



# Sustainability Report

*Based on 2021 Activity*

As a municipal utility we believe it is important to meet the needs of our customers. Interest in carbon reduction is growing. In our industry, sustainability is often looked at as green energy, but this report highlights the ways we contribute to sustainability and carbon reduction in other ways, including our energy mix.



## Customer Survey

In 2021, we surveyed our customers and this is what they said:

0 = Low Importance  
10 = High Importance



How Important is Carbon Reduction?

7.5 / 10

7.8 / 10

How Important is it that AU Provides Renewable Energy?

How Much More, as a Percent of Your Utility Bill, Will You Pay for More Renewable Energy?

5% more

## We Deliver Renewable Energy

Our wholesale electric provider, Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA), is committed to being

**80% CARBON-FREE ENERGY** by 2030

\* Renewable energy provided each year is modeled but the actual amount of renewable energy delivered is dependent upon the actual resources produced by the renewable generation.



in 2021, **24%** of the energy delivered by SMMPA was from **RENEWABLE RESOURCES\***



### Austin Utilities owns two solar arrays:

-  **Austin Utilities**  
3.8 kW array
-  **Downtown EV Charger**  
1.29 kW array

In 2021, our solar arrays produced

**6,844 kWh OF SOLAR ENERGY**



## We Support Customer Interest in Renewable Energy

**SolarChoice** allows customers to subscribe to the solar output from a **COMMUNITY SOLAR ARRAY** instead of installing solar on their own property.

**44 CUSTOMERS** are subscribed to **206 PANELS**

In total, SolarChoice customers received **98,880 kWh** of solar energy credits.



**CUSTOMER OWNED SOLAR PROJECTS** qualify for our solar rebate program.

**29** customers owned solar arrays

**327.26 kW** of solar generation

Our solar customers produced approximately

**▶ 1,104,502 kWh** of solar energy





## We Support Using Energy Wisely

### Conserve energy + save money

when you participate in our Conserve & Save rebate program for the purchase of **energy saving appliances and equipment**.



**1,702 REBATES**

were processed in 2021 saving customers

**2,795,274**

kWh of electricity

**185,464**

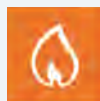
therms of natural gas

**684,116**

gallons of water

### Our Project Conserve and Save program for 4th graders

encourages students and families to take action with their energy and water use through energy efficiency curriculum and a take home kit filled with items that provided these energy savings to participants.



**4,243**  
therms



**11,785**  
kWh



**357,619**  
gallons



**402** Take home kits filled with energy saving items

were distributed in 2021

## We Support Clean Transportation

Austin Utilities is **CHARGED UP** about electric vehicles (EVs).

EVs are good for the environment because they do not produce tailpipe emissions that contribute to carbon.



Austin Utilities has installed three electric vehicle charging stations in Austin on public property.

**128 sessions in 2021** – 878 kWh EV charging



**Public Parking Lot #1**

403 1st St NW – First EV Charger installed 2013, offset with solar panels



**Public Parking Lot #2**

329 1st St NE installed in 2020



**AU Parking Lot**

1908 14th St NE installed in 2020



In 2022 Austin Utilities will add a DC Fast Charge station in Austin for public use.

**370 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were rEV'd up about electric vehicles**

through an interactive EV education experience delivered by Austin Utilities.



**75%** of students who participated said they learned advantages to purchasing an EV.

**11 members joined our Electric Vehicle Owners Club in 2021.**

Several members participated in a public EV Expo held in October.



**CHARGING FORWARD WITH LOCAL ENERGY**

Austin Utilities has two alternate fuel vehicles in our fleet with plans to add more in the future.

**2016 Ford F 150**

CNG vehicle (Compressed Natural Gas)

Gas Service department  
17,230 miles in 2021



**2020 Nissan Leaf**

BEV (Battery Electric Vehicle)

Shared fleet vehicle  
2,851 miles in 2021



## We Support Community Projects Focused on Sustainability

### 2021 annual rain barrel sale event

Rain barrels reduce water purchased by **providing free water for gardening** collected and stored from your homes rain gutter system.

