

Our colors are **GREEN, WHITE, and YELLOW,**
but just how **GREEN** is Edina?

Celeste Eckstein
managing editor

“We can no longer go on pretending that the problem is happening somewhere else and that we, at the local level, don’t have enough power to do our part,” the City of Edina’s Energy and Environment Commission wrote in a letter prefacing the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Edina’s most ambitious and comprehensive plan for climate adaptation and mitigation to date. The CAP, which passed in December 2021, was created by a 26 person planning committee “consisting of residents, business community members, institutional representatives, City commission members, and

“Two changes to Minnesota’s climate are occurring already: shorter winters with fewer cold extremes, and more heavy and extreme precipitation.”

City of Edina

City staff.” As scientists warn of the irreversible dangers of climate change, many Edina students, citizens, and city employees have seemingly prioritized the issue through actions like the CAP. Yet the unanswerable question remains: Will it be enough?

Edina’s history with climate change

While the CAP is likely Edina’s most significant action to address climate change yet, it’s not the first. In 2007, Edina’s Energy and Environment Commission (EEC) was created, which advises the city on conservation and environmental efforts. In the same year, Edina set a goal to reduce carbon emissions by 15% by 2015 in accordance with Minnesota’s Next Generation Energy Act, which aimed to reduce greenhouse gases “while supporting clean energy, energy efficiency, and supplementing other renewable energy standards.” The city failed to achieve this.

In 2015, Edina joined Xcel Partners in Energy to create an Electricity Action Plan. Though less comprehensive than the CAP, the plan worked to reduce electricity use and carbon emissions in Edina. Through focusing

on both businesses, residents, and municipal facilities, the plan worked to make buildings more energy efficient by encouraging lower electricity usage and the incorporation of renewable energy sources. The next year, Edina hired its first sustainability manager to help coordinate and oversee environmental efforts like the Electricity Action Plan.

Electrification and energy efficiency are still important priorities for Edina today, but the city has expanded its goals. “The Climate Action Plan is really big and incorporates some of those electricity actions but expands the focus so much, to all energy for one thing, so adding in natural gas, but also all natural environments that are affected by climate change and all the other ways that pollution like greenhouse gas emissions gets into our environment through waste management, water quality, and that kind

of thing,” Edina’s sustainability manager Grace Hancock said. One example of Edina’s efforts beyond electrification is the No Mow May campaign—initiated for the first time in 2022—where lawn height ordinances are suspended for participating properties so residents can refrain from mowing their lawns to support pollinators.

In 2020, development of the CAP first began. “When I joined the city [in late 2020], there had already been a lot of momentum, primarily from residents, and primarily by volunteers on the Energy and Environment commission, asking the city council to direct staff to develop a Climate Action Plan,” said Hancock. “The EEC has been very instrumental in the environmental work that has happened in the city...So the city council heard that request [for the CAP] and were, I think, convinced by the EEC that this was an important next step.”

Climate change concerns

Edina’s northern, landlocked position doesn’t protect it from the consequences of climate change. According to an infographic published by the city, flooding, extreme weather, increased mosquito/tick diseases, food insecurity, grid failure, water quality, and wildfire are just some of the ways in which climate change may affect the

city in the years to come. Every passing year, Edina’s climate will begin to resemble that of a place 12 miles further south. By 2100, it will be akin to Denison, TX today.

From 1980 to 2018, the city has seen a number of significant changes, including higher average temperatures, less days below freezing, and more heavy rain events. On their website, the City of Edina wrote that Minnesota is already experiencing “shorter winters with fewer cold extremes, and more heavy and extreme precipitation.”

The Minnehaha Creek provides evidence for the impacts of climate change on Edina. In 2014, intense heavy rain events encouraged a study to assess the creek’s vulnerability to climate change and enable community adaptation. Yet in the fall of 2022, the creek faced extreme drought.

Intense precipitation has impacted students and teachers during the 2022-23 school year. With a total of four e-learning days this year alone—three due to weather and one due to a lack of power—the changing climate has forced students and teachers to adjust their schedules.

Between causing environmental damage, interrupting schooling and activities, and altering the seasons, climate change poses a risk to all; however, vulnerable communities such as disabled, low-income, and elderly people are often impacted to a greater degree. Through adoption of the CAP, Edina hopes to adapt to the changing environment and prevent future damage while recognizing the increased risk of these vulnerable communities.

Adaptation and prevention: Edina’s environmental response

Edina hopes to minimize Edina’s negative impact on the environment. “The most pressing problem right now is just to get our greenhouse gas emissions down. We want to hit that 45% [carbon emissions deduction] as soon as we possibly can, no later than 2030,” Hancock said. She explained that electricity and natural gas are the biggest polluters in Edina.

Because of greenhouse gas emissions from energy use, the city is beginning a campaign to encourage electrification through Electrify Everything, a program “founded by

the cities of Eden Prairie, Edina, Minneapolis, and St. Louis Park, with support from the Center for Energy & Environment.” Electrification is the process of switching from natural gas energy

sources to electric power in order to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, passed in August 2022, and Edina’s Climate Action Fund, residents will have financial resources to increase energy efficiency and electrify their households. The city also plans to host a series of workshops to educate residents.

Transportation is Minnesota’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and one of the CAP’s eight central focuses. However, Hancock explained that Edina plans to ease into addressing transportation pollution more cautiously than electrification. “America is built for cars,” she said. “Asking someone to walk to the store instead of driving to the store—that is not only a convenience issue or a money issue, although those are important, but there is a behavioral part of that and a cultural part of that.”

The city plans to accelerate creation of walking and biking infrastructure, work with Metro Transit to ensure “efficiency, convenience, frequency, and reliability of bus service,” and encourage electric vehicles by adding publicly available charging stations, which are also used for municip-

“And I think until somebody figures out a way to make people care, or to make it more attractive, I don’t see how you’re going to fix it.”

Shawn Draves

pal electric vehicles adopted in accordance with Edina’s Green Fleet Policy.

Junior Suryash Rawat, who is a member of the EEC, predicted slow improvement in pollution reduction in the transportation sector. Hancock noted that the city is addressing transportation “much more slowly and much more carefully” than energy because of the cultural importance of cars...

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Ways to help reduce **CO₂ EMISSIONS**

40 MIL tons of carbon dioxide were emitted from transportation in Minnesota in 2018. Here are some ways to help decrease this number!

Carpooling by taking the bus to school or riding with friends is an easy way to decrease CO₂ emissions.

The best way to not contribute to increasing CO₂ emissions is to walk or bike to school (if you live close enough). These two methods create...

0 MIL tons

ELECTRIC APPLIANCES

INCANDESCENT LIGHTING

Incandescent light bulbs are generally cheaper and more widely available than LED bulbs; however, they also are much less energy efficient. About 90% of an incandescent bulb’s energy is released as heat. These bulbs typically have a lifespan of about 1,000 hours.

vs.

LED lights boast a much higher level of energy efficiency, emitting very little heat. Although LED bulbs have a bigger price tag, they can last from 50,000 to 100,000 hours. Ultimately, LED lights can cost less in the long run.

LED LIGHTING

How to sort your **ORGANIC WASTE**

COMPOSTABLE TRAYS

FOOD REMAINS

SOILED REMAINS

“I still think—I don’t think, I know that there’s a great majority of people, students and probably even staff members, that don’t know what is suited for an organics can. I know the team put up posters above the cans, which in theory should help. Does it? organics can. I know the team put up posters above the cans, which in theory should help. Does it?”

art by Maggie Baker and Anabelle Jakala

Shawn Draves