Mayor Napier opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

Present: Mayor Dave Napier
         Councilmembers Wendy Berry, Julie Eastman, Lisa Eng-Sarne,
         Robyn Gulley, and John Justen

Also Present: City Manager Ryan Schroeder
              Police Chief Brian Sturgeon
              Fire Chief Mark Juelfs
              Parks & Public Works Director/City Engineer Ross Beckwith
              Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Dave Schletty
              Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn
              Finance Director Char Stark
              HR Director Debra Gieseke
              Marketing & Communications Manager Dan Nowicki
              City Clerk Shirley Buecksler

Dr. Craig A. Waldron, The Waldron Company

Mayor Napier thanked everyone for being here and introduced Dr. Craig A. Waldron of The Waldron Company.

Dr. Waldron asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Mayor Napier said he was born and raised in West St. Paul. He has sat on the Council since 2013 and this is his second term as Mayor. West St. Paul has everything to make it a beautiful city.

Councilmember Berry said she was elected to Council two years ago. She moved here from Minneapolis in 2015 and this is their first home.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne said she was appointed to Council two years ago and elected last fall. She grew up in Maplewood and has now lived in West St. Paul for 11 years. She loves how people look out for each other here.

Councilmember Gulley said she is a newly elected Councilmember and has been on Council for a little over 60 days. She is excited to be here and to dig into strategic planning on how we can grow and evolve our community.
Councilmember Justen said he has lived in West St. Paul for 13 years but his family business has been here forever. He has been on Council for two years now, and there are a lot of good things going on.

Councilmember Eastman said she is new to Council, now for about 60 days. She has lived in West St. Paul since 1993. Before being elected to Council, she was active in attending all City Council meetings since 2018.

City Manager Schroeder said he is looking forward to Council developing a robust work plan for the next person.

Finance Director Stark said she has been here for 4 1/2 years. Her whole career has been in government and she is enjoying West St. Paul.

Public Works & Parks Director/City Engineer Beckwith said he has been here five years.

Assistant Parks Director Schletty said he has been with the City for 20 years and that he is one of the few employees who live in West St. Paul.

Marketing & Communication Manager Nowicki said he has been here 7 years.

Fire Chief Juelfs has been with the Fire Department for 23 years, with the past two years as Chief.

Police Chief Sturgeon said he grew up in South St. Paul and has been with West St. Paul for 33 years.

Community Development Director Hartshorn said he has been with West St. Paul 18 years as of yesterday.

Human Resources Director Gieseke said she has been with the City just over a year and a half, with previous experience in manufacturing in the private sector.

City Clerk Buecksler said she has been with West St. Paul for a little over 3 years and was previously with South St. Paul.

Dr. Waldron said he enjoys local government. He came from Iowa and went to Minnesota State out of Mankato. He has worked for almost every governmental entity. He won a Council seat for two terms in North Mankato, and did a stint with the Minnesota Department of Economic Development. While three, it made him realize how much more he preferred local government. He went to Roseville as the City’s first Community Development Director. He was then recruited to Oakdale as the City Administrator. He thought he would be there five years but ended up staying for 21 years. He retired from there and went to Hamline full-time as a faculty member teaching strategic planning. He retired from there after four years. North St. Paul called and their Manager had left and they asked if he would come help for a bit. Two to three months turned into 18 months. Today, he is still adjunct at Hamline. He really enjoys these strategic planning sessions and
working with local government. It’s a nice way to stay connected and still try to help communities get to where they’re going. After 47 years, he said he was lucky to choose the career he did.

**Trends in Local Government**

**Infrastructure**
Infrastructure, particularly in first ring suburbs, is aging and it’s a challenge to keep that up. Some communities are getting creative and may have tax increment debt that drops off and they don’t cut the tax rate so they can reallocate that for other critical purposes. There are some interesting ways to get at that.

**Housing**
Affordable housing – are we able to provide it? How are we going to do it? Beyond that, how do we maintain our existing housing stock, partly as it ages? We are starting to see a supply problem with demand far exceeding supply.