**Austin Utilities offers a \$10 rebate on the purchase of rain barrels.**



## Partners in Planting

is our tree rebate program that encourages proper tree planting.

**Trees remove carbon dioxide from the air we breath.**

Austin Utilities partners with a local non-profit, Spruce Up Austin, on tree planting and education efforts.



**In 2021 we doubled the size of our BUTTERFLY GARDEN to support growth of the declining Monarch Butterfly population.**

**Thank you to the Shooting Sport and Wildlife Mower County 4-H group for the great work maintaining our Butterfly Garden.**

Austin Utilities supplies butterfly garden seeds to customers interested in starting their own butterfly garden.

### AU PURPLE MARTIN COLONY

Purple Martins are seeing a slow decline in population in part due to their dependence on humans for their habitat.

**Thank you to Bob Goetz for his continued interest in teaching us how to maintain the purple martin houses created by Austin Utilities.**

#### HATCHLING RESULTS:

**17 Nests • 60 Hatched  
64 Eggs • 58 Fledged**



## Savings add up to a BIG IMPACT!

Austin Utilities offers a variety of programs that make it easy for our customers to make more sustainable choices every day. We continue to take steps to minimize our impact on the environment. We understand the decisions we make today can help shape our energy future for generations to come.

**In 2021 our sustainability programs saved the equivalent of 9,591,890 kWh**

The carbon reduction associated with this is equivalent to:



1908 14th Street N.E., Austin, MN 55912  
507.433.8886 | [www.austinutilities.com](http://www.austinutilities.com)

The greenhouse gas emissions from

**894**



gasoline powered vehicles

The greenhouse gas emissions avoided by

**157,266 incandescent lamps switched to LEDs**



The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from



**523**

homes' energy use for one year



The carbon sequestered by

**4,911**

acres of U.S. forests in one year

**Thank you for helping us make a difference.**



## Locator Safety and Appreciation

We celebrated Locator Safety and Appreciation Week April 24-30. Locators are responsible for locating, identifying and marking underground utilities before the start of a construction or other project, like tree planting or digging. It might sound like a simple job that allows for a lot of time spent outdoors but locating is a complicated job and their work is an essential part of our business. At Austin Utilities, our engineering service technicians have the important job of responding to locate requests. Requests are made through Gopher State One Call, where people are encouraged to Call 811 before they dig. We staff three technicians who respond to more than 3,000 locates a year.

Much of their time is spent locating underground electric, natural gas and water infrastructure in the designated construction area. Using the knowledge they have of our system and special equipment, they find the underground utilities and mark the location with paint and colored flags. Sometimes they have to intrude on private property to perform the duties of their job. Making sure underground utilities are properly identified is extremely important. A mislabeled locating mark could be a disaster if the act of digging causes a utility service to be damaged.



Derek Berndt, AU Locator



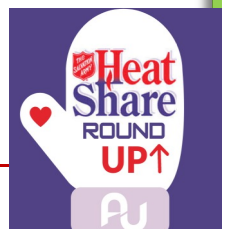
Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

Did you know that private utilities are not marked when you put in a locate with Gopher One? Private utilities are “downstream” of the meter. Often an electric line from the house to the garage. Or the electric line from the house to an outdoor light. Or a gas line from the house to an outdoor grill. Austin Utilities will locate these private lines for residential customers if you call Austin Utilities to specifically request the line to be located.

Our locator’s job doesn’t end there. They also perform complex technical engineering as they take field measurements and drawings of new or changed services then use that information to update our computerized mapping system. Their job is a critical part of making sure we deliver safe and reliable services. We are very thankful for all of the engineer service technicians who perform this valuable service.



**Set up an automatic monthly donation to HeatShare.** AU Customers have been supporting HeatShare since the late 90s and we are hoping to increase that help. HeatShare is a Salvation Army program that provides emergency utility assistance for people with no place left to turn. The program is funded by customers of local utility companies. Return the form below to: Austin Utilities 1908 14th St NE, Austin, MN 55912.



### HEATSHARE MONTHLY DONATION FORM

Name:			
Address:			
Acct #:			
AMOUNT PER MONTH:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$5.00	<input type="checkbox"/> Round Up Program	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER \$ _____



Use the QR code to sign up today.



