

Rochester's Sustainability Efforts

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak on Rochester's efforts to transition to clean, renewable energy. I'm excited to share our most recent efforts to be more energy efficient and our desire to do even more in the years ahead!

Continuing the commitment of former Mayor Ardeell Brede, I have **pledged my commitment to achieving 100% clean, renewable energy use by 2030**. Our City has a target of an 80% carbon reduction from 2005 levels by 2050, but I am hopeful we can do better...and much faster!

- Rochester was recently awarded **LEED for Cities-Gold certified**, the *first city in Minnesota* to achieve this certification.
- We also were awarded **Greensteps levels 4 and 5** in 2018.
- We *share* (1 day per week) a **Sustainability Coordinator** with the DMC-EDA and are hoping to add a full time city-specific person later this year.
- A **student intern** from our Climate Smart Municipality sister-city of Muenster Germany arrives this April and will stay until August.

Here are some of our recent actions in various categories to demonstrate our direction. We can provide details on any of these upon request:

New Construction:

- DMC and the City share a **Sustainable Building Policy** for projects *pursuing public support* (such as TIF) that mirrors St. Paul's Building Policy (SB2030 requirements.)
- Our new North Police Station (former Think Bank building) is pursuing **B3 guidelines and SB2030** on its own accord (*without* bonding support.)
- Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) and Minnesota Energy Resources(MER) are piloting a **streamlined new construction incentive program** for building projects performing beyond code minimums.

Existing Buildings:

- In 2019, Rochester is starting a **Voluntary Energy Benchmarking Program** for public and private entities to share utility data and continuously improve performance (Energy Star Program.)
- RPU is piloting a **recommissioning incentive program** to encourage more building energy use reduction in the City.

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- We're working through a second **energy reduction project** at City Hall – a recommissioning project and lighting replacement.
- We are swapping out all our **street lighting to LED**.
- There are **buildings built “solar ready”** which can be completed and utilized once our SMMPA contract has expired (or perhaps with an exception allowed in the current contract.)

Transportation:

- City was awarded a **federal grant to purchase two electric vehicle** buses to add to its growing transit program. We applied for another grant for a larger fleet, but did not win that grant.
- **BRT and other mass transit options** are being integrated into transportation plans.
- City **established a Transportation Management Authority** to encourage alternative commuting habits in partnership with the business community.
- Two mixed use **transportation hubs** w mixed income units
- A **“city loop” and walk/bike infrastructure** are being planned in Rochester, although business has pushed for modifications that make them less safe.

Culture-Building:

- We've established a **collaboration with Mayo Clinic and the County** to discuss the future of our independent district heat/energy systems.
- The DMC project and City collaborate to offer a **monthly sustainability series** open to the community to learn best practices and share lessons learned from local and regional sustainability experts.
- We are active participants in the **Climate Smart Municipalities Exchange Program** - this will be our 4th year in the grant program.

Recycling:

- We have a stellar recycling service center - a county facility. We have a **recycling participation rate of over 50%** and a **negative land fill** due to our utilizing old landfill to supplement our waste-to-energy burners which provide steam to various buildings in our city.

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RPU:

RPU **decommissioned its coal plant** years ago, although coal is still in the mix of energy we purchase, and began a **limited time solar garden** partnership with SMMPA.

A **natural gas peaking plant** has just been built. Many hope to not add another, but meet needs without natural gas in the future.

RPU is currently considering **rate changes to incentivize conservation** by users.

Combined heat and power generation for the downtown steam heating district is being discussed.

NOTE:

One of our biggest barrier to move to become a 100% renewable and carbon neutral city is that RPU is a long term contract with SMMPA. *Times and technology have changed, but the contract does not.* The contract makes it impossible financially to develop our own solar/wind resources as we would be required to sell the energy back to SMMPA at a rate so low as to not make it feasible...and we would then buy it back from them at the contracted rate. **SMMPA is purchasing renewable power only in amounts to meet the state requirement, despite the low cost, making it impossible for us to make headway until the contract expires in 2030.** RPU has committed to release a plan to meet the 100% renewable goal this year.

Future plans for 2019:

There are some higher level planning efforts like the comprehensive plan and transportation plan that were approved in 2018 that have a lot of overlap with our sustainability efforts. Overall, they do a good job of outlining priorities and future planning for the City that aligns with our sustainability programming and future initiatives.

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Rochester Public Schools:

- They have established a five year contract with Cenergistics to reduce utility costs through education, building management programming etc. thereby reducing District footprint as well.
- They have done LED lighting conversions during indoor air quality projects and retro fitting as well. About 25% of sites now, more coming in future
- Lighting controls installed that include occupant sensors, daylight harvesting
- Boiler upgrades to more efficient units
- Chemical changes to use of **green cleaning products, stripping products** etc.
- Use of **Luxury Vinyl Tile** and polished concrete floors which reduces stripping chemicals.
- Recycling programs** that include sorting/comingle programs for plastics and paper
- Better product choices** such as the use of recycled paper for restrooms, cardboard less toilet paper etc, use of refill soap containers versus throw away plastic and low to No VOC paint products
- Water bottle filler stations** to reduce plastic water bottle waste
- Training of staff Example: Chloride management for use of salt products on parking lots.
- Gibbs Elementary School (our newest school) is our only **LEED school** as it was built under that program.
- We do have a few **solar panels at three high schools** but they provide little to no return in power costs - they were primarily done as an educational project.