



# 2026 NEIGHBORHOOD STAR APPLICANT WORKSHOP



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**Thank you for your interest in the Neighborhood  
STAR program!**

**Since 1995, the program has invested millions in  
capital improvements in Saint Paul.**



**Planning and Economic Development  
February 2026**



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# Agenda

- Introductions: Please introduce yourself in the chat! Staff will introduce themselves throughout the presentation.
- Program Information
- Application Process
- Compliance
  - Insurance
  - Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity
  - Affirmative Action
  - Prevailing Wage
  - Vendor Outreach Program
  - Minnesota Business Subsidy Law
  - Saint Paul Living Wage Ordinance
  - Sustainable Building Ordinance
- Using ZoomGrants
- Additional resources and Q&A

# STAR Program Information



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# History

In 1993, the Minnesota State Legislature authorized the City of Saint Paul to levy a half-cent sales tax to improve the Saint Paul RiverCentre complex and create the Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) Program.

STAR funds support:

- **Capital activities** of the RiverCenter and economic development needs in Saint Paul (40%);
- **Cultural STAR Program** grants to arts and cultural organizations in Saint Paul (10%);
- **Neighborhood STAR Program** grants for capital projects to further residential, cultural, commercial, and economic development in downtown Saint Paul and Saint Paul Neighborhoods (50%).

## Neighborhood STAR Board



- **Community involvement and participation** is essential to the Neighborhood STAR Program's success.
- **Mayor appoints three citizen volunteer members from each of the city's seven wards** to serve on the board and making funding recommendations.
- The board is the **formal review body** for the Neighborhood STAR Program. They are advisory to the Mayor and City Council. They read and score each proposal, conduct applicant interviews, and make funding recommendations to the Mayor and City Council.



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# Application Process



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# How can I apply for Neighborhood STAR funds?

- Applications accepted once per year.
- Application period opened February 2
- Applications due March 13 by 4 p.m.
- Between \$1.9-\$2.5 million expected to be awarded in 2026.
- Subject to Neighborhood STAR guidelines found at [www.stpaul.gov/nstar](http://www.stpaul.gov/nstar)
  - Must be for capital improvements
  - Must be for property/project in St. Paul
  - Must be an eligible applicant: Public, non-profit, and for-profit entities located in or doing business in St. Paul; City departments, churches, and religious organizations may also be eligible
  - Must have an expected life of 7+ years
  - All proposals must be reviewed by the Neighborhood STAR Board
  - 1:1 match required for projects requesting over \$50,000
  - **NEW:** Must be under contract for any prior STAR award before applying again

## How to apply, continued



- Applications must be submitted online via ZoomGrants
  - Link directly from [stpaul.gov/nstar](http://stpaul.gov/nstar)
  - Public Libraries are a good resource for applicants with limited access to technology or who need additional translation support
  - **Be sure to submit proposal in advance of the deadline (March 13, 4 p.m.) to avoid technology problems**
  - All required attachments must be submitted with your application to be eligible
  - More info about ZoomGrants will be provided later in this presentation
- Fees: application fee of \$75 for requests up to \$25,000 or \$125 for requests over \$25,000, and 1% closing fee if awarded funds
- Application questions can be found at [stpaul.gov/nstar](http://stpaul.gov/nstar) to help you prepare your answers before entering online.



# Reminders:

- **All attachments MUST be attached when you submit your application.** We cannot accept a note of explanation for any missing attachments, and we cannot accept late attachments. We will cover required attachments later in this presentation.
- **NEW: You must be under contract for any prior STAR awards before applying for additional STAR funds.**
- **STAR staff cannot assist applicants with amending or correcting their proposals after submission.**
  - Proposals without all required attachments will be ineligible for further consideration
  - Incomplete proposals will not be accepted (complete the budget tab!)
  - Proposals that do not meet eligibility criteria (applicant or project) will not be considered
  - Proposals that only partially meet eligibility guidelines may be recommended for partial funding. If a proposal is recommended for funding but includes ineligible activities, the city cannot fund those activities.





