



Energy City Celebrates 25 Years!

This year marks the 25th anniversary of Elk River being selected as Energy City, making us the one city (of 30 considered) to receive the Minnesota Environmental Initiative (MEI)'s designation. Our community was selected for being a leader for energy efficient and renewable energy technologies, products, and services.

The history of Elk River's designation as Energy City spans many years and has evolved significantly over time. In 1996, garbage began being converted to fuel right here in town at Great River Energy's waste to energy facility. This conversion produced enough electricity for approximately 30,000 homes. In 2001, Elk River also became home to a 660,000-watt utility-scale wind generator. Seven years later, the local landfill, using methane gas from decomposing garbage, produced enough energy for nearly 1,600 homes.

Homes are not the only buildings to be powered by nature. In 2007, Twin Lakes Elementary School opened and was designed using the Gold Level LEED Certified standards, making it incredibly efficient. Elk River Library is LEED Certified thanks to the geothermal heating and cooling present on site.

Between 2008 and 2012, Project Conserve provided residents with educational information specific for their homes. They received free home inspections and air-tightness tests, plus tips for saving energy (electrical and natural gas) and water. The city had hundreds of participants who benefited from these customized energy audits.

In 2010, Elk River was chosen to be a pilot city for the GreenStep Cities program. Today, the program has 143 cities participating in the voluntary program, providing assistance and resources to allow cities to achieve their sustainability and quality of life goals.

Over the last few years, Elk River has been fortunate enough to add two more renewable energy demonstration sites thanks to our partnership with the Minnesota Municipal Power Association (MMPA). The Hometown Solar and Hometown Wind provide up-close education for our residents.

Thanks to our partnership with Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) we've been able to add three electric vehicle charging stations within the city limits. ERMU also provide numerous rebate and conservation programs specific for local businesses and residential customers. The city participates in the Clean Energy Choice program and purchases 100% renewable energy for all city buildings. Local residents and businesses can also take advantage of this program.

In 2021, our city, state, nation and even our world are in a far different situation then we were 25 years ago. Technology has significantly changed, allowing for true advancements in renewable energy production which has reduced our dependence on natural resources.

Elk River is not resting on its energy laurels but continuing to explore ways to further reduce our carbon footprint, while making energy efficiency more attainable for our residents. There is a concentrated, strategic effort to support sustainable, energy efficient building and manufacturing through energy and water conservation and by recycling or reusing products.

Today, being the designated Energy City includes a commission with members representing businesses, utilities and residents focused on continued collaboration to make Elk River more sustainable.

Learn more about the Energy City Commission, and other advisory groups by visiting ElkRiverMN.gov/AdvisoryCommission.

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