

AIA Minneapolis 2021 City Council Questions - Katie Jones

Sustainable Design/Resiliency

The building sector accounts for nearly half of carbon dioxide emissions in the United States per year – more than any other sector. U.S. buildings alone are responsible for more CO2 emissions annually than those of any other country except China. Most of these emissions come from the combustion of fossil fuels to provide heating, cooling, and lighting, and to power appliances and electrical equipment.

How will you work with architects and the city to prepare Minneapolis for the impacts of climate change?

We are not addressing the climate change crisis at the scale and speed that we need to be. That's why over the past decade I've worked extensively to develop and implement clean energy policies in cities across the state. One recent example is my work with Hennepin County on the Efficient Buildings Collaborative - a platform that makes it more feasible for cities to adopt energy benchmarking and sustainable building policies. With both policies, I've worked with architects in order to make sure we're creating policies that are scientifically impactful and implementable given the design process.

Addressing building fossil gas use at a city level necessitates a multi-pronged approach. I would work in conjunction with architects to prepare Minneapolis by:

- ***Decarbonizing existing buildings — Minneapolis has 100,000 buildings that must be decarbonized. To do this effectively, we need to pilot deep energy retrofits and heating electrification on basic building types, learn from pilots, and scale up. Priority should be given to historically under-resourced communities.***
- ***Updating the building code — I've worked to advance net-zero code at the state legislature. Although it did not become law, it did drive the state to fast forward the next code adoption by three years. I'll continue to push Minneapolis in this effort.***
- ***Prohibiting new gas line hook-ups — I will investigate any and all levers we can pull to regulate fossil gas hook-ups in new construction.***

How will you incentivize approaches to design, construction, and operations to move these goals forward?

Minneapolis must be bold in incentivizing the use of less carbon intensive energy. The City should be leveraging utility franchise fees to incentivize beneficial electrification of buildings, reduce natural gas use, and direct funds to the Green Cost Share, which

provides energy efficiency grants to businesses with enhanced incentives for those in Green Zones.

To meet the increased demand for green technology, we must increase the supply of skilled clean energy workers. We must join with local educational partners to attract and train new electricians, HVAC technicians, insulators, and solar installers, especially focusing job pipelines and fostering entrepreneurship in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities.

Incentives don't involve just funding; improved zoning and processes are also critical. We must reevaluate our zoning and permitting processes to allow for innovative sustainable building. Personally, I've been working on the Uptown Strawhouse for the last three years and experienced just how internal City processes are creating barriers that are antithetical to stated sustainability goals. We must look at how setback requirements make building thicker envelopes challenging, how window-to-wall ratios on accessory dwelling units are too prescriptive, and how using materials that are codified in existing building codes (ex. straw bale construction in the ICC), while perhaps not approved in MN, can be utilized to move the needle on sustainability.

The City may not have direct control over all climate solutions, but we do hold important influence. We must continue to push with partner cities for stronger statewide energy codes, and we must withhold municipal consent for any new projects that do not fit our climate goals.

Development/Affordable Housing

Investment and development efforts in Minneapolis have historically been uneven and have led to both prosperity and displacement. As a member of the City Council, what specific solutions do you have to foster development and affordable housing that serves the multifaceted needs of Minneapolis businesses and residents? To what extent are public-private partnerships or taxpayer-supported development part of the solution?

As Minneapolis continues to grow, we must expand the number of homes and variety of them from apartments, houses, and condos to boarding house rooms, senior living, ADUs, cooperatives, and triplexes. That means making it easier to build. Continuing to expand housing not only creates physical space for new residents, it also raises additional tax revenue to fund affordable housing.

One major issue is that our current definition of affordable housing at 60% adjusted median income does not go far enough. I will push for an increase in deeply affordable housing — targeting people earning 30% of adjusted median income — to ensure that everyone in our city has access to housing.

We must augment existing programs that work and collaborate with community members to develop new community-based solutions, such as:

- *the 4-D Program, which keeps rents affordable in NOAH buildings in exchange for reduced tax liability.*
- *the Stable Homes Stable Schools program, which provides housing subsidies for Minneapolis Public School families in need.*
- *reevaluating the inclusionary zoning policy's affordability thresholds to ensure we expand the number of affordable homes.*
- *rebalancing power between renters and rental property owners through policies that prevent price gouging and stabilize rents, while ensuring that safeguards are in place for continued good upkeep and maintenance of properties.*

Equity in the Built Environment

We see wide disparities in access to quality housing, access to spaces to work and play, and access to the process that creates and designs these places in the City of Minneapolis. How would you address these as a member of the Council?

