



Cities Bulletin e-newsletter

April 7, 2025 | Issue 13

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The legislation would allow online publication of public notices when a qualified newspaper closes.

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Various dates and locations

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- For legislative questions: [Contact IGR Staff](#)
- For editorial or other Cities Bulletin questions: Contact Rachel Kats, Publications & Web Editor (651) 215-4032 or (800) 925-1122; rkats@lmc.org

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Senate Committee Hears Bill To Modify Government Newspaper Publication Requirements

April 7, 2025

The legislation would allow online publication of public notices when a qualified newspaper closes.

On April 3, the Senate State and Local Government Committee heard SF 2631, sponsored by Sen. Eric Pratt (R-Prior Lake), which would modify the requirements for publishing notices in qualified newspapers. The bill was laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus bill.

The prior week, on March 24, the House Elections Finance and Government Operations Committee heard the House companion bill, HF 2231, sponsored by Rep. Bobbie Harder (R-Henderson). The bill received bipartisan support, was approved by the committee on a voice vote, and sent to the General Register for possible discussion and a vote by the full House.

Background

Since 2018, more than 12% of local newspapers in Minnesota have shut down, averaging a rate of more than 11 closures per year. Many cities have been impacted by these closures, as publishing notices in alternative newspapers to satisfy the law is often costlier and reaches fewer city residents.

HF 2231 aims to address these challenges by allowing cities to publish legal notices on their websites and on the Minnesota Newspaper Association's (MNA) website for free until another qualified newspaper is designated. This flexibility ensures transparency while giving cities time to find alternate qualified newspapers.

Testimony on the bill

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), MNA, and League of Minnesota Cities worked closely with Rep. Harder on the bill's language. Supporters, including the League, along with the AMC, Prior Lake City Administrator Jason Wedel, and the Minnesota Association of Townships, testified on behalf of local governments in favor of the bill. Other testifiers included the MNA, Minnesota School Board Association, and Herald Journal Publishing.

[View a video of the testimony on HF 2231.](#)

Your next step

The League encourages city leaders to contact their legislators and share their support for the legislation, along with how it could help their city to budget and plan for new projects.

[Read more news articles.](#)

Your LMC Resource

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Homeowners Association and Common Interest Community Reform Bills Advance

April 7, 2025

The wide-ranging proposal includes changes to HOA and CIC policies and raises concerns over local government preemption.

On April 4, the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee considered SF 1750, sponsored by Sen. Eric Lucero (R-Saint Michael). The bill includes numerous recommendations from the Working Group on Common Interest Communities and Homeowners Associations related to homeowners associations (HOAs) and common interest communities (CICs). It was amended and laid over for possible inclusion in the judiciary committee's omnibus policy bill.

The legislation proposes a variety of changes that would:

- Establish new conflict-of-interest standards.
- Prohibit excessive fines and fees.
- Require that association rules be reasonable.
- Establish alternative dispute resolution options.
- Limit the use of property foreclosure as an enforcement tool.
- Require the publication of a schedule of fees, fines, and charges.
- Make it easier to dissolve an HOA or CIC.
- Eliminate certain parking restrictions, such as prohibitions on parking work vehicles in driveways.
- Prohibit cities and counties from conditioning approval of residential building permits, conditional use permits, or planned unit developments on the creation of an HOA or inclusion of any services, features, or common property necessitating an HOA.

League position

As both SF 1750 and its House companion, HF 1268 (Rep. Kristin Bahner, DFL-Maple Grove), have advanced through the committee process, the League has continued to raise concerns about Article 2, Section 2 of the bill, titled "Local Government Preemption." The provision would prohibit cities from requiring the inclusion of private common areas, potentially forcing municipalities to accept property or infrastructure intended to be private as public property managed by cities.

The League provided both in-person and written testimony opposing this preemptive language and continues to work with bill authors to address city concerns.

[Read the League's written testimony on SF 1750 \(pdf\).](#)

Bill amendments

During the Senate judiciary hearing, committee members adopted the [A9 amendment \(pdf\)](#), which removed Article 2 from SF 1750, removing the local preemption language. However, the preemption language remains in the House version, HF 1268, and could return to the Senate version later in the legislative session.