## Required attachments

- Completed Acknowledgement of Compliance Form (available on our website and on Zoom).
- Evidence of Site Control (Deeded Title, Purchase Agreement or Option, Lease, Lease Agreement, etc.)
- Evidence that the business or organization is in good standing with the Minnesota Secretary of State (go to [sos.state.mn.us](https://sos.state.mn.us) to search for your businesses and send a screenshot or copy of the entity noted in good standing; we do NOT need all your original filing documents).
- At least one contractor/vendor estimate; ideally, an estimate for all project elements.
- Past two years of most recently filed tax returns or audited financials; for startups, a business plan may be substituted
- Photos of your proposed project or service area
- Evidence of additional sources of funding, if applicable
- Sub-grant or sub-loan guidelines, if applicable

**All attachments MUST be included with your proposal. Apply early to avoid technical difficulties!**



# Timeline

## 2026 Annual Round Key Dates

February 2: Applications Open

February 10: Application Workshop

March 13: Application Deadline, 4 p.m.

March 13-April 3: City Staff Review of Applications

April/May: Board Interviews

June: Board Recommendations to Mayor and City Council

June/July: Council Vote

July/August: Applicants Notified

August: Awardee Workshop

*This is the **anticipated** timeline and is subject to change.*





# Competitive Proposals

## Proposals are scored and reviewed across three domains:

- **Impact (10 points):** Excellent proposals will demonstrate how the project will benefit Saint Paul such as advancing public purpose (contributes to tax base, creates retains jobs, revitalizes vacant storefront, advances climate action, contributes to cultural diversity or advances equity, etc.) or addressing identified community or neighborhood needs.
- **Diversity (5 points):** Excellent proposals will describe a project that will be accessible to and inclusive of diverse residents and add to the cultural diversity of Saint Paul.
- **Ability (5 points):** Excellent proposals will describe projects that are clearly defined with a realistic plan that could include timeline and financial support, that demonstrates that the project will be implemented successfully, will remain in place for 7+years, and includes community input in its development.

## Total Possible Points: 20

**The Neighborhood STAR board scores each proposal and uses those scores to create a ranked list of funding recommendations for the Mayor and City Council who make final funding decisions.**



## If you are awarded funds

- Neighborhood STAR is a disbursement/reimbursement grant program
- There is a 1% closing fee on awarded funds (i.e., for a \$50,000 grant, the closing fee would be \$500) that must be received before funds can be disbursed.
- Reimbursement requests must:
  - Be for STAR-eligible activities per your contract
  - Be incurred **after** funding approved by City Council
  - Include sufficient documentation of expense and be approved by City Compliance and STAR staff
- Requests to be submitted once per month until project completion
- 5% retainage for construction related expenses until project completion
- Process can take up to 4 weeks to complete



## Contracting & Working with Project Managers

- Each awarded project will be assigned a Project Manager from the Planning and Economic Development Team
- Your Project Manager will be your main point of contact for contract execution, compliance, and fund disbursement
- Awarded projects have one year after funding announcements to get under contract
- Contract periods are for two years; a Project Manager will work with you throughout the life of your project



# Insurance Requirements



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# Insurance Requirements

- Certificate of Insurance with at least \$1.5 million coverage for each occurrence needed before the contract can be approved. An umbrella policy may be helpful if securing a \$1.5 million policy is a challenge.
- If you do not have commercial vehicles, you may need to submit copies of your individual insurance policy.
- You must provide proof of Worker's Compensation insurance or complete documentation stating why you don't need it in the State of Minnesota.
- Your Project Manager will work with you on insurance requirements and/or any applicable waivers.
- If you have questions about the City's insurance requirements, contact Michael Cowell at [Michael.Cowell@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Michael.Cowell@ci.stpaul.mn.us) or 651-266-6501.



