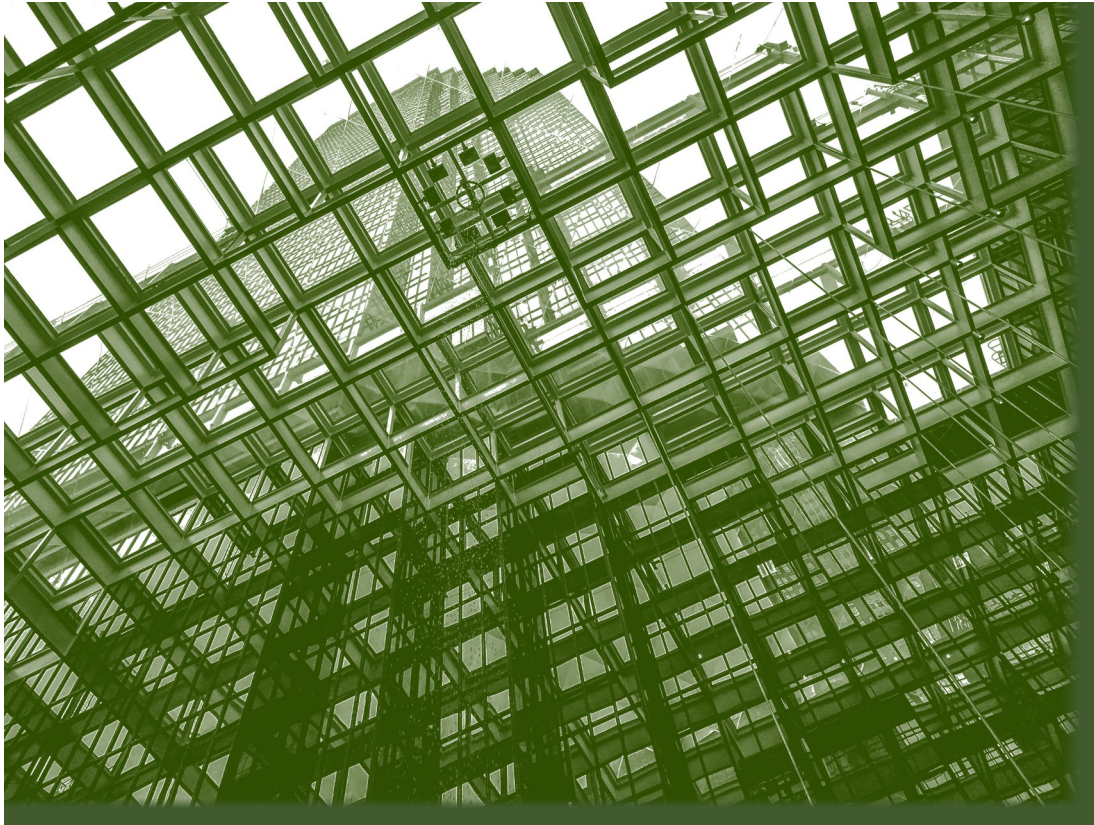


sky high **pollution**



how minnesota corporations pollute our planet and politics,
and how community collaboration can help the state reach its
2050 greenhouse gas emission reduction goals



100%



MN 350

MINNESOTA
BLACK, INDIGENOUS, &
PEOPLE OF COLOR
CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE TABLE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, damage to the climate has emerged as both an environmental justice issue and a racial justice issue, with an increased awareness of the threat it poses to all of us.

Recognizing this, the city of Minneapolis has been environmentally proactive and has committed to modernizing the ways in which we get our energy. Last year, the Minneapolis City Council declared a climate emergency, and has set goals to modernize their energy infrastructure to be powered by 100 percent renewable sources by 2022 and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050.

The municipal and residential segments have both made strides to reduce their emissions, yet the overall goal of 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions has fallen behind largely because of one critical economic segment: commercial and industrial buildings.

Commercial and industrial buildings account for half of all greenhouse gas emissions in Minneapolis, and their owners have not effectively invested in clean energy policy. The city set a goal of a 20 percent reduction in energy consumption by these buildings by 2025, but as of 2018, they were consuming 6 percent more energy than the base year. (see page 4)

Like Minneapolis, the state of Minnesota has set the goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The state is not on track to meet this goal in part because of the work of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce (see page 5) which has lobbied against clean energy policies. Many of those sitting on the board of directors are senior executives within the commercial and industrial building community. The Chamber of Commerce has demonstrated a clear record of opposing clean energy policies in Minnesota on behalf of their members.

