

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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*Institute on the Environment*

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To Whom It May Concern,

The GreenStep Cities program is a collection of sustainability best practices for cities across Minnesota. It is a challenge, assistance and recognition program to help cities achieve their sustainability goals through implementation of 28 best practices. Each best practice can be implemented by completing one or more specific actions from a list of four to eight actions. These actions are tailored to all Minnesota cities, focus on cost savings and energy use reduction, and encourage innovation. At the University of Minnesota, the capstone Sustainability Studies Minor class developed a new partnership with GreenStep to support cities in their goals by evaluating accomplishments and making recommendations.

The cities planned to either implement or take the next "step" in Minnesota GreenStep Cities. Some of the students had the advantage of working with their own hometowns, but all of the cities welcomed student involvement. The 46 students who were enrolled in the minor's capstone course and worked on the GreenStep Cities program spring 2012, represented an incredible diversity in disciplinary background, work experience and point of view. Teams working with the cities this year typically included groups of five students majoring in fields such as environmental policy, architecture, global studies, engineering and communications. Students presented to the cities they worked with. The students' efforts were highlighted at the 7th Annual Twin Cities Sustainable Communities Conference, where they gave presentations about "their" cities standing alongside the program coordinator for GreenStep Cities, Philipp Muessig, who served as a mentor for the class.

The impact of this unique partnership is great on both the students and the cities participated. The class itself promotes students of all disciplinary backgrounds to learn about and help improve initiatives that the city has chosen to complete. With this partnership from this University class, Minnesota cities were given further assistance to make their next step towards sustainability a reality.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Mercer-Taylor  
Sustainability Education Coordinator, Institute on the Environment  
University of Minnesota

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