Next steps

Both House and Senate versions of the bills have been heard in at least one committee. Cities are encouraged to review Article 2 and share any concerns with their legislators.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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Pension Commission Reviews PERA COLA Increases

April 7, 2025

Lawmakers considered postretirement benefit increases to the Public Employees Retirement Association General Plan and Police & Fire Plan.

On April 1, the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement reviewed two bills aimed at increasing the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for retirees on the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) General Plan and Police & Fire Plan.

PERA Police & Fire Plan COLA increase

HF 139/SF 1122, sponsored by Rep. Tim O'Driscoll (R-Sartell) and Sen. Nick Frentz (DFL-North Mankato), would adjust the current COLA structure for the Police & Fire Plan. This would allow for an increase of 1% to 2%, depending on the Social Security COLA increase, and reduce the waiting period from 36 months to 12 months.

Currently, retirees on the plan are eligible for a fixed 1% COLA after a 36-month waiting period. During the hearing, Doug Anderson, executive director of PERA, testified that the proposed change would cost approximately \$44 million annually. He expressed PERA's support for the bill, contingent on upon a new ongoing state appropriation to cover the cost.

Sen. Frentz noted that the bill would only be included in the upcoming pensions omnibus bill if the commission's budget target includes funding to cover the annual increase.

The bill was laid over for further consideration, pending budget decisions.

[View the commission's summary of HF 139/SF 1122 \(pdf\).](#)

PERA General Plan COLA increase

HF 2821/SF 3192, also sponsored by Rep. O'Driscoll and Sen. Frentz, would update the COLA formula for members of the PERA General Plan.

Currently, the COLA for the PERA General Plan is 1%, unless the Social Security COLA is greater than 2%, in which case the COLA is 50% of the Social Security COLA, not to exceed 1.5%. Under the bill, the COLA for the PERA General Plan is 1% unless the Social Security COLA is greater than 1%, in which case the COLA is the same as the Social Security COLA, not to exceed 1.75%.

Current law also requires employers to contribute 7.5% of an employee's salary until the plan is 100% funded (projected to occur in 2034), when the employer match will return to 6.5%. To ensure that the employer match does not extend beyond 2034, the legislation would reduce the requirement that the PERA General Plan be fully funded at 100% to 98%. This would keep the

same projected date of 2034 for the plan to be fully funded, allowing for the employer contribution to return to 6.5%.

Anderson also testified in support of the bill, saying that changes would improve retiree benefits without impacting the employer contribution rates.

The commission approved the bill for inclusion in the pension omnibus bill.

[View the commission's summary of HF 2821/SF 3192 \(pdf\).](#)

What's next?

Because a pension omnibus bill is not subject to committee deadlines, the commission can pass a final bill any time before the May 19 session deadline. Once legislative leaders agree on a joint budget target for pensions, the commission will begin assembling its final omnibus bill package for consideration by the full Legislature.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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Legislation Targets Earlier Notification of State About Potential High Water Use Projects

April 7, 2025

The proposal would require all city and county employees to report any contact related to a high water use project, even if no application or proposal has been made.

On April 3, the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee heard HF 3007, sponsored by Rep. Peter Fischer (DFL-Maplewood). The bill aims to get information to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) earlier in the development process about potential high water use projects. While the proposal is primarily directed at future data center projects, it would also apply to other industries, including crop-based fuel production, food processing, animal feedlots, and irrigation.

Rep. Fischer and the DNR expressed concern that by the time a project reaches the stage of addressing water appropriation and supply, significant investments have already been made, making it difficult to consider alternative options or environmental impacts.

What's in the bill?

The bill would require all city and county employees to report to the DNR within 10 business days of any contact that may indicate a potential project involving high water use, even if no official proposal is made or location is identified.

Bill language excerpt:

“A city or county employee who has been contacted by a person regarding a project that is likely to be subject to this subdivision must, even if no final decision has been made on the project's location, notify the commissioner in writing within 10 business days of the contact, providing the name of and contact information for the person and potential project locations.”