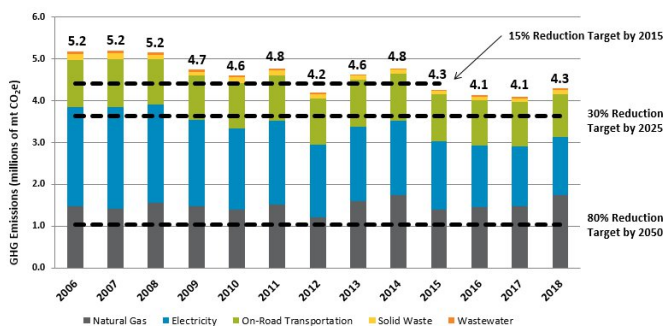
Furthermore, the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center (HERC,) which incinerates the trash from commercial buildings, affects the residents of the community where it is located, North Minneapolis. While the HERC itself has not been studied, similar trash incinerators around the country emit CO₂ at the rate of up to 2.5 times that of a coal power plant and the toxins they emit cause a variety of negative health outcomes for nearby residents. (see page 9)

The reality is Minnesota communities, especially poor communities and communities of color, are living with dirty air, worse health outcomes, and high energy bills.

The workers who clean, maintain, and guard the major buildings in the Twin Cities area and a coalition of climate, environmental, community groups are calling on the owners of commercial and industrial buildings in the Twin Cities to form an **Owners & Community Green Table** to get our city and state back on track to meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals. The community has offered three solutions for immediate consideration:

- Commercial and industrial building owners should adopt a **Green Cleaning Technician Training Program** for commercial building

Minneapolis Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Citywide Activities



janitorial workers to reduce energy use, waste and the use of toxic chemicals.

- Building owners must commit to **end their membership in trade associations that lobby against clean energy policies**, specifically the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.
- **The HERC,² a trash incinerator in North Minneapolis, must cease operation.** While the HERC itself has not been studied, similar trash incinerators are a major source of air pollutants, including dioxin, lead, and mercury. Where these incinerators are located next to communities of color, the toxins they emit contribute to significant racial health disparities, including increased rates of miscarriages and cancer. Aside from these health impacts, they also emit CO₂ at a rate 2.5 times that of a coal power plant.

DOWNTOWN: TOWERS OF POLLUTION

The municipal and residential segments in Minneapolis have both made strides to reduce their emissions. Yet, the overall goal of 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions has fallen behind because of one critical economic segment: commercial and industrial buildings.³

In Minneapolis, half of all greenhouse gas emissions are caused by commercial and industrial buildings, most of which are

downtown.⁴ The city has a goal of a 20 percent reduction in energy consumption by 2025 for this segment. Currently, greenhouse gas emissions have increased by six percent in the city of Minneapolis since the reduction goal was set.⁵

New commercial buildings continue to rely on the use of fracked gas (aka natural gas) as a heat source, while many older buildings are very heat inefficient due to a failure to update their energy solutions.⁶

Large building owners cost the public money by neglecting clean energy solutions. Each ton of carbon released into the atmosphere has a social cost of \$42.46, that is, the general public pays the equivalent of \$42.46 for each ton released.⁷

Consider Artis REIT, which owns Canadian Pacific Plaza and 601 Carlson Tower. In 2018, their CEO was paid \$2.3M,⁸ and their footprint across all of their buildings was 65,268 tons of greenhouse gas emissions with a social cost of \$2.8M.⁹ In effect, Artis REIT was able to pay its CEO entirely by evidently off-loading the cost of greenhouse gas emissions onto the public.

By partnering with the workers most responsible for the upkeep of their buildings, major corporations in Minneapolis and the Twin Cities could do their part to reduce climate impacts.

In contract negotiations underway at this writing, janitorial workers represented by SEIU Local 26 have proposed the creation of a Green Cleaning Technician training program¹⁰ for commercial building janitorial workers. This program would allocate two cents per hour of work done by janitorial workers to train and certify green technicians in the expanded use of non-toxic green chemicals, recycling, and reducing the carbon footprint of commercial and industrial buildings, especially those in the central business district.

Definition

"social cost of carbon"

A comprehensive monetary estimate of climate change damages to society, based upon the best available scientific knowledge, and includes, among other things, changes in net agricultural productivity, human health, property damages from increased flood risk and changes in energy system costs.

