

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION OVERVIEW – MEETING 2

PILLAR GOAL	PROJECT ACTIONS	June 26 Progress Updates & Ways to Help	August 21 Meeting Notes
ADDRESS CRIME AND QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES	Downtown Improvement District	The Downtown Improvement District (DID) is a special service district that focuses on enhancing the cleanliness, safety, and overall appeal of the downtown area. Funded by assessments on property owners within the district, the DID provides services like street cleaning, security patrols, graffiti removal, landscaping, and public space maintenance. Its goal is to create a vibrant, welcoming environment that supports businesses, residents, and visitors, helping to drive economic development and improve quality of life downtown.	<p><b>Update presented by Dave Higgins, President of the Downtown Development Corporation</b></p> <p>At the August 13 City Council Meeting, Council President Noecker recognized the Downtown Ambassadors for their dedication to keeping downtown Saint Paul safe, clean, and welcoming. Their work supports businesses, residents, and visitors, making the city a more vibrant and accessible community.</p> <p>DID Ambassadors are easily recognized in their bright yellow uniforms and are available 7 days a week, from 7 AM to 11 PM. They can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Assist with directions &amp; safety escorts</li><li>- Report and address graffiti, litter, and broken glass</li><li>- Offer wellness checks and non-emergency assistance</li><li>- Help keep parks and public spaces safe &amp; clean</li></ul> <p>Need Assistance? Contact the Safety Communications Center via all or text at 651-236-0284 for non-emergency needs, safety escorts, or to report issues.</p>
	Community First Public Safety		<p><b>Update presented by SPPD Downtown District Commander Jake Peterson</b></p> <p>Commander Peterson has served with the Saint Paul Police Department for 26 years, with a commitment to revitalizing downtown and strengthening community connections.</p> <p>Saint Paul Police recently launched a new downtown initiative, VIBE (Visible, Intentional, with Balanced Enforcement), that is now five and a half weeks underway. The initiative emphasizes intentional presence, community involvement, and ongoing improvements to the downtown experience.</p> <p><u>Key points of this initiative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Objective: Increase visible, intentional policing while maintaining balanced enforcement downtown.</li><li>- Implementation: 26 officers are dedicated full-time to the downtown area, providing coverage 24/7.</li><li>- Community Engagement: Residents are encouraged to meet at least one downtown officer by name, fostering familiarity and trust.</li></ul> <p><u>Call to Action:</u> Commander Peterson challenged attendees to actively connect with law enforcement as part of a broader strategy to improve downtown safety and community relationships.</p>

	Transit Safety		<p><b>Update presented by Metro Transit Lieutenants Mohamed &amp; Malland</b></p> <p><u>Staffing &amp; Visibility:</u> Both Metro Transit Lieutenants acknowledged ongoing staffing shortages but highlighted that new officers are being hired. As staffing increases, expect greater presence downtown.</p> <p><u>Resource Strategy:</u> Currently focusing on high-priority areas such as University Avenue and the downtown corridor. Officers are increasingly on foot this summer with plans to continue bike patrols too. Will also continue efforts to have officers on different beats so that they become more familiar with their assigned geographical area and provide proactive policing as a service.</p> <p><u>Guiding Mottos:</u> “Presence matters” / “Leaders of presence” – emphasizing visibility so the public feels safe.</p> <p><u>Security Enhancements:</u> Restoring security positions at Central Station, Union Depot, and 10th Street. Transit agents spending more time on trains, especially with the upcoming BRT Gold Line and B Line.</p> <p><u>Coordination:</u> Working closely with St. Paul Police through joint downtown details to align goals across agencies.</p> <p><u>Homeless Action Team:</u> Recognizes many transit riders use trains and stations as shelter. Strategy focuses on combining necessary enforcement with connecting people to resources to avoid simply displacing individuals.</p> <p><u>Outlook:</u> The agencies are still adjusting and improving, with ongoing efforts to increase community presence and address underlying challenges, not just symptoms.</p>
	Violence Reduction	<p>The Ramsey County Attorney’s Office is focused on reducing violence in downtown Saint Paul through initiatives like the Nonfatal Shootings Initiative, which treats nonfatal shootings with high priority; the Healing Streets Project, offering support to those affected by violence; and collaborations to improve sexual assault response and survivor support. These efforts aim to increase public safety and provide trauma-informed care.</p>	<p><b>Update presented by Ramsey County Attorney John Choi</b></p> <p><u>Community-First Public Safety:</u> The County Attorney’s Office is a key pillar alongside police in promoting safety, combining enforcement with upstream prevention and community partnerships.</p> <p><u>Collaboration is Key:</u> Progress happens when agencies work together. Over the past five years, collaborative efforts—including the Violence Reduction Leadership Group—have improved outcomes such as nonfatal shooting clearance rates and reduced auto theft and carjackings.</p> <p><u>Safe and Strong Initiative:</u> Launched in 2024 with Metro Transit Police, this program focuses on enforcement plus connecting individuals to services. It targets persistent challenges along the University Avenue corridor and downtown transit areas.</p>