League response

The League of Minnesota Cities, along with the Association of Minnesota Counties, submitted written testimony raising concerns about the local government reporting mandate. The League letter states that the bill's language is overly vague, noting that informal conversations and speculative inquiries are common with city staff and happen well before any specific proposal or site is identified.

The requirement also assumes all city staff — whether an economic development coordinator, a stormwater worker chatting with a vendor at a seminar, or a city clerk answering a call — would have the knowledge to recognize whether a conversation could potentially trigger the statute's water use threshold.

These concerns were echoed by legislators during the hearing, where a League representative was called to provide additional information on the topic. The committee co-chairs acknowledged the issue and agreed it would need to be addressed if the proposal moves forward.

HF 3007 was laid over for possible inclusion in the omnibus environment and natural resources budget bill, which is expected to be drafted in the coming weeks. No Senate companion bill has been introduced at this time.

Next steps

The League will continue working with the House and Senate environment committees to prevent the mandated reporter requirement from being included as the omnibus bills are developed and finalized.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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Committee Considers Housing Tax Increment Financing Proposals

April 7, 2025

Lawmakers heard two bills related to statewide TIF proposals aimed at supporting affordable and workforce housing.

On March 31, the House Taxes Committee heard a full agenda of tax increment finance (TIF) bills. While most focused on local TIF adjustments, two proposals have statewide implications. Both were laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus tax bill.

Expanding unobligated TIF proceeds (HF 1159)

HF 1159, sponsored by Rep. Cheryl Youakim (DFL-Hopkins), would expand how cities can use unobligated TIF proceeds outside of their districts. Specifically, the bill would allow those funds to be directed to local housing trust funds, provided the funds benefit households that meet certain income requirements.

In a letter of support, the League of Cities highlighted that this change would help more cities establish and fund local housing trust funds — unlocking unused TIF dollars for grants, loans, matching funds, and other direct city assistance.

The bill was amended to allow for income averaging in affordable housing projects and was laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus tax bill.

TIF timeframes (HF 338)

The committee also considered HF 338, sponsored by Rep. Roger Skraba (R-Ely). This bill would allow TIF districts outside the metropolitan area to qualify as housing districts without income restrictions, enabling them to fund both market-rate and workforce housing.

Additionally, the bill would extend two key TIF timeframes:

- The five-year rule, which requires that debt for the in-district portion of tax increment financing activity be undertaken within five years, would be extended to 10 years.
- The six-year rule, which requires the authority to begin using a certain percentage of increment on paying off development debt by the sixth year, would be extended to 11 years.

The bill was also laid over for possible inclusion in an omnibus tax bill.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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Public Finance Technical Bills Advance

April 7, 2025

House and Senate tax committees considered updates to modernize and streamline public finance laws.

During the week of March 31, both the [Senate Taxes Committee](#) and the [House Taxes Committee](#) heard what is known as the 2024 public finance bill.

[SF 2880](#), sponsored by Senate Taxes Committee Chair [Sen. Ann Rest](#) (DFL-New Hope), and [HF 2730](#), sponsored by House Taxes Committee Co-chair [Rep. Aisha Gomez](#) (DFL-Minneapolis), are supported by the Minnesota Institute of Public Finance and aim to streamline and modernize laws related to financing public buildings.

The bills would:

- Shorten and align the required timing of several public notices.
- Add courthouse or justice center construction to the list of debt obligations eligible for state guarantees.
- Clarify which obligations qualify for state guarantees.
- Clarify which obligations fall under the Minnesota Bond Allocation Act.
- Make other technical adjustments to current public finance statutes.

Both bills were laid over for possible inclusion their respective committees' omnibus tax bills.

[Read more news articles.](#)

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Minnesota Cities Lead the Way in Housing Innovation

Housing is a pressing issue in Minnesota, and cities across the state are stepping up with innovative solutions to meet growing needs. From incentive programs to partnerships with developers, local leaders are driving efforts to expand affordable and market-rate housing options in their communities. These efforts highlight the important role cities play in addressing the housing challenge — and the opportunity for strong state-local collaboration to support these initiatives.

