

Green Alternatives

Summer 2011

an environmental newsletter for City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County employees

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Buying Green Newsletter

QUESTIONS?

Contact Karen Reilly
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Get Ready for the Eco Experience at the Minnesota State Fair

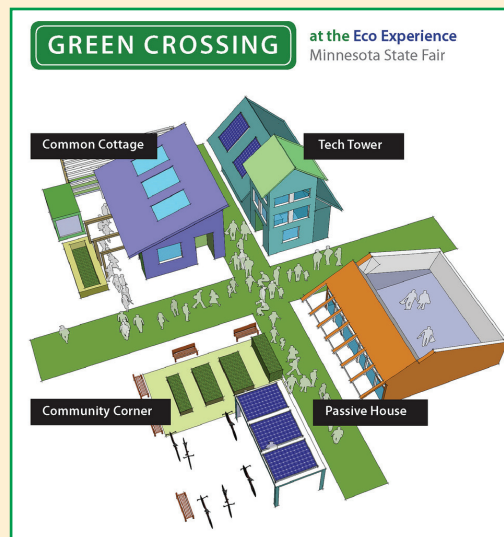
Each year the Eco Experience showcases cutting edge design and technology in green building. This year the all-new Green Crossing area showcases four different concepts to demonstrate not only the future of green building, but what you can do to your current house.

The Passive House is a cutting edge home designed as a complete system. Passive house uses only the most efficient appliances, fixtures, and mechanical systems. Combined with super-insulated window and walls, this brings a 90% reduction in total energy costs.

Passive House is derived from the German term “Passiv Haus,” which describes a building with an extremely reduced (passive) heating system, versus conventional buildings with large (active) systems. Passive house heating comes from the sun, its occupants and household activities. While a certified passive house needs to meet rigorous energy standards, its lessons can be applied to any existing home. In your own home, consider energy efficiency, renewable energy, the use of recyclable or reused materials when available, and pay attention to indoor air quality. Come see how the Passive House works.

The Common Cottage will teach you how to improve the house you have. You’ll find information on how to improve the energy efficiency of your home and how to pay for energy improvements. A computer is set up to take you to websites full of information from government entities, utility companies, and community organizations. Did you have ice dams last winter? Learn what causes them and how to prevent them!

The Common Cottage also has beautiful and simple design elements, including overhangs that welcome sunlight in the winter and keep the house shaded during the summer. The kitchen featured in this house uses reclaimed cabinets, recycled-content materials, and healthy interior finishes. The final touch is a large patio with a rain garden, chicken coop, and patio shade made of salvaged fabric from the damaged Metrodome roof!



The Tech Tower exhibits ways to be sustainable using technology in the home. This building can be thought of as a new home or as an addition to your existing home. The Tech Tower focuses on energy efficiency first – with LED lighting, a handy wattage meter, and smart power strips. Then, it integrates three types of solar electric panels for renewable energy production: traditional PV modules, double-paned glass modules, and solar shingles. The energy monitoring system shows exactly what is happening at your electric meter – anywhere you have access to the Internet. You

can also see how to design for passive cooling, how to use energy- and resource-efficient materials, and how to update old wood fireplaces, heating and water systems. This exhibit house is designed as a multi-purpose space that functions as a dining room, office, and guest room. Learn how to transform the rooms you have in to the rooms you want—without adding on.

The Community Corner includes neighborhood features to support sustainable living, such as a bus stop, bike rack, solar-powered charging station for electric vehicles, and a community garden for producing food and spending time outdoors. The solar carport in the Community Corner is constructed with beautiful double-glass panels made in Mountain Iron, Minnesota.

Look for more information on www.ecoexperience.org



Check Out Your Energy Use

Energy meters are available for checkout free of charge at all Ramsey County Library locations. Find out how much energy your TV, computer or that old freezer in your garage is using and discover which of your home appliances and electronics are still using energy, even when “off”. The Power Check meters, courtesy of Xcel Energy, come with instructions for use, worksheets, money saving tips and incentive programs.

Search the Ramsey County Library online catalog for meter availability or call 651.724.6100.



Eek! Those scary Phantom Loads!!!

Did you know that there may be phantoms lurking in your home that are costing you a lot of energy and money? These “phantoms” are the sources of wasted energy that leak out of many of your home electrical devices, such as your television, DVD player, or MP3 player when you turn them “off,” but they still continue to use energy. According to the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, phantom power loads can consume up to 10% of the electricity used in an average home, and this adds unnecessary costs to your monthly energy bills.

So how do you get rid of these scary energy phantoms? It’s easy! Simply unplug your unused electrical devices, or plug them into a power strip and then flip the switch off. These simple actions can go a long way in chasing away your energy phantoms! For more information, go to <http://standby.lbl.gov>

Saint Paul Has a New Sustainable Transportation Planner



Emily P.G. Erickson is Saint Paul’s new Sustainable Transportation Planner. Since January 2011, she’s been working to facilitate a balanced and flexible transportation system in Saint Paul. Her work is already making its mark on the landscape of Saint Paul.

She has shepherded the arrival of Nice Ride bike share to Saint Paul, which will include 20 stations when this season’s installations of the bright green bikes are complete. She’s also been busy working to site \$20,000 worth of bike racks from the Bike Walk Twin Cities Bike Parking Program; many of these racks will appear in the City’s parks in the coming year. Emily has also been collaborating with partners throughout the region on policy documents, such as regional wayfinding guidelines, and events, including Bike Walk Week for which she sits on the Steering Committee.

Upcoming work will include construction projects, the Complete Streets Plan, the Citywide Bicycle Plan and continuing to work on other planning, coordination, and implementation efforts focused around sustainable transportation in Saint Paul. For more information on some of these initiatives, check out www.stpaul.gov/bikes or contact Emily directly at Emily.Erickson@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

Green Alternatives Fair and Open House

Together with the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County hosted the Green Alternatives Fair and Open House on June 30, 2011. Fourteen booths – from the Master Gardener’s and Smart Trips to Green Buildings and Energy Initiatives – provided information to help employees reduce their environmental footprint, both at work and at home.

Of the one hundred fifteen people that attended, several of them took the Environmental Action Pledge, promising to change a behavior as a result of something they had learned. Twenty-one people attended the Green Meetings and Celebrations presentation.

For more information on the work being done by the Green Alternatives team, contact Karen Reilly.