



To: Mayor and Council

Agenda Item #: V. B.

From: Jordan Gilgenbach, Communications Coordinator

Action

Date: July 15, 2014

Discussion

Information

Subject: June "Speak Up, Edina" Report

Action Requested:

Receive report on June 2014 "Speak Up, Edina" discussion about conservation incentives

Information / Background:

Since June 2012, the City of Edina has used the online engagement website, www.SpeakUpEdina.org, to collect ideas and opinions from residents. One of the City Council's six strategic priorities for 2014-2015 is Communication and Engagement: "To clearly understand community needs, expectations and opinions, the City will consistently seek the input of a broad range of stakeholders in meaningful and interactive communication." A goal of that is to host a monthly discussion on www.SpeakUp.Edina.org. In June 2014, the discussion topic centered on conservation incentives. In this online discussion, the City posed the following questions:

- If the City offered a financial incentive for conservation, such as water conservation, solar panels, etc., would you take advantage of such a program? Why or why not?
- What types of upgrades should be incented?
- Why type of incentive program would you support? For example, low-interest loans, property assessments, rebates or refunds, or something else.
- How would you propose such a program be funded?

The discussion was open for comments between May 30 and July 3. During that time, 23 comments were made. Additionally, 594 people visited the site 832 times, garnering 2,786 page views. About 45 percent visitors to the site during that period were from Edina (according to their internet provider).

The discussion was promoted through various means, including a press release, Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor posts, City Extra messages.

Attached are the comments on this topic.

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Discussion: Conservation Incentives

The City is interested to find out how the community feels about incentives for conservation.

Note: The City is not proposing a change at this time. By using this online discussion, feedback on topics will be compiled and given to the City Council as informational only.

4 Topics

15 Answers

Closed 2014-07-04

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Topic: [Incentives](#)

If the City offered financial incentive for conservation, such as water conservation, solar panels, etc., would you take advantage of such a program? Why or why not?

5 Responses

5 Responses



[Joel Stegner](#) 29 days ago

It really depends on what program the city wants to offer. I can see that the program might be directed toward homeowners - in other words, the more affluent members of the Edina community - who would have the financial capacity to make a major investment in solar panels. While I once owned a home, I now live in a condo where association fees pick up things like water and heat. If I turn down the thermostat, it has no direct impact on those fees. I think that you should favor conservation programs that are potentially of benefit to the widest population, particularly on those households on fixed or low incomes that struggle more with their monthly bills. Below I'll suggest what those programs might be.

0 Supports

comment...

 Reply to Joel Stegner



[Tim Hutchens](#) 27 days ago

This should not be about you (Joel, or any one person) wasting as much or little as you want and affecting your cost. But rather how to incentive the public to move in a more sustainable way for future generations to live on the planet. Here is how I would do it, electricity right now it is cheaper to finance a solar array than pay for coal and nuclear (Xcels energy mix), everyone and your association should have solar. Want to save water, eliminate lawns and plant perma-culture, polyculture plants of food bearing ones, or raise the cost of water to increase conservation quickly the profits could fund other sustainable projects. Incentives for recycling, city wide composting and programs focused on waste reduction, repairing, reusing and upcycling, with cradle to cradle being the norm for all products sold in Edina. Reduce traffic, focus on bike lanes and non-car forms of transportation, have EV, bus, and alternative fuel mix incentives or as Paris is doing pay people to ride their bikes(health and environmental benefits). Changing behaviors are difficult we have to educate the youth and have them talk their parents in to thinking less about themselves and more about the planet. Demonize large houses, and teach about the waste involved with construction and the material loss, and embodied energy of tearing down perfectly good little houses to make giant wasteful ones, and living with less rather than consuming as much as possible would be a good start.

1 Support



[Joel Stegner](#) 26 days ago

I actually agree with much of your agenda long-term. What I'm talking about behavior change among the most Edina residents possible, particularly directed to those who based on their financial situations are least able to change their lifestyles to live "green." What Edina needs to do are small projects that impact a lot of people and are highly visible first, to create an appetite for more of what you are talking about.

