



DOWNTOWN ACTION SERIES – MEETING #9 SUMMARY

From Thursday, October 15, 2026 • 4:30-6 PM • Union Depot (214 4th St E • Saint Paul, MN 55101)

Purpose of the Downtown Action Series

The Downtown Action Series continues to serve as a shared table for downtown Saint Paul—bringing together residents, public agencies, businesses, and partners to stay informed, hold each other accountable, and actively shape the future of downtown. The series is designed not just to share updates, but to build relationships, surface ideas, and create a sense of shared ownership over downtown's next chapter.

ALDI – Matt Lilla, Division Vice President, ALDI Inc., Faribault Division

Matt Lilla highlighted ALDI's newest Saint Paul location, which helps address the gap in downtown grocery access following approximately 18 months without a grocery store. He described ALDI's business model, which emphasizes operational efficiency, private-label products, and low prices. He also highlighted the company's growth in Minnesota, from approximately 25 locations when he began his tenure to more than 83 today.

Saint Paul City Council – President Rebecca Noecker

Council President Noecker described three complementary investments supporting downtown's future:

- Retail: ALDI's opening restores convenient grocery access for downtown residents.
- Housing: The Stella office-to-residential conversion was reported to be 23.6% leased. Landmark Towers, another residential conversion, was reported to be fully leased at above-market rates.
- Public space: Wabasha Park, formerly Osborn Park/Ecolab Park, adds accessible outdoor seating, a pergola with color-changing lights, and another place for people to gather near Osborn 370.

Council President Noecker also highlighted \$2 million in Downtown Vitality Fund grants supporting street-level businesses, renovations, and downtown activation. Recipients include Alary's Bary, Avalon, Camp Bar & Cabaret, Erta Ale Ethiopian Restaurant, LaNoire Bridal, Market House Commercial Condominium Association, MetroNOME Brewery, Owl's Eye Art Collective, Ruam Mit, Saint Paul Downtown Development Corporation, St. Paul Grower's Association, and With Love.

Downtown Alliance – Joe Spencer

Joe Spencer reported that a dedicated downtown community prosecutor had been working on downtown cases for approximately six weeks. He noted that meaningful results take time given the complexity of the legal system.

The City Council had also approved the 2027 Downtown Improvement District budget. The budget is approximately 3.5% higher than the previous year, with the goal of keeping increases below annual inflation. Property owners were notified and retain the ability to object through the established process.

The Downtown Alliance is also preparing a seasonal promotion highlighting downtown holiday events, theater, lighting, dining, and other activities.

Downtown Development Corporation – Dave Higgins

The skyway reopening remains a priority. The Downtown Development Corporation reported that additional bids had been obtained and that the project was nearing contract award, with work expected to begin shortly afterward. Dave Higgins identified December 1, 2026, as an outside date for reopening, while acknowledging that this was a target rather than a guarantee.

City of Saint Paul Office of Mayor Kaohly Her – Laura Isdahl

Laura described ongoing coordination across City departments and discussions with property owners to reopen the skyways. Work includes developing a temporary emergency egress plan for the section affected by the Saint Paul Athletic Club closure and addressing security needs. The Downtown Development Corporation was also advancing access work involving the Alliance Bank Center.

Laura also shared that the Mayor's 2027 supplemental budget restores funding for Dayton's Bluff Library, parks centers, and enforcement and compliance with the City's separation ordinance. Additional revenue from the finalized Xcel Energy franchise agreement helped support these restorations. The agreement also establishes a Saint Paul bill credit for energy-burdened households without increasing residents' electric and gas franchise fees.

City of Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development - Spencer Miller-Johnson & Jules Atangana

The City is developing a long-range, people-centered policy and zoning plan for downtown. Community engagement is underway, with workshops designed to gather ideas about downtown's future, including how streets and skyways can work together to support activity and vitality.

Upcoming workshops announced at the meeting:

- Monday, October 19, at 5 p.m.: Minnesota Museum of American Art. Small-group discussion on skyway and street activation.
- Wednesday, November 4, at 5 p.m.: Saint Paul Public Library.

More information is available at Downtown2050PlanStPaul.gov

The City also provided a brief update on downtown housing conversions, including the Arm building and the Ramsey County building on Kellogg Boulevard. The City expressed hope that the Ramsey County building transaction could close by mid-2027.

Saint Paul Police Department – Commander Eric Kammerer

Commander Kammerer provided several public safety updates:

- Property crimes were reported down approximately 10% year to date.
- Reckless discharges and shots fired were down approximately 12% year to date.
- Crimes against society were up approximately 10%; the commander attributed some of this increase to narcotics and vagrancy-related enforcement activity.
- Joint road details with the Department of Safety and Inspections and Parks and Recreation focus on cleaning public spaces and addressing conditions in parks and rights-of-way.
- Officers continue coordinated details with Metro Transit at light-rail platforms and bus stops.
- A federally funded detail focused on serious crimes had involved 66 officers across approximately 28 details over six weeks.
- Securix and EcoLab provided funding through the Saint Paul Police Foundation for three new Segways, bringing the downtown skyway beat's total to seven.
- Thirty-four officers were scheduled to begin the police academy the following Monday. The department reported approximately 560 officers against an authorized staffing level of 616.

The department also highlighted its Fussus Connect program, which allows participating businesses and property managers to provide access to exterior camera feeds during active incidents, and its community camera registry, through which investigators can request footage from registered camera owners.

