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# 2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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## The Coronavirus Pandemic

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared a novel coronavirus, COVID-19, a pandemic. The coronavirus was first detected in late 2019 and rapidly spread through most countries of the world in the first months of 2020. The President of the United States declared a national emergency on March 13, 2020, followed by Minnesota Governor Tim Walz issuing an Executive Order 20-01 on March 13, 2020, to declare a peacetime state of emergency in our state. He sent a request to the President to issue a disaster declaration for Minnesota. This declaration would allow federal funds to flow to Minnesota to help combat the spread of COVID-19.

On March 15, 2020, Mayor Melvin Carter declared a State of Local Emergency in the City of Saint Paul. The Mayor and City Council members quickly worked together to respond to the public health concerns and urgent economic needs of businesses and families:

- Working with the City's Housing Redevelopment Authority, the City launched the Saint Paul Bridge Fund providing an initial \$3.25 million in grants for Saint Paul families and small businesses who need it most.
- Established city and county provided mobile bathrooms and handwashing stations, food support and established additional capacity through repurposing a fire station and other facilities to support the safety and wellness of unsheltered residents.
- Created a new Language Line to provide COVID-related information for people who speak Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Oromo, and Karen.
- Provided economic relief from several city fees, fines, collections and assessments for both residents and businesses.

## The Killing of George Floyd

Two months into the coronavirus pandemic, George Floyd, 46-year-old African American man, was arrested in the city of Minneapolis for allegedly using counterfeit money to buy a pack of cigarettes. Four Minneapolis police officers responded to the call. During the arrest, George Floyd died after a white police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, while he pleaded that he could not breathe. George Floyd died on May 25, 2020.

The killing of George Floyd triggered a series of unprecedented peaceful protests and civil unrest in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Later, protests erupted throughout the Metro area and Greater Minnesota. Governor Tim Walz declared a state of emergency after several nights of destruction and fires in cultural communities with high concentrations of minority-owned or -operated businesses, such as Lake Street in South Minneapolis, Broadway in North Minneapolis, and Midway-Hamline in Saint Paul. The public outcry for racial justice after the murder of George Floyd broke out across the country from California to New York and sparked protests around the world. The protesters demanded police accountability, public safety reform, and racial justice.

# Racial Equity Legislative Advocacy Workgroup

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the killing of George Floyd are important political events that will shape the policy priorities for the Minnesota Legislature and the state's response to racial injustice.

National data shows that vulnerable individuals and groups, including unsheltered, low-income, immigrant, refugee, and communities of color, disproportionately experience more negative and harsher impacts, and take a longer time to recover from crises. In fact, these events further reveal the racial disparities in our state and exacerbate the disproportionate impact on communities of color in Minnesota.

Dr. Samuel Myers, University of Minnesota Economist, coined the term the "Minnesota Paradox" to describe the drastically different quality of life between White Americans and communities of color living in our state. Dr. Myers writes that these racial disparities are some of the worst in the nation and are measured by racial gaps across systems in unemployment, income, wealth, incarceration rates, arrest rates, homeownership rates, and educational attainment.

On June 11, 2020, the Minnesota House of Representatives addressed the "Minnesota Paradox" by passing a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis and established the Minnesota House Select Committee on Racial Justice to analyze data related to the impact of systemic racism and to identify potential legislative efforts. The Select Committee on Racial Justice released a report which stated, "These disparities are not an accident. Instead, they reflect the design of our historical and current public policy decisions. Understanding that racially discriminatory public policy decisions shaped these disparities, the Legislature will need to consider and implement racially conscious policy changes to overcome these disparities."

In accordance with the socio-political environment, the City of Saint Paul's Intergovernmental Relation's Team created and continues to lead the Racial Equity Legislative Advocacy Workgroup ("Workgroup"). The Workgroup is made-up of 25 self-selected nonprofit organizations and City employees committed to advancing health equity and economic justice. After an intensive three-week process, the Workgroup selected a package of racial justice policy priorities:

- Eviction Reform
- Emergency Services Program
- Driver's License Suspension Reform
- Nonprofit Infrastructure Program and Technical Support for Microbusinesses

These priorities are a critical part of the City's legislative platform to advance racial equity and the Workgroup will be essential partners to help pass these priorities.

Additional health equity, economic justice, and public safety policy priorities:

- Funding mechanism for the presumption for Covid-19 workers' compensation
- Economic stimulus initiatives
- Rebuilding of communities impacted by civil unrest
- Invest in education initiatives to address learning loss and opportunity gaps
- Support stronger policies on hate crimes to combat the increasing rise of violence against Asian Americans and other racial and ethnic communities

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# STATE BONDING PRIORITIES

## Eastbound Kellogg RiverCentre Bridge Bonding Project

The Eastbound Kellogg Bridge is almost unrecognizable as a bridge structure because it forms physical connections to surrounding buildings and parking ramps as it extends over the historic downtown river bluff. Built in 1936, as downtown businesses expanded towards the river, the bridge widened Kellogg Blvd to a 4-lane roadway. It is a very long and complex structure, spanning from West 7<sup>th</sup> Street to Market Street. The construction involves the demolition of the current structure and reconstruction of foundations, piers, abutments, beams, bridge deck, and railings. This project is needed due to the concrete deterioration and steel corrosion that has occurred over 84 years of service.

