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Michigan Communities Recognized for Sustainability Achievements

Gold, Silver and Bronze Certifications Go to 36 Communities

LANSING, Michigan - Three dozen Michigan communities will be recognized as part of the 2019 [Michigan Green Communities Challenge](#) for their commitment to sustainability projects from creative energy financing solutions to improving green infrastructure. Communities will receive awards at the annual Michigan Sustainability Conference, hosted by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy and Michigan Green Communities (MGC), on November 20 and 21 in Lansing, Michigan.

Michigan Green Communities (MGC) connects community leaders through training, education, communications, and the annual MGC Challenge program. MGC is a partnership of the [Michigan Municipal League](#), [Michigan Association of Counties](#), [Michigan Townships Association](#), the [Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy \(EGLE\)](#), the [Michigan Economic Development Corp. \(MEDC\)](#). The Challenge is funded by the [Charles Stewart Mott Foundation](#). This year's MGC Challenge included participation from villages, townships, cities, and counties across the state. Program benefits include creating a roadmap for sustainability initiatives; establishing benchmarks for your community's progress toward sustainability initiatives; and the motivation of comparing and competing with other Michigan communities. The Challenge competition occurs annually but is available year-round as a tool for communities to benchmark sustainability.

In 2019, Michigan communities took over 500 actions towards becoming more sustainable and reported over 300 metrics to track their progress. With a 20-percent increase in participation from 2018, the Challenge continues to demonstrate a growing commitment to sustainability in the state.

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The 36 Michigan communities were awarded Gold, Silver, and Bronze certifications based on actions and metrics reported in their community. The Challenge is a starting point for communities looking to further sustainability initiatives. First-time participant City of Detroit is receiving a silver certification.

“As we continue to grow sustainability and climate work in the City of Detroit, we appreciate that Michigan Green Communities serves as a powerful network of peer cities that we can learn from, grow with, and continually challenge one another,” said Joel Howrani Heeres, Director of the Office of Sustainability for the City of Detroit.

The Challenge also serves as a tool to help communities benchmark success.

“The Green Communities Challenge is a great benchmarking and goal-setting tool for communities to improve their sustainability and resiliency efforts,” said Amy Tweeten, MGC Steering Committee member from the City of Petoskey.

In June of 2019, the City of Petoskey approved a vision of 100-percent renewable energy to power the city's electric needs by 2035.

For the second year in a row, the City of Traverse City received recognition as most-improved community. Traverse City first completed the Challenge in 2017 and continues to use the Challenge as a tool to track success. First awarded bronze, the City of Traverse City has continued to further its sustainability goals and reached gold certification for the first time in 2019.

From renewable energy resolutions to establishing sustainability teams, communities in Michigan are challenging themselves to become more sustainable. Below is a breakdown of the recipients by level.

Gold Certifications:

- **City of Ann Arbor:** Created a new Office of Sustainability and Innovations to support climate action work.
- **City of Battle Creek:** Adopted a sustainability plan in March 2019 that influences projects in the capital improvements planning process.
- **City of Dearborn:** Currently updating the city's forestry management plan, including a draft goal of a 40-percent urban tree canopy.
- **City of East Lansing:** In partnership with the Lansing Board of Water and Light, Michigan Energy Options and Pivot Energy, the City of East Lansing completed a 1,000-panel Community Solar Park installation on a retired landfill site for which residents, the city, nonprofits, and local businesses have leased panels.
- **City of Grand Rapids:** Approved a citywide four-year Strategic Plan that includes sustainability as one of six core values leading the city's work and also includes health and environment as one of the plan's six strategic priorities and focuses on carbon reductions, increasing and enhancing green space, water quality, waste minimization and diversion, and health disparities.

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- **City of Holland:** As part of its comprehensive Community Energy Plan, the city offers homeowners a new way to pay for energy improvements with the Holland On-Bill Loan Program offered by the Holland Energy Fund.
- **City of Novi:** The city's Integrated Solutions Team, with direction from the mayor and city council members, designed a leading-edge facility, completed in August 2019, that had minimal impact to the site, while providing staff a state-of-the-art working environment.
- **Delhi Charter Township:** Started using a food waste de-packager in 2019 to further divert waste from the landfill to anaerobic digesters.
- **Pittsfield Charter Township:** Began working towards developing a tree canopy and green infrastructure plan through the sustainability committee which resulted in the installation of the townships first Community Garden in Prairie Park in 2019.
- **City of Traverse City:** Launched City 'kWh Challenge' focused on creating a culture shift and increasing staff awareness of opportunities for action by challenging departments to a friendly competition to reduce energy use.

