2023 Annual Report
GREETINGS FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS,

As the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2023, we are reflecting proudly on the remarkable resilience and growth our downtown has achieved in the face of collective challenges and change. We’re excited to present this year’s annual report, including a timeline highlighting key milestones and achievements that shaped our journey.

A reflection of the past five years would be incomplete without acknowledging the overwhelming impact of COVID-19. Our clear vision and strategic approach employed since our founding in 2018 proved invaluable in guiding us through the worst of the pandemic. Amidst many changes and uncertainties, we’ve remained steadfast in our commitment to address the ever-evolving needs of our downtown community – most notably through the launch of the Downtown Improvement District in 2021, aimed at prioritizing the safety and cleanliness of our historic downtown.

Even in the face of great change, the Alliance and our many partners worked together to support downtown, hosting events that safely brought us together and providing resources to the businesses, culture and arts organizations, and residents who make downtown an incredible community. Over the past five years, we’ve been able to employ inspiring art installations, show-stopping performances, impressive investments and groundbreaking initiatives with the goal of enhancing downtown’s vibrancy while maintaining its status as a safe and inclusive hub for businesses, residents and entertainment.

We owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to our dedicated staff, board members and generous donors. It is because of you that we have achieved and overcome so much and built a strong foundation for the future. With your continued support, we are excited to embark on the next chapter of our journey, dedicated to making downtown Saint Paul a place to grow and thrive for everyone.

Melvin Carter
HONORARY CO-CHAIR
Mayor, City of Saint Paul

Matt Majka
CHAIR
President, Minnesota Wild

Jeanne Crain
VICE CHAIR
President & CEO, Bremer Bank

Megan Remark
SECRETARY
President, Regions Hospital

Kyle
TREASURER
President & CEO, St. Paul Area Chamber

Christophe Beck
President & CEO, Ecolab

Jennifer Hellman
President & CEO, Goff Public

James McClean
President and CEO, Downtown Resident

Ken Smith
President and CEO, District Energy

Chris Clark
President, Xcel Energy – MN, ND, SD

Chris Hilger
Chairman, President & CEO, Securian Financial

Rebecca Noecker
Commissioner Saint Paul City Council

Rick Smith
Regional President, Travelers

Richard DeBruyns
President, Mortuary Hospital

Todd Hurley
President & CEO, Saint Paul Port Authority

Rafael Ortega
Commissioner Ramsey County Board

Jai Winston
Program Director, Saint Paul Knight Foundation

Christopher Harrington
President & CEO, Ordway

Abdirahman Kahiin
Owner, Afro Deli

Andy Resher
CEO, Brighten Science

Charlie Zelle
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DOWNTOWN
BY THE NUMBERS

In 2023, the residential population experienced a 6% increase, a positive sign for the long-term growth and vibrancy of downtown. Both housing unit occupancy and residential occupancy increased in 2023, with property owners representing 20% of the downtown population and renters representing 80%.

2023 saw a jump in building permits as construction resumed following a stall in 2022. While the data now reflects a change in the number of people working downtown, overall office occupancy is increasing as offices continue to right-size and buildings convert.

As more people made their way back to downtown in 2023, transit ridership and traffic continues to steadily increase.

TRACKING DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT
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See the interactive map at: stpdowntownalliance.org/economic-development
DEVELOPMENT

DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT STRATEGY: A BOLD APPROACH TO FURTHERING DENSITY, VITALITY AND DESIRABILITY IN DOWNTOWN SAINT PAUL

In 2023, the Alliance launched an effort in partnership with public and private stakeholders to create a development strategy that furthers density, vitality and desirability in downtown Saint Paul. The Downtown Investment Strategy will identify three to five priority development opportunities and/or initiatives based on stakeholder input, community engagement, market analysis and an economic impact assessment.

The Alliance hired urban strategy consulting firm James Lima Planning + Development (JLP+D) to develop the Downtown Investment Strategy, along with the local Minneapolis office of global design firm Perkins+Will and Saint Paul-based real estate and engagement firm NEOO Partners.