## Redevelopment Appropriations Bonds

Support businesses rebuild and recover from the civil unrest from the summer of 2020. Many of the businesses impacted from the civil unrest were owned or operated by Black, immigrant, and communities of color. An investment of \$300 million in appropriation bonds will help assist private businesses with physical infrastructure redevelopment needs from the damage sustained during last year's civil unrest.

## River Learning Center

The River Learning Center is a city-led project combining a mixed-use, river-focused space and a National Park Service Headquarters at the Crosby Farm Regional Park, serving as a national gateway to the Mississippi River with year-round river learning and outdoor recreation experiences on and along Saint Paul's river.

The City of Saint Paul has completed technical and feasibility studies of the property to analyze possible sites, identify programmatic needs, and estimate capital and operations/maintenance expenses. An agreement has been completed, which identifies the City of Saint Paul as the owner and project lead and the National Park Service as the tenant and project partner. The City of Saint Paul and the Great River Passage Conservancy are currently advocating for \$3 million in state bonding money to complete full design, site evaluation and site preparation.

## Como Park Zoo and Conservatory

The most visited cultural destination in Minnesota, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory seeks support in a bonding appropriation for pre-design and design for the entry exhibits, including a restoration to the Orangutan habitat in Phase I. In addition, being a good steward of conservation, the City of Saint Paul seeks funds for energy efficient asset preservation at a world-class facility that inspires the public to value the presence of living things in our lives.

## North End Community Center

The North End Community Center project includes construction of a new 25,000 square foot building and enhancements to the existing 5.6-acre park in the St Paul's North End neighborhood. The project will provide improved access to new state-of-the-art amenities to encourage social and physical activity. These shared spaces include multi-purpose community rooms, a teaching kitchen, youth and teen rooms, a gymnasium, dance room, fitness room, and outdoor courtyard. Park improvements include a new multi-sport artificial turf field, play area, basketball court, and sepak takraw courts. This project will be a regional leader in environmentally responsible design including the use of geothermal energy and solar panels for on-site energy production.

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# FUNDING AND POLICY INITIATIVES

## Revenue, Taxes, and Finance

### Local Government Aid (LGA)

The City of Saint Paul supports increasing the Local Government Aid (LGA) appropriation to address cities' unmet needs as defined by the LGA formula, as well as increases in the LGA appropriation to account for inflation. The Minnesota Department of Revenue calculated that the state-wide unmet need in the LGA formula for 2021 is \$776.4 million. However, the current funding is capped at \$564.4 million. The City of Saint Paul supports increasing LGA to close this \$212 million gap and fully fund cities' needs. The City of Saint Paul also supports adjusting LGA each year to account for inflation.

The City of Saint Paul uses state-allocated LGA to fund critical city services and to stabilize property taxes. LGA remains a key variable in the city's ability to provide basic services, accounting for 21% of City general fund revenues. The City strongly opposes freezes to the LGA appropriation or reductions of LGA for balancing state budget deficits. The City also opposes targeted reductions to specific cities as well as reductions or offsets for local policy or expenditure decisions.

### Local Control

The increasingly complex and costly requirements necessary for cities to provide services to their residents require a strong partnership between federal, state and local governments. This partnership should be based upon a shared vision for Minnesota and should allow individual communities to tailor that vision to the unique needs of their communities. There are 853 cities in Minnesota, each with its own challenges, and legislators at the Capitol generally tend to agree that local elected officials are in the best position to decide how the needs of their communities should be addressed.

Saint Paul supports the preservation of local control to ensure city officials can exercise their own decision making authority.

### Other Revenue, Tax and Finance Items

- The City supports the fiscal disparities program as it's an important tool in providing a common level of services among cities.
- The City does not support state-sanctioned levy limits which undermine the relationship between local officials and residents in determining the appropriate balance of taxation and service delivery.
- The City supports simplifying the process to receive the exemption for construction materials, as well as extending the exemption to materials purchased by third party officials on behalf of the City.
- The City opposes the elimination of the Solid Waste Management Tax.

