



2021 Position Brief

Community Power is an energy democracy organization based in Minneapolis that grew out of the “Minneapolis Energy Options” Campaign in 2013 to consider municipalization¹ of the two investor-owned energy utilities providing electricity and natural gas in the city. Our mission is to support residents of Minnesota cities and towns to build a Clean Local Equitable Affordable and Reliable energy future. Our work ranges broadly from access to energy efficiency and community solar to centering communities in energy decision-making. We partner in this work alongside economic, housing, and environmental justice, and community organizations, and we believe there is immense power in local change. For more information on these policy recommendations, you can reference the Background Information document for context on each of the five items.

1. **Fulfilling Minneapolis’ 100% Renewable Energy Ordinance in ways that provide a net-savings and revenue for residents, small businesses and the City, including:**
 - a. **Developing off-site renewable power projects** (which are either owned or developed by the city or a local, community partner) which generates revenue for the City upon selling energy to the grid, while retaining the Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)² from these projects.
 - b. **Subscribing to Community Solar Gardens and using the savings to offset the cost of purchasing RECs** from rural wind projects.³
2. **Making renewables and energy efficiency more accessible and equitable by:**
 - a. Championing efforts to bring **Inclusive Energy Financing (particularly the original Pay-As-You-Save™ [PAYS] version of Tariff-Based-On-Bill-Financing)** to Minneapolis so that residents and businesses can make immediate cost-effective energy improvements with no upfront cost or credit checks, and importantly no personal debt burden. The monthly cost-recovery charge to pay for the improvements stays with the property rather than the person, and results in a net-lower bill from day one.
 - b. Building **equity-focused Community Solar Gardens** on City buildings that low and moderate income community members can subscribe to in order to lower their utility bills, while contracting with entities for the construction of these projects that are building wealth and economic agency for BIPOC residents (e.g. the ownership models and/or workforce of these entities are actively building that wealth).
 - c. Supporting the creation of **green workforce training centers**, accessible to or within Green Zones
 - d. **Advancing energy solutions that are informed by renters’ rights.** This includes resourcing resident-led organizing efforts in rental properties to ease renters’ energy cost burden and/or stabilize overall housing costs; and supporting the utility shut-off moratoriums during public crises like COVID-19
 - e. **Holding Xcel and Centerpoint accountable to supply energy meter data** which makes it easy for landlords to comply with the City’s Energy Disclosure ordinances and aggregated energy data collection for local governments to design helpful, community-centered programs that build stability and resilience of households with low and moderate-income and communities of color.

¹ Municipalization is conversation to city-ownership and operation, as is currently the case for our water utility

² <https://www.energysage.com/other-clean-options/renewable-energy-credits-recs/>

³ Community Solar Gardens themselves do not typically transfer RECs to the user (instead they give them to the utility to count toward its renewable goals) due to state law. Thus the CSG alone does not create renewables for the user to be “100%” renewable. Purchasing purchasing RECs from rural wind projects would add towards the City’s goals.

3. Implementing and resourcing energy initiatives that equitably reduce costs for Minneapolis residents and small businesses, including at minimum:

- a. At least one full-time, dedicated City staff position to support implementation of the activities of the Energy Vision Advisory Committee and the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership
- b. At least one full-time, dedicated City staff position to build a presence and relationship with the state's primary energy regulatory agency, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), and intervene on behalf of City residents as necessary in Rate Cases, Integrated Resource Plans, Conservation Improvement Programs, and distributed energy and grid-planning dockets
- c. Robust, city-wide community-led engagement in energy solutions so that communities are not reliant on utility-marketing to participate
- d. Research, advocacy and relationship-building to secure deeply energy efficient building codes at the state level, and definition and adoption of a municipal level code, known as 'Stretch Building Codes'.
- e. Pilot projects to test renewable heating options such as geothermal district heating, and/or renewable-powered electric heat pumps
- f. Advocacy at the Capitol and PUC to protect Minneapolis communities who will be impacted once the COVID-specific moratorium on utility shut-offs expires.
- g. Continuation of the successful Green Business Cost Share program, and the expansion of the Green Housing Cost Share program to buy down the cost of efficiency upgrades and renewables for small businesses and residents

4. Funding equitable energy solutions at adequate levels with transparency and accountability, including:

- a. **Dedicated revenues from the Franchise Fee paid to the City by both Xcel and Centerpoint with transparent budgeting available to the public.** The City enacted a 0.5% increase in the utility franchise fee in 2017 with the promise to fund comprehensive energy programs (such as inclusive financing, community engagement efforts on energy with renters, and the Green Business Cost Share program) so long as the savings for residents outstripped the small rise in cost from the franchise fee increase.⁴
- b. **Exploration of emerging innovative resources (e.g. Inclusive Financing, Green Banks, Municipal Green Bonds)**

5. Reviewing the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership's Effectiveness and Franchise Agreements to Keep our Energy Options Open:

- a. The City Council and Mayor should evaluate the performance of the Clean Energy Partnership in helping equitably meet Minneapolis' ambitious Climate Action Plan goals. If Xcel and/or Centerpoint refuse to make and act on clear commitments to a shared and adequate-to-meet-the-need work plan, the City Council should revisit the other energy options identified in the 2014 Minneapolis Energy Pathways Study,⁵ which are community-choice aggregation and energy municipalization.

⁴ For more details on the franchise fee, see: <http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/news/WCMSP-207153>

⁵ For more details on the Energy Pathways Study, see: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/energyfranchise/WCMS1P-113782>