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Running for Minneapolis Mayor

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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 not a distant issue, it is here and shaping the daily lives of our residents. From extreme heat to flooding, our communities, especially those already burdened by environmental injustice, feel the impacts first and worst. As mayor, I believe Minneapolis must meet this crisis with urgency, equity, and innovation. My approach will be rooted in resilience, clean energy, and protecting frontline communities while creating good green jobs.

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.

The city's shortfall on energy efficiency retrofits is unacceptable, especially when renters, low income residents, and BIPOC communities carry the highest energy burdens. I will expand retrofit incentives, streamline access for renters and small landlords, and dedicate resources for targeted outreach in historically underserved neighborhoods. I will support weatherization programs, fund community-based retrofit navigators, and create financing options so families do not have to choose between food and utilities.

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?

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

We cannot allow utility gatekeeping to stall our progress. Minneapolis should push for transparent, affordable interconnection standards and back community-owned solar projects. As mayor, I will use the city's regulatory leverage in franchise agreements and through the Clean Energy Partnership to ensure Xcel, or any other entity, does not put up roadblocks. If we cannot get it done, we will seek alternative models that put residents first.

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?

Phasing out HERC by 2028 requires a serious scale-up of repair, reuse, composting, and recycling. I will invest in city-run compost pickup, expand neighborhood reuse and repair hubs, and partner with local businesses on circular economy practices. At the intergovernmental level, I will advocate for county and state alignment with zero waste goals and ensure that the transition protects workers while moving towards clean energy alternatives. I will also ensure the current HERC location is used for an equitable and health focused future purpose.

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

We must match our climate goals with the resources to achieve them. Minneapolis should target at least $25million annually in climate equity funding, with the ability to scale as needed over the decade. These funds should be placed in a dedicated Climate Equity Fund to ensure transparency and prevent diversion into unrelated budget items.

I do believe there must be flexibility for emergencies. With consensus input and a clear process, funds should be able to be temporarily reallocated if the city faces urgent needs. Any reallocation should only happen with strong community input and with organizations like the Climate Legacy Roundtable fully included in those discussions.

We also cannot and should not rely on Minneapolis residents alone to fund this work. Meeting the scale of the climate crisis requires pulling in dollars from state and federal partners as well as private and philanthropic partnerships. Minneapolis should take the lead but must also be a strong advocate for securing outside funding.

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

Community governance is essential. Advisory bodies like the Climate Legacy Roundtable should remain central to this process and carry real procedural weight, not just symbolic input. Residents deserve to be partners in setting priorities, monitoring spending, and tracking progress, and they should also have a role if funds ever need to be redirected.

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?

District heating and cooling can be a powerful tool in ending fossil fuel reliance. Minneapolis should explore city-led pilots using geothermal and water-based systems in dense neighborhoods, schools, and public buildings. Over time, district energy can anchor a broader renewable transition while reducing costs for residents and small businesses.

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?
    - 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).
    - 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?

Criteria must include measurable carbon reduction, equity outcomes, affordability, and expansion of local clean energy. Evaluation should be annual, with a public dashboard showing progress. If utilities again fail to meet commitments, the city must consider stronger measures, ultimately evaluating the option of shifting toward alternative models altogether.

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

[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.

energy would you work to include in your intergovernmental affairs agenda to the Public Utilities Commission and/or the state Legislature?

At the Public Utilities Commission and Legislature, I will push for:

- Streamlined approval of community solar and microgrids
- Equitable electrification incentives for renters and small landlords
- State investment in district energy pilots
- Worker protections for those transitioning out of fossil fuel industries

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: Phase out rapidly
    - Wind: Increase investment
    - Nuclear: Maintain existing plants with strict oversight, and remain open to exploring safe next-generation technologies if they prove cost effective, safe, and equitable
    - Fracked gas: Phase out
    - Solar: Expand significantly, prioritize community and rooftop solar
    - Green hydrogen: Support research and pilot projects
    - Carbon capture: Only where scientifically proven and community-supported, not as a license to keep polluting
    - Other hydrogen: Avoid blue and grey hydrogen tied to fossil fuels
    - Trash burning: Phase out by 2028 in alignment with HERC closure

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?

Our drinking water cannot be put at risk. I will push for independent monitoring of Monticello, mandatory transparency on leaks, and federal-state-city collaboration to ensure safe storage of spent fuel. If Xcel cannot guarantee safety, we must be prepared to pursue legal action and advocate for stronger federal oversight.