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## Housing

Housing is a basic and fundamental human need. With the Covid-19 pandemic, this basic need is more important than ever. The City is focused on three people-focused strategies to meet housing needs:

- Production: Creating new affordable housing
- Preservation: Maintaining existing affordable housing
- Protection: Ensuring all residents can have safe affordable homes

**Unsheltered Homelessness**

Since 2018, the City has been actively responding to encampments through coordination and outreach in collaboration with Ramsey County, and nonprofit partners. Protocols are in place to monitor the safety and health of encampment residents and ensure access to services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the numbers of people who are experiencing homelessness, and the related economic impacts have led to more residents living in unsafe conditions in tents, under bridges, in caves. The pandemic also has affected the way local jurisdictions respond to encampments. With the goal of limiting the spread of COVID-19, Governor Tim Walz's peacetime emergency and subsequent Executive Orders outline the conditions under which local jurisdictions can restrict, limit or close encampments.

The City acts to restrict, limit, or close encampments only when necessary to protect the health, safety or security of encampment residents. Before any action is taken on an encampment the City works with Ramsey County and nonprofit partners to find safe, stable housing for encampment residents. In partnership, the City will support legislative efforts for more supportive services, shelter options, and permanent housing for our unsheltered homelessness.

**Renter Community**

As a renter-majority community, the City of Saint Paul supports state and local government tools that increase the supply of housing units for our most vulnerable residents and expands access through tenant protections. The City also supports reducing racial disparities in homeownership through increasing in homeownership opportunities and increasing resiliency of existing homeowners.

**Community Land Trust**

The City also established a Community Land Trust financing tool to support new pathways to homeownership for low-income households designed to stay affordable long term. Financing can be used by community land trusts and/or real estate development partners for property acquisition, development gap financing, long-term affordability gap financing and closing cost assistance.

The City supports legislative priorities that advance our housing goals:

**Housing Infrastructure (HIB) Bonds and General Obligation (GO) Bonds**

The development and preservation of affordable housing is critical to creating jobs, economic development, and stability for our most vulnerable populations through: Housing Infrastructure Bonds (HIB) provide much needed multifamily housing development purposes tied to supportive and senior housing; and, GO Bonds support our Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) for capital rehabilitation of their public housing units, providing vital housing for the most impoverished Minnesotans.

**Local Housing Trust Funds**

In 2019, Saint Paul established a \$10 million Housing Trust Fund and an ongoing \$2 million annual investment. The contributions of City dollars along with federal and state financing tools are intended to address the current crisis of housing affordability in Saint Paul and invest in a future city that works for all residents.

**4(d) Affordable Housing Incentive Program**

The City supports the 4(d) Affordable Housing Incentive Program which provides owners of unsubsidized rental housing 4(d) status in exchange for 10-year affordability restrictions to serve households at or below 60% AMI. The City does not support changes to this program without a comprehensive study to examine the property tax implications for cities and their residents.

### **Homework Starts with Home**

The program supports collaborative efforts between schools, housing organizations, and local governments to identify, engage, and stabilize students experiencing homelessness and their families--a situation that affects 9,500 students statewide. This initiative builds on the successful Rental Assistance Pilot for Homeless and Highly Mobile Families with School-Age Children, administered by MHFA and the MN Department of Education.

### **Tenant Rights and Remedies**

The City supports tenant protection policies geared at ensuring stable, accessible, fair and equitable Housing opportunities for all. The City supports policies around tenant rights and responsibilities, just cause notices, advance-notice of sale, security deposit limitations, and tenant screening guidelines. The City also supports Tenant Remedies Act (TRA) that allows tenants to petition the court to require landlords to provide necessary repairs and improvements in the case of the loss of essential services and amenities. The proposed amendment to TRA combines the existing court order with a priority lien on the property.

The City also supports legislative efforts to:

- Provide State Rent Subsidy that allocates Minnesota Housing funds to housing authorities already administering federal housing choice vouchers to serve people of the lowest income.
- Modify the Housing Support Program, an income supplement program funded by the State and administered through the Department of Human Services, to work better for families by increasing the subsidy to account for household size.
- Meet the needs of those with the lowest incomes who are most cost-burdened and who have the fewest existing options by increasing supply.
- Expand affordable housing programs for seniors, veterans, and those experiencing long-term homelessness.
- Expand low cost financing programs that improve the energy efficiency of existing homes and buildings, particularly those in low and moderate-income communities.
- Maintain housing options, such as workforce housing, and prevent displacements for low- and moderate-income residents by investing in the existing housing supply.
- Promote fair access and the removal of common barriers to housing options through expungement reforms.

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## **Community-First Public Safety**

Crime in Saint Paul has trended downward overall since 1995, has not deviated from national trends, and remains consistent with what is happening in other cities nationwide. Saint Paul experienced an unusual increase in gun violence in 2019. In 2020, Saint Paul continued to see a rise in gun violence similar to increases across cities nationwide during the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic and civil unrest over the past year. The Saint Paul Police Department Budget has increased by 73% over the past 15 years, leading all city departments with a total budget of \$105 million in 2020. The City's 2021 police budget continues these investments; however, our officers can't do it alone.

