

# City of Columbia

701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201



**Agenda Item Number:** REP 121-15

**Department Source:** City Manager - Sustainability *DB*

**To:** City Council

**From:** City Manager & Staff

**Council Meeting Date:** 12/21/2015

**Re:** Report - Columbia pursuing STAR Communities Certification

## Documents Included With This Agenda Item

Council memo

**Supporting documentation includes:** None

## Executive Summary

The City of Columbia has been accepted into the Leadership Program of STAR Communities. STAR (Sustainability Tool for Assessing & Rating Communities) is the only national certification tool for benchmarking a community-wide sustainability assessment and rating. Involvement in the process will highlight successful efforts Columbia is involved in - and identify opportunities for improvement. In addition, the rating system offers metrics for use in multiple priority areas of the City of Columbia Strategic Plan and will provide national benchmarks for success to be measured.

## Discussion

STAR (Sustainability Tool for Assessing & Rating Communities) is the only national certification tool for benchmarking a community-wide sustainability assessment and rating. Columbia was selected to be a Leadership STAR Community. Local community leaders use STAR to assess their community's sustainability, set targets for moving forward, and measure progress over time.

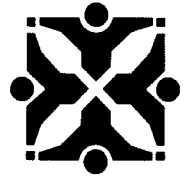
Released in October 2012, the rating system's evaluation measures collectively define community-scale sustainability, and present a vision of how communities can become more healthy, inclusive, and prosperous across goal areas. The system's goals and objectives provide a much-needed vocabulary and benchmark performance metrics that local governments and their communities can use to more effectively strategize and define their sustainability planning efforts. The intent of the rating system is to help communities identify, validate, and support implementation of best practices to improve sustainable community conditions. There are 8 goal areas of performance metrics serving to benchmark the entire community from a comprehensive sustainability perspective. The goal areas are:

- |                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Built Environment           | 5. Equity & Empowerment |
| 2. Climate & Energy            | 6. Health & Safety      |
| 3. Economy & Jobs              | 7. Natural Systems      |
| 4. Education, Arts & Community | 8. Innovation           |

STAR will provide an excellent foundation for a broader assessment of our community. It also serves as an opportunity to communicate our strategic objectives and outcomes with our community partners.

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The stated benefits of being identified as a Leadership STAR Community are:

- Demonstrate commitment to local sustainability
- Receive national recognition for leadership and achievements
- Gain competitive advantage for attracting economic development and funding
- Improve transparency and accountability and showcase results
- Communicate long-term resiliency and risk management to municipal bond agencies
- Build and strengthen partnerships within government and the community

The Leadership STAR Community Program supports a cohort of cities as they get organized around the Rating System then collect and report their data in order to receive a certified STAR Community Rating. Leadership STAR Communities will have extensive access to STAR Communities staff and technical assistance. Communities achieving a certified STAR Community Rating will be recognized as national leaders in sustainability and gain a deep understanding of their community's strengths and needs to support current and future generations. Through this one -year program, Leadership STAR Communities will gain tools to measure progress towards a common set of sustainability metrics; access to STAR' s online platform to track the community's sustainability data; opportunities to learn best practice from other communities; and assistance in sustainability messaging and storytelling. Columbia has begun the process and would apply for STAR certification by Fall 2016.

## Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None

Long-Term Impact: None

## Vision, Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Vision Impact: Environment

Strategic Plan Impact: Social Equity...Improving the Odds for Success,

Comprehensive Plan Impact: Land Use & Growth Management, Environmental Management, Infrastructure, Economic Development, Livable & Sustainable Communities

## Suggested Council Action

For information only

## Legislative History

N/A

Department Approved

City Manager Approved