



## COMMUNITY-SCALE ENERGY PLANNING FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Energy systems and energy use are important components of the local economy. Yet many local governments are unfamiliar with community-scale energy planning concepts and best practices. The [Local Government Project for Energy Planning](#) (LoGoPEP), with the [GreenStep Cities](#) program, has developed planning guidance, identified best practices and data sources, and developed sample goals and tools for assessing implementation options.

Local governments need to address energy in their comprehensive plan for several reasons:

- ✓ **Changing markets:** Ongoing transformation in energy markets and technologies are enabling new options for households, businesses, and property owners to capturing value in clean energy resources.
- ✓ **Economic opportunity:** Local energy development creates economic opportunity and improves local economic resilience.
- ✓ **Community priorities:** As local energy resources become more valuable, local governments must determine and then implement community preferences on how local energy development occurs.
- ✓ **Environmental benefit:** State policy, and some local policy, requires reductions in carbon emissions, much of which depends on local action. Plans should guide local action for environmental benefit.

Planning for the protection and development of local clean energy resources, understanding local energy infrastructure, and shaping local market development is essential to achieving community goals for growth, change, and development. A community can no more ignore energy in its long-range plan than it can ignore housing, natural resources, or commercial development. The three steps to integrating energy into the comprehensive plan are:

1. **Identify Existing Conditions:** Local clean energy resources typically fall into four categories: Efficiency (in building and transportation energy use), solar, wind, and biomass. Local infrastructure includes both utility systems using public rights-of-way and existing energy producing installations. Community-focused energy data is at [Regional Indicators](#), [Xcel Community Energy reports](#), [U.S. Dept. of Energy](#), and other data sets.
2. **Set Desired Conditions:** What priorities should the community set for solar or wind development? How will energy be generated and used in the residences and businesses of the future? Are zero-net-energy buildings possible? Are they inevitable? What environmental, economic, or equity co-benefits can be achieved? Communities sometimes struggle with knowing what are achievable goals, but best practices and guidance are available. [GreenStep Cities](#), [LoGoPEP](#), and the [Metropolitan Council](#) have Minnesota sample goals derived from real world circumstance that communities can rely on.
3. **Select and Prioritize Strategies:** What influence does local government tools for achieving desired conditions for energy development and infrastructure? Local government tools (development regulations, programs, policies) commonly used to achieve desired development or resource protection goals can be modified to address desired energy development.

Planners, elected and appointed officials, and engaged residents and businesses can shape the energy future to benefit their community. Local opportunities to address GHG emissions can create local benefit and improve climate resilience. Regardless, local clean energy development is occurring and will accelerate into the future.