With the 2025 legislative session underway, the League of Minnesota Cities continues to prioritize working with state lawmakers and other stakeholders to advance policies that empower local efforts while achieving shared housing goals.

Cities understand the unique needs of their communities and have implemented creative strategies tailored to their circumstances, from updating zoning ordinances to investing in workforce housing. These local successes provide valuable insights that can inform broader efforts across the state.

A collaborative approach is essential for success. By respecting local expertise and providing funding, technical assistance, and adaptable frameworks, the state can help amplify city-led efforts and ensure housing solutions work for urban, suburban, and rural communities alike.

Here are seven examples of cities using tailored, innovative strategies to attract housing development that meet local needs.

Albert Lea

POPULATION: 18,396

After sitting vacant for 20 years due to contamination from a fire at a meatpacking plant, part of a 35-acre site in Albert Lea is now home to 48 rental units. Supported by \$944,000 in funding from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), the city cleaned up 3.4 acres to prepare for apartment development. The city is also contributing \$474,000 in tax increment financing (TIF) over 26 years.

This development, located along the Blazing Star State Trail, provides affordable housing close to the Albert Lea Aquatic Center, Frank Hall Park, and the historic downtown area. The site remediation cost \$1.26 million, while the housing complex cost \$5.9 million. Before the project, the site was valued at \$52,200; today, it's worth \$2.99 million. The city plans further development with additional support from DEED.

Balaton

POPULATION: 595

In 2019, the Balaton Economic Development Authority began a strategic planning process with input from residents and community leaders that identified housing rehabilitation as a top priority. Further community engagement in 2021 showed strong interest from homeowners and rental property owners in accessing resources for housing updates.

As a result, in 2023, the City of Balaton was awarded \$646,205 through the Small Cities Development Program to address housing issues, including health and safety hazards, energy efficiency improvements, and accessibility upgrades. The program targets 20 owner-occupied homes and three single-family rental units, all serving low- to moderate-income households. This initiative ensures the community maintains sustainable, affordable housing for its residents.

East Grand Forks

POPULATION: 9,176

East Grand Forks implemented two home construction incentive programs to promote new construction development on its unsold residential lots. The builder incentive programs offer a \$1,000 down payment for land, with the balance due upon closing the home sale. Additionally, the city provides contractors with a \$100,000 interest-free loan for building materials. Special assessments are factored into the land's total cost.

Since the programs launched, 54 of 68 lots have been sold. The city has also partnered with Polk County and the local school district to offer a two-year property tax reimbursement on all newly constructed homes once they reach full taxable value. These efforts, in collaboration with local builders, have created quality, affordable housing; boosted the tax base; and supported community growth.

Edina

POPULATION: 53,494

Edina is addressing affordable housing needs for low- and moderate-income seniors by developing 118 age-restricted rental units. The project is a collaboration between the Edina Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), a local nonprofit, and a partnership of for-profit and nonprofit developers.

Initially, Edina's HRA provided a forgivable loan to a nonprofit to acquire the land and find a suitable developer. The nonprofit retained land ownership and contributed it through a 99-year ground lease, ensuring long-term affordability while reducing development costs.

The HRA also awarded the developer TIF funds and established a new TIF district. Income averaging allows rents to range from 30% to 70% of the area median income. Additional funding sources include housing revenue bonds, low-income housing tax credits, and loans from Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council.

Kasson

POPULATION: 7,200

To address its limited stock of multifamily housing options, Kasson acquired 64 acres in the southwest part of the community, designating 10 acres for development and the rest for parkland and wetlands. Phase 1, completed in 2023, brought a 47-unit market-rate apartment

complex. Phase 2, completed in 2024, added a 50-unit workforce housing apartment complex, a six-unit townhouse, and a 2.5-acre lot for future development.

The city supported these projects with TIF and tax abatement programs and by providing land at reduced costs. Collaborative efforts with local developers, like the recent Vail project, are increasing housing options, growing the tax base, and fostering sustainable development.

