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CITY OF ST. LOUIS PARK ADOPTS LANDMARK CLIMATE ACTION PLAN,
INITIATED BY STUDENTS

***Supported by iMatter, Students Spur City Council to Set Aggressive Goal
for Net Zero Emissions by 2040***

St. Louis Park, MN – Feb. 6, 2018 – The work of a passionate group of high school students has culminated in one of the nation’s most ambitious plans to combat climate change on a local level. Yesterday, the St. Louis Park City Council unanimously approved a landmark [Climate Action Plan](#), which includes a goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, the most aggressive city plan in Minnesota. To achieve this, the city has adopted specific targets for 2030, such as 100 percent renewable electricity, reducing solid waste by 50 percent and reducing vehicle emissions by 25 percent.

The two-year-long effort is part of an action campaign through iMatter, a youth-driven climate change organization based in the Twin Cities. iMatter, a national organization, supports youth leaders to help drive and shape aggressive climate policy at a local level.

The city’s forward-thinking plan was initiated by a high-school student presentation in March 2016, which included more than 550 student petition signatures and a report card highlighting the city’s strengths and weaknesses on climate change. As a result, the city committed to creating a Climate Action Plan (CAP), including youth involvement.

“The fact that they had me at the table was really amazing,” said Lukas Wrede, a St. Louis Park High School senior who has been part of the process from the beginning. “We share the same vision for St. Louis Park now.”

The St. Louis Park students -- part of the Jane Goodall’s Roots & Shoots group, a global youth-led community action program -- started working with iMatter in late 2015. The lead consultant on the creation of the plan was Minneapolis-based [Great Plains Institute](#), which works to transform the energy system to be both environmentally and economically sustainable. On Monday, students saw their efforts come to fruition when the CAP was officially adopted.

“Adopting this Climate Action Plan is only the start of a challenging journey that will present us with many unknowns in the years to come,” said St. Louis Park Mayor Jake Spano. “That said, the students who have pursued this effort for the past two years have made it clear that the time is long past to begin this effort, no matter how difficult it may be.”

“St. Louis Park has an opportunity to be a leader in the movement to restore a healthy climate and set the standard for the rest of the state and the country,” Wrede wrote, in a letter on one of the opening pages of the plan. “...we see this as an opportunity to rethink our current actions and imagine a better, more sustainable future.”

“We applaud the City of St. Louis Park and its youth for championing such a bold and transformative climate action plan,” Abby Finis of Great Plains Institute, lead consultant on the climate action plan, said. “It’s the leadership and vision of cities enacting meaningful and sustainable changes that will be so critical to the future of our environment. Not only will this spur transformation within their city, but St. Louis Park can serve as a model that brings about more action at the local, state, and national level.

“St. Louis Park joins a growing movement of communities across Minnesota and the nation that are going all-in on clean and renewable energy,” said Patty O’Keefe, Beyond Coal Organizing Representative for the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign in Minnesota. “Now, as we move forward to realize this vision of 100 percent clean energy, it’s vital that we work to ensure that everyone shares in the benefits of a clean energy economy. That means investing in clean energy right here in our neighborhoods and putting equity at the center of this goal. Sierra Club also applauds the high school students of iMatter for advocating for a world in which our air, land and water is preserved for future generations.”

Local Momentum Supports Statewide and National Movement

It’s an unusual but powerful story - decisions St. Louis Park makes from today onward will be weighed against the plan, a change that was initiated by the city’s youngest constituents. This kind of momentum does not go unnoticed, and the St. Louis Park students have inspired many other young people in cities around Minnesota to join with iMatter for city-level action. Later this month, students in Bloomington and Minneapolis will present resolutions to their city councils. Youth in many other Minnesota cities, including Edina, Eden Prairie, Grand Marais, Minnetonka, Stillwater, and St. Paul, are also working with iMatter. What started as a pilot project in St. Louis Park is becoming a statewide movement.

“Young people have the moral authority to speak on climate change – it’s an issue that directly affects their futures,” said Maddie Adkins, an iMatter youth leader and part of the national organization’s core team. “Young people have the power to push past the political divides that typically color decisions about climate change policy, and remind city officials why climate action is so necessary.”

This model of young people working in conjunction with their cities to create aggressive climate policy works. Two years ago, iMatter supported 5-10 young people in 5 pilot cities.

Now, iMatter is supporting more than 80 young people in 60+ cities around the U.S. and Canada - all while doing virtually no outreach.

“This has become a national movement,” adds Adkins. “Young people are inspired by the efforts of their peers, and with support from the iMatter community, they learn that they are powerful individuals whose voices and futures must be taken into account in city decision-making.”

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iMatter

iMatter is a youth-driven climate change organization, founded by a 13-year-old in 2007, that is dedicated to amplifying the voice of the youngest generation. iMatter works with young people to drive and shape aggressive climate policy in their cities, supporting them to step into their power to make meaningful impact toward ending the climate crisis. For more information, please visit www.imatteryouth.org.

City of St. Louis Park

The City of St. Louis Park, population 47,500, has a long history of leading the way on environmental stewardship, including offering organized solid waste and organics collection and being the first city in the state to offer curbside recycling with incentives. In January 2017, the city put into effect a zerowaste packaging ordinance for commercial establishments. Other citywide efforts include hybrid and all-electric vehicles incorporated into the city fleet, annual environmental education events for residents, zero-waste city events and many other initiatives. For more information visit www.stlouispark.org.

Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3 million members and supporters. In addition to helping people from all backgrounds explore nature and our outdoor heritage, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit www.sierraclub.org.

Great Plains Institute

As a non-partisan, non-profit organization, the Great Plains Institute works with diverse interests to transform the way we produce, distribute, and consume energy to be both environmentally and economically sustainable. We combine our unique consensus-building approach, expert knowledge, research and analysis, and local action to work on solutions that strengthen communities and provide greater economic opportunity through creation of higher paying jobs, expansion of the nation's industrial base, and greater domestic energy independence while eliminating carbon emissions. For more information, visit betterenergy.org.