**Diversity and Inclusion**
How are we as communities going to be more inclusive and reflect our population? Take a look at what we can do in terms of social equity. It’s interesting how many Councils have been talking about this and are concerned about it. In the past six months, there has been much more discussion and interest in this issue.

**Providing More Services and Opportunities**
Councils feel that pressure and that need, yet you have a public that doesn’t want to raise taxes. Communities are in a bind with a great request for services but people really watch their tax dollars and are very concerned. Some research shows the mistake we made in government. You kind of talk about taxes here as a separate entity and people don’t like paying taxes. But when you survey people, they like your services and feel safe in their community. They support their Police Department but when you start talking about where their taxes are going, that creates a different circumstance.

**Difficulties to Recruit Talented Staff**
There has been a good battle for talent between communities and you will see a lot of positions crop up. Finance Directors are hard to find and recruit, for instance. The talent hunt has been a challenge for a number of communities.

**Post-COVID Environment**
Will things look different? Will we not have as many face-to-face meetings? One City was talking about decreased traffic because of more Zoom meetings and you don’t feel compelled to drive to meetings. No one knows what it’s going to look like, yet.

**Environment, Sustainability**
As a City, what are we going to do about our carbon footprint? More Cities are developing their environmental management commissions and so forth.
Communications
A challenge is how are we going to communicate with the less served groups in our community? How will we handle our responses when we’re sitting in a Council meeting and tweets are going out before it’s even adjourned? The social networking connection is becoming more difficult.

Policing
Hearing a lot in terms of policing with respect to recruitment and inclusivity. It’s been a tough time for Police Departments. How do you respond and when do you respond? What are we really expecting from our police? Are we giving them mixed messages?

What You’re Doing Today
Cities are becoming more involved in strategy and planning and trying to get everyone on the same page. There’s nothing more difficult in moving a community forward if you don’t all agree on what’s going on. A lot of time going is put into strategy, and economic development and community development becomes part of that discussion, also. Tough work on strategy can create respect for each other on the Council.

Councilmember Gulley: One of the things we hear a lot about is that citizens want different kinds of businesses. We have a real diversity. Some want certain sit down restaurants. The focus is not so much what we can do on that, but building relationships that will help us connect with those interested in coming into our community. Another thing is they want more and better public spaces. We lost our YMCA this past year and we don’t know if they will come back. A lot of people depended on that and are looking for ways to get that back into the community.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: Those trends sound right.

Dr. Waldron: I would like to hear from the Council now about what they think the biggest accomplishments have been in the past year or two.

Mayor Napier
2012 was a time where our economic engine, Robert Street, was failing and falling apart. Buildings were vacant. Parks were not doing well. Signal Hills and a bank building were vacant for years. Kmart was underutilized. Streets were being maintained but not at a level that was gaining any ground.

All of that has now come to fruition. Signal Hills is going to be developed this year, our parks are doing well and plans are in place, streets are being improved. They approved a half cent sales tax in the city that will allow us to do road construction, so they are improving at a good pace. What I’m proud of the last two years is that we have had record development in our city. This year, you cannot help but drive down Robert Street and see all of the big projects going on that will have a long lasting effect on our community. Our housing stock is one of the hottest on the market in the metro area. That helps by having a vision for improvements and providing grants for home improvement. I am proud of our financial plan that we have in place to create some stability for our taxpayers down the road. Lastly, I am proud of our Emerald
Ash Borer plan that was proactive and ahead of the curve, as well as our Inflow & Infiltration which was also ahead of the curve. Other cities are using it as a model. I am proud of so much that this community has done over the past several years.

People want to know why one business or another isn’t coming in to town. You can make it beautiful but it’s up to a developer to think it’s the perfect spot. But we have businesses coming in, including another car wash, a fitness center, and more. All of us want sit down restaurants and small unique shops, and we hope to create that environment. It will come, but I think we are doing a lot of good things. I am proud of what we’re doing. Robert Street was a huge risk but we capitalized big on the equity.