The City's 2021 Community-First Public Safety Plan prioritizes investments that are proven to make our most vulnerable children and families more secure in our homes and neighborhoods and center around these three focus areas:

- Improving community connectivity & supports.
- Designing public spaces for safety.
- Enhancing the capacity of public safety systems.

The City's community-first public safety investments for 2021 total nearly \$1 Million and include:

- Targeted Youth Employment, City's Right Track Program
- Community Ambassadors Initiative
- Saint Paul Fire Department Community EMT program
- Returning Home Saint Paul
- Healing Streets an initiative of Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health
- ETHOS is an initiative of the City Attorney's Office
- Awakenings is an intervention program in the City's Parks and Rec Department

### **Community First Public Safety Commission**

In December 2020, Mayor Carter announced his Community-First Public Safety Commission. The 48 members include a broad array of voices from the public and private sectors, nonprofit, community and neighborhood organizations, educational institutions, peace officer associations, city commissions, labor and advocacy organizations, healthcare, philanthropy, and residents. The Commission will convene for 5 months in a process led by the Citizens League and will provide recommendations to the Mayor and City Council in May 2021.

The City supports these legislative efforts:

#### **Gun Violence Prevention**

The City is committed to supporting efforts to reduce gun violence, including background checks on all gun sales and purchases and gun violence protective orders.

- Red Flag laws are a powerful tool to help keep people and communities safe, while also respecting individual rights. These laws empower families, law enforcement officers and school administrators to petition for a court-issued Extreme Risk Protection Order to temporarily restrict a person's access to firearms when they pose a significant risk of harming themselves or others.
- Background checks are the primary method to enforce gun possession laws. Strong laws targeted at people who pose a risk of violence to themselves and others have been shown to disrupt firearm access and save lives. Requiring background checks for gun buyers is the most comprehensive intervention to keep guns out of the wrong hands. Loopholes in our background check system weaken gun possession laws, enabling criminals to get armed with no questions asked and making it difficult to enforce the law and protect communities from gun violence.

#### **Legalization of cannabis**

Legalizing cannabis for recreational use will help reduce expungement of non-violent marijuana related drug offenses, provide dedicated new tax revenues toward education and community wealth building programs. Currently, marijuana is legal in the District of Columbia and 11 states. Minnesota legalized medical cannabis in 2014.

#### **Post-Conviction Relief Exceptions**

Under current Minnesota law, a person who has been convicted of a crime cannot file a petition for post-conviction relief after two years of the entry of judgement. The City of Saint Paul supports legislation that will allow individuals to file for post-conviction relief outside of the two-year limitation when their past criminal conviction becomes the basis of an unknown collateral consequence.

#### **Restore the Vote**

Minnesotans convicted of any felony offense are not allowed to vote while they are incarcerated or in the community on probation. About 63,000 Minnesotans - 1.5% of the voting age population - are unable to vote due to a felony conviction. Everyone should be encouraged to be civically engaged and have every opportunity to participate in the democratic process. The City supports efforts to allow for individuals who are released from incarceration to vote.

**Supporting recently incarcerated individuals seeking employment and housing**

A key to reducing recidivism and building safer communities is to support the successful re-entry of formerly incarcerated individuals into society. The City supports efforts to reduce the barriers that formerly incarcerated individuals face in obtaining housing and employment including banning the box for housing.

**Fines and Fees**

The City supports reforms that reduce the collateral consequences for low level driving offenses. The City supports efforts to end the cycle of amassing fines for these offenses and providing opportunities for diversion and restitution to enable people to access better jobs, work more hours, be reliable employees, and take better care of their family. This

**Catalytic Converters**

Reduce the rate of stolen catalytic converters in the Metropolitan area.

The City also support legislative efforts to:

- Reform arbitration, bail, probation, and civil asset forfeiture.
- Reduce sex trafficking while protecting victims and supporting survivors.
- Support legislation to appropriate funding towards Cop Autism Response Education (C.A.R.E) training protocol to better meets the needs of individuals on the Autism Spectrum and build more inclusive communities.

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## Supporting New Americans

Our nation has a proud tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees into our communities, and Saint Paul is no exception. Minnesota's first large group of immigrants came from European countries of Norway, Sweden, Ireland, and Germany. Today, Minnesota's immigrant and refugee populations are from across the globe including Central and South America, Southeast Asia, East Africa and South Asia. Nearly 20 percent of our residents are foreign-born. Nearly 30 percent of our residents speak more than one language. In all, over 100 languages are spoken in our city.

