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Thursday, July 31, 2014

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## **Evanston sustainability coordinator talks city's 4-star rating**

[Marissa Mizroch](#), Reporter  
April 25, 2014 •

A month after Evanston was awarded a 4-star sustainability ranking for its environmentally friendly initiatives, the city's sustainable programs coordinator expressed her desire to put Evanston on the map as an environmental leader.

“We want to be on the minds of people who say they want to be like Portland, Seattle, Cambridge — and like Evanston,” Catherine Hurley, Evanston’s sustainable programs coordinator, told an audience at the Firehouse Grill on Thursday night.

Evanston became the second city in the nation to receive a 4-star ranking from Sustainability Tools for Assessing & Rating Communities in March. The city earned 488 points on the STAR rating system in categories including recycling, green transportation, energy efficiency and other sustainability efforts.

STAR Communities was founded in April 2012 as a standardized way for local communities to achieve sustainability goals. Participating communities are awarded a ranking on a scale of one to five stars, based on an overall points score of local sustainability efforts and achievements.

“What I really like about it is that it measures civic engagement,” Debbie Hillman, a resident of Evanston for 38 years, said. “On the face of it, that may not seem like a sustainability issue, but sustainability is citizen-driven.”

Evanston resident Jim Parks, who has lived in the city since 1959, said he had noticed an increased partnership between engaged citizens and the Evanston government to be greener.

“The city has always had a good ear for having respect for what the people want,” Parks said.

Hurley stressed that the need for such a relationship is significant.

“You can have a lot of great citizen work and a lot of great community work, but if the local government isn’t an active partner, there’s only so much you can do,” she said.

The ranking was awarded after a yearlong review that looked at seven goal areas, including Evanston’s natural systems, climate and energy and health and safety for the community. Evanston's 4-star status will stand for three years. Hurley said the city is already looking ahead to its next review in 2017.

“Just to sustain our 4-star, we have to keep improving, keep reducing energy,” Hurley said. “We have to keep adding affordable housing. We have to continue to add more opportunities for healthy food, and if we want to get to the (5-star ranking), we have to come up with stuff we want to actually work on.”

City officials' new goals include focusing on public fields and parks and promoting its progress to make Evanston a nationally known city for environmental action, Hurley said.

“If anyone out there is able to achieve (the 5-star rating), it’s going to be us,” she said.

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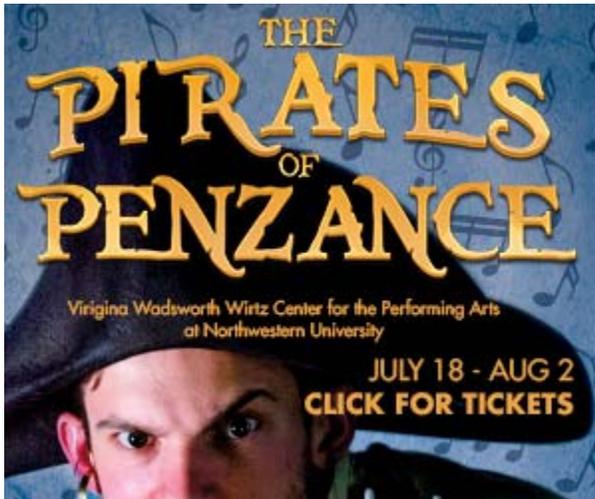
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