Councilmember Berry

Three years ago, I never would have thought I would be so proud of the sewer in this community. We are a model for other cities. The projects on Robert Street are numerous and are big projects. Those big buildings will bring more people here. I am excited to see that and am excited for the steps we are taking towards including and diversity. We have made some good strides in acknowledging Black History Month, Women’s History Month, and things like that. The conversations we are having are good follow-up steps to it. We had hard decisions but nothing I would say we need to take back.

Both Fire Chief Juelfs and Police Chief Sturgeon have taken big strides in things that had to be done here, are open to talking and sharing, and we are lucky to have that.

Fire Chief Juelfs: On the strides we’ve made, a little back story from when I became Chief two years ago. I had a Captain and a Firefighter who came into my office, both with suicide plans. Shortly after that, unfortunately, South St. Paul experienced a suicide with one of their Police Officers. We brought in a psychologist to help assist. During that class with Dr. Margaret Gavian, Medical Director for the Minnesota Fire Initiative, I told her we needed to have something in place to catch these issues. She happened to be developing a program called PAR360. When you’re on a scene, every 20 minutes, our dispatcher calls and asks if we have PAR (Personnel Accountability Report). The PAR360 program looks at the 360 degrees of your life and makes sure you have the tools and skills to deal with those, back to your mental health. It’s more of a personal resiliency program. In addition, we modeled after what both South St. Paul and West St. Paul Police Departments are doing with mental health checkups. We have always done just the physical checkups in the past. What I am most proud of with that program is beating down the barriers and getting rid of the stigma. When I started 25 years ago in the fire service, if you went on a traumatic call and came back talking about your feelings, you would have been run out of the Department. Both of these Firefighters have been very vocal in talking about how they reached bottom. Now we have MnFire, a non-profit that lobbies and fosters mental health, heart health, and cancer prevention in Firefighters. Town Square Television did an eight minute story on one of our Firefighters, and they are using that program to roll out their training. I think we’ve made great strides by opening up the conversation and allowing all public safety personnel to talk about their issues, hopefully well before it comes towards suicide.
Councilmember Eng-Sarne

I used to work for Senator Jim Metzen and he would say, "For years and years you could shoot a cannon down Robert Street and now you might hit somebody." I have a lot of things that I am proud of for what this group has done and the group behind those two tables. We all found ways to work during a pandemic and provided services differently to achieve goals.

The Robert Street tunnel, trails, and sidewalks are happening. We made it through emergency meetings and rallied the community in positive ways. We had peaceful demonstrations. Around the time of civil unrest, I held an event called “Skate Against Hate,” as a positive outlet during that time. I am proud of the team who made the digital happen. Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki is a Swiss Army knife of marketing with video, survey management, branding, emergency communications, PowerPoints, sales brochures, I could go on and on. I am proud of our emergency services teams for their efforts around mental health. The City Clerk had to work around elections and the pandemic. We kept moving as a City and we adapted. A new playground was installed at Marthaler Park and it’s great. We received funding for our lift stations. A year ago we were at a Town Hall meeting and the room was packed, but things have changed.

Councilmember Gulley

I am really excited a lot of things Council has worked on in the past that will push forward. For example, all the work on Robert Street. There are a lot of complicated feelings in the city, but I think it looks great and we’ve done a lot of work to pull businesses up to the front so they look better and we don’t just see empty parking lots. There is a lot of work to do to make this a development center for our city. Smith Avenue – we have a cute neighborhood corner there with a lot of opportunity for continued development. The north end of Robert Street is really cool, especially by Councilmember Justen’s music shop. Transportation, the sidewalk plan, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), will all create a good opportunity for folks to come into West St. Paul. Parks – there is a lot on the horizon and I am excited about engaging the community in park design.

Engagement and volunteerism is so high in our community. They want to be a part of the discussion to make our community better. We are trying to figure out how to best utilize and take advantage of that. We are fortunate to be walking in this moment with this great opportunity. We have a lot of excitement about public art, and we have an art park. That is something we are excited to carry forward, as well, and our community is excited about it, also. We also received an email from a constituent who talked about the good work that was done on Emerald Ash Borer.