0 Supports

comment...

 Reply to Joel Stegner

comment...

 Reply to Tim Hutchens



[Joel Acker](#) 26 days ago

We live in an apartment but would definitely take advantage of any programs that the city could offer that would apply not only to home owners but also to renters living in Edina.

0 Supports

comment . . .

Reply to Joel Acker



[Dave Bender](#) 16 days ago

We'd certainly look at any programs the city would offer. Whether we'd partake in them depends.

From the city's standpoint, it seems that it would make sense to offer incentives if there was some relatively direct benefit to the city. For example, if the city can benefit by reducing water usage (because, for example, maybe a new well doesn't need to be built), providing residents with water-conservation benefits makes sense.

I'd not be as likely to favor incentives that are there for just the general good. Seems like the state and the federal government should cover that.

0 Supports

comment . . .

Reply to Dave Bender

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4 Topics 15 Answers Closed 2014-07-04

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Topic: [Types of Upgrades](#)

What types of upgrades should be incented?

4 Responses

4 Responses



[Joel Stegner](#) 29 days ago

I think that one thing that would have energy and reduce our city's carbon blueprint is getting people out of their cars for short trips. This is not possible with the very limited number of side walks and bike-friendly streets in the city. I live in the Colony, a multi-unit development 2-3 blocks north of Southdale Shopping Center and east of Fairview Southdale Hospital. There is a concentration of the fixed income, low income population I mentioned earlier. If one drives through our neighborhood, one will see a few people walking in the streets, because we have a very incomplete network of sidewalks - and when it comes to major streets (France, 66th and Xerxes/York, a limited number of sidewalks. Particularly in the winter, the only safe way to get to Southdale Shopping Center is by car - so of course, few people walk. Likewise, there is no safe way to walk to the hospital. Should our local residents be expected to drive 2-3 blocks and pay to park in a hospital ramp? No. I would suggest that building a more complete network of sidewalks so people can walk would be a energy conservative practice in which all our residents would benefit in many ways - the walkers saving money and getting more exercise, the drivers dealing with less congestion because the walkers aren't driving. The City needs to expand its thinking.

Another example would be older people on limited incomes who might even require fuel assistance in the winter. Many of them live in older homes that are not adequately insulated or have energy inefficient furnaces and appliances. I believe that the City should focus its efforts on the most needy population - so they are not wasting money they don't have very much of things like home heating.

Along the same line, energy usage would definitely be reduced if people would use more energy efficient light bulbs. These light bulbs save money in the long run, but are expensive up front, which means that those with higher incomes are best able to acquire them. I believe that Xcel has had special incentive programs for these light bulbs. The City might want to partner with Xcel to improve access for these bulbs for its low income residents.

What I'm suggesting is that the City should get out of the mindset of providing financial incentives to its most affluent households to save energy, because they are in the best position to afford them on their own, but should focus its efforts on programs that serve as many people as possible and focus on those who don't have the financial means to make the upfront investments to lower their energy costs.

1 Support



[Joel Acker](#) 26 days ago

I agree with your comment about not providing financial incentives to the affluent community who can afford these things on their own.

0 Supports

Reply to Joel Acker

Reply to Joel Stegner



[Joel Acker](#) 26 days ago

Electric vehicle purchases should be incented. Driving is one of the worst things we do for the environment and for the health of our community. We live in an apartment near France Avenue and it is sickening the amount of dust that accumulates in our apartment in just one day when we have the windows open. That dust is largely from all the pollution of the traffic on France.

The city could begin to offer a program to reduce the costs associated with getting started with an electric vehicle as well as promoting their benefits. Websites like: DriveElectricMN.org & organizations like PlugInConnect (www.pluginconnect.com/) could help the city to develop such programs. I would highly encourage the city to work with the owners of the apartment complexes throughout the city to get them to encourage their residents to look at electric vehicles and to get the building owners to support plug-in vehicles.