## Scholarship Winner

Ingrid Dolan Peterson

AU chose the essay submitted by Ingrid as the winner of AU's \$500 Scholarship. This qualified her for consideration in the Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship contest through MMUA, where she again took the first place prize and will be awarded an additional \$2,000 for college. Congratulations Ingrid! Read her winning essay below.

### “Municipal Utilities: Good for All of Us”

Municipal utilities are something most people, especially high school students, don't think twice about, but they play a vital role in our daily lives. Without them, we wouldn't have hot water for showers, power for all of our devices, or lights in our homes. Most of us would be miserable without the comforts provided by our local municipal utilities. At times, especially in Minnesota, we are reminded of the importance of our local municipal utility companies and that they are “good for all of us.” One of these times occurred not long ago in southeastern Minnesota when Mother Nature disrupted our lives by knocking out the power on the evening of December 15, 2021. When the unseasonably warm weather turned destructive and the power to Austin went out for hours, it is probably safe to say most people were very happy to be customers of Austin Utilities. My family, like many others, lit candles and spent this time playing board games and enjoying each other's company. We remained relaxed even though the weather outside was wild and, at times, scary. The peace of mind my family felt came from knowing that the lights and heat would soon come back on. This was thanks to the men and women from Austin Utilities who were out braving the elements while we stayed dry and warm. The reason municipal utility companies were created in the first place was to take care of people—usually people living in smaller communities—like Austin. When municipal utilities were first established in the 1880s, the purpose was to deliver needed services at affordable rates. This purpose remains the same today and is reflected in the list of values on Austin Utilities' website: commitment, customer/community focus, operational expense, safety, and stewardship. It is within these core values where the idea of municipal utilities being “good for all of us” can truly be seen. The first value on the list is commitment along with the statement that “everyone is accountable for success.” Employees working for municipal utility companies, like Austin Utilities, have a shared sense of responsibility to work together to provide the best service possible to their whole community. These employees are not just working for a company, they are customers too. Customer/community focus and operational excellence are the second and third values listed. To me, both areas are about the quality of service ALL customers can expect from Austin Utilities. It doesn't matter who you are, how much money you make, or in what part of town you live. All people deserve to be comfortable in their own homes, and Austin Utilities is there to make sure this happens. Safety is value number four. The phrase “everyone home safe every day” applies to employees of the company, but it can also be for customers and their families. The important work Austin Utilities does in and around people's homes not only keeps the heat on, the lights working, and hot water running, it also keeps people safe from things like natural gas leaks. Making sure everyone is safe in their home every day is definitely “good for all of us.” The fifth, and final, value is stewardship. This means Austin Utilities is committed to staying current and abiding by regulatory guidelines and being both financially and environmentally responsible in its practices. All these things impact utilities customers in some way. By following guidelines, Austin Utilities is using the most up-to-date research and technological advancements. When decisions are made to update equipment, the financial impacts and environmental impacts are considered by the elected board of directors. It is their responsibility to make decisions that are in the best interest of the community as a whole. This is what they were elected to do. It is a comfort to know I live in a city with a municipal utility company who cares more about people and the environment than making money. So, the next time Mother Nature blows through my neighborhood and leaves my family and community in the dark, I am confident I will be able to relax and enjoy those moments once again because I know Austin Utilities employees will be out in the wind, rain or snow restoring all of the services I rarely think about and too often take for granted. Living in a community with a municipal utility company is something we should all be proud of and grateful for.

## Air Conditioning Clean & Tune

One of the most important things you can do to get your home ready for summer is a clean and tune on your central air conditioning. It is the simplest way to prepare your equipment for peak performance after it has been idle all winter. Maintaining your air conditioning can prevent it from breaking down when you need it most. A clean and tune can increase your units efficiency and decrease your cooling costs.

Get a \$25 CREDIT ON YOUR UTILITY BILL when you have a professional AC Clean and Tune.



## Community Ed Charged Up Kids

Remember to sign your child up for AU's July 14th class through the Community Ed book.

**Austin Utilities Office will be Closed Monday, July 4th**

— H A P P Y —

