

September 15, 2020

Dear Saint Paul City Council:

The global work from home (WFH) experiment that was triggered by COVID-19 has forged new paradigms that will forever redefine the way we work. Survey after survey shows the vast majority of employees whose jobs can be performed remotely, expect and demand WFH flexibility going forward. Employers faced with this reality are rethinking their office space and many are now planning to downsize their footprint. Talent pools are no longer limited by geography and businesses are hiring the best people who can sustain and grow the business regardless of where they live.

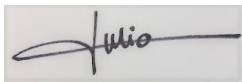
The upside to employers is clear: slashing office occupancy costs while also enhancing employee work/life balance and gaining previously unavailable access to talent. This upside is a threat to most downtowns and especially Saint Paul, where commercial real estate was measurably struggling before the pandemic.

Every downtown is an ecosystem that depends on a healthy relationship between its parts. A strong jobs base nurtures retail activity and augments the residential population to animate downtown streets, parks, and skyways. Absent this balance, as we have seen over the last several months, our public realm suffers and we risk losing the confidence of residents and employers.

More than ever, a Saint Paul Downtown Improvement District (DID) is essential toward attracting new jobs and ensuring we do not lag other urban hubs in the post-pandemic recovery. The business community is united in its commitment to fund the special services that are necessary to improve curbside appeal, enhance public safety and invite jobs and visitors.

I urge you to join the business community and help make downtown Saint Paul the best place to work, live and play. With your approval of the DID, our downtown has a better chance to compete in this new paradigm.

Sincerely,



Julio Fesser  
Second Vice President