I would also target the apartment building owners to encourage them to conserve energy by doing things like replacing older appliances for their residents and other programs. At our complex they are gradually going through the apartments and replacing all the appliances and remodeling the kitchens, but then they greatly increase the rent. Perhaps the city could offer incentive programs to offset the cost for the building owners of buying those appliances so that poorer apartment-dwelling residents won't get hit with the bill.

0 Supports

comment . . .

Reply to Joel Acker



[Kw x](#) 15 days ago

City of Edina has its hands full rebuilding the streets and infrastructure of the community. We lack sidewalks to safely walk (or bicycle) to close by services. Do we need hours of discussion about tax incentives which might duplicate federal and state programs?

0 Supports

comment . . .

Reply to Kw x

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4 Topics 15 Answers Closed 2014-07-04

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Topic: [How to Provide Incentives](#)

What type of incentive program would you support? For example, low-interest loans, property assessments, rebates or refunds, or something else.

4 Responses

4 Responses



[Joel Stegner](#) 29 days ago

In terms of an improved network of sidewalks in the city, I believe that currently the property owner is assessed directly for sidewalk improvements. Frankly, sidewalks are like roads - a public service. The individual home or business owner generally isn't the greatest user of the sidewalk, but members of the general public. The disconnected system of sidewalks in Edina essentially forces people to move from the sidewalk to the street to the sidewalk to the street to get around the city. As I've observed driving around the city, it is extremely dangerous when people cross major streets in Edina, as crosswalks markings are missing or so worn that they cannot be seen. The city is introducing timed walk signs with stop lights and even when there are crosswalks, drivers do not appear well educated to the rights of walkers.

As for the sale of lights, a basic couponing system where people get immediate rewards gives the energy aware customer immediate gratification. Rebates essentially are often unused, because of the extra steps involved in using them. Low interest loans really are appropriate if Edina wants only a few of its citizens to pursue conservation in a big way, as have more of its citizens pursue it in smaller ways. Edina can also extend its spending by entering into partnership with energy companies who also have money to spend on conservation. And the city can look at other issues (like airplane noise) if it wants to get into home insulation programs for low income households - where the insulation can reduce noise levels and hold in the heat.

1 Support



[Joel Acker](#) 26 days ago

I agree that low-interest loans only benefit a few people in a large way. A program that benefits a large number of residents in a smaller way would be much more meaningful.

0 Supports

comment...

Reply to Joel Acker

comment...

Reply to Joel Stegner



[Joel Acker](#) 26 days ago

Rebates or refunds would be great for programs geared toward apartment building owners. Perhaps the city could offer tax incentives to building owners if they can cut down on their overall resource use. The city could perhaps outline a program where if an entire complex reduces its water, gas or electricity use by a certain threshold within a certain period then they'll receive a specified tax break. Then, building owners will look at how they can influence resident behavior and how they can improve their buildings to qualify for the tax break.

And electric vehicle purchase program that gives homeowners a one-year break on their property taxes or a property tax rebate could also be effective, but then you'd need some way for renters to also receive a rebate as well.

0 Supports



[Joel Stegner](#) 26 days ago

I believe in Edina, taxi service is probably predominantly from people's resident to the airport and for the older population to medical and other appointments. The shared car and ride concepts that are in use in major cities could make it possible for some Edina residents with limited need to drive to avoid the cost of owning a car.

0 Supports

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Topic: [Funding](#)

How would you propose such a program be funded?

2 Responses

2 Responses



[Joel Stegner](#) 29 days ago

What needs to be avoid would be use of general tax revenues to mostly subsidize high income households that have the financial means to take on major conservation project. The City can also avoid expenditures altogether if it modifies its building code standards to require the use of high efficient appliances and building designs that don't waste energy in new construction. For water use, it could change the way it charges for water to have higher costs for households that based on community norms have very high uses of water - e.g. those houses with lawn watering systems that over water or being poorly designed put a lot of their water into the street and sewer system. To the degree possible, the city should partner with companies that sell energy or appliances to upgrade the energy/water use efficiency of all households. If these companies can save money through conservation, they may be willing to help fund it.