When adopted elsewhere, the program has been shown to reduce energy use by 5.6 percent on average in buildings where it has been implemented;¹¹ were this implemented in the central business district, it could bring commercial and industrial buildings more than 20 percent closer to their energy use reduction goals.¹²

By supporting the creation of a Green Cleaning Technician Training program, major building owners would show the community they are concerned about the health of building workers, building tenants, and the community writ large.

MINNESOTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: POLITICAL POLLUTION

In addition to burdening the public with the cost of their carbon footprint, many of the owners of Minneapolis' largest buildings oppose modernizing the energy grid, often covertly through trade associations.

Many local corporations who either own large commercial buildings or rent space in those buildings belong to the Chamber of Commerce, which has demonstrated a clear record of opposing clean energy policies in Minnesota on behalf of their members.

The Chamber of Commerce consistently opposes legislation that would encourage the transition to clean energy. In 2019, the Chamber of Commerce said they "support strategies that consider all of the energy resources available as long as those strategies result in cost-effective power, competitive rates, ensure system reliability and do not shift costs to others."¹³ However, the Chamber of Commerce has consistently fought against any clean energy solutions proposed at the state level.

In 2019, for instance, the Chamber of Commerce opposed the 100 Percent Clean Energy by 2050 bill and The Clean Energy First Act, two bipartisan clean



Artis REIT¹⁴

MPLS property: Canadian Pacific Plaza; 601 Carlson Towers

Headquarters: Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Annual Profit: \$121M

CEO, pay: Armin Martens, \$2.3M

Annual social cost of global GHG emissions: \$2.8M¹⁵

Scientific GHG Emission Reduction Target: No

energy bills introduced in the Minnesota House of Representatives:

- 100 Percent Clean Energy by 2050 (HF2208) would require all of Minnesota's utilities to use 100% carbon-free electricity by 2050, a necessary step if Minnesota is to keep emissions below the scientifically



General Mills¹⁶

MPLS property: General Mills World HQ;
various corporate offices

Headquarters: Minneapolis, MN

Annual Profit: \$1.6B

CEO, pay: Jeffrey Harmening, \$4.6M

Annual social cost of global GHG
emissions: ~\$405.7M¹⁷

Scientific GHG Emission Reduction
Target: Yes

recommended level.¹⁸ Failure to reduce carbon producing energy will result in irreparable and catastrophic damage to the climate. Lauryn Schothorst, the Chamber of Commerce's director of energy and labor-management policy nonetheless characterized this vital measure as simply "additional mandates" during a legislative hearing about this bill.¹⁹

- The Clean Energy First Act (HF1956) would require utilities to evaluate modern energy infrastructure before investing in outdated technology. Ms. Schothorst testified against the bill on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce and its members to express concern that the proposed law could increase business costs.²⁰

The Chamber of Commerce has consistently rejected tangible clean energy reforms. When Governor Walz proposed

that the state adopt basic clean car standards, the Chamber of Commerce opposed the effort.²¹ When Enbridge²² proposed not only to replace but to expand their Line 3 pipeline,²³ the Chamber of Commerce lobbied the Public Utilities Commission to speed construction of the pipeline despite the dangers it posed.²⁴

Beyond opposing infrastructure modernization to support clean energy initiatives, the Chamber of Commerce has argued in favor of stifling the free speech of those who support it. In 2018, the Chamber of Commerce was a leading advocate for HF3693,²⁵ a bill that would have extended civil and criminal liability to organizations that have connections to protesters who protest at the site of "critical infrastructure."²⁶

The legislation was so broad in its concept of "vicarious liability" that it was dubbed the "guilt by association" bill. Teresa Nelson, Legal Director of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said the bill "runs afoul of the right to due process, it punishes the constitutional right of freedom of speech and freedom of association, and will almost certainly chill speech."²⁷

The Chamber of Commerce also has long opposed public involvement in environmental decisions. In 2015, the

Definition

"scientific greenhouse gas
emission reduction target"

GHG reduction goals that are in line with scientific recommendations to keep global warming below two degrees Celsius. If a company has significant CO2 emissions but has not set a scientific reduction target, it is a major red flag that any environmental rhetoric of the company is simply greenwashing.



"We are people from the countryside in Ecuador, and when I was young it was a fertile place. But then the droughts began, and the land didn't produce anymore. As people who lived on what we took from the earth, we had to leave. We were not alone, millions of people from the areas near my village left too, in one of the biggest migrations ever out of South America.

