



Great Places

The City restores and protects land, water, air and other natural resources

What strategies are working?

OUR EFFORTS ARE BEARING RESULTS.

- Minneapolis has reduced Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). CSOs occur when heavy rain or melting snow causes sanitary sewers to overflow into stormwater drainpipes.
- Our erosion control ordinances ensure that construction operations manage sediment.
- The Environmental Protection Agency rated Minneapolis' stormwater as good.
- Our initiative around Volatile Organic Compounds is successful.
- One-sort recycling has been successful because it's easier for residents than the multi-sort program was.

WE'RE COOPERATING WITH PARTNERS AND TRYING NEW APPROACHES.

- Thanks to public-private partnerships we are achieving results without regulatory hammers. We get a lot done when we work with the Park Board, County and other partners.
- We're going beyond a silo approach and bringing in partners for energy efficiency initiatives.
- The City's and County's bikeway plans are coordinated.
- Thanks to a reorganization, City staff have more opportunities to work on environmental health issues.
- The Minneapolis Climate Action Plan, the City's Clean Energy Partnership with Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy, and the zero waste initiative are examples of the City's leadership on clean energy.
- We are testing a new sidewalk material that could help street trees' survival.
- Multiple efforts are underway to protect our urban forest, including a public tree replacement program and incentives for businesses to plant trees. There is a good coordinated effort.
- We are acting on air pollution proactively. We have begun an air toxicity study that will provide us with more information about air quality at a neighborhood level.
- We're improving our bike path system. Intersections where on-street bike lanes and off-street bike paths merge have gotten better.
- We advocate for transit investment.
- We are using a complementary planning process in the Above the Falls Master Plan update.
- We are developing an ecological services master plan.
- We are looking at underutilized land, such as the Upper Harbor area along the Mississippi, and how we can transform that land using a phased approach.

WE OFFER INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE CHANGE.

- We work with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and environmental groups to help businesses solve environmental problems in a way that benefits the businesses and the environment.
- We go beyond enacting rules and regulations to provide grants and technical assistance.
- Neighborhood groups use grant programs.
- We use dollars from pollution control fees to correct pollution problems.

What strategies are not working?

TRANSPORTATION REMAINS A CHALLENGE.

- We are an auto-centric, sprawling metropolitan area. We've made a lot of progress on bikeways but not on

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other non-auto modes.

- We need better collaboration between the City and County for protected bikeways on County roads within Minneapolis.
- We are missing opportunities to connect land use with transit-oriented development.
- We aren't doing enough to address racial inequity in public transportation service.

WE DON'T ALWAYS HAVE AUTHORITY TO TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT OUR RESOURCES.

- We're grappling with our inability to control pesticide use on public and private land in Minneapolis.
- The City can condemn dead trees and the Park Board can condemn infested trees, but we don't have a tool to ensure diseased trees are removed promptly.

WE NEED MORE INFORMATION.

- We lack data on how much commercial waste is generated and where it goes.
- We know more trees are blown down in areas where sidewalk repair or roadway work has occurred, but we still don't know what we can do to reduce the likelihood of tree damage.
- It's difficult to find the level of information we need. We are using regional data when we really need neighborhood data.

WE LACK KEY RESOURCES.

- We don't have a household hazardous waste collection site in Minneapolis.
- When a developer comes in with an innovative design or nontraditional approach, it's difficult for City staff to find the time to work through new approaches.
- We need to do more work on managing stormwater.
- We can't pay for everything.

WE NEED A BROADER APPROACH TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES.

- We haven't found a way to develop a climate adaptation plan.
- We are about to lose a massive number of trees to emerald ash borers. Although we have a good plan for replacing public trees, there is no plan for replacing trees on private property.
- We need to broaden our view of critical habitat along the river and think of the river as a flyway for migrating birds.
- We aren't doing enough to reach out to people in other cultures and help them understand what they can do to reduce waste and toxins.