Protecting the human rights of residents of the United States, including the City of Saint Paul, is not just a moral imperative rooted in the founding principles of our nation but also essential to ensuring future economic opportunity and prosperity for all who live, work, and conduct commerce within Minnesota and the City of Saint Paul. Regardless of immigration status, an individual is endowed with the same universal and inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The City supports legislation that welcomes and supports our new American communities, advances community cohesion and family unity, and prevents the unfair and unjust removal of our residents.

The City supports these legislative efforts:

**Driver's License for All**

The City of Saint Paul supports efforts to ensure that all Minnesota residents have access to driver's licenses. Many Minnesota residents cannot access a state driver's license because of their legal status even though they are established members of our communities. Their children are U.S. citizens and Minnesota is their home. The inability to obtain a driver's license inhibits their ability to provide for their families and contribute to the economy.



**Ban Private Detention Centers**

The aggressive and expanding presence of US ICE in communities across Minnesota has caused and will continue to cause trauma for many families. The City supports banning private prisons from operating in Minnesota to incarcerate inmates detained by State and local jurisdictions.

**Reduce Gross Misdemeanor Sentencing**

A difference between the state and federal definitions creates an inconsistency in Minnesota. Two people can be convicted of the same gross misdemeanor, with one sentenced to 364 days and the other to 365 days. Federal law dictates that these two people will face very different immigration consequences. The City of Saint Paul supports efforts to align sentencing guidelines.

**Timely U-Visa Certification Processing**

The City of Saint Paul supports efforts that expedite law enforcement agencies processing of immigration-related requests from victims of crimes who are foreign nationals in the United States under a U-Visa. These victims provide a certificate from law enforcement identifying them as crime victims to federal immigration authorities to support their request to remain in the United States under a U-visa.

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## Emergency Responders

As part of the Community First Public Safety strategy, the City's budget invests in our emergency responders to ensure they have the resources to respond to the wide variety of health and safety needs across the city.

The City supports legislative efforts to:

- Provide state funding to help cover costs associated with filling temporary personnel gaps created by firefighters who are called to military duty for training or combat.
- Fund the Minnesota Fire Safety Account with a standing appropriation to fund critical services and the Department of Labor and Industry efforts to transfer authority for adoption of the state fire code to the state Fire Marshal.
- Maintain current state statutes related to fireworks sales and use.
- Add concealing criminal proceeds § 609.496 and engaging in business of concealing criminal proceeds § 609.497 to the list of forfeitable offenses and monitoring other legislative changes to the state's forfeiture laws.
- Increase the crash reporting threshold above the \$1000.00 currently in statute.
- Amend § 152.021-152.025 to assign weights to marijuana derivatives.
- Reduce health risks to firefighters and emergency responders through legislation related to flame-retardant chemicals.
- Expand § 609.2231, sub. 6 to include code enforcement officials allowing for escalated charges for assaults perpetrated while performing official duties.

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## Lifelong Learning

In the City of Saint Paul, we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to learn and grow over the course of their entire life from infants and toddlers to our aging adults.

**Early Childhood Learning and Caring**

The City of Saint Paul understands how critical it is for our youngest learners to have access to quality education and childcare. Research has proven that investing in early childhood has as much as an 18% return on investment and can help mitigate many of these negative outcomes.

The City of Saint Paul supports investments in early childhood, including Early Learning Scholarships, Voluntary PreK, and the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), as well as increasing CCAP rates and removing the cap for early learning scholarships.

The City also supports opportunities for cities to meet the needs of their own community in early learning, by expanding funding opportunities early childhood learning and care. The City has been and continues to be an active and engaged partners on key local, regional, and national initiatives to ensure every child has an opportunity to learn and grow.

City initiatives and partnerships include:

**Saint Paul Children's Collaborative**

A collaborative effort to ensure that all families in Saint Paul have access to affordable, high-quality early learning and child care

**Families First Housing Pilot**

The City of Saint Paul and the Saint Paul Public Schools launched the Families First Housing Pilot. The program will provide a \$300 monthly rent supplement to families with children in Saint Paul Public Schools, in addition to ongoing housing support services for up to three years.

**Sprockets**

Sprockets is a collaboration between the City of Saint Paul, Saint Paul Public Schools, and community organizations that supports quality out-of-school time experiences for youth.

**The City supports these legislative efforts:**

**College Savings Account Pilot Data Request**

Post-secondary education is one of the keys to ensuring that young people have the greatest opportunity to succeed. It also plays a central role in ensuring our region and state have a workforce that will continue to compete in the global economy. Research shows that low and moderate-income children who have even a small amount of money saved for college are three times more likely to attend.

On January 1, 2020, the City launched CollegeBound Saint Paul, the first College Saving Account (CSA) program led by a city in the state of Minnesota. The City's Office of Financial Empowerment oversees this new program, and with support from the State, starts every child born in Saint Paul with a \$50 seed deposit in a college savings account. In 2019, the MN State Legislature appropriated \$500,000 towards this program. Unfortunately, current Minnesota vital records policies present a barrier to fully reaching the vision of support for all eligible city residents, specifically children born to an unmarried or unwed parent. The City will pursue legislation to allow access to data for all children.