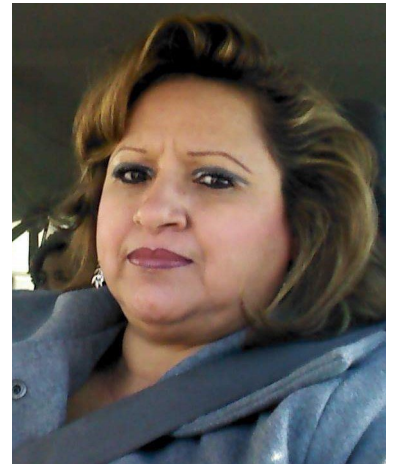
"Now I clean buildings that are some of the biggest polluters in Minnesota, which furthers the same problem that made me immigrate. This must be addressed. I think if we win green cleaning, we can send a message."

Elsa Guamán
Member, SEIU Local 26

"I want a healthy environment for my family, also in my workplace for my colleagues. This means training to work with chemicals that do not affect our health or that of our clients.

"In my work they made us sign training sheets for trainings they didn't give us, and we had to take breaks and eat food in the same place where they store the harmful cleaning chemicals. And it smells bad. We fight to win respect and justice."

Guadalupe Pineda
Member, SEIU Local 26



"I collect trash in downtown Minneapolis. At the end of my workday I go to my home in North Minneapolis and breath in the polluted air from the HERC incinerator that is burning the garbage I collected. This is the reason I am fighting for a healthy planet for my kids."

Maurice McLaurin
Member, SEIU Local 26

Chamber of Commerce successfully worked to eliminate the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's Citizens' Board.²⁸ In 2017, the Chamber of Commerce sought to eliminate the Environmental Quality Board and hand over some of the power of the board to industries the board regulates.²⁹ In 2019, the Chamber of Commerce praised efforts to limit citizen input through the "continued streamlining of environmental review and permitting processes."³⁰

Ultimately, Minnesota has set a goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050,³¹ and the state is not on track to meet this goal³² seemingly in part because of the work of the Chamber of Commerce and its members. Though many of its members individually profess to be working to combat climate change, their membership in trade associations who oppose clean energy policies tells a different story.

General Mills, which owns many office buildings in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, including their global headquarters, is a prime example.

On their website and in their corporate literature, General Mills suggests that their corporate style of environmentalism is one of their core values. In its corporate environmental sustainability report, General Mills claims to be a caregiver of the environment:

"General Mills strives to be a good steward of the environment. Environmental responsibility is a core company value, and its business depends on the present and future availability of natural resources. General Mills has implemented innovative ways to minimize its environmental footprint by identifying opportunities to incorporate sustainable strategies, processes and products throughout its operations."³³

However, General Mills is a member of the NAM,³⁴ which recently and successfully



UnitedHealth Group³⁵

MPLS property: UHG World HQ; other corporate offices; multiple clinics

Headquarters: Minneapolis, MN

Annual Profit: \$12.4B

CEO, pay: David Wichmann, \$18.1M

Annual social cost of global GHG emissions: \$2B³⁶

Scientific GHG Emission Reduction Target: No

obbied the Trump administration to exit the Paris Climate Accords³⁷ and which has been recognized as the trade association causing the most harm to climate policy in the world.³⁸

Samsung Electronics owns one of the largest buildings in Minneapolis, City Center (33 South Sixth Street,) and is also a member of the NAM. Samsung Electronics is represented on the NAM board of directors by David Steel, Samsung Electronics' Executive Vice President and Head of Corporate Affairs.³⁹ Although Minneapolis may have been a valuable financial investment, through the work of the NAM, it evidently does not seem worthy of a clean energy investment by Samsung Electronics that would benefit the community.

Withholding dues from the Chamber of Commerce and its campaigns against clean energy — combined with the introduction

of Green Cleaning Technicians into their buildings — would demonstrate a commitment to addressing rising greenhouse gases.

Such action does have precedent. There have been several cases of high-profile companies exiting trade associations to protest their stance on climate policy. For example, both Apple and Nike discontinued their membership in the US Chamber of Commerce in 2009 for environmental reasons.⁴⁰

Community partners, including downtown cleaners, believe corporations that are truly committed to preventing further damage to the climate typically do not pay dues to trade associations lobbying to oppose climate protections. These community partners, including downtown cleaners, are therefore asking companies that believe in a healthy Minnesota to discontinue their memberships in trade associations opposing reasonable clean energy policies.