Councilmember Justen

I remember coming in and one of the thoughts I had was the unbeatable task set by the Met Council and the comprehensive plan to include an additional 2,400 residences. In the two years since I got on Council, we have reached that number. We have senior, affordable, multi-family, and townhome projects. I didn’t think we could have added this many in the ground by now to hit that number. I am incredibly surprised and impressed that we could do that. It ties into residents, tax base, restaurants, more community members, and community engagement. Specifically, I am proud of the work we did to put in sidewalks but residents
don’t want to pay for assessments. We moved to a model that we are not assessing for sidewalks, at all. It makes it easier for residents to accept the project. That has changed a lot. The goal to get sidewalks was a strategic move and I am proud of that. When you find what’s stopping you, you get it out of your way, and you can get things done.

Councilmember Eastman

One of the best things to show what is going on in West St. Paul is everything you hear on the national and state level about topics that are important to people and society, we are having those conversations here. Before being on Council, I was a part of a trend in our city and a welcome trend. A couple of organizations bubbled up— one is the Women of West St. Paul (WOW) and the other is the Residents of Color Collective (ROCC), and positive things a couple of years ago were the engagement and passion that happens in our community. I hope for the day after COVID when people can come back together again. It was fun having people show up. It was ‘must see TV’ and ‘must be in the room’ at Council meetings. People would applaud and welcome new businesses to the community. We are being talked about. I have heard from folks on a national, state, county level and different organizations such as the League of Women Voters and League of Minnesota Cities, as well as other cities, on how we did these things. They are jealous of us and our city that we have Town Square Television and are able to get the word out. One thing I heard is that Town Square TV thanked us for all the engagement because our ratings are through the roof for streaming and such.

We have engagement and partnerships with Met Council and Dakota County. They appreciate us and the things we are working on. The diversity of our neighborhood — for me, it was a great learning opportunity from campaigning this past year. We have a very diverse community, and it is going to grow because we are building all of these apartment buildings. Since the beginning of 2020, we are adding over 1,000 apartment and senior units. Brand new construction, two thirds of which is deemed affordable. We are getting to our 2020 estimates. We will reach that in 2023/2024. There will be some good things and some challenges out of that, which will press us further on how to handle that growth, with the right Staff and First Responders. Along with further diversification of our community, there is the demographic and economic indicators. In Dakota County, we are already one of the cities with the most rental population. We have more group homes, more seniors, and more senior care. We need to keep an eye out for needs in those community sectors.

I also want to give a shout out to our Police and Fire Departments. I have heard from people on the state and national level that have a lot of appreciation for the leadership expertise here in the areas of mental health. Also, our environmental movements that we’ve done with I/I, storm water, and parks. The things that we are doing and previous Councils have done to pass carbon pricing. That’s a great leading thing our community has done, along with the work that is happening here at Thompson Park, all the initiatives going on at a local, county and state level. We are leaders in our community. Last year, the passing of the ban on conversion therapy was another impressive thing that talks more about our values and where we are going. The fact that we are so involved in the Green Step Cities process is another way, when you talk about diversity and access, of having those types of programs in place. Thank you to Assistant Parks Director Schletty.
Councilmember Eng-Sarne
Congresswoman Angie Craig has mentioned carbon pricing and the resolution we passed (Resolution 19-132 Approving Endorsement of Carbon Pricing in the U.S. Congress).

Councilmember Justen
We have developed an incredibly good working relationship with our State Representatives. That relationship has helped us receive lift station funding, even though it’s not the most visible thing, but it’s millions of dollars we may not have received without those relationships. It goes under the radar but is something we are really proud of.

Councilmember Eastman
We have a great relationship with county leaders, the Mayor – City Manager meetings, Chief Sturgeon’s partnership with Dakota County Sheriffs and other Police Chiefs, this all helps. Financial excellence – we have a set a strong foundation for success going forward. And how much we’ve improved on transparency and building a trust foundation.

Councilmember Gulley
Finance Director Stark is doing an amazing job of getting us on the right track.

