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Running for: Minneapolis City Council - Ward 8. Submitted 9/18/2025

2025 City Candidate Questionnaire

Thank you for filling out our 2025 City Candidate Questionnaire. As a 501(C)3 organization, Community Power will not be making endorsements. The purpose of this questionnaire is to educate Minneapolis residents on the positions of candidates seeking the City offices that will shape the future of energy related to access, equity, resilience, decision-making/ownership and affordability.

Connecting to On-the-Ground Realities of Climate Change and City-level Action

1. Briefly share your understanding of climate change and how that guides what you believe Minneapolis must do to mitigate and adapt to it.[1]

   Climate change is the change in climate patterns due to the use of fossil fuels that release carbon dioxide and methane into the air by humans. It impacts people's health and safety, and has been shown to more significantly affect marginalized populations. This is a global phenomenon as well as a local one. Our weather patterns here in Minnesota and Minneapolis are getting more extreme. Our needs for air conditioning and ice removal are going to increase, which will only exacerbate the problem.

   We need to transition heating and cooling in our buildings to zero-carbon sources such as geothermal and clean electricity. Cars and trucks are another significant source of air pollution in our city. We need to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles and make it possible for more families to live without a car by significantly improving public transportation and making our streets safer for all users. The City needs to explore adding permeable sidewalks to deal with the increased freeze/thaw cycles we will experience.

   Specific projects the City should pursue are implementing our zero waste plan, transitioning harmful highways like Olson Memorial to the thriving business district and neighborhood street it used to be, and funding the Block by Block program to methodically transition our buildings away from fossil fuels in a manner that saves residents money.

2. **Energy Efficiency:** The city has fallen far short from reaching its goal of 75% of households participation in energy efficiency retrofits.[2] What would you do once in office to advance access to energy efficiency, particularly for those who bear a higher energy cost burden or face access barriers to existing programs (e.g. renters, low & moderate income, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color residents)? Please describe the particular policies/initiatives you would expand, continue, and/or create.

[1] See City's 100% renewables resolution which calls for achieving 100% renewable electricity for all Minneapolis energy users by 2030, and 100% renewable energy for all sectors (electricity, heating, transportation, industry) by 2050.
[2] See City's Climate Action Plan from 2013. The City met its third shorter-term goal of 100% renewable electricity for city operations by 2023.

Minneapolis needs to implement the Block-by-Block program so that we are methodically transitioning our buildings to higher energy efficiency and electricity in a way that includes everyone, not just those who can already afford the changes. We should provide incentives, regulations, and resources for landlords to retrofit their buildings so that renters are included in the benefits.

3. **Local Clean Energy:** The city of Minneapolis has a goal for 30% of its electricity to be sourced from local distributed solar by 2030.[3] However, our electric utility, Xcel Energy, has been in the news multiple times over the years for delaying local clean energy projects or outright blocking them by excessive interconnection fees. What changes, if any, would you like to see to enable better access to the electric grid for communities, and how would you wield the City's authority to bring those changes about?

   The city needs to advocate for local clean energy projects and negotiate for fair connection fees and timelines with Xcel. If Xcel continues to block these projects, Minneapolis should take legal action and use all the leverage it has in our contract to change Xcel's behavior. We must also advocate at the state for a realistic pathway for the City to run its own power and heating utilities, just like it does for water and sewer.

4. **Trash Incineration/ Zero Waste:** In 2024, the city passed an ambitious landmark resolution calling upon the county to shut down the HERC incinerator downtown by 2028.[4] How would you expand repair, reuse, recycling, composting rates and other zero waste economy efforts in Minneapolis or at the intergovernmental level so we can be on track to meet that goal?

   Minneapolis has a zero-waste plan that is not being implemented. We need to implement that plan! This includes expanding municipal waste service (including composting) to apartments and commercial properties. Minneapolis has the lowest trash per capita rates in the county, but we are still the largest absolute contributor to the trash in the incinerator. It is our job to continue to drive down the amount of trash burned, including by advocating at the state level for producer responsibility bills on plastic and other non-recyclable or compostable materials.

Tools for a Just Transition

5. **Funding to Meet the Scale of the Challenge:** At the urging of community advisory bodies, the City of Minneapolis in 2017 increased the utility franchise fees by 0.5%, which amounts to approximately $2.5 million per year, to create resources for the specific purpose of funding local energy solutions that would *equitably lower* utility bills. In 2023, the Minneapolis City Council voted to raise an additional $10 million for 2024, and annually going forward, explicitly to meet the updated Climate Equity Plan goals. Currently, these funds are not structurally ear-marked, and there is no scale-up plan for funds beyond this. An inaugural 2-year advisory committee called the Climate Legacy Roundtable (CLR) made up of EVAC, CEAC, and Green Zones committee members along with additional community members launched in early 2025. It is not yet clear what specific level of input and co-governance this community advisory body will have.

   - In your opinion, what amount of <u>annual</u> funding does the City need to implement its goals in time? Please use *specific numbers* (we understand they are estimates/ballparks!).