**People's Prosperity Pilot**

The City of Saint Paul launched the People's Prosperity Guaranteed Income Pilot in the Fall of 2020. It provides up to 150 Saint Paul families with \$500 per month in guaranteed income for a period of up to 18 months. The People's Prosperity Pilot was offered to families participating in CollegeBound Saint Paul, the City's college savings initiative which is providing every child born to a Saint Paul resident on or after January 1, 2020 with a college savings account and a \$50 seed deposit. In addition to the \$500, families receives each month through the Pilot, their child receives a \$10 bonus deposit in their CollegeBound Saint Paul account.

The goal of our guaranteed income pilot is simple: get cash to families in our community with no strings attached so they can buy the things they need like food, housing, and other essentials. For far too long, too

many programs that provide support have focused on telling families on how much, where and what to spend resources on. Because families know best what they need, our program gives them the flexibility to determine how to spend these resources. The City will pursue a bill to exclude the People's Prosperity Pilot income from other asset-based eligibility requirements.

### **Youth Jobs**

The Department of Employment and Economic Development Youth at Work competitive grant program provides key funding for the City's Right Track youth jobs program. These funds support jobs for over 600 Saint Paul youth from low-income families each year. Right Track is Saint Paul's pipeline for youth career development and building a diverse workforce. Right Track brings together the City, businesses and community organizations to provide employment opportunities for youth.

### **Workforce Training**

The City of Saint Paul supports efforts to increase funding for job search assistance, skills training, childcare, and related programs to help people find and retain employment, including:

- A payroll tax credit for job training programs that invest in skilled employees.
- The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Program.
- Tax incentives for companies that hire and retain disadvantaged workers.

### **Libraries**

The City of Saint Paul supports legislation that will ensure that the Saint Paul Public Library has the resources necessary to provide high-quality educational tools and programming. The City supports funding for Regional Library Basic System Support (RLBSS), Regional Library Telecommunication Aid (RLTA), and continuing access to Legacy/Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund for public library programs.

### **High-Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning**

High-quality afterschool and summer learning programs have evidence-based benefits that will positively impact the persistent challenges facing Saint Paul's young people, families, businesses, educators, and communities. The City of Saint Paul supports new state public funding for competitive grants for afterschool and summer programs targeted to low-income youth.

The City also supports legislative efforts to:

- Increase the amount of funding available for the Youth at Work competitive grant and Minnesota Youth Program.
- Promote the timely announcement of grant awards to maximize annual program preparation.
- Prioritize organizations that demonstrate an ability to manage funds and partnerships that support alignment across systems.
- Base funding decisions on factors including the number and percentage of youth in poverty, youth of color and the youth unemployment rate.
- Encourage greater private sector participation.

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## **Economic Justice and Inclusion**

To build a city that works for all of us, Saint Paul is committed to ensuring that everyone has safe, healthy neighborhoods to live in and raise a family, access to high-quality education, and the opportunity of good-paying jobs. The City established a new Office of Financial Empowerment to connect families with financial education and

wealth-building resources available from the government, non-profit, and private sectors. The City supports legislation that will expand economic opportunity for families and workers.

The City supports these legislative efforts:

### **Working Families**

People are working harder than ever, but many families are still struggling to make ends meet. The City of Saint Paul recognizes that strong families create strong communities. The City supports responsible statewide solutions that help individuals make a better life for themselves and their families such as paid parental leave and family medical leave.

### **Statewide \$15 Minimum Wage**

The City supports a statewide \$15 minimum wage to ensure that no one working full time has to live in poverty. With the recent passage of a \$15 minimum wage ordinance, the City is committed to working families and supports legislation that will ensure that workers with disabilities are paid the full minimum wage.

### **Statewide Earned Sick and Safe Time**

The city supports a statewide policy guaranteeing earned sick and safe time for workers to ensure that all Minnesotans can achieve the best possible health and safety outcomes for themselves and their families.

### **Military Leave Subsidy for Firefighters**

State law requires political subdivisions of the state to award preference points to veterans for most open, competitive positions and establishes the requirements persons must meet in order to qualify for Veterans Preference. The City supports filling vacancies created by firefighters who are called to military duty for training or combat.

### **Human Rights**

The City supports a change to the Minnesota Municipal Contracting Statute is codified at § 471.345 to allow cities to make a contract by two quotes for contracts estimated not to exceed \$250,000, but only if the business being directly solicited was either:

- Certified as a small business enterprise by a county-designated small business certification program; or
- Certified by the commissioner of administration as a small business that is majority-owned and operated by a veteran or service-disabled veteran. This authority currently applies only to county boards and the cities requests the same authority.