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INVEST IN, MAINTAIN, AND IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACES	5 <sup>th</sup> Street	City planners and the Downtown Alliance recommended elevating 5th Street to become the main pedestrian thoroughfare, linking landmarks like Rice Park, Mears Park, the Central Station, and CHS Field.	<p><b>Written update prepared and shared by City of Saint Paul Public Works Department</b></p> <p><u>Project Timelines:</u></p> <p>Robert Street: Substantially complete this year; some items continuing into 2026.</p> <p>7th Street by the Downtowner: Expected to wrap up in September.</p> <p>Minnesota Street: Scheduled for completion this season.</p> <p><u>Coordination &amp; Communication:</u></p> <p>Outreach to businesses and residents, weekly construction updates.</p> <p>Collaboration with partners including Ramsey County, MnDOT, and Metro Transit.</p> <p>Plans to improve on-site communication and information at major construction sites.</p> <p><u>Public Works Focus Areas:</u></p> <p>Completing ongoing construction projects (e.g., Kellogg Bikeway, Robert, Minnesota).</p> <p>Developing the Downtown Streets and Sidewalks Plan.</p>

			<p>Implementing improvements at key downtown intersections.</p> <p><u>Maintenance &amp; Accessibility:</u></p> <p>Supporting the Downtown Alliance Ambassador program.</p> <p>Regular trash sweeps in high-need areas.</p> <p>Enhanced graffiti removal, vegetation management, and painting.</p> <p><u>Call to Action:</u> Check out and bookmark the following resources –</p> <p><a href="http://www.stpaul.gov/construction">www.stpaul.gov/construction</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/downtown-projects">https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/downtown-projects</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/transportation-and-transit/downtown-streets-and-sidewalks-plan">https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/transportation-and-transit/downtown-streets-and-sidewalks-plan</a></p>
	Ecolab Plaza	Ecolab Plaza, now known as Osborn Plaza, is undergoing a significant transformation in downtown Saint Paul. Originally a concrete sidewalk and plaza area between Ecolab's headquarters, the Landmark Center, and the Hamm Building, the space is being reimagined into a vibrant green community area.	<p><b>Update presented by City of Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Director Andy Rodriguez</b></p> <p><u>Volunteer &amp; Community Partnerships:</u> Acknowledged the critical role of volunteers and community groups, including Friends of Mears Park, in maintaining and activating downtown parks.</p> <p><u>Park Activation &amp; Events:</u> Summer initiatives included happy hours, block parties, and collaborations with local businesses (e.g., Gambit Brewing) to bring more visibility and engagement to park spaces.</p> <p><u>Public Safety Collaboration:</u> Partnering with city departments and the Police Department to support unsheltered residents and mitigate drug use, ensuring safer, more enjoyable parks.</p> <p><u>Pedro Park Grand Opening:</u> Ribbon-cutting scheduled for September 4th, 4–6 p.m. The park features vibrant spaces, a new dog park, and programming supported by Downtown Street Team ambassadors and placemaking consultants.</p> <p><u>Other Park Projects:</u></p> <p>Osborne Plaza: Significant renovation planned within 12–18 months, possibly breaking ground this fall.</p> <p>Ham's Plaza: Re-envisioning in collaboration with Ecolab; timeline nearly finalized.</p>
	Hamms Plaza	Hamm Plaza is being redeveloped to enhance transit access, pedestrian infrastructure, and green space. Key upgrades include an expanded Metro Transit Gold Line stop, improved bike and pedestrian connections via the Capital City Bikeway, and new landscaping with trees and benches. Ecolab, headquartered nearby, is contributing to the project with a \$2 million investment to transform the area into a vibrant community green space. The City's Parks and Recreation Department is leading the redevelopment to create a more welcoming hub for residents, workers, and visitors.	
	Pedro Park	Pedro Park is nearly doubling in size—from 0.45 to 0.87 acres—transforming into a true urban oasis. The	