Silver Certifications:

- **City of Detroit:** Released the Detroit Sustainability Action Agenda in 2019, which was the result of a year-long process involving community engagement, interdepartmental collaboration, and research.
- **Clinton Township:** Participates in the Green Macomb initiative to support green infrastructure efforts that strengthen the economic vitality, quality of life, and environmental well-being of the region.
- **Delta Township:** Approved an update to the non-motorized transportation plan in 2018.
- **City of Ferndale:** In the process of full LED streetlight conversion, which is set to be complete by the end of 2019.
- **Meridian Township:** Installed a 20-KW solar array that provides power to the municipal building and installed a solar garden that features groups of pollinator-friendly plants throughout the garden to communicate the interconnected complexity of climate.
- **City of Petoskey:** Petoskey City Council adopted a resolution to reach 100% renewable energy powering the entire city's electric needs by 2035.

Bronze Certifications:

- **City of Bay City:** Established a sustainability team in January 2019.
- **Charter Township of Northville:** Partnering with the Motor City Mountain Biking Association to build a trail system on over 300 acres of passive recreation land.
- **Charter Township of West Bloomfield:** Incorporated regulations for solar energy systems and wind energy conversion systems into the Township's Zoning Ordinance.

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- **City of Big Rapids:** Achieves energy savings at the Big Rapids Housing Commission through an on-going energy performance contract.
- **City of Charlevoix/Charlevoix County:** Working with SEEDS to conduct an energy audit of all city-owned buildings.
- **City of Flint:** Working with Consumers Energy on a pilot program to install LED lights and to conduct a study on expanding LED usage in the city.
- **City of Ithaca:** Increased recycling participation rates through single-stream collection.
- **City of Kalamazoo:** Approved a natural features protection ordinance and launched a planning project to develop a community-wide sustainability and climate action strategy.
- **City of Ludington:** Adopted a sidewalk ordinance for core area of the city to install, complete, and repair sidewalks to encourage non-motorized transportation.
- **City of Northville:** Encourages Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design buildings for all developments within the Cady Street Overlay district.
- **City of Rockford:** Founded the Rockford Sustainability Committee in 2018.
- **City of St. Joseph:** Implemented the Sustainability Resolution in 2018 to encourage staff and officials to recognize and consider opportunities to reduce the environmental footprint of city activities.
- **City of Ypsilanti:** Works with Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner to provide free consultations to households interested in developing or enhancing rain gardens.
- **City of Eaton Rapids:** Recently passed a zoning ordinance to encourage solar and wind farms located on farmland.
- **Hartland Township:** Adopted a streetlight conversion plan in August 2019, which will replace 53 streetlights with LED lighting.
- **City of Huntington Woods:** Adopted an energy plan in 2019 along with a municipal energy vision statement.
- **Monroe County:** Offers a myriad of free recycling and waste reduction programs to all Monroe County residents towards the goal of a sustainable community.
- **City of Royal Oak:** Implemented communitywide single-stream recycling program, resulting in a 28-percent increase in recycling.
- **Village of Elk Rapids:** Working with Energy Reduction Coalition to update and change old lighting in the shared village and township government center, police department, fire department and district library.
- **Village of Milford:** Continues to maintain a high recycling rate, with over 40 percent of the materials collected curbside avoiding the landfill.

View the MGC website, <http://migreencommunities.com/>, for more details.

For additional information, contact Shanna Draheim, Michigan Municipal League policy development director, at sdraheim@mml.org and 517-908-0307.

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About the League: [Michigan Municipal League](http://mml.org) is dedicated to making Michigan's communities better by thoughtfully innovating programs, energetically connecting ideas and people, actively serving members with resources and services, and passionately inspiring positive change for Michigan's greatest centers of potential: its communities. The League advocates on behalf of its member communities in Lansing, Washington, D.C., and the courts; provides educational opportunities for elected and appointed municipal officials; and assists municipal leaders in administering services to their communities through League programs and services. Learn more at mml.org.

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