The City also supports legislative efforts to:

- Dedicate state funding for programs at the Department of Employment and Economic Development focusing on cultural corridors, women and minority-owned businesses, redevelopment areas and transit improvement areas.
- Preserve a local municipality's ability to set the fees necessary to protect and promote public health within their community.
- Address systemic racism and racial injustice by making critical investments in the areas of housing, public health and health care, business development, contracting, jobs, and arts that target Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities who have been traditionally left out of economic opportunities.
- Establish a system of reparations for the African American community to grow equity and generational wealth and eliminate ongoing disparities.

## Streets, Sidewalks, and Bikeways

Streets, sidewalks, and bikeways are how we connect people to opportunity. Investing in a long-term strategy will be vital for our city's future. Our 2020 budget proposal continues our work from 2019 by investing \$20.3 million for road reconstruction and resurfacing.

The availability of transportation funding resources continues to significantly lag behind need, especially for local municipalities. The City supports a new comprehensive transportation financing package that gives cities the new resources and funding tools needed to meet growing demand.

The City supports these legislative efforts:

### **ReConnect Rondo Land Bridge**

Support the Minnesota Department of Transportation's efforts to fund the design and construction of a land bridge over I-94 in the Rondo Neighborhood.

### **City Streets**

The City of Saint Paul supports new dedicated revenue outside of the constitutional formula for city streets. The City also supports funding for the statewide Complete Streets policy; ensuring streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Additionally, the City supports improving safety, reducing crashes, and enhancing livability by enabling municipalities to set lower default speed limits consistent with local priorities and plans. The City supports a statewide effort to educate motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians about the rules of the road and best practices to increase safety and decrease crashes, injuries, and fatalities.

### **Transit Investments**

The City of Saint Paul supports additional funding for transit projects across the region, including a sales tax increase for Metro Transit. To build a 21<sup>st</sup> century transit system, any new transit funding from the state must recognize the need for a geographic balance across the Metro Area. This includes projects like the Gateway Corridor, Riverview Corridor, Rush Line, Red Rock, and Robert Street. The City of Saint Paul also supports efforts to develop and incorporate bus rapid transit into Highway 252/I-94 project.

### **Railroads**

The City of Saint Paul has 84 active rail crossings and 5 quiet zones, yet has little authority to protect the human and environmental health of our community as it relates to railroads. The planning and coordination required for response operations is city and region wide and spans from initial response through recovery. The City recognizes the important role rail plays in our economy and as a transportation mode for goods, and will monitor all legislative activity related to railroads.

### **Safe Routes to School Funding**

The Safe Routes to School grant funds are used for planning and infrastructure projects that encourage more students to walk and bicycle to school by increasing the walkability of the city and by assuring that curbs are compliant with ADA regulations. As part of the effort to more fully support the Safe Routes to School Program, the City supports funding for repairing, advancing and upgrading sidewalks.

## Parks and Recreation Centers

The City of Saint Paul is committed to providing a parks and recreation system that provides opportunities for health, safety, and lifelong learning.

The City supports these legislative efforts:

### Legacy Funding

Legacy resources are used to supplement and support projects and programs including regional parks, libraries, Como Zoo, improvements to the Mississippi River, and a host of other items.

The City of Saint Paul supports the following positions regarding the Legacy Amendment:

- Overall Fund – Support the equitable distribution of all funds.
- Parks and Trails Fund – Support projects with clear regional or statewide significance that will ensure equitable funding across metro, outstate, and DNR programs.
- Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund – Support more equitable geographic distribution of this fund, recognizing the unique circumstances the Metropolitan area presents related to fish, game, habitats, wetlands, prairies, and forests.
- Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund – Support distribution of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund in a fair and equitable way. This includes support for the Minnesota regional library systems and Como Zoo and Conservatory.

### Urban Forest Invasive Species Mitigation

The City supports funding to assist cities with urban forest management and meeting the costs of preparing for, and responding to, catastrophic urban forest problems. Specifically, cities need additional funding for the identification, removal, replacement, and treatment of trees related to management of Emerald Ash Borer. The state should provide on-going funding for a grant program with annual funding that is usable for those activities.

### Parks Funding

Local parks and trails support the economic vitality needed to attract and retain a dedicated and qualified workforce. Investment in local parks is important to the future of economic growth, both to keep pace with the needs of those who live and work in Saint Paul and to attract future development opportunities. The City of Saint Paul supports the dedication of resources that can be invested in these local assets. Local parks and trails are not constitutionally eligible for Legacy funds, therefore the City supports the dedication of other resources that can be invested in these local assets.