[3] See the Clean Energy Partnership's 2023 annual report as this is theme 2 for the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership

[4] Hennepin County , who owns the HERC, has set a closure date for the HERC that ranges from 2028-2040.

The City will need to raise and leverage 10s of millions of dollars each year to reach its goals. This can only be done in partnership with the State and the utility companies.

- Should these funds be placed in a dedicated fund or in the general fund? Why or why not?

  We need a dedicated fund, otherwise they are at risk of being coopted.

- How should Minneapolis residents be involved in governance of the money raised (either through CLR and/or beyond) and how much procedural weight should that input carry?

  This is a great opportunity for co-governing with Minneapolis residents. I know so many of my neighbors care deeply about this issue and are well-positioned to help lead the transition, particularly those on the CLR.

6. **Heating & Cooling Systems:** There are growing local and national examples of "district heating" systems that use existing water pipe systems or ground-source heating to heat and cool buildings.[5-6] Some city governments have launched city-owned district energy systems to enable a community-wide transition from fossil fuels to renewables. What role would you like to see district heating playing, if any, in a strategy towards ending reliance on fossil fuels for heating and cooling?

   I would like to see district heating play a considerable role in ending reliance on fossil fuels. Minneapolis is a great city for transitioning to this kind of heating, particularly downtown and in our most dense neighborhoods.

7. **Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership:** In 2013, the City discussed a potential municipalization of the gas and electric utilities as a way to reach the City's ambitious Climate Action Plan goals more quickly, equitably and affordably. Instead, in 2014, the city created the "Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership" to allow the utilities time to demonstrate good faith on their promise to be good partners with the City. This whole process coincided with the expiration of the City's 20-year franchise agreements with both Centerpoint & Xcel, which got renegotiated in 2014 and shortened from 20 years to 10 years. These agreements expired and were renegotiated again in 2024,[7] offering a pivotal moment for reflection on the effectiveness of this first-in-the-nation Partnership:

   - For this new flexible agreement (2025-2034), what criteria do you believe the City should use to measure whether the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership has been effective in achieving the City's goals?

     It should be evaluated on the actual transition from fossil fuel energy to green energy. If it is shown to be ineffective, the structure of the partnership should be changed to enable reaching our community's goals.

   - How frequently would you like the City to evaluate the progress towards its goals under the new flexible-duration agreement? (e.g. once at the end, annually, at the midpoint, etc).

     Biannually

[5] Examples nationally: Framingham, Massachusetts is piloted networked geothermal heating systems.
[6] Examples locally: Towerside Development on the East Bank; District Heating in Minneapolis downtown; EcoDistrict in St. Paul.
[7] City website with comprehensive information on the new agreements.

- If the utilities were to fail again in their obligations to the City, what actions would you see the City take to protect the interests of its constituents?

  If CenterPoint and Xcel do not live up to their end of the bargain, the City should take over the power and heating utilities. The City already runs a highly effective water and sewer utility, and by having these utilities be public, it would protect union jobs for Minneapolis residents. The City needs to advocate at the State to create a real pathway for municipalities to control their own utilities.

Our City in Context

8. **Minneapolis Priorities for State Level Rules, Regulations -** The city has authority to advocate on behalf of residents' interests to influence not only state level policy, but also specific regulation and rules governing the monopoly utilities that operate in Minneapolis communities. What top priorities on energy would you work to include in your intergovernmental affairs agenda to the Public Utilities Commission and/or the state Legislature?

   The City needs to be adamant that a rapid transition to renewables and carbon-free energy is a must. This means no new fossil fuel infrastructure and state support for municipalities to transition their energy usage away from fossil fuels. This includes investments in geothermal energy and heating to transition away from fossil gas entirely. I would also like to see the PUC take a stronger stance against rate increases by utilities, given the massive profits they have accumulated and the cost burden that many Minneapolis residents are facing.

9. **Sources of Where Our Electricity Comes From -** While the City can govern its own local energy goals, energy from the larger electric power grid will continue to be produced to supplement the energy produced locally in the city limits. Minneapolis residents have paid and will pay for the cost of the infrastructure and the risks/benefits of it all for decades. Every energy technology comes with a unique set of features, hazards, and vested interests. How would you, if given the opportunity, engage with the following energy technologies in order to meet the city's demand for electricity? (*E.g.* increased/advocated for, banned, phased out, continued at current levels, etc).

   - Coal ***banned***
   - Wind **increased**
   - Nuclear **continued at current levels**
   - Fracked gas **phased out**
   - Solar **increased**
   - Green hydrogen **continued at current levels**
   - Carbon capture & sequestration **increased**
   - Other forms of hydrogen (grey, blue, yellow, etc). **Phased out**
   - Trash burning **phased out**

10. **Nuclear & Minneapolis Drinking Water** - Xcel Energy's nuclear power plant at Monticello is about 30 miles up the Mississippi river from the city of Minneapolis's main drinking water intake. In recent years, spent fuel storage casks at Monticello have been leaking tritium which has moved through the water table to the river. What line of action would you pursue to protect the City's interests in this regard? **The City needs to have monitoring set up to catch if there is radioactive material in the water, and a contingency plan in place to protect residents.**