

December 1, 2023

Council President Amy Brendmoen
Councilmember Russel Balenger
Councilmember Rebecca Noecker
Councilmember Chris Tolbert

Councilmember Mitra Jalali
Councilmember Nelsie Yang
Councilmember Jane Prince

Re: Proposed Budget and Final Levy

Dear Council President Brendmoen and Councilmembers:

On behalf of the St. Paul Area Chamber and its members, I write to express our appreciation for the efforts of Mayor Carter and the City Council to limit the property tax levy increase to 3.7 percent for 2024. Coming off a significant property tax increase in 2023 and a year of inflationary pressures, this modest levy increase is a welcome reprieve for businesses and residents alike.

We also strongly support the proposed use of the \$13.6 million in public safety aid appropriated by the state legislature. As police departments across the country face recruitment and retention challenges, we specifically appreciate the Mayor's continued support for funding and operating a second police academy annually. We also commend the partnership between the City of St. Paul and Ramsey County to combat non-fatal gun violence.

The addition of staff for summer street maintenance and snowplowing is a welcome response to the challenges facing the City's street infrastructure. We agree with the recommendation to redirect funding towards mill and overlay and skim paving, along with the renewed focus on vegetation management and graffiti removal in public right-of-way. Having a streetscape that is well-maintained helps improve public safety perceptions.

Moving forward, we urge the City to dedicate even more General Fund resources towards our street infrastructure, which has been chronically underfunded for many administrations. While the proceeds from the newly-adopted sales tax will alleviate some of the pressures to repair core arterials, there are still hundreds of miles of streets in need of repair and upgrade.

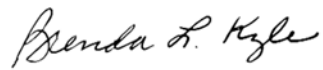
There is one portion of the proposed budget that is cause for concern. While addressing medical debt is a laudable goal, this endeavor is not a fundamental responsibility of municipal government. While the Chamber understands that one-time American Rescue Plan



funds will be used for this program, given the identified needs facing our public infrastructure, would it not be more prudent to invest this \$1 million towards street repair?

The St. Paul Area Chamber appreciates the partnership between the City and our business community. We stand ready to partner on initiatives to bring economic activity and vibrancy to our city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda L. Kyle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B' and a stylized 'K'.

B Kyle
President and CEO
St. Paul Area Chamber