

## Public Safety

The St. Paul Area Chamber advocates for a measurable year-over-year improvement in both crime statistics and the public perceptions of safety in the East Metro. The economic vitality of our region depends on the assurance of public safety in our communities. City, county, and state level public officials must prioritize resources to ensure the effectiveness of the East Metro law enforcement and criminal justice systems, and to increase public confidence in the safety of our communities while promoting better public safety outcomes. SPAC supports policies that improve public safety, including:

- A renewed focus on improving public safety perceptions and crime prevention by increasing police presence in central corridors. The City of St. Paul and Ramsey County should prioritize resources towards filling all positions requested by the Chief of Police and County Sheriff.
- Conducting at least two police academies each year, to better recruit and train a new pipeline of officers.
- Enforce current rules and develop new strategies to improve the safety, cleanliness and vitality of the downtown skyway system.
- Utilizing targeted co-responder and mental health crisis programs for mental health and/or substance use issues to be used to supplement police, providing law enforcement the bandwidth to dedicate their time and resources to core policing functions.
- Investing in the technological tools law enforcement needs to properly deter criminal activity and solve crimes (i.e., cameras, communications, gunshot detection technology).
- Prioritize County Attorney staffing to bring on additional prosecutors to address the backlog of cases, and in turn, the concerns of jail overcrowding.
- Improving the safety perceptions of transit through physical improvements at stations and bus stops, increased security presence and law enforcement responsiveness, and enforcing an acceptable standard of behavior on transit vehicles.

## Housing

We support commonsense policies that increase the overall housing stock throughout the East Metro (rental/homeownership, multi/single-family, affordable/workforce/market rate). We believe that there is no singular solution to the housing shortage in our region and that government partners should focus on attracting private housing development, encouraging cross-sector partnerships and reimagining housing policy to reduce cost barriers for developers and consumers. We support:

- Continued state and local investment to build new housing across the spectrum.
- Zoning modifications to ensure that current regulations are solutions to identified problems and do not inhibit other housing production or affordability goals, or unnecessarily increase development or operational costs.
- Local governments acting as strong development partners by easing burdens for businesses and residents alike. This includes local investment (and ongoing maintenance) in parks, water, and utility infrastructure, etc. that play a role in development costs and the affordability of housing.
- Policies and investments that strengthen the regional homelessness response system and promote collaboration among local and state governments.
- Ultimately, we want to ensure that adequate shelter is accessible, and no one is forced to sleep on the streets of St. Paul.

However, **we do not support the use of rent control** as a tool to meet the East Metro's affordable housing needs. We maintain that rent control fundamentally undermines the development of new housing stock by creating risk and uncertainty for investors and developers. We encourage the St. Paul City Council to use

available data to evaluate the effectiveness of rent control as a tool to increase affordable housing and to consider its repeal.

## Business Climate and Competitiveness

The best contributor to a strong economy is a healthy business climate. We will promote public policy that supports the rights of private employers to make decisions based on what is important to their employees and customers. We also strongly encourage our public sector partners to engage the business community in their planning and decision-making processes. We support:

- “Soft touch” regulations, efficient and predictable permitting and licensing processes, and reduced barriers to entry for new businesses.
- Conscientious tax policies that do not cause the City of St. Paul to become a regional outlier and become unaffordable for businesses and residents alike. Specifically, we oppose the 2023 ballot measure to increase the local sales tax by one-percent, which would result in the City of St. Paul having the highest local sales tax in the state.
- Land use policies which provide for a diversified tax base, preservation of industrial land, and transit-oriented development.
- Access to opportunities for BIPOC- and women-owned businesses.
- A statewide approach to early-childhood education and childcare funding, recognizing that the task of preparing the future generation of workers is larger than any individual city can fund through the property tax or administer successfully on its own. To that end, we do not support the 2024 ballot initiative to increase the property tax levy for a city-run childcare subsidy program, as the anticipated revenues fall well below projected expenses- creating an unfunded mandate.

## Infrastructure

High quality community development and reliable infrastructure are central to economic growth.

Investment in infrastructure (including roads, bridges, ports, transit, utilities, and telecommunications) are central to the economic growth of the East Metro region. We support:

- Reprioritizing investments in public infrastructure (streets, bridges, park facilities) in the city budget, recognizing that these are core municipal services.
- Transportation design and transit service that supports efficient workforce access to employers, as well as improved mobility throughout the region and housing options.
- Sustainable, predictable, and comprehensive funding mechanisms for infrastructure
- Recognizing that the condition of a streetscape reflects its perceived value to the community, adequate budget resources must be allocated to ongoing maintenance of live vegetation in traffic corridors, as well as graffiti and trash removal in public spaces.

## Talent Supply and Development

Access to a diverse, skilled workforce is an essential tool for business growth. We support public policies that prioritize efforts to help employers attract and retain employees, while also allowing employers the flexibility to meet the needs of their companies and employees. This includes:

- Resources and connections for students and workers looking for new career opportunities.
- Immigration policies to support the attraction of professionals to our market.
- Addressing the benefits cliff by ensuring public assistance policies are not an inhibitor to career development and workforce retention.
- Collaborating with the local network of public and private higher education institutions to prepare the workforce of the future.