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# NEWS RELEASE

*May 1, 2015 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## Dubuque Achieves 4-STAR Community Rating

DUBUQUE, Iowa – Dubuque was awarded a 4-STAR Community Rating for national excellence today. Dubuque is just the third Iowa community and the 25th in the nation to achieve certification under the national STAR Community Rating System (STAR).

The STAR Community Rating System is a robust sustainability rating system for cities, towns, and counties, which helps communities evaluate themselves across seven areas related to sustainability, such as built environment; climate and energy; economy and jobs; education, arts and community; health and safety; and natural systems. For instance, communities get credit for reductions in energy use, increased transportation access, or increased investment in locally owned and operated financial institutions. STAR provides support as localities benchmark progress, and a third-party review ensures accountability.

“This is truly a community achievement,” said Dubuque Mayor Roy D. Buol. “Our sustainability efforts are focused on outcomes and this process was extremely valuable in defining what they mean to residents and businesses. We are very proud to receive a 4-STAR rating and look forward to using the information we have gathered to become a 5-STAR community.”

The STAR framework is comprehensive, including everything from how safe residents feel, how successful schools are, and how fast emergency response times are, to things like workforce readiness, housing affordability, and civic engagement. Over 30 Sustainable Dubuque partners collaborated over the past year to collect data to measure the community’s progress towards national sustainability standards. Dubuque scored highest in the “built environment” and “education, arts, and community” categories. Other notable achievements within the assessment include:

- **Built Environment:** Dubuque far exceeded the national threshold for total acreage of and access to public space. Nearly 98 percent of housing units in Dubuque are within a half-mile of a park or public space. Dubuque holds 77.8 park acres per 1,000 residents. Parks promote active living lifestyles, provide environmental and health benefits, and also provide a venue for community programming.

- **Climate & Energy:** Dubuque demonstrated a five percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions between 2003- 2011. This progress is supported by innovative local actions such as a curbside food scrap collection program and an electronic waste recycling program.
- **Economy & Jobs:** Since 2000, downtown rehabilitation has contributed to 3,000 net new jobs and over \$329 million in public and private improvements. The Petal Project green business certification also offers an innovative framework to help businesses reach their sustainability goals.
- **Equity & Empowerment:** Dubuque shows a commitment to civil and human rights through a robust Human Rights Code, a Human Rights Department within the local government, and an independent Human Rights Commission which provides independent oversight and convenes dialogues around diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Health & Safety:** Dubuque is a top performer in the state in terms of community health indicators, such as mortality, tobacco use, and diet and exercise. The City has also increased production of local foods through community garden plots, and the Dubuque School District has passed a School Wellness Policy to promote activity and healthy foods in schools.

Communities pursuing STAR certification accumulate points for their achievements across the seven goal areas, which are used to determine their rating. There are four STAR recognition levels: Reporting Community (50-199 points); 3-STAR Community (200-399 points); 4-STAR Community (400-599 points); or 5-STAR (600+ points). Dubuque received a score of 468, qualifying it as a 4-STAR Community, recognized for “national excellence” in sustainability. Only two cities have received a 5-STAR Community rating, the highest achievable. Other 4-STAR certified communities include Austin, Tex.; Broward County, Flor.; Davenport, Iowa; Evanston, Ill.; Memphis, Tenn.; Portland, Ore.; Tacoma, Wash.; Tucson, Ariz.; and Washington, D.C.

“Sustainable cities provide a healthy environment, support a strong economy, and continually improve the well-being of the community,” said Hilari Varnadore, executive director of STAR Communities. “The data and information that Dubuque gathered through the process should help them continue to make improvements that benefit the whole community.” According to Varnadore, nearly 100 communities are actively using the STAR Community Rating System, with more than 60 engaged in the certification process.

For more details Dubuque’s certification, visit [www.cityofdubuque.org/STARcommunity](http://www.cityofdubuque.org/STARcommunity). Visit [www.sustainabledubuque.org](http://www.sustainabledubuque.org) for more information on Dubuque’s sustainability efforts.

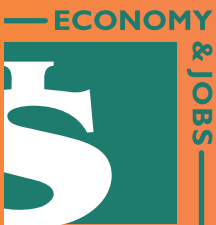
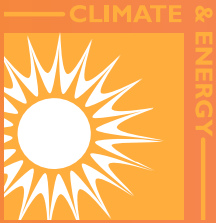
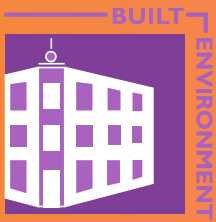
To view the full list of communities involved, visit [www.STARcommunities.org/communities](http://www.STARcommunities.org/communities).

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**See attached information**

### **About STAR Communities**

*STAR Communities advances a national framework for sustainable communities through the delivery of standards and tools built by and for local governments and the communities they serve. The organization administers the STAR Community Rating System, the nation’s first framework and certification program for local sustainability. For more information, visit [www.STARcommunities.org](http://www.STARcommunities.org).*



# DUBUQUE IS A 4-STAR CERTIFIED COMMUNITY!



Dubuque has achieved a 4-STAR rating under the STAR Community Rating System (STAR), a national certification measuring a community’s environmental, economic, and social efforts to achieve sustainability.

While the nationally-developed framework uses slightly different words, the seven major objectives mirror Dubuque’s twelve sustainability principles. STAR’s rating criteria is designed to assess communities’ sustainability efforts in a clear and data-driven way.

## How did Dubuque become a 4-STAR Community?

In 2014, over 30 Sustainable Dubuque partners collected data to measure our progress towards national sustainability standards. **Dubuque earned 468 points, a significant achievement.**

The STAR framework is comprehensive, including everything from how safe our residents feel, how successful our schools are, and how fast our emergency response times are, to things like workforce readiness, housing affordability, and civic engagement.

