

## **2019 SOTC – St. Paul, MN; 03/14/2019**

We are at an exciting time in Saint Paul's story:

Our population has grown by 24,000 people over the last 9 years.

New developments are popping up all over, from Osborn 370, The 428, and Treasure Island Center downtown... to Beacon Bluff Business Center right here on the East Side.

Exciting visions for the Ford Plant and the RiversEdge put \$2B in proposed economic development on our horizon;

And Minnesota United will play their home opener at our brand new Allianz Field on April 13!

Saint Paul is overflowing with opportunity, and people are noticing – earlier this year, we hosted a Miami-based company that is planning to move, and has narrowed their choices to either Dallas or Saint Paul.

As we reflect on the State of Our City however, we still have work to do to ensure all of us get to participate in the benefits of Saint Paul's growing prosperity.

Experience shows that our passion for helping people can sometimes take a backseat to our zeal for municipal statistics.

The money we spend to build new housing means nothing if families can't stay in their homes;

Our work to bring down crime rates will remain marginal without addressing the basic needs that make people feel so desperate in the first place;

And a billion dollar light rail line is useless if it speeds past our most transit dependent neighborhoods.

The State of Our City cannot be measured by the height of our buildings, nor by the combined value of our firms, but only by the extent to which our public supports and resources work for all of us.

From our affordable housing trust, to funding our schools, the meaningful investments we've made over the past year to invest in people will change our city's course.

We've made big progress in a small amount of time, and your work is the key ingredient.

Building a city that works for all of us is only possible if all of us build it together.

Over the past month, we have asked residents across our city a simple question: "When someone asks what it was like growing up in Saint Paul, what do we hope our children will say?"

We got 400 responses, from people of different ages, neighborhoods, and cultures. And we learned that our hopes really aren't that different.

In every part of our city, we said that building a city that works for all of us means ensuring all of us can feel SAFE, WELCOME, and INCLUDED in Saint Paul's prosperity and growth.

You wouldn't let us separate the three either, because we realized that feeling welcome and included makes us feel safer too.

Together, we are constructing a new roadmap for city-building:

Traditional public safety strategies move people OUT of public spaces, but we feel safer when people are around.

Traditional strategies send offenders to the MARGINS, but we feel safe when our neighbors feel connected, and hopeful about their future.

Our traditional public safety toolbox isn't designed to make us ALL feel safe, but to draw a circle; and protect those inside from the others, at all costs.

That explains why some of us want fewer police while others demand more - where you live in relation to that circle defines your reality, and shapes your perspective.

In a city that works for all of us — where all of us feel safe, welcome and included — that circle cannot exist

We need a strategy that goes beyond crime response to crime reduction. That's the genesis of our Community First Public Safety Framework.

Community First was born in conversation with a small group of teens about the people and places that make them feel most safe.

Their response was refreshingly comprehensive, compared to the simple law & order discourse we're all used to:

They mentioned their homes, schools, rec center, and library; adults who believe in them and friends who have their back; and then a local police officer who knows them all by name.

Their feedback and yours, combined with a large body of academic research, informs the core strategies of our Community First Framework:

People who trust that police will treat them fairly are more likely to obey the law, assist with investigations, and call 911 in an emergency, SO we will prioritize and protect the trust between community and law enforcement.

The quality of our built environment influences the outcomes and behaviors that occur within, SO we will invest in our challenged neighborhoods.

And people who are financially secure, educated, and connected to community are less likely to become either an offender or a victim, SO we will employ every tool to connect residents to opportunity.

Chief Axtell and I are working together closely to foster and protect community trust in law enforcement.

We reviewed and revised our Police Department's use of force policies, issued the department's first ever use of force report, and called time-out for a comprehensive audit of our K-9 Unit.

We invested in our mental health unit, added capacity to investigate sex crimes; and expanded our community engagement division.

Like any relationship, our work to build trust is never done.

Next, I'll work with our City Attorney's Office to launch the NEIGHBORHOOD JUSTICE PROGRAM, with trained volunteers employing restorative justice principles as an alternative to criminal prosecution for non-violent, first-time offenders.

