

**From:** Wallace, William <bwallace@hamline.edu>  
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**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward1  
**Subject:** Budget Decisions

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Dear Councilmember Bowie,

I am contacting you to register my concerns about the current budgeting process in Saint Paul. For some time I have observed that there does not appear to be a recognition that the City infrastructure requires regular maintenance and repair and our budget process and fiscal priorities need to reflect that reality. This concern deepened when I received a copy of the In\$ight Saint Paul budget report. The report raises a number of concerns including:

1. Parks and Recreation wants to start five new projects for \$13 million and is not budgeting forward to reflect the cost of maintaining those new projects even while existing parks are in serious need of work and updates.
2. There are significant personnel increases in City staff - without a clear explanation of why and how those positions will contribute to the basic services of the City and how the effectiveness of any new hires will be evaluated.
3. That there is no clear disclosure of how TIF funds are being spent and what is now committed in the City.

Saint Paul has the highest sales tax rate at 9.875%. I am experiencing this high tax rate and significant property tax increases without any comparable increases in my income. In my opinion, consistently raising taxes and fees is not a sustainable system and does not represent a reasonable way to overcome the decline in downtown property value declines or a dwindling population.

I encourage you and your colleagues to read the In\$ight Saint Paul report and to start to address the questions raised in this report as a component of the budget process. I feel that the budget process needs to be guided - for the next several years at least - by some clear principles that are all grounded in measurable outcomes. Every City department should have their budget evaluated against stated measurable outcomes before any increases or new initiatives are contemplated. Given the unsettled political situation as we change federal administration I feel that prudent budgeting would be to minimize new expenditures and concentrate on our infrastructure repairs while building a strong reserve fund.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Wallace  
477 Laurel Avenue #5E  
Saint Paul, MN 55102