# Compliance



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# Compliance Requirements

- Entities that do business with the City of Saint Paul must meet compliance requirements that are set by the city to ensure that local, state, federal, and funder requirements are met. This is sometimes simply referred to as "compliance."
- Contract compliance requirements are determined based on project type and cost. Compliance related to human rights, labor standards such as minimum wage, and insurance are required of ALL projects. We will review the most common compliance requirements today.
- Compliance may increase the cost of projects and extend project timelines; applicants should plan accordingly





# A Summary of Common Areas of Compliance

- Awardees **may not discriminate** against protected classes
- Awardees must comply with city **insurance** requirements
- Employees must receive **all pay** due for their work, as well as **Earned Sick and Safe Time (ESST)** and at least the **minimum wage** for your size business for St. Paul
- If you receive \$20,000 or more, you must solicit two written bids for construction per the city's **Two Bid Policy** and proceed with the "lowest responsible bidder" for the work
- If your project is for construction work and/or you receive a grant of \$25,000 or more, **Prevailing Wage** requirements, a minimum wage for construction workers, will apply. This can increase the cost of your project.
- If you receive \$25,000 or more in grant funds, you must have a defined public purpose and set goals for job creation and wages per **Business Subsidy Law**.



## Summary, continued

- Awardees receiving \$50,000 or more must have an **Affirmative Action Plan** certified by the City, including goals and documentation for hiring and recruiting (\$75 fee for certification)
- If the total cost of your project is over \$50,000, you must satisfy **Vendor Outreach Program (VOP)** compliance, meeting goals around soliciting bids from small, minority- and/or woman-owned firms that are CERT certified with the City of St. Paul
- If you receive an award of \$100,000 or more, you must follow the **St. Paul Living Wage Ordinance**, which guarantees a living wage to employees, with wages determined each year by the City.
- If you receive \$200,000 or more in public funds, **Sustainable Building Ordinance** will apply, including certification of your building through an eligible green building standard.

What Compliance May Apply to your Project?	\$5,000-\$24,999	\$25,000-\$49,999	\$50,000	\$50,001-\$99,999	\$100,000-\$199,999	\$200,000 ≤
Discrimination, minimum wage, ESST, and wage theft laws	X	X	X	X	X	X
Two Bid Policy	X	X	X	X	X	X
Prevailing Wage		X	X	X	X	X
MN Business Subsidy Law		X	X	X	X	X
Affirmative Action/ Equal Employment Opportunity			X	X	X	X
\$1 : \$1 Match				X	X	X
Vendor Outreach Program				X	X	X
Living Wage Ordinance					X	X
Sustainable Building Ordinance						X

# Affirmative Action



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## Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity

Awardee, Vendors and/or Developers that have a contract with the city for \$50,000 or greater are required to have a certified Affirmative Action Plan (AAP). Also applies to entities awarded a total of \$50,000 or more over a 12-month period.

Affirmative Action Plan and workforce participation goals apply to construction projects.

There's a \$75 (check only) fee to certify an AAP – AAP certified for 2 years.

Project Managers must ensure vendor AAP certification before routing contracts for signature.

Check [AAP Open Data Portal](#) or contact Yia Thao.

There are no AA exemptions for nonprofits, vendors without employees, LLCs, etc.

# Prevailing Wage



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## Prevailing Wage

Prevailing Wage will apply to your project if:

- 1) It involves any kind of construction work;
- 2) You are receiving any amount of public money, and;
- 3) The total cost of your project meets or exceeds \$25,000 (if your project has federal money in it the project cost threshold is \$2,000).

