 40% of the funding for the program to income-qualified residential projects. Renters are eligible to apply for the program, but need property owner approval on all project applications, except for electric bicycles.

HOURCAR

In 2024, the City will host two HOURCAR EVie vehicles at its public housing building, Dow Towers, which will provide low-income residents with access to electric car sharing at a reduced cost.

Lighting Upgrades

Public Works staff has finished converting 100% of lighting in municipal buildings to LED lighting. Staff are also working to convert lighting controls from switches to motion sensors where applicable. Lighting control conversion helps to save electricity and money, because the lights automatically turn off in a room after no movement has been detected after a certain time. Public Works staff is approximately 70% completed with converting street, parking lot, and park lighting to LED lighting.

Organics Program

In January 2022, the City of Hopkins, through waste hauler Republic Services, began offering an opt-in organics service to residents on the city contract. Residents can opt-in to the program at no additional cost. To date, 850 participants have opted-in to the program. Staff continues to promote the program to the community and share education about how the program works, including what material is accepted.

Solar

The City of Hopkins has three solar arrays installed on municipal buildings at Public Works, the Fire Station, and the Hopkins Pavilion. City staff are researching additional opportunities to add solar. The City is subscribed to four solar gardens, located in Carver and Dakota Counties. The City maintains its SolSmart Silver designation.

Trees

Public Works staff continues to maintain and improve the City's tree canopy. Staff planted 175 trees in 2023, and Public Works is hiring a new seasonal waterer position that will be dedicated to watering all new trees. The City is still managing tree damage from Emerald Ash Borer and are prioritizing planting a diversified tree canopy throughout the city.

FUTURE ACTION

Staff is seeking feedback on the above programs and any further direction on sustainability programs and initiatives.