Informed by research and engagement, the Alliance’s goals for downtown include:
• Adding 20,000 residents (to a total of 30,000, or 10% of the city’s population)
• Adding 20,000 workers (to a total of 75,000, or 50% of citywide jobs)
• Increasing the number of annual visitors by 20% to reach 10 million

Market and economic analyses were conducted in winter and spring 2023. Engagement occurred in the summer with the goal of having a final strategy developed in early 2024.

For more information, visit stpdowntown.org/investmentstrategy.

DIS PARTNERS

Downtown Investment Strategy partners include the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Saint Paul Port Authority, Saint Paul Area Chamber, St. Paul Building Owners and Managers Association, Visit Saint Paul, CapitalRiver Council, Knight Foundation, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Wild and other corporations that are members of the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance. Representatives from each of these organizations make up a steering committee co-chaired by Chris Hilger, chairman, president and CEO of Securian Financial, and Christophe Beck, chairman and CEO of Ecolab.

MARKETING AND EVENTS

We delivered a major marketing program in collaboration with Visit Saint Paul in 2023. Find Your Place in Downtown is a co-branded video series aimed at showcasing the many different types of Minnesotans and travelers who come downtown to enjoy our restaurants, bars, entertainment venues and businesses.

We also celebrated another season of the Saint Paulsidays in person and across social media. Our video shorts featuring all the amazing ways to celebrate winter in downtown reached tens of thousands of viewers, and the Alliance’s Instagram followers jumped by 39% in 2023.

In partnership with downtown institutions, businesses, artists and musicians, the Alliance hosts a busy calendar of events and activations around downtown. We sponsored a new summer series this year: Food Truck Wednesdays in Rice Park. Each Wednesday, workers and visitors grabbed lunch from 20+ local food trucks, listened to live music and enjoyed the gorgeous summer weather in one of our beautiful downtown parks. We also welcomed back summertime favorites like Roller Disco in Rice Park on Friday evenings and Osborn 370 Sets happy hour concerts.

GROW DOWNTOWN EXPANDS

Launched in 2022, the Grown Downtown program was a huge success, placing six small businesses, entrepreneurs and artists into empty retail spaces in downtown Saint Paul, rent-free for six months. Many have gone on to extend their leases into longer-term agreements and in 2023, seven additional businesses joined the program.

ADVOCATING FOR DOWNTOWN

Public safety continued to be an important issue for downtown stakeholders. In addition to hosting monthly public safety check-in calls to hear updates from all of downtown’s public safety and law enforcement partners, the Alliance also advocated for several other priorities in 2023, including:
• Successfully extending the downtown TIF (tax-increment financing) district, which includes Xcel Energy Center and the RiverCentre;
• Significant capital investment dollars for several key projects, including RiversEdge and the Kellogg Bridge; and
• A record investment in affordable housing that includes dollars for Catholic Charities and other Saint Paul supportive housing and social service providers.

In partnership with Minneapolis, Rochester and Duluth with the support of the League of Minnesota Cities, the Alliance also advocated for a bill that amended state law to allow for residential multifamily housing properties to be included in special service districts, representing a critical step toward providing SPDD services in all of downtown in the future.
The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance was founded as a nonprofit to promote and enhance the city’s downtown.

**POP-UPS AT CENTRAL STATION**
The Alliance hosted events that provided new spaces for community members to connect, play and enjoy activities.

**SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER**
The SPDID launched the Safety Communications Center to streamline communication between the Street Team, outreach services, private security teams and the Saint Paul Police department.

**10K RESIDENTS**
Downtown’s residential population surpasses 10,000 for the first time, thanks to hundreds of new housing units coming online.

**SPDID STREET TEAM**
The SPDID developed a high-visibility Street Team program with enhanced capacity and foot patrols.

**DOWNTOWN INVESTMENT STRATEGY**
The Alliance announced a new collaborative initiative with public and private stakeholders to develop a Downtown Investment Strategy to enhance density, vitality and desirability in downtown.

