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Where do the Twin Cities fit in a country that increasingly prizes a sustainable approach to life?



# green ambition

## How We Stack Up Against the Rest of the Country\*

1. Portland, Oregon
2. San Francisco
3. Seattle
4. Chicago
5. Oakland
6. New York
7. Boston
8. Philadelphia
9. Denver
- 10. Minneapolis**
11. Baltimore
12. Washington, D. C.
13. Sacramento
14. Austin
15. Honolulu x
16. Milwaukee
17. San Diego
18. Kansas City x
19. Albuquerque
20. Tucson x
21. San Antonio x
22. Phoenix
23. San Jose x
24. Dallas
25. Los Angeles x

In the past year, we've gotten used to patting ourselves on the back. Everyone's talking about our architecture, our arts, our culture. But how do we stack up on the green issue?

The Twin Cities are pretty green, no doubt. But lest you get cocky about our "greenness," it's important to note that, in the 2006 SustainLane U.S. City Rankings study, which rates our 50 largest cities on such things as congestion, air quality, land use and climate, Minneapolis comes in at a just barely respectable 10th place.

As the study found, Minneapolis shows a contradictory tendency to both excel and lag behind in matters of sustainability. While we're second in the nation in our number of bike commuters (2.3 percent of the population pedals to work) and clearly understand the value of sustainable agriculture, we are off the charts—in a bad way—when it comes to such things as LEED (Leadership in Environmental & Energy Design) building and tap water quality.

Achieving sustainability comes through both sweeping legislative endeavors and the small, grassroots efforts of you and your neighbors. With that in mind, we report not only on public policy, alternative fuels and new transportation options, but also on volunteer opportunities and education. ✦

\*2006 SustainLane U.S. City Rankings study



Homeowners John Tiedeman and Anna Gustason chose a simple palette of contemporary furnishings, natural colors and favorite family pieces—like the circular copper starburst over the fireplace—to finish their Printer's Row condo. The first-floor unit opens off a private terrace (right), which is really a front porch for the couple, who like to hang out, chat with neighbors and watch the street scene below.





Two young professionals opt for a home in the lively downtown St. Paul Wacouta Commons neighborhood—and get super energy efficiency and flow-efficient plumbing as a bonus.

By Camille LeFevre

Photographed by Dana Wheelock

# urban scene

Michael Lander is perfectly candid about his “green” approach.

“It’s a spectrum of possibilities we’re moving along,” says the president of the Lander Group, a Minneapolis-based development company, “but what we’re doing now is definitely an improvement over past practices.” He’s referring, in a broad sense, to Wacouta Commons, the diverse new neighborhood the Lander Group and ESG Architects of Minneapolis are creating in the northwest corner of downtown St. Paul.

“First and foremost, we’re redeveloping an existing site with high-density housing near multi-modal transportation—bus lines, bike paths, sidewalks,” he says. In other words, land reuse, clustered mid-rise residences and easy access to non-auto transport save tremendous energy costs “and trump any green initiatives we could incorporate into a single building.”



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Earthy mocha and linen wall colors “warm up the industrial feel of the place,” Gustason says, while a deep red adds a punch of drama to the master bedroom (left), which features eight-foot-high windows. When opened, metal-frame shoji doors, which run along a track, allow light to spill out of the master bedroom and

Ah. But there’s also the building itself, the 42-unit Printers Row. Designed to be historically sensitive to its St. Paul context, yet contemporary in its juxtaposition of design details and materials, the well-insulated building is sided with durable, low-maintenance hardy board. The large windows feature low-e glass. And the landscaping is low-maintenance, drought-resistant native plants and shrubs.

Inside, each of the condominiums includes individually controlled, high-efficiency heat, air and hot water; low-energy-use appliances; flow-efficient plumbing fixtures; and cabinets sealed to prevent formaldehyde emissions. “We also offer bamboo flooring as an option,” Lander explains. “And the natural granite is from a local vendor.”

For John Tiedeman and Anna Gustason, however, all of the green elements were just bonus reasons to purchase the Printers Row model unit. Both of them love downtown St. Paul’s historic character, and were intrigued with how Printers Row reflects and modernizes that character. “I like the idea of living in new construction, but with the feel of a rehabbed unit with concrete floors and exposed ductwork,” says Tiedeman, a purchasing manager for General Mills.

They were also enamored with the new neighborhood, built around Wacouta Commons Park. “I love that we live in a downtown metropolitan area,” Tiedeman explains, “but it doesn’t feel like a downtown area past five at night. Then it becomes its own neighborhood.”

From the terrace that opens off their first-floor unit, the couple enjoys people-watching and staying in touch with neighbors. “It’s our front porch,” says Gustason, who designs and sells cabinetry, “where we greet friends and have face-to-face conversations with our neighbors.”

Inside, the condo is a blend of his reverence for comfort and tradition, and her taste for cool, contemporary spaces. “We now have our home to the point where it pleases us both,” Gustason says. The copper starburst sculpture above the fireplace came from Tiedeman’s grandparents, who found it outside a dumpster decades ago and hung it over their fireplace. Tiedeman also purchased the overstuffed couches and the pool table, which fills the small dining nook. More modern chairs reflect Gustason’s taste.

On weekends, the couple shops at the Farmers’ Market, visits nearby coffee shops and restaurants, and enjoys the architecture of St. Paul. “It’s a unique place to live,” Tiedeman says of the area’s urban/small-town-neighborhood ambience. “We’re happy about how downtown St. Paul is changing for the better, but we still love its historic feel.” +