OUR POLICIES AND PRACTICES ARE INFLEXIBLE AND DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW.

- The City is too big and too cumbersome to partner with. We don't make it easy for a businessperson to come in and informally talk to us about a project. We could do better.
- It's very difficult for businesses to follow our contracting guidelines.
- We have good policies, but they aren't adaptable. Inflexible policies are blocking us from trying new approaches. We want to try things outside of the box, but we don't know how.
- City and State grant deadlines don't match, and there is no overlap. Small businesses trying to access both funding sources lose out because the City is on an annual budget cycle and the State is on a biennial cycle. There is no flexibility to carry over dollars, and a business may have to give a grant back because the two application processes don't mesh. The "use it or lose it" grant structure is a hindrance.

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Working in partnership, what strategies could we pursue?

INNOVATE AND MAKE BETTER USE OF PARTNERSHIPS.

- Look for innovative approaches to link recreational services to an ecological function. For example, instead of fencing a stormwater pond, make it part of a larger recreational use.
- Look at the City's rental licensing process and take advantage of clean air/energy partnerships to offer weatherization services.
- Reinvent the model rather than spitting out the old one. For example, incorporate health and safety improvements into our insulation for energy conservation program. Look for new ideas on how a reinvented Community Action Partnership should function in Minneapolis.
- When looking at capital projects, think of the long-term implications. For example, ask whether an area will be flooded. Be forward thinking and get data to make informed capital funding decisions.
- Gather partners together to tackle issues. Approach stormwater system improvements through a joint effort involving the Watershed District, Park Board and the City. Protect trees by working with Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council and the State of Minnesota. Align sustainability initiatives by involving the library system, schools and other community entities.
- Cultivate partnerships to restore the river bank and protect critical habitat along the river.
- Define responsibility for bikeway and road contracts so we can better coordinate.
- Look ahead three to five years to maximize the impact of our efforts by pooling money with partners on common goals. Sound planning and flexibility are essential.
- Take advantage of the opportunity to use public-private partnerships to get the most out of funds when the new federal air quality standards are introduced.

GET MORE AUTHORITY TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT.

- Obtain approval from the State of Minnesota to allow cities greater authority over pesticide use in local communities. Dedicate resources to working on our State and federal legislative agenda.
- Create a process to remove dead and diseased trees promptly.
- Take a proactive approach to gain greater control over public land encroachments. The Park Board should review construction permits that border parkland to ensure they don't encroach. The Park Board, City and utility companies must delineate who owns land and help homeowners know where private property ends and public property begins.
- Involve the Park Board in the preliminary development review process.
- Create a Minneapolis land preservation policy that considers the need for urban agriculture, green space, shared amenities and long-term property rights.

BE MORE FLEXIBLE AND OPEN TO INNOVATION.

- Change the City's internal culture to be more innovation-friendly. Shift our thinking so staff are comfortable taking risks. To move nimbly, staff members have to believe it's OK to try new things, even if that means failing sometimes.
- Implement a process that encourages staff to meet on a periodic basis to share ideas and information about projects they are working on or new processes they are trying.
- Use our one-sort recycling initiative as a model for future initiatives. Our efforts should focus on making it easy for residents to do the right thing.
- Build more flexibility into our policies, so we can try new approaches.
- Increase funding/staffing levels so City staff has more time to solve problems.
- Find ways to use stormwater as a resource instead of managing it as a problem.

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- Go beyond putting environmental action messages in different languages. Ensure messages are meaningful by connecting the audience with people they can relate to.
- Make the best use of partnerships and encourage private investment in public realm operation and maintenance.

LEARN MORE.

- Better understand the impact that rising temperatures have on asphalt.
- Study what can be done with commercial, industrial and multifamily waste.

This conversation had representatives from Minneapolis City Council, Mayor's Office, Regulatory Services, Minneapolis Fire Department, Minneapolis Health Department, City Coordinator's Office, Sustainability Office, Environmental Initiative, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and Sierra Club.