

## City Report: White Bear Lake

### White Bear Lake and Lüdenscheid

Lüdenscheid is an industrial city tucked between numerous nature preservation areas in the hills of the Sauerland region. It is a regional economic and service center with a focus on manufacturing in five main areas: electrical engineering, iron, sheet metal and metal processing, mechanical engineering, and plastics processing. The local lighting industry enjoys an excellent reputation around the world, and the first climate neutral production site of a global company opened in Lüdenscheid soil in 2019.

When Lüdenscheid first joined the Climate Alliance in the late 1990s, it was one of the first municipalities to take a step towards defining CO2 targets and committing itself to climate protection. The 2019 "Climate Protection Action Program" drastically increased the city's climate protection goals, and in 2020, the "Municipal Sustainability Budget" was developed. This budget significantly changed the city's administrative structure: going forward, sustainability goals will be part of all municipal budgeting decisions and be linked to financial resources.

Lüdenscheid has partnered with White Bear Lake and FH Münster University of Applied Sciences to create an intern exchange program to assist with the implementation of projects such as exploring options for solar panels on White Bear Lake's municipal buildings, planning for placement of electric vehicle charging stations throughout the community, and developing a plan for procurement of electric vehicles for its municipal fleet, and planning an electric autonomous vehicle pilot project with the School District and the White Bear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce.

Inspired by the partnerships formed through Climate Smart Municipalities, Mayor Emerson formed a steering committee that includes representatives from the business and non-profit sectors which has the goal of accelerating community-wide progress toward a cleaner and more efficient energy footprint.



A beautiful fountain near Lüdenscheid's historical district.



Delegation members walk to a ceremonial tree planting ceremony in the forest of Lüdenscheid.

## Deutsche Perspektive

Sebastian Wagemeyer, Mayor of the City of Lüdenscheid

**Q:** We are in the city of Lüdenscheid and we are learning about your forests and the industries here. What is so exciting about the climate adaptation and mitigation strategies that are happening here?

**A:** We have quite a challenge in bringing together on the one hand, industry -- we have a lot of car industry and a lot of people working at jobs in the car industry and the families rely on these jobs -- and on the other hand we have the necessity to combat climate change and we have the beetles here in our forests destroying everything. We had the great flooding just a few weeks ago. It is an urgent case, so we have to deal with it, and we have to cope with it, and to bring these two aspects together will be one of the main challenges in the future: to keep jobs for the people here to live in prosperity and wealth, and that they are healthy, and nature works out fine. On the other hand, well, we have to forbid, probably some things just to make sure that we can really combat the challenges in the climate crisis. We started to figure out things here in the city council, and we worked on a program focusing on aspects to combat climate change, and we decided on one, which is I think one of the most progressive ones in this area, but it will be difficult to bring it to reality. So we have a new part focusing on climate change and protection of the environment, and I think this is a clear sign that we want to change something.

**Q:** You are the Mayor of Lüdenscheid, and the IPCC report indicated that we all need

to be more ambitious and faster in achieving climate goals. What specific thing is your city doing to meet this challenge and is the most exciting to you?

**A:** First of all, many people worked on a strategy of sustainability. There are more than 100 issues we're going to deal with and to focus on in the in the next years. So, this is quite ambitious, and I think this is the second part. The third part is that we have a political committee focusing on the environment and the protection of the environment and climate change.

**Q:** So, you are getting a lot more political will around this issue?

**A:** Definitely, definitely.

**Q:** What do you like about working with the Minnesotans?

**A:** What I like about working with Americans, and Minnesotans in particular, is Americans are so positive. There is always a positive outlook on the world. In Germany it's always a problem and we tend to see things more negative. In America, it's always a challenge, and this is what I really like because it's a more ambitious more curious way to deal with things and to cope with things. And what I really like is there is a huge amount of curiosity. Being interested in networking and getting together and solving problems together. And this is what I really like about this, partnership this project, and getting along with Minnesotans.





Left to right: Senator Davie Senjem, Commissioner Grace Arnold, and Doug Biehn (with shovel) plant a tree in Lüdenscheid as part of a restoration and adaptation project.

## **International Cooperation Opens Minds and Possibilities**

Doug Biehn shares his thoughts on Lüdenscheid’s city planning and international cooperation



Doug Biehn

**Q:** We are in the city of Lüdenscheid, which is your sister city. What are you seeing and what is the most impressive thing that captures your imagination?

**A:** The things that come to mind right away are the greenery -- it's just unbelievably green -- the long history of buildings that are over 1,000 years old, the walkability of the city, the way it's

**A:** Well, when you're at a Zoom meeting you see faces, you don't see hands. You don't really see the facial expressions of the person, because you're not talking to them individually one on one. When we meet together as a group, yes, we have our get togethers, but then we step aside and we have those one-on-one conversations we may continue the conversation we were dealing with in the prior presentation, or we might take a completely different route. But, again, it's getting that different individual one on one perspective, it gives you a greater insight and knowledge, which I also think works well in coordination

been set up and altered by the city staff with walking trails and interactive activities along those trails, and then the parks. Rose Garden is an example of those parks. It's an area where people can gather and enjoy each other's company. It's an open area that is just fun to be at, especially with the changeable water fountain.

**Q:** What are you learning about Lüdenscheid’s approach to parks, greenery, and city planning that you think the people of White Bear Lake will benefit from?

**A:** I'm wondering at how there's just so much difference and that things can be moved from the location where they have been in the past. Just because I think one way, doesn't mean that's the best or the only way to think about it. Plus, learning is allowing me to assist my city staff if they come to me with an idea that is impactful in the area of climate or sustainability. I will now have the ability to analyze and give my support where appropriate for the for the anything that's brought to my attention.

**Q:** What is valuable about seeing Lüdenscheid and being able to talk with your German partners? What would be lost if you could not be here in person?

**“Just because I think one way, doesn't mean that's the best or the only way to think about it.”**

**- Doug Biehn**

back with Zoom meetings. Once you know the person you're talking to on a more personal level, it's easier to interact with that person on Zoom. Knowing them personally, makes a big deal.