I'll issue the first Executive Order of my administration, creating a RETURNING RESIDENTS ADVISORY COUNCIL to ask those who've re-entered our community from incarceration alongside nonprofit and public sector professionals , for

recommendations toward making Saint Paul safer, more inclusive, and more welcoming for them too.

The next strategy in our Framework is to invest in the physical character of our neighborhoods.

Research shows that public spaces that are well-designed, well-maintained, and well-lit improve quality of life for residents and limit opportunity for crime.

Our Saint Paul Downtown Alliance is putting this principle into action:

Public, private, and nonprofit leaders have teamed up to launch a STEWARDSHIP PILOT PROGRAM, including community activities, art projects, grants for performances, beautification, and youth activities ; and full-time staff to pick up trash, coordinate with businesses and offer walking directions.

Those efforts will make downtown safer and more enjoyable to live, work, run a business, or just have fun.

We are supporting these efforts with more than words. The City has stepped up with a plan to mill and overlay every downtown street over the next few years, to leverage their investments.

We're partnering in our neighborhoods too, through Commercial Vitality Zones.

Our Department of Planning & Economic Development last month announced \$322k in funding, matched by \$360k in private investments, from 14 businesses near Rice & University, including El Bravo Restaurant, Mama Ann's Soulfood, Minuteman Auto Sales – and a gateway Pagoda to welcome visitors to Hmongtown Marketplace.

Improving our streets, sidewalks and bike lanes will make our public right of way safer and more welcoming; and eliminating late fines has already reopened our libraries to people of all incomes.

And we're investing in our Cultural Destination Areas – like Little Mekong, Little Africa and District del Sol – leveraging our city's rich diversity to create jobs and economic opportunity, particularly within communities of color.

To continue this work, I will create a cross-department work group to assess and recommend physical improvements in specific areas of our city with the biggest safety concerns, using principles of CPTED – Crime Prevention through Environmental Design – to recommend physical improvements.

One place in Saint Paul that definitely requires investment is our Third Street/ Kellogg Bridge, which connects the East Side and the entire East Metro to our downtown.

Originally constructed and owned by the state, the bridge was conveyed to the city in 1983, with no support or funding for ongoing maintenance.

While most city owned bridges are 25 feet long and supported by only 2 piers, the Third Street/ Kellogg Bridge is 2100 feet with 19 piers.

Minnesota's only other comparable city-owned bridge is the 10th Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis, which won bonding funds for reconstruction in 2017.

For the 5th straight year, we are working with our Saint Paul legislative delegation to request bonding dollars for the Third Street/ Kellogg bridge.

With a projected economic downturn on the horizon, now is the time. Let's fix the bridge, put people to work, and connect the entire East Metro to the prosperity and opportunities downtown.

In time, the efforts I've outlined will make Saint Paul a safer, more inclusive and more welcoming place to live.

But we don't all have the luxury of time.

I hear your stories everyday:

Faduma struggles to pay rent and feed her family on \$11.96 an hour, in her 9th year of employment at a local retailer.

Andre rebuilt his life after getting out of prison, and eventually secured a taxi license, paving his way to become a home-owner, college graduate, and youth basketball coach.

And Alia – once a teen mom ashamed of her GED – will complete her post-doctoral studies this Spring.

I hear you loud and clear: your urgency; your big dreams; the amazing lives you've built and the incredible barriers you've faced.

Our job as a city isn't just to create conditions where success is possible, it's to seek and destroy every barrier that limits our potential.

We raised the Minimum Wage so no one who works full-time is ever stuck living in poverty.

We are launching our Virtual One Shop to simplify the permitting process for those seeking to reinvest in their home or businesses.

And we established our Office of Financial Empowerment to help put money back in the pockets of our lowest income Saint Paulites.

Our simplest strategy is helping people file taxes.

5,000 of our lowest income residents lose an estimated \$15M per year, by allowing state and federal tax credits to go unclaimed.

Ensuring people know how, where and why to get free tax help will help families be more self-sufficient and bring millions back into our local economy.

Our most exciting proposal is our plan to start every Saint Paul child on the pathway to college from birth, with \$50 in a College Savings Account.

