

RESOLUTION NO. 21-100

RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY IMPACTING THE ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY, AND HUMAN HEALTH

WHEREAS, in 2021 Golden Valley experienced numerous climate change-related impacts including a record June heat wave, drought conditions, water use restrictions, and poor air quality from drought-fueled forest fires prompting residents to restrict outdoor activity and remain indoors for periods, making it clear that the climate crisis is not only a future issue — it is affecting us here and now;

WHEREAS, hundreds of Golden Valley properties are at risk of flooding and flood damage during heavy or intense precipitation events which can cause significant hardship and economic loss;

WHEREAS, Golden Valley residents have increasingly reported experiencing drainage and flooding issues, high groundwater issues, and historically high surface water levels in water bodies throughout the community;

WHEREAS, the frequency of daily rainfalls greater than 3 inches has increased 66% in the past century and annual precipitation in the Twin Cities increased from an average of 26.18 inches between 1940-1979 to an average of 30.92 inches between 1980-2018, increasing the frequency of flooding, landslides, freeze/thaw cycles, ice storms, rain on frozen ground events, and heavy snowstorms which put increased strain on city operations, residents, businesses, and the natural environment;

WHEREAS, ice cover on Minnesota lakes has declined an average of 10-14 days over the past 50 years and winter temperatures are warming nearly ten times faster than summer temperatures, increasing by approximately 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit per decade since 1969 based on data collected at MSP airport;

WHEREAS, the urban heat island effect causes nighttime temperatures in the first ring suburbs of Hennepin County to be 2 degrees Fahrenheit higher on average compared to surrounding areas and spikes to as much as 9 degrees Fahrenheit higher than surrounding areas during a heat wave, and is expected to increase due to climate change, affecting the health and well-being of residents;

WHEREAS, the high-risk climate hazards for Golden Valley include invasive species and pests, more freeze/thaw cycles, more frequent and intense heavy rainfalls, and extreme heat, and the moderate-risk climate hazards include extreme wind events and tornadoes, diminished air quality, and vector-borne diseases as outlined in the

Vulnerability Assessment in the Resilience and Sustainability chapter of Golden Valley's 2040 Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, extreme weather will create new challenges for Golden Valley's infrastructure and finances and will pose a threat to the health, safety, and economic vitality of our residents and businesses;

WHEREAS, historic and present policies and decisions created disparate impacts for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and people of lower socioeconomic status;

WHEREAS, the greatest burden from an inadequate response to the climate crisis will be felt by historically excluded, marginalized and underserved communities, the youngest generation including the children and grandchildren of Golden Valley community members, and future generations;

WHEREAS, the impacts of climate change are affecting all residents, but the impacts will not be felt equally, and like other environmental justice issues, Hennepin County data show that our communities of color, low-income families, and residents with disabilities contribute least to the problem of climate pollution but are the most at risk from negative climate impacts, especially during flooding events, heat waves, and poor air quality days, and we acknowledge that those who have the least capacity to respond to climate change will be most affected;

WHEREAS, in Minnesota, the ten warmest and wettest years ever recorded have all occurred since 1998, warming surface waters and leading to a significant loss of fish habitat for many prominent species as well as increasing the risk of harmful algae blooms, forests are changing as native northern species are strained by warming temperatures, crops are stressed by cycles of drought and floods, home insurance rates are rising faster than the national average and faster warming winters are leading to new pests as well as shorter winter recreation seasons;

WHEREAS, the bi-partisan Next Generation Energy Act, passed by the Minnesota State Legislature and signed by then Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2007, committed our State to achieving an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and with interim goals of 15% and 30% below 2005 greenhouse gas emissions levels by 2015 and 2025, respectively, with cities being key drivers of achieving these goals;

WHEREAS, our State did not meet its 2015 goal, and is not yet on track to reach our future targets;

WHEREAS, in April 2016 world leaders from 175 countries, including the United States, recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit);”

WHEREAS, we have already reached a temperature increase of nearly 1.1 degrees Celsius (nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit) as compared to pre-industrial times and the widespread impacts already realized by this level of global warming demonstrate that the Earth is already too hot for safety and justice, as attested by increased and intensifying wildfires, floods, rising seas, diseases, droughts, and extreme weather, threatening the food security, water supply, and well-being of billions of people;

WHEREAS, in August 2021 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body responsible for assessing the science related to climate change, released a report that stated “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere and land,” and that “Human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last 2000 years,” and “with every additional increment of global warming, changes in extremes continue to become larger,” and “leaders at all levels must take immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to prevent catastrophic impacts”;

WHEREAS, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, and the intelligence community have identified climate change as a threat to national security, and the Department of Homeland Security views climate change as a top homeland security risk;

WHEREAS, recent scientific research indicates that to achieve the goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), carbon emissions must be halved by 2030 and reach net zero global emissions by 2050;

WHEREAS, a transition to a clean energy economy, if not carefully planned, would have a disruptive effect and impact on the livelihoods of many in our community while a well-planned transition may provide expanded job opportunities and affordable and reliable energy for local residents;

WHEREAS, the massive scope and scale of action necessary to stabilize the climate will require unprecedented levels of public awareness, engagement, and deliberation to develop and implement effective, just, and equitable policies to address climate change;

WHEREAS, 2,012 jurisdictions in 34 countries including Minnesota leaders Duluth, Minneapolis, and Crystal Bay Township, have already declared climate emergencies in order to focus attention on the need for rapid action to address climate change;

WHEREAS, acting together with these other communities now will magnify our impact, and increase our visibility and leverage for state and federal funding and support;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Golden Valley declares that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, humanity and the natural world.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Golden Valley commits to working for a just transition to a clean energy economy and climate emergency mobilization effort and will:

- Continue to collaborate with residents, businesses, institutions, and non-profits to implement its Resilience and Sustainability Plan, Energy Action Plan, Natural Resources Management Plan, and Surface Water Management Plan, all of which contain goals, objectives, policies, and actions to help address climate impacts
- Continue to implement its Equity Plan including actions and practices that promote economic prosperity for all
- Continue to implement GreenStep Cities best practices related to energy, climate actions, climate adaptation and community resilience
- Work with the City's Environmental Commission to address climate impacts and improve the environment, economy, and human health through the development and implementation of its annual work plan
- Update and implement its 10-year capital improvement program with an increasing focus on sustainability, equity, and climate adaptation
- Position the City with shovel-ready projects to take advantage of state and federal infrastructure funding and climate action funding opportunities
- Consider the environment, energy, and climate in the development of its annual legislative priorities
- Strategically partner with Hennepin County to implement its Climate Action Plan and help the County achieve its goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050
- Consider advancing the development of a Citywide climate action plan sooner than 2030 as scheduled in the City's Resilience and Sustainability Plan
- Continue to explore and secure the resources needed to fulfill its environmental goals and commitments

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Golden Valley calls on the Minnesota legislature and executive branch to immediately and aggressively support cities of all sizes around Minnesota to both mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change including providing funding and resources for the development and implementation of climate action plans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Golden Valley calls on the federal government to immediately commit resources to support the climate mitigation and adaptation efforts of cities large and small, to invest in the infrastructure needed for a resilient, sustainable, and equitable future, to ensure that investment is at the scale needed, and to provide the necessary global leadership to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

Adopted by the City Council of Golden Valley, Minnesota this 21st day of December 2021.

DocuSigned by:



Shepard M. Harris, Mayor

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:



Theresa J. Schyma, City Clerk