



City of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

# **Combined 2020/2021 Green Tier Legacy Communities Annual Report**

Sustainability Component of the Green Tier Legacy  
Charter

March 31, 2022

## Wisconsin Rapids Mayor's Council on Sustainability

### Mission Statement:

“To lead Wisconsin Rapids in developing, implementing, and maintaining measurable practices which drive the City and its constituents to become more sustainable: economically, environmentally, and socially.”

### Vision Statement:

The City of Wisconsin Rapids, surrounding municipalities, businesses, organizations, and citizens will live and work in a community that is resilient and sustainable characterized by:

- near self-reliance in **energy** achieved through a reduction in energy consumption and a greater use of renewables.
- greater **food** security by consuming local, sustainable foods from area farms and community and backyard gardens.
- an enhanced **transportation** system that equally serves bicyclists, pedestrians, and public and private vehicles.
- new and existing residential, commercial, and government **buildings** that are more energy efficient.
- an expansion in **recycling** participation and practices that are focused on local, cost effective, reprocessing and reuse.
- increased **wellness** of the community through access to affordable healthy food and more physical activity.
- continued growth of a more localized **economy** related to areas such as energy, food, transportation, buildings, recycling, and wellness.

## 2020/2021 Sustainable Initiatives and Activities:

### Build and Buy Green

- Rapids Rediscovered
  - The City has continued to administer the “Rapids Rediscovered” program to encourage residential infill development on vacant lots throughout the City. The City awards grants to encourage new responsible housing on these lots.

### Transportation

- Bicycle Parking Standards
  - Continued to implement bicycle parking guidelines found in our zoning ordinance which provide recommendations for the number of recommended bicycle parking spaces by use, requires visible and prominent locations, guidelines for design, accessibility, lighting, and bike racks.
- Safe Routes to School
  - The Wisconsin Rapids Public School District adopted a Safe Routes to School Plan in 2010 and presently seeking grant approval to update the plan.
- Wayfinding Signage
  - The City is currently in the final approval stages of phase one for an extensive wayfinding signage project that is scheduled for spring 2022 installation. This project includes municipal signage, trail signage, pedestrian kiosks, and trailhead kiosks. This will help to integrate the existing multi-use paths, sidewalks, parks, and community amenities.

### Land Use

- Mixed-Use Language
  - The City’s Comprehensive Plan identifies a Mixed Uses land use category that allows for a complimentary mix of residential and commercial land uses.
  - The City’s Downtown Commercial (B-1) allows mixed-use housing by right, and the General Commercial (B-2) and Neighborhood Commercial (B-3) allow mixed-use housing with a conditional use permit. Mixed-use housing is defined as one or more dwelling units that also house a retail use or professional office.

- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's)
  - Continued to support construction of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) as permitted in our zoning ordinance to increase housing stock and promote housing choice and affordability.
- In-Law Dwelling Units
  - Continued support of in-law dwelling units to promote intergenerational living space and to increase housing stock and housing choice.
- Cottage Housing
  - Continued to support development of cottage style housing as allowed in the zoning ordinance which permits clusters of smaller home styles, while maintaining larger areas of open space.
- Bird City Wisconsin Community
  - Certified Bird City Wisconsin Community prioritizing protection and management of green space.
- Tree City USA
  - Recognized Tree City USA that prioritizes trees and green space. The City planted 20 trees throughout the summer and fall of 2021. The City also placed a concentrated effort on the elimination of invasive species within City right-of-ways.
- Landscape Standards
  - Continue to adopt strict landscape standards to ensure that street frontages, foundation plantings, and bufferyards help to provide environmental and aesthetic benefit and reduce the “heat-island” effect.

## Energy

- SolSmart Designation
  - Continuing to prioritize solar market growth within the community.
- Streamlined Solar System Permit Application Process
  - Continued streamlined permit procedure for both building mounted solar systems that are approved administratively and ground mounted systems that are approved by Plan Commission. We are continuing to see more inquiry and interest in solar installation.

- Lower Emissions City Fleet Vehicles
  - Newly purchased City fleet vehicles have idle time shut-off programmed into their computers.

## **Water**

- Impervious Coverage Requirements
  - Continued to enforce impervious coverage requirements to better manage stormwater and reduce damage to infrastructure, buildings, and the natural environment.
  - Coverage requirements are also addressed in the zoning ordinance parking and loading section, which seeks to minimize impervious surfaces and does not allow land uses in business, mixed use, or industrial zones to exceed the minimum number of parking spaces by more than 15 percent.
- Xeriscape Plantings
  - Encourage the use of xeriscape plantings that promote a reduction of water and energy consumption.

## **Healthy Community Planning**

- Placemaking
  - Completed work with the UniverCity Year project with UW Madison focusing on arts and culture initiatives.
  - Building on the work that was done with UniverCity Year project in 2020, we are reinvigorating work in the areas of public art and creative placemaking to move Wisconsin Rapids forward in creating a sense of place in the community.
- Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
  - The Farmers Market is held Thursdays and Saturdays from June to October. The Farmer's Market accepts EBT FoodShare, WIC, and Senior Farmers Market Vouchers.
- Growing Friends Community Garden
  - This community garden contains 72 beds of various sizes available for a low cost. Volunteers also help in growing, harvesting, and donating food items to local food pantries.