Businesses can also enroll in the no-trespassing affidavit program, which authorizes police to act on behalf of property owners in enforcing trespassing laws.

Commander Kammerer encouraged residents and businesses to report concerns promptly and document serial numbers, photographs, and values of personal property to assist with investigations.

City of Saint Paul Office of Neighborhood Safety – Toy Vixayvong & Chris Michels

The City's outreach team described its work supporting people experiencing homelessness downtown and along the University corridor. The approach includes dedicated case management and coordination with the Downtown Alliance, Saint Paul Police and Fire, Parks and Recreation, libraries, Ramsey County, and other partners.

Residents can report concerns through 911 or the non-emergency line. Ramsey County dispatch social workers help triage calls and connect them with the appropriate response. The team expects its work to shift seasonally, with greater attention to sidewalks and other locations as winter approaches.

Metro Transit – Lesley Kandaras (General Manager) and Adam Harrington (Director of Service Development)

Metro Transit reported that service has expanded approximately 23% across the system since the 2023 sales tax was enacted. The B Line, which opened in 2025, was reported to have returned to pre-pandemic ridership levels.

Upcoming service milestones discussed included:

- Gold Line extension: Planned opening March 27, 2027
- Southwest Light Rail/Green Line extension: Planned opening June 12, 2027, connecting Union Depot with Eden Prairie

Metro Transit also described its layered public safety approach, including Metro Transit Police, Transit Rider Investment Program personnel, supplemental security, and the Downtown Ambassador partnership.

The Safe and Strong initiative concluded October 7, with a final outreach effort involving City officials and Ramsey County social workers. Outreach will continue under a winter protocol, with adjusted hours and activity downtown and along the Green Line.

Ramsey County – County Manager Ling Becker

Ramsey County shared several upcoming investments and community updates:

- Critical Corridors grants: Awards were scheduled to be announced October 20. This is the first year downtown corridors have been eligible for the program, which has awarded grants throughout Ramsey County since 2023.
- Dynamic Downtown solicitation fund: The County is developing an initiative expected to leverage \$50 million in bonding.
- Rivers Edge: Bond preparations are beginning, with further project updates anticipated in early 2027.

- Holiday events: Union Depot's European Christmas Market was scheduled to begin November 30, followed by the tree lighting on December 4 and the CPKC train event on December 13. Landmark Center also has a slate of holiday activities planned.

The County also reviewed its election security procedures. County Manger Becker said Ramsey County had denied federal DOJ requests to observe inside polling places during the primary, citing state-law restrictions on who may enter polling places. The County described its coordination structure with county departments and law enforcement, contingency planning for election-night materials, and resources for residents at RamseyCountyMN.gov/vote.

Saint Paul Parks Conservancy – Jodi Massey

The Conservancy announced plans to work with the City Parks Department on a survey about downtown park programming. Feedback will help guide future summer activities.

The Conservancy also previewed a \$200,000 Cities Challenge grant announcement expected October 20, focused on downtown parks. Additional information was to follow the public announcement.

CapitolRiver Council – Amy Lee

The Downtown District Council described its role connecting residents, businesses, and City departments. Its priorities include development, housing, economic vitality, cultural identity, livability, safety, and mobility.

Four committees support this work: Public Realm; Planning and Economic Development; St. Paul Government Advisory; and Arts, Culture, and Events.

Recent and upcoming efforts include:

- Community engagement during National Night Out.
- Continued participation in the Skyway 5K.
- New pop-up office hours at downtown restaurants and coffee shops, beginning at Ellery's on a Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Residential pop-ups and canvassing.
- Partnership with the downtown indoor farmers market to explore food-systems and agriculture programming as it approaches its first anniversary.

Active Residents – Bill Hanley, Nancy Kehmeier, and Julie Printz

Residents highlighted ongoing efforts to make downtown more active and welcoming.

- Bill Hanley described resident-led blood drives, including a new partnership with Ramsey County Public Health, and resident advocacy to explore new uses for the indoor park above

Town Square. He also previewed a potential December 12 skyway event featuring a gay men's chorus and food, in partnership with the Parks Department.

- Nancy Kehmeier and Friends of the Skyway highlighted new artwork by Nancy K. Meyerson, including a Saint Paul artists' display at the Jackson Street ramp. Other initiatives include a proposed pre-K bicycle meetup in the skyway, a November 1 book parade, a new small-business group, and opportunities to join the Friends of the Skyway volunteer network.
- Julie Printz promoted two Halloween events:
 - o A daytime, all-ages event with trick-or-treating, treat-bag decorating, and other activities.
 - o An adult event at the DoubleTree Hotel from 8 p.m. to midnight.
 - o Flyers were available at the meeting.

Sustain Saint Paul – Jacob Hooper

Sustain Saint Paul encouraged residents to participate in the Downtown 2050 planning process and discussed the City's proposed expansion of mixed-use traditional neighborhood zoning along major streets. Although the proposed districts do not directly include downtown, adjacent corridors such as West Seventh Street could help connect surrounding neighborhoods to downtown and support more housing, small businesses, and neighborhood activity.

Sustain St. Paul also announced an informational event about land value tax on November 9 at the Black Dog. Jacob described land value tax as a potential change to how property taxes are calculated, intended to encourage productive land use and discourage underused properties such as vacant parking lots. Saint Paul has asked the state to consider authorizing the approach.