1 Support



[Joel Acker](#) 26 days ago

The idea of a tiered water billing system sounds excellent. In some states that is how electricity use is billed, the more you use, the higher your price per kWh. Water use could be billed similarly. This would work to encourage conservation since homeowners would know that running their sprinkler system all the time will now cost them more than in the past.

The increased water revenue from this program could then be used to pay for other programs, such as electric vehicle incentives or energy efficient appliance purchase incentives.

0 Supports

Reply to Joel Acker

Reply to Joel Stegner

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Ideas In Action

[Bike Lanes](#)



Conservation Incentives

23 Jun

City Staff from City of Edina

Should the City provide incentives to homeowners for conservation upgrades? Tell us what you think on Speak Up, Edina as part of our year-long discussion series! <http://bit.ly/1nxeZex>

Shared with City of Edina in General

REPLY

8



★ Bob, Josh and Donna thanked you



Jonathon C. from Valley Estates

23 Jun

Incentives would be nice for rain gardens, water barrels, compost bins...sign me up.

Thank [Remove](#)

Sara thanked Jonathon

Louise S. from Indian Hills

23 Jun

Please explain what "conservation upgrades" might encompass? Do you mean environmental related activities like erosion control? Habitat planting like native grasses and plants? I think that you need to clarify the question to get a valid response. And, you might consider coordinating the City's incentive program with that of the watershed districts.

Yes, it would be great for the City to incentivize residents to be conservation role models. The City could come up with a short list, maybe 6, conservation practices. Such a list might include a commitment:

1. to keep the nearest storm drain free of leaves and debris
2. to stop using herbicides to rid lawns of dandelions for the sake of native bees; and reducing their lawn fertilizer regime to decrease nitrates in their yards.
3. to have a plan to rid their properties of buckthorn.
4. to increase native plantings for bird and wildlife
5. to reduce the amount of salt that they put down for ice control.
6. to encourage residents to mentor at least 1 young person in their conservation efforts.

Money is not the only thing that could be used to incentivize people. What about a plaque or sign that identifies a home as being part of the "Edina Conservation Corp"?

Thank [Remove](#)

Sara and Reema thanked Louise



City Staff from City of Edina

24 Jun

Louise, Thanks for your comments! That's a good question about what "conservation upgrades" encompass. It really could be anything big or small, from switching to CFLs or LED lighting, installing solar panels, replacing old windows with energy efficient ones, installation of a rain garden, etc. The questions are meant to be open-ended, asking what kinds of activities should be incented, and to what extent? Should it be offering LED lights for a discounted price? Providing a low interest loan for a higher cost project? Providing grants to pay for part of other projects?

Non-monetary incentives are another good idea to keep in mind. Thanks for weighing in!

-  **David F.** from Golf Terrace Heights 24 Jun
I don't understand this attempt at environmentalism when the city doesn't enforce state mandated erosion control at construction sites and allows mature trees to be cut down. The city eliminated a ... [View more](#)
[Thank](#) [Remove](#)
Reema thanked David
-  **Josh J.** from Brookview Heights 24 Jun
I think its an interesting idea. I would look at doing more green projects around my house if there was an incentive (other than I know they benefit the environment). I think it would be more beneficial to the community as a whole if it focused on exterior applications like rain gardens, native grass plantings, etc.
[Thank](#) [Remove](#)
-  **John S.** from The Heights 24 Jun
Some homes in Edina might still have fuel oil furnaces, maybe the City could work with the EPA to offer incentives to upgrade to natural gas. I think there might be State money available to even pay for the removal of old fuel oil tanks. It would be interesting to know how many homes still use fuel oil.
[Thank](#) [Remove](#)
- Shea H.** from Braemar Hills 24 Jun
Appreciate the attempt at conservation which I'm a fan of but David's point is spot on which is the fact that the government isn't good at doing it.

Sounds like another government boondoggle and excuse to raise taxes. No thanks.
[Thank](#) [Remove](#)
-  **Patricia P.** from Chowen-Strachauer Park 24 Jun
I'd be all for an incentive
[Thank](#) [Remove](#)