The Saint Paul Parks Department is 1 of 10 implementing agencies in the Metropolitan Council's Metro Regional Parks System. The City works closely with those nine other implementing agencies to ensure an equitable funding formula for the Parks and Trails Fund and to increase the operations and maintenance funding, required by state statute to be 40 percent, currently funded at less than 9 percent. The City supports fully funding the Metro Regional Parks biennial budget, opposes cuts and allowing the Metropolitan Council to maximize investments in capital assets.

A bridge connecting the Samuel Morgan Regional Trail and the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary has been a long-time priority for the community and the City. This vital connection will provide safer, more direct access between a trail seeing over a half-million users per year and the gateway to the East Side along with the soon to be constructed Wakan Tipi Center. Extensive planning and engineering has occurred to accommodate constraints from crossing the Hoffman Interlocking rail facility and staying underneath flight

space for Holman Field. Full project funding is not feasible to be provided entirely locally, and needs state assistance to connect park and trail assets of regional significance with construction of this shovel-ready project.

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## Resilience

Cities everywhere must respond and adapt to the harmful effects of climate change and other long-term challenges. The City of Saint Paul is committed to becoming a carbon-neutral community by 2050 and being a leader on clean and efficient energy, sustainable transportation systems, land use, and solid waste systems.

The City supports these legislative efforts:

### **State Sales Tax Exemption for the McCarrons Water Treatment Plant Improvements Project**

Saint Paul Regional Water Services will be completing the process of procurement for the services of a Design-Build firm in 2020 for the McCarrons WTP Improvements Project. SPRWS is exempt from state sales tax currently for these types of projects. When using a contractor such as this, an exempt entity (SPRWS) can designate the contractor as its purchasing agent and follow a rigorous reimbursement process or it can seek legislation to provide sales tax exemption for the specific project. There is still a reimbursement process in that case, but it is much less intensive than the process when you designate a purchasing agent. SPRWS would like to pursue this legislative approval during the 2021 session.

### **Advanced Commercial Energy Code**

Accelerate the statewide commercial energy code adoption process with updates occurring every three years, rather than the current six-year cycle. The accelerated process will result in commercial buildings (including multifamily buildings 4+ stories) being designed and constructed to be net-zero energy by 2036. This legislation is a result of several years of work and broad stakeholder engagement and is supported by the Minnesota Departments of Commerce and Labor and Industry.

### **Advanced Energy Standard/Stretch Code**

Enable Minnesota cities to require commercial and multifamily buildings to be designed and constructed to an energy performance standard sometimes referred to as an advanced energy standard or stretch code. The legislation would also permit cities to apply the advanced energy standard to commercial and multifamily buildings undergoing major renovation.

### **Energy Conservation & Optimization (“ECO”) Act**

Build on the highly successful Minnesota Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) by expanding customer choices to include load management (modifying timing of energy use) and limited efficient fuel switching (switching to the use of another fuel when more efficient, cost-effective, and lower carbon).

### **District Energy St. Paul**

Support the continued operation of the Saint Paul district heating and cooling system cogeneration facility, which consumes large volumes of waste wood as its primary fuel source to supply electricity, until alternative solutions to managing waste wood can be fully evaluated and implemented.

The City also supports legislative efforts to:

- Advocate for including more renewable, equitable, and locally produced energy so that our city can meet the bold commitments for reducing emissions and energy burdens as expressed in our Climate Inheritance Resolution and Climate Action and Resilience Plan.
- Incentivize the manufacture of green products to be used in construction and assist manufacturers in incorporating green practices in their production of goods.
- Support the Metropolitan Council as a regional governmental agency and planning organization.
- Improve energy efficiency goals and activities by investor owned utilities.
- Prepare for the impacts of climate change on infrastructure, natural systems and human health.
- Increase distributed generation technologies, such as solar photovoltaic, solar thermal production, wind, combined heat and power for both public and private entities.
- Encourage legislation and amendments to rules to expand source separated composting efforts.
- Increase state funding for the state solid waste block grant program referred to as SCORE to be used for recycling efforts and expansion of organics collection.

## **The City of Saint Paul Also Supports**

### **Ramsey County Bonding Projects**

- ❖ Riversedge Deck, \$40 million
- ❖ Twin Cities to Milwaukee/Chicago Second Train, MnDOT lead - \$10 million
  - ❖ Rush Line BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) - \$2.5 million
  - ❖ Riverview Corridor, Ramsey lead - \$2.5 million

### **Saint Paul Port Authority Projects**

- ❖ Hillcrest Golf Course Redevelopment Site - \$2 million

## **Community partners and coalition legislative priorities for 2021**

Ramsey County  
 Saint Paul Public Schools  
 League of Minnesota Cities  
 Metro Cities  
 Homes for All Coalition  
 Restore the Vote  
 Minnesotans for Responsible Marijuana Regulation

**For more information on City of Saint Paul's 2021 Legislative Agenda, please contact:**

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