THE SOCIAL COST OF THE HERC

Today, indigenous people and people of color are the most likely to be impacted by pollution and climate change.⁴¹ Many recent immigrants to Minnesota cite danger from climate change as the major factor in leaving their home countries. Yet, in North Minneapolis, the HERC evidently releases toxic chemicals at astounding rates into the nearby urban neighborhoods — a predominantly Black and Brown community.

The HERC is a trash incinerator owned by Hennepin County and run by Great River Energy, which also owns and operates coal plants elsewhere.⁴²

Downtown buildings along with other Hennepin County commercial and residential customers, send their trash to

the HERC; that trash is then used to produce energy, and that energy is used to power the same commercial and industrial buildings feeding it trash — adding yet more CO₂ to the city's carbon footprint.

Building owners need to understand that much of the garbage they produce is directly hurting residents of one of the most marginalized communities in the U.S., North Minneapolis. Points of concern include:

- The waste from these buildings is being sent to be burned next to perhaps one of the most challenged communities in the state, North Minneapolis, where many commercial cleaners live and which is already burdened by several other industrial facilities.
- The emissions from other trash incinerators that have been studied include all kinds of harmful substances like dioxin, mercury, lead, and nitrous oxides that can cause serious health impacts, including cancer and miscarriages.⁴³
- Trash incineration not only emits harmful substances; a national study

Definition

"greenwashing"

Superficially environmentally conscious practices with an underlying purpose of increasing profit directly through cost savings or indirectly by generating public goodwill.

For example, UnitedHealth's environmental position is incoherent. In one document, their environmental impact statement reads: "We also appreciate that a changing environment can impact our ability to accomplish our mission, and we manage accordingly."⁴⁴

Their Environmental policy, however, reads: "climate change has not been identified to be a material risk; and therefore, is not identified as a significant driver for business strategy."⁴⁵

documents that incinerators emits carbon at a rate 2.5 times that of coal power plants, and this should also be counted in these buildings' carbon footprint.⁴⁶

The implementation of a Green Cleaning Technician program could teach janitors to sort and divert trash to recycling and composting so workers can take a direct role in dramatically lowering the amount trash being burned until the incinerator is shut down. This approach could also show the state how to move to zero waste.

The city of Minneapolis has been environmentally proactive in many ways and has committed to using renewable and sustainable energy; the HERC, however, is not one of those measures. Last year, the Minneapolis city council declared a climate emergency⁴⁷ and has set goals of using 100 percent renewable energy by 2022 and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050.⁴⁸ Building owners need a holistic understanding of how their properties impact Minneapolis. Closing the HERC would address the impact of our largest commercial buildings and build toward Minnesota's goal of CO2 reduction.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF INACTION

Global warming is a reality for every Minnesotan. Community and worker input on clean energy solutions is one powerful way Minnesotans can cooperatively create a healthy state and a healthy planet for ourselves and our children.

According to one analysis, Minneapolis will feel the effects of climate change more than any U.S. city but New Orleans, which is sinking into the Gulf of Mexico.⁴⁹ The earliest effects of climate change are already noticeable across Minnesota:

- West Nile virus and Lyme disease are becoming more common in greater Minnesota as the climate becomes

friendlier to mosquitoes and ticks.⁵⁰

- The record rains of 2019 caused devastating crop loss in Minnesota.⁵¹
- Flood damage in the Twin Cities and around the state from increased rainfall threatens infrastructure built for 20th century weather conditions and not intended for 21st century climate realities.⁵²
- Higher temperatures make allergies and asthma more common and acute.⁵³ Hospital trips for heat-related illnesses have increased.⁵⁴ These kinds of health impacts are most severely felt in large urban cities, especially parts of cities populated predominantly by people of color, such as the neighborhoods around the HERC in North Minneapolis.⁵⁵

As the damage to the climate worsens, more drastic changes will be felt across the state. In the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, evergreens will be replaced with maple and

Leadership in the Chamber of Commerce⁵⁶

The Chamber's board of directors is comprised of high-level executives from many companies which own major buildings in the Twin Cities.³⁴