### WHAT IS PREVAILING WAGE?

- Prevailing wage is like a minimum wage for construction workers. Your contract with the city will contain a list of hourly rates of pay for various types of construction workers. If prevailing wage is triggered on your project, your contractors will need to ensure they're paying their workers at the minimal rates provided in the contract.
- **Prevailing wage may increase the cost of your project.**



## What do you have to do?

- 1) When you're looking for contractors make sure to tell them as soon as you can that your project is a prevailing wage project; most contractors are familiar with prevailing wage. Some contractors do not like working on prevailing wage projects because it can involve more work on their end.
- 2) Make sure to include the prevailing wage paperwork the city provides to you in your contracts with your contractors.
- 3) During the project, your contractors will be required to submit their workers' payroll to the city.
- 4) If they don't pay the required rates to their workers, or fail to submit their payroll to the city, it can delay or prevent payment from the city to you.
- 5) Any work occurring at the same time and place as your STAR work may become subject to prevailing wage. Contact staff for more info.
- 6) All of this will be discussed in more detail at your pre-construction meeting. If you have any immediate questions please email us at: [ContractCompliance@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:ContractCompliance@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

# Vendor Outreach Program

Department of Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity  
Contract Compliance Division



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## Vendor Outreach Program (VOP)

- Applies to projects with a total project cost over \$50,000.
- Business inclusion goals – 25% overall, with subgoals:
  - 5% to minority-owned business enterprises (MBE)
  - 10% to woman-owned business enterprises (WBE)
  - 10% to other small business enterprises (SBE)
- Businesses must be CERT certified to count toward VOP goals
- Reporting requirements will be discussed further at a pre-bid or pre-construction meeting

## VOP responsibilities



Access the CERT directory  
<https://cert.smwbe.com/>



Reach out to CERT certified businesses for each scope of work, supply, service



Keep records of vendors solicited for bids and responses received



Include VOP specs with subcontracts



Payment reporting  
<https://stpaul.diversitycompliance.com/>



Can use the CERT list/directory to find small local vendors, even if VOP is not a requirement on your project



Encourage small local businesses to become CERT certified

Certification is free and lasts for 3 years

Contact the CERT program directly

# Vendor Outreach Program

Contact:

Bret Bicoy, Compliance Coordinator  
[bret.bicoy@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:bret.bicoy@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

[contractcompliance@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:contractcompliance@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

## CERT

[https://cert.smwbe.com/  
cert@ci.stpaul.mn.us](https://cert.smwbe.com/cert@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

651-266-8966 – Choose the option for “CERT”



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# Minnesota Business Subsidy Law



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## Minnesota Business Subsidy Law

- Minnesota Statute Sections 116J.993-.995 and
- City Council Resolution #99-742
- Require that a business receiving state or local government assistance must have a defined public purpose and recipients must set goals for job creation, wages and benefits to be achieved within 2 years of receiving assistance



## Minnesota Business Subsidy Law

- Applies to recipients\* receiving a business subsidy of \$25,000 or more of grant funds, unless the project or recipient falls within an exemption;
- Annual reporting is required by March 1st of each year for the prior calendar year;
- Additionally, if the business subsidy law applies, and the award is \$150,000 or more, the following will also apply:
  - Requires a notice and public hearing on the subsidy;
  - Specific wage and job goals to be attained within 2 years and a 5-year commitment to continue operations at its business location in Saint Paul;

\* All for-profit entities are defined as a business subsidy recipient; however, only non-profit entities with at least 100 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employees and with a ratio of highest to lowest paid employee that exceeds ten to one are defined as a business subsidy recipient.



**For questions regarding Business Subsidy Law,  
please contact:**

Jenny Wolfe

651-266-6680

[jenny.wolfe@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:jenny.wolfe@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

# Saint Paul Living Wage Ordinance



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## Saint Paul Living Wage Ordinance

- Chapter 98 of Saint Paul Administrative Code;
- Applies to recipients receiving \$100,000 or more in a City Business Subsidy unless the recipient qualifies for an exemption\*;
- Recipients and Qualifying Tenant(s) must pay a living wage to each employee (and in the case of a Tenant to an independent contractor as well) who is employed in the location for which the subsidy was provided for the longer of 3 years or the term of the STAR Grant Agreement.

\*The following entities are exempt from paying a living wage: for-profit or non-profit entity that qualifies as a small business under MN Statutes 645.445, which includes, in part, businesses that are not an affiliate, and with 20 or fewer full-time employees or with annual gross revenues less than \$1 million.



