

ENERGY PLANNING COMMISSION



2023 SUMMARY

Adopted by the EPC March 13th, 2024

The Energy Planning Commission was created in November of 2019. The commission's mandate is to advise and recommend methods to help the city meet its aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals of 80% by 2050. In March 2022 during the State of the City address, Mayor Larson announced an increased greenhouse gas reduction goal of 100% by 2050.

Since the Commission's inception, we have covered many topics including electric vehicles, renewable energy, building electrification, municipal utilities, City sustainability documents, local utility planning documents, City building updates, and more. Throughout these conversations, the Commission greatly appreciates the direction and guidance of City employees Mindy Granley (Sustainability Officer), Mike LeBeau (Construction Project Supervisor), and Alex Jackson (Energy Coordinator).

This report highlights our collective efforts to advance sustainability, enhance energy efficiency, and foster a resilient and vibrant community.

January: Strategic Facilities Planning and Capacity Investment

The year began with a presentation from Minnesota Power and Frontier Energy regarding energy efficiency assistance for new construction projects within Duluth.

The Commission supported the allocation of funds for capacity in strategic facilities planning aligned with greenhouse gas reduction goals.

March: Formation of Working Groups and Community Scope

Discussions in March centered on forming working groups to delve deeper into specific topics. The Commission revisited its responsibilities, exploring the balance between city buildings and the broader community.

Support was extended to the city's heat pump water heater initiative, contributing to more efficient water heating alternatives.

May: Electric Vehicle Charging and Greenhouse Gas Inventory Progress

Updates from Minnesota Power's Electrification Specialist on electric vehicle charging initiatives marked May.

The Commission also received progress updates on the city's greenhouse gas inventory, reinforcing the commitment to comprehensive sustainability tracking.

July: Legislative Updates and RACER Grant Implementation

Key legislative updates were presented by the Director of Communications, Advocacy, and Public Outreach at the American Institute of Architects. Discussions spanned building benchmarking, carbon-free electricity goals, the Inflation Reduction Act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, residential heat pump grants, building codes, and energy efficiency programs.

Initiation of the Renewables Advancing Community Energy Resilience (RACER) grant project brought plans for community input on resilience needs and solar site assessments in Duluth.

September: Comfort Systems Transition and Funding Advocacy

The Energy Plan Commission engaged with the Duluth Climate and Energy Network, addressing the future of Comfort Systems. A recommendation letter for the city administration and council was drafted to emphasize the need for a plan to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and secure long-term funding for the transition.

A letter of support provided by the Energy Plan Commission reinforced the city's Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) grant proposal to develop community-based learning sessions and outreach materials focusing on navigating the complexities of clean and efficient energy resources and available funding.

November: Geothermal Energy and LEAP Project Update

Presentations from Home Energy Efficiency Team (HEET) in November covered networked geothermal energy as a future business model opportunity for Comfort Systems.

Information from NREL addressed IRA incentives, an electric vehicle roadmap, building stock analysis, and industrial decarbonization opportunities as part of Communities Local Energy Action Program (LEAP).

Introduction of the geothermal project coordinator marked a step towards sustainable energy partnerships.

In closing, the City of Duluth Energy Plan Commission remains committed to creating a sustainable and resilient future for our city and community and we are grateful to all stakeholders, city employees, and residents who share that vision.