- General Mills — General Mills World HQ, 750K sqf; Dupont Center Building, 690K sqf.
- US Bank — US Bank Plaza, 1.3M sqf
- Ryan — Midtown Exchange, 1.1M sqf; AT&T Tower, 690K sqf
- Best buy — Corporate HQ, 1.7M sqf
- Medtronic — various office buildings, more than 5M sqf in TC
- Target — corporate HQ 1.7M sqf; Financial West, 500K sqf
- United Health — various offices, more than 2.5M sqf in TC
- Wells Fargo — various offices, about 1.2M sqf, not counting banking locations

oak. Loons will cease to come in the summer and feral pigs and possum will become commonplace.⁵⁷ Duluth may become a haven for climate migrants.⁵⁸ Extreme rain will become the norm; as one climate scientist said, “Look at last year’s numbers in Fillmore County, where we had weather observers recording more than 60 inches of precipitation. That’s Tallahassee, Florida. That’s not Minnesota.”⁵⁹

The combination of these factors has directly affected precious farmland and the health of all Minnesotans. Clear solutions need to be implemented immediately. Energy use by commercial and industrial buildings had risen six percent at a time when that number should be in decline. Building owners need to collaborate with community members to find effective solutions that benefit all Minnesotans.

BACK ON TRACK: COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

We all have a responsibility to be good stewards of our environment, to protect our communities and families from the pollution damaging our health and our planet. The greatest responsibility lies with those who have profited the most off carbon-intensive businesses, such as commercial and industrial real estate, which evidently accounts for more than half of carbon emissions in Minneapolis.

We have a lot of work to do if we are going to prevent the worst effects of climate change. That is why, in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, a group of nonprofit organizations, worker centers, and union members — including janitors who clean downtown buildings — are proposing the creation of an Owner & Community Green Table where they can work with building owners of large CO₂-producing buildings to establish bold solutions to reduce waste and greenhouse

gas emissions. In addition to the table, community members have identified three immediate solutions that will get Minneapolis back on track to reaching its established CO₂ reduction goals:

- **Creating a Green Cleaning Training Program:** The green cleaning training program will train and certify green technicians in the expanded use of non-toxic green



Accesso Partners

MPLS property: IDS Center

Headquarters: Hallandale Beach, FL

Annual Profit: **UNDISCLOSED**

CEO pay: **UNDISCLOSED**

Annual social cost of global GHG emissions: **UNDISCLOSED**

Scientific GHG Emission Reduction Target: No

chemicals, recycling, and reducing a building's carbon footprint. The program has been shown to reduce energy use by 5.6 percent, on average, in buildings where it has been implemented;⁶⁰ were this implemented across the board, it could bring commercial and industrial buildings more than 20 percent closer to their energy use reduction goals.

- **End lobbying against clean energy policies:** Building owners must make the bold statement of severing their membership ties to trade associations that do not align with Minnesota's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This includes without limitation discontinuing membership with the NAM and the Chamber of Commerce.
- **Closing the HERC:** While the HERC itself has not been studied, similar trash incinerators are a major source of air pollutants, including dioxin, lead, and mercury. Where these incinerators are located next to communities of color, the toxins they emit contribute to significant racial health disparities, including increased rates of miscarriages and cancer.⁶¹ Aside from these health impacts, they also emit CO₂ at a rate 2.5 times that of a coal power plant.⁶²

Minnesota is far behind on its commitments to prevent further damage to the climate, seemingly in large part because



Samsung Electronics⁶³

MPLS property: 33 S. Sixth Street/City Center

Headquarters: Seoul, South Korea

Annual Profit: \$38.1B

CEO, pay: Ki Nam Kim, \$3.9M

Annual social cost of global GHG emissions: ~\$372.6M⁶⁴

Scientific GHG Emission Reduction Target: No

of the business decisions of a relatively small group of property owners and the trade associations to which they belong. Many of these building owners do not call Minnesota home. Collaborating with workers and the community is a powerful way to ameliorate the pernicious causes of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental injustice in Minnesota and to pave the way for a better tomorrow for everyone.

End Notes

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- 4) Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership 2018 Annual Report. Page 24 states that 73% of city emissions come from natural gas and electric usage in buildings. The city further divides this usage into “Residential” and “Commercial and Industrial” segments. They also convert their electricity and natural gas usage data into the same units — MBTU or million British Thermal Units — to calculate total energy use. On page 20, the report says that the residential segment used 15,617,668 MBTU in 2018. On page 37, the report states that commercial and industrial buildings used 32,979,209 MBTU in 2018, or 68% of total energy usage. Simply multiplying the 73% of total emissions caused by energy use by the 68% accounted for by commercial and industrial buildings yields the total emissions caused by commercial and industrial buildings: 49.64%.
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