		expanded park is designed to cool downtown heat islands, boost property values, and bring new life to the street level. It marks the culmination of over 20 years of community-driven advocacy. Construction is ongoing, with infrastructure and amenities rolling out first, and a grand opening anticipated in spring or summer 2025.	<p>Mears Park: Improvements including replacement of the retaining wall to enhance existing spaces.</p> <p>Active Recreation Planning: Exploring opportunities for pickleball courts and other active recreation downtown.</p>
	RiversEdge	The RiversEdge project in downtown Saint Paul is an \$800 million mixed-use development featuring a 9-acre riverfront park, office and residential towers, retail, and public amenities like an amphitheater and riverwalk. Led by Ramsey County and AECOM, it aims to revitalize the riverfront with sustainable design and boost economic growth. Schematic designs for the park and infrastructure are complete and community engagement is underway.	<p><b>Written update prepared by the Office of Rafael E. Ortega, District 5, Board Chair</b></p> <p><u>Downtown Housing Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ramsey County has an urgent and evident need for affordable housing, especially for individuals and families with household incomes less than 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI).</li><li>• A key strategy to meet this need is to retain existing affordable housing and the county board just voted to support two projects located in downtown Saint Paul to complete critical maintenance and upkeep projects to ensure 10 units of affordable housing at 30% - 60% are maintained for decades to come.</li><li>• Using Local Affordable Housing Aid, \$1.55 million was invested into the Minnesota Park and Presshouse apartments which will ensure 10 households have access to affordable housing for another 30-years.</li></ul> <p><u>RiversEdge</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The county continues to focus on site readiness by clearing the path for the private development opportunity, designing the underlying infrastructure of the future public space, and addressing various financial, legal, and technical obstacles.</li><li>• Current work is focused on a phasing plan, including verifying the appropriate size and timing of the parking structure, a foundational piece of the redevelopment. The investment in parking for both the site and downtown is being evaluated to best serve the project and broader downtown needs.</li><li>• Additional activity has been around making some short-term modest improvements to the look of the jersey barriers along Kellogg. Keep an eye out for additional beautification efforts to the site as an interim use while the site is readied for development.</li></ul> <p><u>Critical Corridors expansion into downtown</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Critical Corridors Development and Infrastructure program facilitates inclusive redevelopment and public infrastructure to support projects that incorporate efficient land use and compact built form.</li><li>• The program geography (eligibility) will be adjusted to now include Downtown to support the important work of facilitating redevelopment in our capital city. This</li></ul>