Councilmember Justen
This circles back to so many things we’ve talked about here. As we have improved our financials, we have been able to do these things, and it’s a foundation for future success. There are so many initiatives that we have been able to do because of that financial shift. City Manager Schroeder should be given credit for this, as well.

Dr. Waldron: This next section on burning issues is the most difficult section. He asked Council to share issues that are bothering you or hindering your capacity that you want to get off your chest and talk about.

Councilmember Eastman
It’s more of a state of what’s going on. We had a couple issues in our community, especially following the George Floyd killing, positive and negative, engagement in the community, and peaceful protests. I participated in some of this and, when you’re physically out there on the street corners, you get to see the people who are part of our community whether they live, work or shop here. We do have a much more diverse area than some may think. As we were dealing with this, along with a sign issue in our community that was not positive, I heard a lot of complaints on that and what we can fix or not fix. There is concern among our diverse community about safety and whether they feel welcomed here. This goes for our BIPOC and LDBTQIA members. I had reached out to some of my friends and neighbors relating to issues that were happening at work, at our local businesses, feeling safe, things like that. A couple of things I want to bring up. As we are building out new apartment buildings and things like that, we will have some rapid growth. On the Dominium site, the City will pay part of the pipeline. The projection of how many people will live there – it will be another 1,000 residents to that area, or about 4.5% of our current population on that block. It’s a good thing to know
and anticipate what that growth will have an effect on — traffic, transit, and being able to welcome all of the new folks moving to our area.

Dr. Waldron: In terms of the diverse population here now and others we anticipate coming in, are we missing something, from your perspective, or do we just need to gear up our efforts? What is your sense of how people will feel more welcome?

Councilmember Eastman: We have so much opportunity and, from my experience campaigning last year, the good thing about campaigning during a pandemic, walking to all the doors and visiting with apartment complexes in my ward. Getting to visit those areas and meet people and see the challenges. For instance, housing safety. Some rental units are wonderful, some are a little concerning for those living there. Simple things like lighting and doors within the buildings were a concern. I felt people weren’t safe. The opportunities we have is that multi-lingual has grown. We have Spanish speaking folks, others from Africa, Asia; multiple languages are spoken in this area. We lost the Southwest Review newspaper, so we lost some of those communications to access and invite people here. I am concerned about our large rental population post-COVID. I don’t know if they will get hit with an increase in evictions. There is a lot of anxiety, and our families are dealing with COVID and job loss.

Councilmember Justen
With his public facing business, there is a low level anxiety of what’s coming in when we come through the trail of Chauvin. We had peaceful protests but also some opportunistic activity. I had to board up my business. The Police Department did a great job of shutting that activity down. I’ve talked to a lot of people that are concerned. A trial like this is long-going, and we have to prepare ourselves. Our citizens and business owners just don’t know what may happen. I don’t think that will come from within our community, but there is concern that there could be flashpoints and it could happen at any time. We need to get our heads around it, and it ties into the same thing.

Dr. Waldron: Any ideas on how we deal with people’s anxiety? What would you like to see happen in your ideal world?

Councilmember Gulley
We are a diverse city in a lot of different ways. I think we have this incredible opportunity, especially with really high engagement levels and groups that are organically forming, to take advantage of that and use it as a building block to make our city more representative for the community we serve. It is a challenge and a really good opportunity to grow and evolve and come into our own and become the city we represent on all levels. I want our City Staff and committees and every bit of our city to be representative of the whole community. When we’re not, we cannot functionally address the different lenses that people bring. A friend in a wheelchair just got elected to Maplewood Council. The way she looks at sidewalks and bus stops is different than others. I cannot have the same way of looking at things anymore. We are not doing anything wrong, we have an awesome Staff but, at the same time, we have this opportunity to think creatively of how we can do things better and more powerful. Why not be leaders in that in the metro area? I have excellent relationships with two Universities that
have Masters programs with very diverse students that could go into government. I teach at Metro State and graduated from the University of Minnesota. Why not build relationships with their career development people? What if, as a City, we got other metro Cities to throw in $5K to hire a recruiter for all Cities on a common application? These are ideas that are different from what we’ve done in the past.

