

Lake Street Energy Challenge

Have you heard about the “Lake Street Energy Challenge”? We’re betting you’d like a little more information about where it fits into your community, your home or your business. Keep reading to get more information on where it came from and how it inspired home energy parties.



Where it all started

In late 2014, the Midtown-Lake Street Corridor teamed up with Xcel Energy for Partners in Energy, a two-year partnership to develop and implement an energy action plan. A team of 23 members of our Lake Street-Midtown neighborhoods volunteered to create our energy vision, representing each neighborhood’s energy priorities—for residents, businesses, neighborhood organizations and our local nonprofits. Then they developed an energy action plan including actionable goals targeting things that could be achieved over the next 18 months and that would ultimately help move towards that vision.

This planning effort was led by Midtown Community Works Partnership to advance sustainability goals within the Lake Street–Midtown Greenway corridor. The Midtown Community Works (MCW) Partnership is a public-private partnership formed to guide the redevelopments of the Midtown Greenway-Lake Street corridor in south Minneapolis. The MCW Partnership provides a forum to coordinate a wide array of public and private investments. They focus on projects that have community support and seek to enhance the economic vitality, improve connections to the local and regional transit systems and improve the surrounding neighborhoods.

Working on energy-related issues is nothing new to many of the individuals who served on the volunteer planning team for the Lake Street Energy Challenge. Although most planning team members had previously worked together in various capacities, this was the first time they came together formally to discuss an energy action plan for the Lake Street-Midtown Greenway Corridor.

As part of coming up with strategies for our community energy action plan, the team attended facilitated workshops where they reviewed community-wide energy use data, utility energy program information, and our existing energy-related sustainability efforts in our community. When the planning team developed the energy action plan, there was a specific vision, mission and strategies established, and the plan was named Lake Street Energy Challenge. It captured our ambitions to bring the community together to be a national role model for equitable and community-driven clean energy, while leading the way toward a carbon-neutral Minneapolis to keep our energy dollars local.

What we want to accomplish

On June 7, 2015, we unveiled the Lake Street Energy Challenge at Open Streets Minneapolis along Lyndale Avenue. Now we're ready to roll up our sleeves to meet our energy challenges!

Feel free to read the complete community energy action plan found at MCWsustainability.org.

Glad you asked!

Q. How can the Lake Street Energy Challenge impact my life?

A. Whether you live or work within the corridor, the Lake Street Energy Challenge is an opportunity for residents and businesses to lower electric and natural gas use, and create a more renewable energy future. All participation is voluntary. Working through neighborhood and business associations, utility partners, and local community leaders, the Challenge will offer ways to broaden the reach of energy efficiency programs and promote solar gardens.

These three focus areas were identified to reach our goals:

- Find ways to conserve energy and save money in our homes
- Help small to medium-sized businesses like clinics, retailers, co-ops, save energy to improve their bottom line
- Help incorporate renewables into our community energy mix through solar gardens

Q. I have a business on Lake Street. What can you do to help me save money?

A. There are options depending on what you are interested in doing. The Lake Street Energy Challenge is helping to promote small business coaching to save energy. Contact the Lake Street Council to learn more. Xcel Energy has programs to help you

identify opportunities in your business to save and rebates to help cover the cost of energy efficiency upgrades. If you want free help getting started, call their Business Solution Center to figure out the right first steps for you at 800-481-4700. For help with efficiency of your natural gas equipment, contact CenterPoint Energy's Business Customer Hotline at 612-321-4939. The MplsGreen.com/LakeStreetEnergyChallenge or cleanenergyresourceteams.org/solargardens has the latest information on community solar gardens to help guide you through how you can invest in solar panels that will allow you to support renewable energy on the grid.

Q. What is the overall mission of the Lake Street Energy Challenge?

A. The planning team worked hard to find just the right mission statement:

"The Lake Street Energy Challenge coordinates action among diverse neighborhood organizations, residents, employees, and businesses to accelerate energy efficiency and community-owned renewable energy accessible for everyone, while creating jobs and community wealth."

Q. Where do I go to keep up with the Lake Street Energy Challenge?

A. One member of the Energy Action Planning team is responsible for MplsGreen.com. This website is dedicated to green living practices in Minneapolis. This site will be used to share information regarding the Lake Street Energy Challenge. Regularly visit MplsGreen.com/Lake-Street-Energy-Challenge to stay up to date on the plan, find out about events where the strategies in the plan are being brought to life and see the latest tracking information on how we are doing towards reaching our community's energy goals.

Q. What if I don't want to be a part of the Lake Street Energy Challenge?

A. Participating in the challenge is completely voluntary. The resources we've put together to support reaching our energy goals are to help people save time, money and energy. The implementation team is working hard to make sure people know what is available to help them contribute to our goals around clean energy, but it is a choice whether you want to be a part of the effort.

Q. Who do I contact if I want to help?

A. You can work with your neighborhood association if you are interested in keeping your work really local but if you want to be a part of the broader challenge, contact Elizabeth Henley, Midtown Community Works Partnership, at henle012@umn.edu. There is a role for everyone, whether it is outreach about energy efficiency a table or working on the planning logistic for a community event to discuss community solar gardens.

Q. How can I get more familiar with the MCW sustainability initiative?

A. One way to stay connected with the Midtown Community Works Sustainability Initiative is to visit MCWsustainability.org.

Where to go from here

Here are just some of the ways you can make an energy difference:

- Host your own home energy party on your block and among your friends.
- Take the Lake Street Energy Challenge Pledge to commit to helping reach our goals.
- Learn new ways you can conserve energy at your home or business. Check out the 100 tips to energy efficiency!
- Like our Facebook page and check the website regularly for updates and progress at MplsGreen.com or MCWsustainability.org.
- Think of ways you can incorporate energy into your neighborhood association or various outreach events. Be creative!



Learn More!
mcwsustainability.org