### The following partners were part of the effort to prepare Dubuque’s certification:

- Alliant Energy
- Arts Community
- City of Dubuque
- Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque
- Crescent Community Health Center
- Dubuque Bike Coop
- Dubuque Community School District
- Dubuque County Iowa State University Extension
- Dubuque County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Dubuque Main Street
- Dubuque Metropolitan Area Solid Waste Agency
- DuRide
- East Central Intergovernmental Association
- Greater Dubuque Development Corporation
- Green Dubuque
- Inclusive Dubuque
- Northeast Iowa Community College
- The Jule

The 4-STAR rating is a reflection of the qualities that make Dubuque a better place to live, work and play.

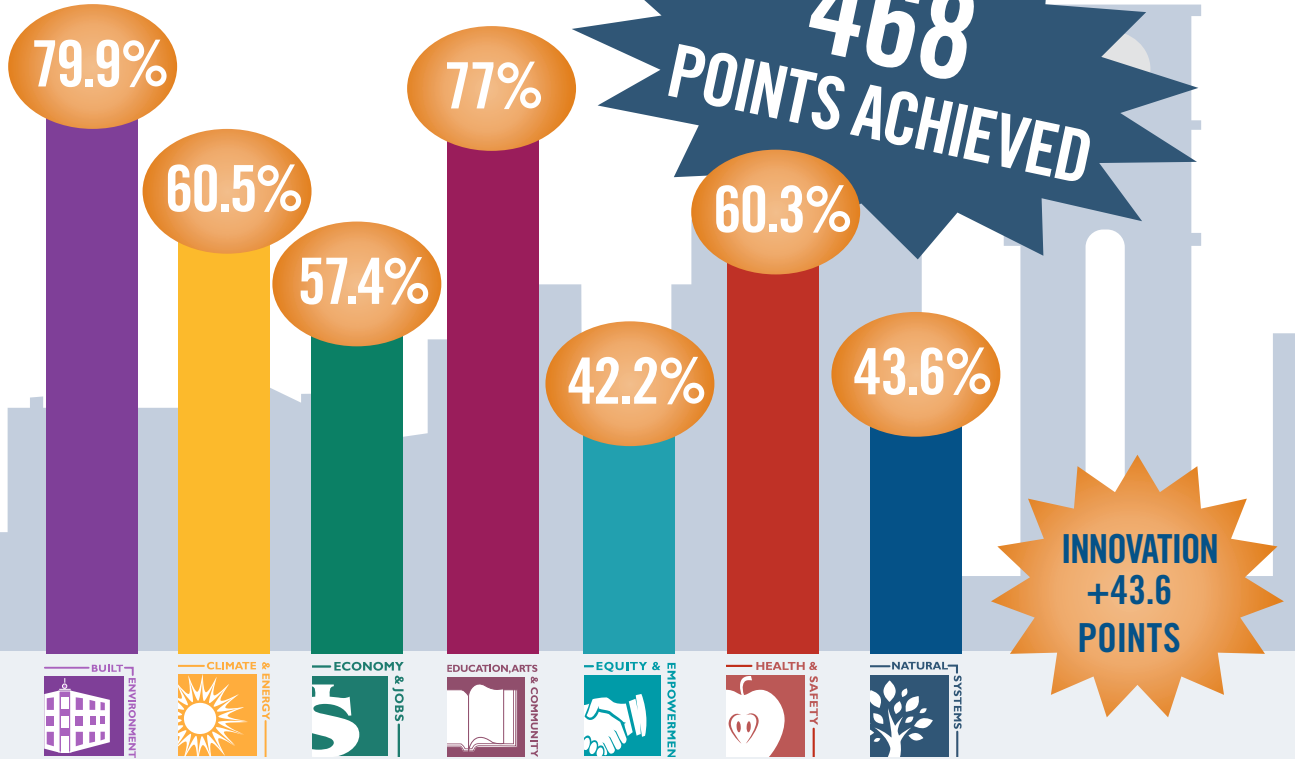
For more information on Dubuque’s sustainability efforts, visit [www.sustainabledubuque.org](http://www.sustainabledubuque.org)



# OUR 4-STAR RESULTS

THE CITY OF  
**DUBUQUE**  
*Masterpiece on the Mississippi*

2015



## WAY TO GO, DUBUQUE!

### Successes:

- Adequate supply of safe drinking water
- Compact downtown neighborhoods provide safe, accessible access to public transit, parks, employment and schools
- Safe transportation networks for pedestrians and bicyclists
- 5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions since 2003
- Public and private initiatives reduce solid waste being sent to landfill
- 98% of residents live within ½ mile walk of a park or open space
- Residents have access to and attend arts and culture events that represent the diversity of the community
- Progress towards a 90% high school graduation rate
- Since 2000, downtown rehabilitation has contributed to 3,000 net new jobs and over \$329 million in public and private improvements
- Increased investment in renewable energy sources
- Increase in number of businesses and employees in targeted industries (Information Technology, Insurance & Financial Services, and Food Manufacturing)
- Opportunities for volunteerism, public education, and community engagement are high
- Active youth and adults have access to services, public spaces, and information to make healthy choices

### LOOKING FORWARD Areas of Improvement



- Increase opportunities for quality jobs and living wages
- Ensure equitable access to community assets and human services programs
- Increase number of residents biking, walking, or riding public transit to work
- Increase affordable housing alternatives
- Increase the percentage of students at Grade Level Reading
- Develop community-wide plans for environmental justice and poverty reduction
- Increase access to healthful food options
- Improve stream and groundwater quality
- Coordinate preparation and response plans to create a more resilient community

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