			will better allow us to respond to the changing landscape and recognizing the large-scale opportunity to leverage existing energy around redevelopment projects.
INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF HOUSING DOWNTOWN	Central Station	A \$130 million mixed-use development is planned for Central Station, featuring a 20-story apartment tower with 300 units, retail space, and a skyway over the Green Line. The project aims to boost transit access and downtown vitality, with construction expected to begin by late 2026.	
	Office-Residential Conversions	In March–April 2024, the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance commissioned Gensler to assess 20 office buildings. 10 “strong candidate” buildings could yield nearly 4,000 residential units (~3,951). An additional 6 are potential candidates, and 4 are unlikely. This effort could remove approximately 3.5 million sq ft of vacant office space—reducing downtown office vacancy by 260 basis points (from ~17.7% to 15.1%) Landmark Tower (345 St. Peter St): Recently converted into 187 luxury apartments, with residents moving in starting May–June 2025. The \$97 million project—developed by Sherman Associates—leveraged federal and state historic tax credits, plus TIF incentives from the city. The Stella (former Ecolab University at 386 Wabasha St. N): Under construction since July 2024, set to produce 174 apartments. It received a \$15.8 million C-PACE loan to support the conversion.	
PROMOTE VIBRANT DOWNTOWN SPACES AND AMENITIES	Active Residents Group	Downtown Saint Paul residents can get involved by joining neighborhood groups – like the Friends of the different parks around downtown, attending city/community meetings (like this Downtown Action Series), attending an evening or weekend event (like Ordway’s upcoming Inside Out series), or joining the Skyway Walkers. To learn more about any of these events or to get more involved, email Bill at skywayblooddrive@gmail.com	<b>Update presented by Bill Hanley, Downtown resident and neighborhood champion</b>  Downtown residents are leading the way in making our city center feel like a true neighborhood of 30,000: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Parks &amp; Public Spaces</u> – Gardening, trash removal, and safety monitoring in Mears Park and beyond.</li><li>• <u>Skyway Safety &amp; Access</u> – Supporting one of downtown’s most valued assets for both residents and workers.</li><li>• <u>Community Giving</u> – Hosting monthly Red Cross blood drives at Union Depot (64 completed since 2020).</li><li>• <u>Arts &amp; Culture</u> – Partnering with the Ordway and SPCO to boost attendance and explore creative community solutions amid declining support for local arts.</li></ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <u>Business &amp; Resident Partnerships</u> – Finding ways to strengthen the connection between local businesses and the growing residential community.</li><li>• <u>New Ideas</u> – From history lectures to movie screenings, residents are creating new ways to connect and build community.</li><li>• <u>Support for Projects</u> – Groups like Friends of Pedro Park help neighbors navigate city processes and bring ideas to life.</li></ul> <p>Get Involved: Every small step matters. Connect at skywayblooddrive@gmail.com</p>
	Business retention		
	Downtown Alliance		
	Downtown Development Corporation	The Saint Paul Downtown Development Corporation (SPDDC) is a nonprofit created in February 2025 by the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance to lead downtown revitalization efforts. It focuses on acquiring and redeveloping key properties, driving office-to-residential conversions, and serving as a central hub for coordinating investment and partnerships—all under the leadership of an experienced real estate developer. The DDC has purchased the debt on the Alliance Bank Building and intends to take control of the building soon.	<p><b>Update presented by Dave Higgins, President of the Downtown Development Corporation</b></p> <p><u>Acquisition of Alliance Bank Center Bank Note:</u> The DDC purchased the debt for this central downtown property, part of the Madison Equities portfolio.</p> <p><u>Next Steps:</u> Over the next 12 months, the DDC plans to gain control of the property, conduct evaluations, and explore redevelopment opportunities, including potential residential conversion, in alignment with the Downtown Investment Strategy.</p> <p><u>Key Partners:</u> City of St. Paul: Provides guidance and support, including involvement with the Alliance Bank Center. Ramsey County: Engaged in downtown growth projects such as the River’s Edge development. Local Employers &amp; Investors: Actively supporting downtown revitalization initiatives.</p> <p><u>Outlook:</u> The DDC is positioned to accelerate downtown St. Paul’s redevelopment by combining strategic investment, collaborative partnerships, and long-term planning.</p>
	Downtown grocery store		

	Lowertown Social Hour	<p>The Lowertown Social Hour is a free, monthly networking event in downtown Saint Paul hosted by the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance. Held at various venues throughout Lowertown and open to all, it's a great way to connect with the community and explore local businesses. <a href="#">For updates, visit the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance's event calendar.</a> This summer, Lowertown Social Hours will be held twice a month, on the first and third Wednesdays. Join us on the patio at 1881 at Union Depot on Wednesday, July 2, from 4–6 p.m. for our next stop! <a href="#">Sign up to learn more about future socials via this link</a>, or use the QR Code.</p> 	<p><b>Update presented by Jenn Schaal Vice President, Operations &amp; Strategy at Visit Saint Paul</b></p> <p><u>New Visitor Kiosks:</u> Two interactive kiosks now available at Landmark Center and River Center, offering maps, dining suggestions, and things to do. Feedback is encouraged to improve the program.</p> <p><u>Minnesota Yacht Club Festival:</u> Downtown hotel occupancy hit 96% on peak days, with a significant economic impact on local hospitality and retail. The festival added a third day, attracting a mix of local (56%) and regional visitors (33%).</p> <p><u>Grand Casino Arena Name Change:</u> New signage coming; adjustment to the name expected over time.</p> <p><u>Call to Action:</u> Check out and provide feedback on the two new visitor kiosks noted above to improve the program. Save the date / plan to attend these upcoming events -</p> <p>State Fair (Aug 29, NPR Day): Visit Saint Paul booth at Danpatch Park with Pride swag and info on the World Juniors Hockey Tournament.</p> <p>World Juniors Hockey Tournament (Dec 26–early Jan): 50th anniversary; 10 countries, top U20 players; all U.S. games at soon-to-be-renamed Grand Casino Arena; fan fest in Rice Park and River Center; volunteer opportunities forthcoming.</p>
	Xcel		