During this speech last year, I announced the formation of a task force to study and make recommendations on how to implement such a plan in our city.

Led by Ann Mulholland at the Saint Paul and Minnesota Community Foundations and Rick Beeson from Sunrise Banks, that task force has spent the last year planning, engaging community members, and studying other cities.

In less than a year, they've completed their work and delivered an 89-page report. I want to publicly thank them for their work.

I'm excited to give you a first peek at our new name and logo, and to share that COLLEGE BOUND SAINT PAUL – our dream that felt like a moonshot only one year ago – is on pace towards our goal of launching the first college savings accounts in January 2020.

Too many of our neighbors face homelessness and housing insecurity everyday.

Our tent encampment this fall, and our polar vortex this winter, brought us face to face with this fact, but the everyday challenges associated with homelessness and housing insecurity touch us all.

Business leaders are frustrated that their employees struggles to find and keep good housing.

School leaders struggle to serve children who move, and change schools, 4-5 times in one school year.

Our affordable housing crisis impacts every single one of us - every workplace, every classroom, every neighborhood.

When children in our schools move that much, it disrupts their education, and every other student in every classroom they touch.

Last spring, the City Council asked for “significant new investments” in affordable housing in my budget proposal. We met that charge together, with a \$71M investment in affordable housing over the next three years.

For some families, housing is the pathway to wealth. For many, it’s the opposite, as one in three Saint Paul families - and half of our residents of color - spend more than 30% of their income on rent.

I am working with our Housing Team to design a Supplemental Housing Assistance pilot.

Seeded by our affordable housing trust fund, in partnership with the Saint Paul Public Schools, Wilder Foundation, and private philanthropic partners, our goal is to provide a modest monthly supplement to help low income, housing cost-burdened families with children in targeted public schools, maintain stable housing.

Now that the Council's funding challenge is met, I have a challenge too.

I am calling on our City Council to pass a set of policy proposals to help low-income families, tenants on public assistance, and residents who've re-entered our community from incarceration find and keep stable housing, from preventing discrimination, displacement, and unfair evictions; to apprising tenants of their rights.

The families we serve so urgently deserve action, I am asking the Council to pass and send this Fair Housing Policy Agenda to my desk as soon as possible.

Last month, I joined the Saint Paul & Minnesota Community Foundations to celebrate an important milestone: they’ve now given over one billion dollars to Minnesota communities over the past 80 years.

The most incredible part of the foundations' story is that it all started with one woman, Annie Paper, and a \$5,000 gift.

Everyday in Saint Paul, small acts add up to make a big difference:

Last week, Elliott Helmer, a 17 year old Eagle Scout from St. Anthony Park, donated over 1,000 stuffed animals he collected to the Saint Paul Police Department, to help comfort children in traumatic situations.

I love the giving spirit of service that so embodies our city.  
More than anything, our willingness to help each other is our key to the future.

In my inaugural speech last year, I joked, "Don't clap if you're not going to help."

More of you clapped after I said it than before it, just to let me know you're ready to go.

So let's get to work. Today, we're launching #4SaintPaul, our quest to challenge every Saint Paul resident to build a stronger city in 4 small, simple, specific acts:

I challenge you to take action:

To improve or invest in yourself;

To make life - or even just one day - easier for someone else;

To beautify, clean, or bring people together in your community;

And to speak up & make your voice heard on a public level.

I dare you to think not about grandiose efforts that take 1,000 people and a year to plan, but finite tasks YOU can accomplish and complete, next week.

If every one of us steps forward to do 4 small things, we'll generate over a million acts of service to our city.

I know Saint Paul is an incredible city, because I talk to you everyday.

Our enormous dreams for our children, our careers, our innovative ideas and businesses never cease to amaze.



It's your strength and determination, your creativity, your ideas, your grit and tenacity that keep Saint Paul moving forward.

William Shakespeare once asked, "What is the city but the people?"

Because I see your strength in action everyday, I am pleased to declare that the State of Our City is strong, diverse, and as prepared as ever for the challenges ahead.

Thank you.