## Saint Paul Living Wage Ordinance

- **A Living Wage is:**
  - **130% of the federal poverty level for a family of four OR**
    - **\$20.63 per hour for 2026**
  - **110% of the federal poverty level for a family of four if health benefits are provided**
    - **\$17.45 per hour for 2025**
- **Wage rates change annually (in January of each year);**
- **An annual certification demonstrating compliance will be required by all recipients for the duration of its obligation to pay living wages.**

# Sustainable Building Ordinance



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# Sustainable Building Ordinance

- Applies to projects receiving more than \$200,000 in public assistance
- Applies to new construction & Rehab
- Projects must be certified through an eligible green building standard
- Projects must comply with the Saint Paul Overlay
- Contact Kurt Schultz about any project that may receive more than \$200,000 from all sources of public money





# Human Rights & Equal Economic Opportunity (HREEO)



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We investigate allegations of discrimination in these areas\*



**Education**



**Employment**



**Real Property**



**Public Accommodations**



**Public Services**



**Credit**



**Business**



**Reprisal**

\*One year statute of limitations period to file a charge of discrimination



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Discrimination against members of these classes is illegal in Saint Paul:  
Chapter 183

- **Race**
- **Color**
- **Disability**
- **Religion**
- **Creed**
- **Age (18+)**
- **Marital Status**
- **Familial Status**
- **Sex and Gender Identity**
- **Sexual or Affectional Orientation**
- **National Origin**
- **Ancestry**
- **Status with Regard to Public Assistance**



# Your Saint Paul Labor Standards Rights

## Wage Theft

Employees in Saint Paul receive all pay they are due for their work



Chapter 224A

## Earned Sick & Safe Time (ESST)

Creates access to paid time off from work for employees who perform work in Saint Paul



Chapter 233

## Minimum Wage

Local hourly minimum wage rate for employees who perform work in the city of Saint Paul



Chapter 224

**Workers have a right to earn a higher Minimum Wage for work done within the city of Saint Paul.**



## MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES

The Saint Paul Minimum Wage is updated annually

BUSINESS SIZE	2025	EFFECTIVE JAN. 1, 2026	EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026
<b>City Rate</b> Includes Macro & Large (101+ employees)	<b>\$15.97</b>	<b>\$16.37</b>	<b>\$16.37</b>
<b>Small</b> (6-100 employees)	<b>\$15.00</b>	<b>\$15.00</b>	<b>\$16.37</b>
<b>Micro</b> (5 or fewer employees)	<b>\$13.25</b>	<b>\$13.25</b>	<b>\$14.25</b>

# Contact us for more information!

PCIARC Coordinator:  
[CivilianReview@stpaul.gov](mailto:CivilianReview@stpaul.gov)  
651-266-8970

Contract Compliance & Business  
Development:  
[ContractCompliance@stpaul.gov](mailto:ContractCompliance@stpaul.gov)  
651-266-8904

CERT & Procurement:  
[Procurement@stpaul.gov](mailto:Procurement@stpaul.gov)  
651-266-8966

Human Rights Investigations:  
[HRightsComplaints@stpaul.gov](mailto:HRightsComplaints@stpaul.gov)  
651-266-8966

Accessibility/LEP  
Coordinator:  
[ADACoordinator@stpaul.gov](mailto:ADACoordinator@stpaul.gov)  
651-266-8902

Labor Standards:  
[LaborStandards@stpaul.gov](mailto:LaborStandards@stpaul.gov)  
651-266-8966



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# ZoomGrants



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# Applying to the 2026 Neighborhood STAR Program

## **Neighborhood STAR applications open Friday, February 2, 2026**

- The Neighborhood STAR Program currently only accepts online applications submitted through ZoomGrants.
- Go to the Neighborhood STAR website at [www.stpaul.gov/nstar](http://www.stpaul.gov/nstar) and click on "Start your application now"
- Login to your ZoomGrants account or create an account to start an application.
- Your answers will auto-save as you move through the application.
- Be sure to attach all required documents.
- Give yourself ample time to complete and submit your application.



