

## LIVING STREETS POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

Maplewood has a history of remarkable sustainability projects! It was one of the first cities in Minnesota to begin installing rain gardens as part of street projects. The City now has more than 700 residential rain gardens, which manage stormwater runoff. Maplewood has been nationally recognized as a leader for its many sustainability efforts, which includes the City's [Living Streets Policy](#), adopted in 2013.

Living Streets are complete green streets that provide for multiple modes of transportation and reduce environmental impacts by having less impervious surfaces, managing stormwater, and providing shade. Living Streets enhance walking or biking conditions, improve safety and security of streets, calm traffic, create livable neighborhoods, improve water quality, enhance urban forest, reduce road lifecycle costs, and improve neighborhood aesthetics.

## WHAT MAY HELP OTHER COMMUNITIES?

### Partnerships

The City indicates that their sustainability and Living Street policy successes are the result of support and contributions from all levels and departments within the City and through strong partnerships. Implementation of the successful Living Streets Policy: [Bartelmy/Meyer Living Streets Demonstration Project](#) was completed through partnership with [Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District](#) which provided funding, grants, technical assistance, and educational resources for the project. The project has been recognized for being groundbreaking for its efforts to incorporate livable communities' elements, public safety, traffic calming, and aesthetic improvements – as well as for partnerships between the City and Watershed District to accomplish mutual goals.

The City has other important partnerships that have advanced sustainability, including its partnership with University of Minnesota, and the capstone "[Sustainable Maplewood](#)" project, which studied efficient use of land through low-impact development, stormwater best management practices, and the protection of natural resources.

## COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

**COUNTY:** Ramsey  
**POPULATION:** 40,545

Maplewood is home to:

- Over 700 residential rain-gardens
- Nature Center that leads the community in environmental related issues and learning
- A culture of sustainability
- Environmental Neighborhood Groups
- Environmental Newsletter

### CONTACT THE CITY:

Shann Finwall, AICP  
Environmental Planner  
(651) 249-2304  
[shann.finwall@ci.maplewood.mn.us](mailto:shann.finwall@ci.maplewood.mn.us)

Steve Love, PE, PLS  
Assistant City Engineer  
(651) 249-2404  
[steve.love@ci.maplewood.mn.us](mailto:steve.love@ci.maplewood.mn.us)

### OTHER RESOURCES:

- Green Corps
- GreenStep Cities
- Regional Indicators Initiative
- B3 Benchmarking



The City is a national leader in sustainability efforts. The Living Streets Policy is only one of the many ways that City encourages sustainable practices.



For street reconstruction projects, residents can select from a variety of garden designs, such as Easy Shrub, Sunny Garden, and Jazz Brights.



The Living Streets project in the Bartelmy-Meyer Neighborhood includes etched raindrops in the sidewalk adjacent to each raingarden.

### Living Streets Design Templates/Measuring Results.

Maplewood's [Living Streets Policy](#) includes different [design templates](#) to foster flexibility and context sensitivity to ensure a neighborhood's specific needs are accounted for, such as improved biking and walking conditions along connector routes.

Project costs following the City's Living Streets policy wasn't significantly different from a standard reconstruction project; however, the sustainability benefits were immense. For example, the City's Bartelmy/Meyer project reconstructed 1.5 miles of residential streets with green enhancements. The streets were narrowed from 30 to 24 feet, which improved stormwater quality, and also reduced the cost of future maintenance. Walkability, active living, neighborhood aesthetics, tree cover, and water quality were improved with the addition of 1.5 miles of sidewalk, 200 trees, 32 raingardens, and a larger regional basin. The project also included a public art feature with raindrop ripples stenciled into the sidewalks at each rainwater garden. In total, the road reconstruction project reduced one acre of impervious surface. As a result of the project, it is anticipated that raingardens will capture the first inch of runoff from any rainfall event, resulting in lower runoff. The City incentivizes stormwater management practices for residential areas. When Living Streets is implemented, stormwater management costs will be much less over time.

### Integrating Sustainability

The City's Living Streets policy is one of many ways the City is committed to sustainability. Maplewood promotes sustainability through its efficient delivery of infrastructure projects, design standards, education, and operations. Sustainability is integrated into the City's comprehensive plan and is part of the City's daily operations, culture, and the [Sustainable Maplewood](#) identity. The City's Comprehensive Plan has a chapter on [sustainability](#), which includes vision, goals, and implementation strategies, all integrated into the Plan. The City's commitment to sustainability is shown in many ways, including having a dedicated full time Environmental Planner, as well as a full time [Green Corp](#) member. In addition, the City has an [Environmental and Natural Resources Commission](#) and Green Team of City staff that works on sustainable operating practices. The City also provides opportunities for Maplewood residents and businesses to develop sustainability attitudes and actions that will strengthen the natural and built environment. This includes having [Environmental Neighborhood Groups](#), providing guidance and resources for the community on [energy](#), [local food](#), [community gardens](#), [environmental ordinances](#), and an [environmental newsletter](#).



Since the 1970s the City's Nature Center has led the community in learning about nature and environmental issues.

## AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

- 2014 Finalist [Environmental Initiative Awards](#) for the Living Streets Policy and Demonstration Project in the Community Action category
- 2013 [Innovation in Government Award](#) from Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District's Watershed Excellence Award
- 2013 Award Winner of National American Public Works Association
- 2012 National Award Winner of Minnesota Chapter of American Public Works Association
- 2012 [Minnesota Blue Star Award](#) for Excellence in Stormwater Management
- [GreenStep City](#) with recent [Step 4 Award](#)
- [Minnesota B3](#) Participant
- [Regional Indicators](#) Participant

September 2015 (updated March 2021)