



# **Three Metro East Green Cities Challenge participants demonstrate sustainable achievements**

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*The Green Cities initiative is an expansion of the St. Louis Green Business Challenge, which will host its 2016 awards ceremony on Dec. 2*

ST. LOUIS - As the St. Louis Green Business Challenge winds down for 2016, municipalities are celebrating their successes as participants in the Green Cities Challenge, with the hopes that other municipalities will follow their examples.

Having kicked off last spring following a 2015 pilot program, the Green Cities Challenge gave St. Louis area municipalities a new way to get involved in the Green Business Challenge and provided the cities with the opportunity to learn how to incorporate sustainable policies and practice sustainable fundamentals within their local government business operations. Standout participants included Alton, Granite City and Highland.

“Now in its 7th year, the St. Louis Green Business Challenge was developed as a business engagement program designed to assist companies with the integration of sustainable practices into their daily operations,” said Missouri Botanical Garden’s Jean Ponzi, who co-manages the Green Business Challenge. “The challenge is a joint program of the St. Louis Regional Chamber and the Missouri Botanical Garden that helps businesses of all types and sizes to integrate Triple Bottom Line (fiscal, social and environmental) measures into the kinds of daily operations common to every business. While the Green Business Challenge has always been open to municipalities, our goal in creating the Green Cities Challenge was to get many more communities engaged in an initiative that was developed exclusively for local government. The response to this year’s Green Cities Challenge was great, and we’ve been thrilled with the work that’s come out of it.”

Guided by principles from the Green Business Challenge and OneSTL, the regional plan for sustainable development, the Green Cities Challenge offers municipalities a variety of options for getting involved. Communities start by selecting one municipal building or facility where they can focus their challenge efforts. From there, they can choose from a menu of sustainable actions. Participants are required to adopt at least five new policies, such as the development of a green team, the creation of a no-idling initiative and the introduction of a waste reduction, energy reduction or climate action plan.

The initiative also requires participants to complete at least five other eco-friendly accomplishments, such as distributing sustainable education materials; hosting sustainable learning events; demonstrating reductions in paper waste, eliminating Styrofoam and plastic bottle use; reducing energy use and completing carbon footprint documentation for their communities.

Metro East municipalities taking part in the Green Cities Challenge were able to accomplish a wide range of sustainable goals, many of which are aimed at positively affecting the region’s air quality.

In Alton, energy efficiency improvements were implemented as part of the community's Climate Action Plan. Efficiency measures were identified based on a previously completed greenhouse gas inventory, an evaluation that had identified specific causes of air pollution and potential strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Other sustainable accomplishments made by the city include offering curbside recycling to all single-family households and reducing energy consumption at the Alton Public Works building from 579,000 kilowatt hours to 372,155 kWh, as a result of lighting upgrades and other energy-efficient strategies.

In Granite City, a variety of efforts to reduce air pollution emissions are under way and in development. The community has formed a Cool Cities Advisory Committee and is completing a sustainability plan. In addition, a \$30,000 Environmental Protection Agency grant is helping Granite City establish an ozone garden; develop ozone monitoring equipment designed to eventually allow the city to provide an air quality forecast to residents; and incorporate educational bulletin boards at schools featuring information about ozone, particulate matter, the sources and health risks of air pollution and tips on ways to improve air quality. Washington University students are helping Granite City officials complete a greenhouse gas inventory designed to help the city reduce emissions.

The city of Highland recently introduced no-idling signage in front of city facilities and has plans to extend this effort to schools and businesses. Other municipal accomplishments have included the enactment of a leaf-burning ordinance, the establishment of a community recycling policy for curbside recycling and department practices, the institution of a Complete Streets Policy and the installation of LED lighting throughout the community. Highland has also been recognized as a Tree City USA community for 27 consecutive years. Cities achieving Tree City USA status through the Arbor Day Foundation are required to meet four core standards of sound urban forestry management: maintaining a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry and celebrating Arbor Day.

Madison County supported the cities of Alton, Granite City and Highland in the Green Cities Challenge, and all three cities are building on their accomplishments to further their work in sustainability.

“We are so proud of our 2016 Green Cities participants,” Ponzi said. “We are very grateful to the Metro East communities who took part and have made so many amazing sustainable contributions, which are not only helping to improve the environment overall, but are also going a long way toward reducing air pollution in the region. We look forward to recognizing them, and all of our Green Cities participants from across the metro area during our upcoming Green Business Challenge Awards ceremony.”

The awards ceremony will take place from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Friday, Dec. 2, at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport's Concourse B event space. The event will feature special recognition for Green Cities Challenge participants.

For information, visit [stlouisgreenchallenge.com](http://stlouisgreenchallenge.com) or call (314) 577-0246.