# Applying to the 2026 Neighborhood STAR Program

## Before you submit your application

- Double check your responses and documents.
- Make sure you:
  - Answered all questions and filled out all form fields
  - Uploaded all required documents
  - Removed all special formatting from your responses (i.e. bullet points, special characters, bold text, italics, underlines, etc.)

**The application deadline is 4 p.m. on Friday, March 13.  
Late applications will not be accepted.**





## Applying to the 2026 Neighborhood STAR Program

# Resources for ZoomGrants Tech Support

ZoomGrants University: [help.zoomgrants.com](https://help.zoomgrants.com)

Email: [questions@zoomgrants.com](mailto:questions@zoomgrants.com)

Phone: 866-323-5404, Ext. 2

Please allow 24-48 hours for a response. Applicants are encouraged to contact tech support well in advance of submission deadlines.

# Additional Resources



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- **Most things can be found on our website!** Guidelines, FAQ's, readiness checklist, board information, sample contracts, and highlights of previously funded STAR projects can be found are all at [www.stpaul.gov/nstar](http://www.stpaul.gov/nstar)
- **More information about compliance** requirements can be found at [www.stpaul.gov/hreeo](http://www.stpaul.gov/hreeo)

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I WANT TO RESIDENTS BUSINESSES VISITORS GOVERNMENT

TRANSLATE

LATEST UPDATES OVERVIEW 2025 INFO PREPARE TO APPLY PROJECT MAP ANNUAL REPORTS FAQs CONTACT US

## NEIGHBORHOOD STAR PROGRAM

The Neighborhood STAR Program provides grants for physical improvement, also known as capital improvement, projects in Saint Paul neighborhoods.

**Apply now for Neighborhood STAR**

Applications are now open for the 2025 Neighborhood STAR program. Completed applications must be submitted no later than **Friday, May 2, 2025 at 4 p.m.**

[Start your application now](#)

# Neighborhood STAR Staff

## **Neighborhood STAR Coordinator:**

Erin Lewis

651-266-6634

[erin.lewis@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:erin.lewis@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

[ped-neighborhoodstar@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:ped-neighborhoodstar@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

## **Project Managers:**

Nya Hardaman

651-266-6703

[nya.hardaman@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:nya.hardaman@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

Grace Bubel

651-266-6433

[grace.bubel@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:grace.bubel@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

Nancy Vang

651-266-6474

[nancy.vang@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:nancy.vang@ci.stpaul.mn.us)



## **Cultural STAR Coordinator:**

Jessica Larson-Johnston

[jessica.Larson.johnston@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:jessica.Larson.johnston@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

651-266-8654



# HREEO Contract Compliance Contacts



HREEO: [Stpaul.gov/HREEO](http://stpaul.gov/HREEO)

651-266-8966

[contractcompliance@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:contractcompliance@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

Shared compliance inbox to reach all compliance contacts

AA/EEO & Workforce Inclusion

Yia Thao

[affirmativeaction@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:affirmativeaction@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

651-266-8928

Vendor Outreach Program (VOP)

Bret Bicoy

[bret.bicoy@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:bret.bicoy@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

651-266-8897

City Labor Standards

Ethan Hansing

[ethan.hansing@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:ethan.hansing@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

651-266-8921

CERT LIST:

<https://cert.smwbe.com/cert@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

651-266-8966 – Choose the option for “CERT”

# Business Subsidy Law, Living Wage Ordinance, and Sustainability Building Ordinance Contacts



Business Subsidy and Living Wage Ordinance Contact:

Jenny Wolfe

[jenny.wolfe@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:jenny.wolfe@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

651-266-6680

Sustainability Building Ordinance Contact:

Kurt Schultz

[Kurt.Schultz@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Kurt.Schultz@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

651-266-6590



*Turbo Tim's – Midway*



*Nancy's Hair & Beauty Salon*

## Questions?



*Bb.q. Korean Fried Chicken, above, and Little Africa Plaza, right*



*Catzen Coffee*