It's essential that leaders in Minneapolis work to break down barriers and make democracy accessible by ensuring that our community is well-represented. I will not wait for communities to come to me and instead will proactively seek the input of Ward 10 residents, especially our neighbors from communities who have been historically shut out of and harmed by decisions made at City Hall. Community meeting times must be held at times throughout the day, must be accessible by public transit, and provide childcare when possible to truly be accessible to everyone.

To make our neighborhoods more equitable I support:

- *pathways for the City to acquire property in neighborhoods previously marked green during the period of redlining and use it for long term affordable housing programming.*
- *green job training, specifically in energy efficiency and solar, to tighten homes and decarbonize the energy our homes use. Priority projects should be in Green Zones. Doing so improves local housing stock as well as reduces energy bills, local air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *planning tools and incentives to make "complete neighborhoods" in pursuit of a 15-minute city. In such a city, residents can access the majority of their daily needs - groceries, childcare, hardware stores, parks - within a 15 minute walk,*

bike, roll, or transit ride. Having such destinations close by reduces travel time and costs for residents as well as reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

- ***connections over freeways such as land bridges or caps to reduce the impacts of pollution on our communities and to provide additional green space in our city.***
- ***road projects that reduce vehicle miles traveled and improve transit access.***
- ***pollution and sound mitigation features along highways such as vertical garden walls/fences as well as solar arrays.***

Post-COVID Downtown Core

The COVID pandemic has drastically changed the way people live, work, and play. Even though the situation is still quite fluid, what changes do you expect to see in the downtown core and beyond?

From Loring Park to First Avenue to the riverfront, downtown Minneapolis has so much to offer but through decades of investment in expanding freeways, it has been cut off from surrounding communities. As we rebuild from the pandemic, I will continue to look first and foremost to our community members who have been asked to bear the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic — health care workers, teachers, grocery store clerks, bus drivers, and more — to ask how we can best help them. Our world has drastically changed and Minneapolis needs to use this new reality to make a downtown core that serves our entire city, not just those who work in downtown offices.

That means rethinking available high rise space as a place for increased housing, gathering, and community services. It includes creating more accessible transit like new light-rail lines to travel to, from, and throughout downtown, as well as improving pedestrian and bike travel across downtown. And investing in locally owned small businesses to ensure store fronts are filled.

2040 Plan Implementation

The Minneapolis 2040 Plan is already having broad and deep impacts on the City's built environment. What will you do as a City Council member to ensure that the goals of the plan are met? Where do you see the greatest opportunity to address inequities? What are your priorities in implementation?

I testified in support of the 2040 Plan during public hearings in 2019 and worked with Neighbors for More Neighbors to push for its adoption. This comprehensive plan not only achieves the requirement from the Met Council to have a plan to accommodate

population growth, it sets many fantastic goals for equity, sustainability, health, and economic development. We can not expect those goals to be met simply because they are laid out in the plan and must actively push our City planners to follow the design goals given.

We can use the 2040 plan, land use incentives, and parking reductions to make complete neighborhoods, where residents can access the majority of their daily needs such as daycare or groceries with a 15-minute walk, bike, roll, or transit ride. Having these destinations close by reduces travel time and costs for residents while greatly reducing greenhouse emissions. Increasing housing density, particularly when coupled with reduced parking minimums and transit-oriented development, reduces the demand for carbon emissions in transportation and lowers local air pollution.

Additional Questions

How would you work with architects to realize your vision for Minneapolis?

Great leaders understand that listening is the most important part of problem solving, and I know that working with AIA and architects across Minneapolis will help me better understand how to best serve my neighbors on the Minneapolis City Council. By creating incentives for sustainable design in collaboration with local energy and architecture experts to both provide additional and more sustainable housing and businesses, we can continue to proactively build our community to reflect the values of inclusivity, sustainability, and equity.

One idea would be to implement a Sustainable Building Design Task Force made up of city building officials and civilian architects, builders, and building scientists to identify barriers to and develop solutions for increased sustainable building development.

And what can we as architects do to work with the city of Minneapolis to move your vision forward?

The most helpful thing any expert in their field can do is share lessons learned and work to find solutions that can be expanded on a large scale. Creating a more sustainable and equitable Minneapolis is going to require the City to pilot projects, learn what works and doesn't work, and scale. Throughout this process, input from subject area experts is crucial to ensuring that our city is doing the best it can to become more climate resilient in every neighborhood.