Milaca

POPULATION: 3,021

Milaca has prioritized creating new apartments and senior housing to meet the needs of older residents and attract new families. A private developer has acquired land to build two apartment buildings, each with 36 units of varying sizes. Ground-floor units will accommodate seniors, but won't be age-restricted.

The development includes amenities like a workout facility, garages, and plans for a community building and sales office. Phase 3 will add a senior living facility. The city supports the project, and is working with the developer on tax abatement programs and other available resources to ensure its success.

Ottertail

POPULATION: 680

The City of Ottertail offers affordable housing through its \$1 Lots program, selling city-owned residential lots for just \$1. "The idea is to grow our community," according to Mayor Ron Grobeck.

Each lot is just under an acre, re-platted to proper size, and soil tested to ensure septic readiness. Buyers must provide a lender's letter of good intent for construction financing, and complete and occupy their homes within 12 months.

The program is designed to promote the development of single-family housing by prioritizing primary residences, giving buyers instant equity and leaving funds for construction. Qualified buyers may also receive a \$10,000 tax abatement through a partnership with Otter Tail County. For details, visit cityofottertail.com/building-big.

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Your LMC Resource

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Thank You to Outgoing Members of the LMCIT Board of Trustees!

April 1, 2025

As the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) bids farewell to three esteemed members of its Board of Trustees, the Trust would like to recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of Dave Callister, Clint Gridley, and Anna Gruber. These individuals have played a critical role in shaping policies, overseeing risk management strategies, and ensuring the success of our member organizations.

Dave Callister: A Champion of Local Government

LMCIT Board of Trustees Chair, Plymouth City Manager

Trustee since 2013

With more than 26 years of experience working with local governments of all sizes, Dave Callister has been a stalwart advocate for municipal risk management. His extensive background includes eight years in the private sector, providing financial advisory services to more than 50 local government entities, including cities, counties, townships, and watershed districts.

As a city administrator for 16 years, Dave managed risk management activities firsthand, working closely with LMCIT staff, legal professionals, and adjusters on various claims and audits. His engagement with the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) extended beyond risk management—he actively participated in LMC conferences, regional meetings, and legislative committees, even testifying before the Legislature on key issues.

Callister's expertise and commitment have been instrumental in developing financial policies for member cities and assisting in key hiring processes within LMC. His tenure on the LMCIT Board reflects his passion for innovative solutions in municipal insurance and risk management.

Clint Gridley: A Leader in Risk Management and Innovation

LMCIT Board of Trustees Vice Chair, Woodbury City Administrator

Trustee since 2017

With 29 years of experience in city management, including 20 years as a city administrator, Clint Gridley has brought an immense wealth of knowledge to the LMCIT Board. His career spans multiple states and diverse municipal insurance arrangements, making him a unique and valuable asset in risk management.

Gridley has played a significant role in several insurance pools, but his leadership extends beyond risk management, bringing a measurement-driven, data-focused approach to LMCIT's services. Under his guidance, the city of Woodbury earned the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Center for Performance Management's Certificate of Excellence, demonstrating his commitment to high standards in municipal operations. With experience managing a \$65 million budget, Gridley has also contributed valuable financial oversight and strategic planning to the LMCIT Board.

His unwavering support for the League's training and risk management programs has left a lasting impact, helping guide LMCIT in enhancing its offerings to member cities.

Anna Gruber: A Passionate Advocate for Municipal Excellence

Sartell City Administrator

Trustee since 2020

Anna Gruber's extensive background in municipal government has made her an invaluable member of the LMCIT Board. Her career is marked by a passion for local governance and a dedication to serving Minnesota's cities. With experience as Pierz city administrator from 2009 to 2014, manager of community solutions at Sourcewell from 2014 to 2020, and currently as Sartell city administrator, Gruber has developed a deep understanding of the needs of both small and mid-sized communities.

Gruber has been actively involved in statewide initiatives, including an appointment by Governor Walz to the State of Minnesota Children's Cabinet. Additionally, her tenure on the LMC's Business Leadership Council when she worked for Sourcewell further strengthened her connection to municipal governance and policy development.