**STREETS OF SUMMER**
Streets of Summer brought music, activities and art downtown, as well as a full-time Street Team staff that assisted visitors and significantly cleaned up downtown, helping the Alliance explore a potential downtown improvement district.

**COMMERCIAL PROPERTY PETITION**
Commercial property owners petitioned to create the Saint Paul Downtown Improvement District (SPDID), a private sector-led effort to increase the safety, vibrancy and cleanliness of downtown.

**PANDEMIC HALTS ACTIVITY**
Beginning in March, the COVID-19 stay-at-home order kept many workers and visitors at home. The Alliance provided support to downtown businesses throughout the pandemic.

**MONTHLY SALES TAX REVENUE RECORD**
March was the highest single month of sales tax collections on record for Saint Paul – the result of the Xcel hosting the state wrestling and hockey tournaments, National Collegiate Hockey Conference Frozen Faceoff, and 12 Wild games.

**CROW DOWNTOWN INITIATIVE**
The Crow Downtown initiative was created to bring new life to empty storefronts, hosting local businesses and startups in empty spaces rent-free for six months.

**SAINT PAULIDAYS**
From the Rice Park Tree Lighting to the GLOW Festival at CHS Field to the European Christmas Market at Union Depot – the Alliance’s “Saint Paulidays” campaign solidified downtown’s reputation as holiday central and an official “Hallmark Channel Christmas town.”

**“SAINT PAULIDAYS”**

**#WELCOMEBACKSTPL**
A campaign featuring 300+ events and activations to inspire people to reengage with downtown safely after months of staying at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. 35-40% of downtown workers returned to their offices.

**DOWNTOWN CLEAN-UP DAY**
In response to the pandemic, the Alliance hosted its first annual Downtown Clean-up Day: 50 volunteers picked up litter on sidewalks, streets and parks.

**DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE FOUNDED**
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DEAR NEIGHBORS,

This year presented its fair share of challenges for public safety across the country, and downtown Saint Paul was no different. As we reflect on the past year, it becomes increasingly clear how important the work our team does to foster the safety and well-being of our community truly is. Together, we have tirelessly pursued strategies to maintain a safe, clean and vibrant city. Yet, none of our efforts would be possible without the incredible relationships we have built with our esteemed partners.

We are immensely grateful for our strong partnership with the Saint Paul Police Department, as their support and collaboration with our Street Team and Safety Communications Center has been invaluable in creating a secure environment for our residents, businesses and visitors.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to our Street Team members, whose hard work, friendly faces and dedication have ensured that downtown remains clean and inviting. Their continuous efforts are what make visiting, working and living downtown a positive experience.

We would also like to express our profound gratitude to our city’s dedicated outreach specialists, who tirelessly assist and support people experiencing homelessness in downtown Saint Paul with compassion and unwavering commitment. Their efforts have made a profound difference in countless lives, addressing the interconnected challenges these experiences can present to a community.

Moving forward, our mission to ensure the safety and cleanliness of our downtown area remains at the forefront as we look to grow our footprint downtown and provide more services to our downtown businesses and residents. Through innovation, collaboration, and a genuine desire to create a better community for all those who work, play and live downtown, we will continue to grow and rise to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

John Bandemer
DIRECTOR OF SAFETY STRATEGIES
THANK YOU TO OUR INVESTORS

Afro Deli
Allina Health
Bremer Bank
Bush Foundation
BWBR
City of Saint Paul
District Energy Saint Paul
Ecolab
Goff Public
Halverson Blaiser Group
HealthPartners
Mark and Teri Henneman
John and Ruth Huss
Knight Foundation
Larson King
M Health Fairview
McKnight Foundation
Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures
Minnesota Wild
Ordway Theatre
Osborn370
Pak Properties
Ramsey County
Red Path
Andrew and Ellen Reeher
St. Paul Area Chamber
St. Paul Saints
Saint Paul Port Authority
Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundations
Securian Financial
Travelers
TKDA
US Bank
Wellworth
Xcel Energy