

Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership - Energy Vision Advisory Committee
Member Comments on Rebuild & Recovery Efforts in Minneapolis
September 2020

1. Rebuild/Recovery Prioritization:

- Investments in affordable housing, small and BIPOC-owned businesses, low-income individuals, and renters
- Investments that lower energy burden, contribute to healthy indoor and outdoor air quality, and reduce carbon emissions in line with the City's climate and energy goals;
- Sustainable building design beyond code and zero carbon energy systems
- Create robust, holistic programs to serve multifamily buildings

2. Rebuild/Recovery Process:

- Align resource allocation goals with demonstrated potential (e.g. explore options to expand upon its existing programs, such as Green Business Cost Share E-TAP and to reach under-resourced communities and communities of color with the necessary resources to help deploy energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in those homes and businesses)
- Explore partnership opportunities, ensuring community-led decision-making as much as possible and providing sufficient resources to community members to engage in those processes
- Engage specific voices like Center for Earth, Energy, and Democracy, the Climate Equity Table, the Minnesota Multifamily Affordable Housing Energy Network, and others
- Leverage relationships in the housing sector
- Continue pursuing workforce diversity efforts and training for emerging and growing energy sectors through existing Green Business Cost Share efforts and other opportunities

3. Energy Cost Relief:

Per MN DLI, businesses are supposed to bring in as much OA as possible, operate HVAC systems longer and install MERV 13 or greater filters. This will definitely be a cost increase to businesses that are already strapped. I know Xcel Energy has a COVID discount that is a result of a reduction in electricity use in March of 2020, but what about a discount due to the increases experienced from increased ventilation and filter pressure? This winter will definitely impact natural gas use especially if relative humidity levels are maintained at recommended levels. A discount might encourage more businesses to comply to these recommendations and help prevent the spread of the virus.

4. Ventilation Energy Recovery:

In many buildings, ventilation (fresh air) and heating / cooling are coupled, so not only are there increases in energy use due to the ventilation, but all the incoming air needs to be reconditioned as the exhausted air just leaves the building. Ideally, buildings would have a separate heating / cooling air system with ventilation air that incorporates energy recovery (the exhausted air passes by the incoming air and pre-heats/cooling it), but this is not standard practice unfortunately. To tie this to the rebuilding discussion, I'm working with a Lake Street business on recovery, and their business does not even have ventilation throughout the building. The whole

second floor is just heated with electric baseboard heat, which is not only super expensive, but they don't have options for fresh air in the winter, instead just relying on leaks in the building envelope.

We are seeing similar issues with ventilation needs. It is super important right now to increase ventilation for COVID safety and, like Elizabeth said, most commercial buildings don't have heat recovery ventilation. Adding that can be a pretty big capital expense, so any help on that would be great. I'm sure our engineering department could help inform on costs and ideas if needed

5. Triple Pane Window Incentives:

On another note, I'd also like to see some resources for replacing double pane windows that are broken with triple pane windows. I haven't found rebates or funding that exists for this, and glass companies are so hurt by the economic downturn their charitable giving programs are dried up right now. While I know that there's not a good payback for replacing windows as part of an energy audit, when windows HAVE to be replaced, and the building envelope itself is more airtight and insulated than code, triple pane windows actually make a huge impact on not only energy performance but occupant comfort and even sound, particularly on busy street corridors. Happy to share energy modeling we've done on this, but I see it as a gap in utility rebates due to dated modeling and assumptions – things have progressed a long ways on this front in even the past three years.

6. Grants/Rebates/Financing:

A complicating factor among businesses damaged in the civil uprising is that many, many businesses and property owners who may have been saving up to address deferred maintenance in their HVAC systems now have likely wiped out their savings on other elements of their recovery. Deferred maintenance in general, and especially related to HVAC systems, is going to be a bigger issue than ever due to the intense financial strain facing the people who would be responsible for making upgrades to their commercial building systems. A combination of grants, rebates, donated labor or materials, low-interest or no-interest financing, and/or inclusive financing are going to be needed on the commercial side to address these issues. I know that's not new, but the gap between what we want to see and what is possible for small commercial operators to do on their own has grown, and strategies have to account for that.

7. All-Electric Rebuilding:

On the recovery investments/rebates, I'm curious if there's any coordination between the city and Xcel Energy to offer all-electric options for reconstruction, whether from utility CIP funds, utility non-CIP funds, or city franchise fee dollars (including rooftop solar). With Xcel's low-carbon commitments (and onsite solar), it's possible to imagine having net zero buildings within 10 years (and with solar, lower energy bills today) if we lay the groundwork now.

8. Insurance Gap Funding:

Insurance only covers costs of replacing equipment as-is and does not provide for increasing energy efficiency or even bringing up to code. How can we ensure that rebuilding efforts can go above and beyond replacement and ensure the highest efficiency outcome is achieved?

9. Energy and Equity:

How is our sector contributing to power, injustice, oppression, marginalization, and the underlying conditions that result in unrest.” How can local energy build power, wealth, and autonomy in communities who need it the most?