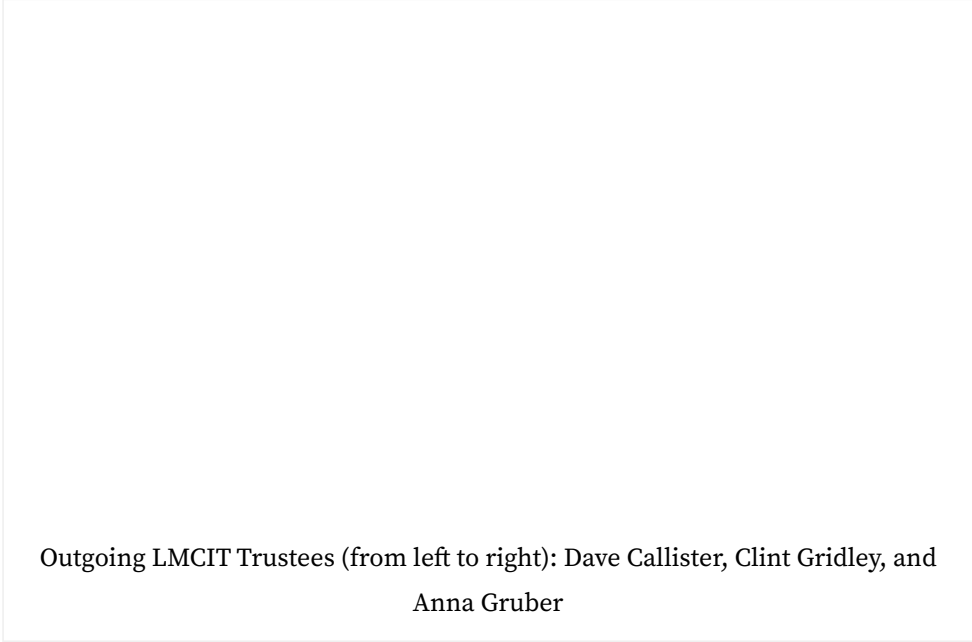
Gruber's contributions to LMCIT have been shaped by her ability to bridge the gap between Greater Minnesota and urban communities. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that all municipalities—regardless of size—receive the support and resources they need. Her expertise in policy, budgeting, and risk management has been instrumental in guiding LMCIT's strategic direction.

A Lasting Impact

The departure of these dedicated trustees marks the end of an era, but their influence will continue to guide the organization. Their leadership has strengthened the foundation of LMCIT, ensuring its continued success in providing excellent and affordable risk management services to Minnesota's cities.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Callister, Gridley, and Gruber for their years of service, insight, and dedication. Their work has helped safeguard our communities, and their legacies will inspire future leaders to carry forward LMCIT's mission.

As we welcome new trustees to the Board, we remain committed to the values and principles that these distinguished individuals have championed. Thank you for your service, and best wishes in your future endeavors!



Outgoing LMCIT Trustees (from left to right): Dave Callister, Clint Gridley, and
Anna Gruber

LMC Awards

The 2025 LMC Awards Program is now open for submissions!

The League each year honors the special achievements of cities and city leaders with the City of Excellence Awards, C.C. Ludwig Award, James F. Miller Leadership Award, and Sustainable City Award.

About City of Excellence Awards

The City of Excellence Awards recognize cities for outstanding work. Awards are given in three population categories and in one special topical category, which is different each year. The 2025 Topical Category is Successful Collaboration Among Local Governments.

[Read more about the City of Excellence Awards](#)

About the Individual Awards

The C.C. Ludwig Award recognizes elected officials who have made significant contributions to Minnesota city government. Similarly, the James F. Miller Leadership Award honors appointed city officials who have gone above and beyond the call of duty for their city and all Minnesota cities. Finally, the Emerging Leader Award is presented in recognition and encouragement of elected and appointed officials who are early in their service to municipal government.

[Learn more about the individual awards](#)

About the Sustainable City Award

Cities currently participating in the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program are eligible for the League of Minnesota Cities Sustainable City Award.

[Learn more about the Sustainable City Award](#)

Your LMC Resource

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