Councilmember Eastman

If I had my magic want of where to start, I think it is starting to adopt strategy and policies. We have some great opportunities, on the state and county level from the Dakota County Sheriff’s Department and POST Board, of understanding a little about best practices of diversity, inclusivity, and racial equity to state where our vision is and what we want to get towards. Companies have done this for years, and everyone needs to do this. We are executing well in a couple areas. In the Environmental Committee, there are equity and access components of environmental work that we are doing or that we should be doing. One of the things is, what can we do in future Open Council Work Session? Perhaps bring in the Dakota County Sheriff and Police Chiefs for guidance on that. Ruth Richardson and the racial equity report. All those elements demonstrate that we are trying to do better.

Councilmember Justen

One aspect of this is more of a mind frame. We are in a strange spot, that we are in Dakota County and we relate ourselves to other Dakota County areas. But we are much more diverse than 90% of Dakota County. In the north end of town, unless you know the boundaries, you wouldn’t know where West St. Paul starts. We are more urban that the rest of Dakota County. I think some of the work we can do on these issues is, although we may be geographically located, we are straddling the line between St. Paul. Hastings doesn’t have to look at things the same way we do, for instance. They’re probably 20 years behind us in diversity of their population. It’s a shift that will trend everywhere. If we’re looking for the resources of Dakota County, we’re looking in the wrong direction. Perhaps we need to build those relationships with St. Paul representatives and look to how we do things to update them, as they are probably 20 years ahead of us. Focus on what we are and how we identify ourselves.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne

Our constituents have conflicting ideas around that, as well. There are plenty of people who like to think of themselves as living in St. Paul, while others feel more like a Woodbury area. In addition to the geographical aspect, we have constituents of who we are.

Councilmember Eastman

The reason I keep talking about the Dakota County Sheriffs and Police Chiefs is because of the experience of some of those members and the work they’ve done. Some used to be Minneapolis Officers, Chief McCarthy of Mendota Heights, as well as Sheriff Leslie. There was a program on WCCO radio last summer in the wake of the Floyd killing discussing the talk and the recognition of challenges that we have in this area. To the national conversation about what’s going on, that is happening here locally in Mendota Heights, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul. Part of getting better is to recognize it and use the language of what is going on.
Councilmember Gulley

There are communities in the metro area that compare to West St. Paul. It would be more useful to compare us to Richfield than to Farmington, for instance. In some of the first tier suburbs, there are cities that look a lot more like West St. Paul.

Councilmember Justen

Newer residents to West St. Paul have an idea of living in St. Paul. They see this as an extension of St. Paul. For residents who have lived here a long time, they may think of it as the community that was less dense and the old Robert Street. There is a conflict there, but not that one side is right or wrong, and we need to develop a bridge to bring those two together. Part of it is time based. We are seeing a shift in the attitudes of people moving in here, and that will continue to work into all of this.

Councilmember Berry

The folks coming in to West St. Paul sometimes don’t know where the West Side and West St. Paul ends, so they don’t know they’re moving into a suburb. For new folks, some use curse words and such as they pass my yard, but they’re not young folks.

My magic wand would be to solve the equity issues. We have requirements from the state that we cannot override. With our Fire Department, we require EMT training and such. With other jobs, we require a Bachelor’s Degree. In a perfect world, you wouldn’t need all these things but experience could do the job without having a degree. I think that would help eliminate that. It’s not a solve but a magic wand. The other thing is we are meeting people where they are. We are getting better with the Fire Department and Police Department events in the parts, which generated so many people to come out of their homes, including kids of color. We need to keep doing that and get the adults involved, as well. We need to figure out where they are and meet them. Same with people who have been here a long time and like to come to events. We still want to have that, along with people who are new to town and want to come.

Mayor Napier

For my magic wand, I would get rid of social media. It has given us a lot of headaches. A statement that should be very clear is that people who are active on social media in our community are not necessarily the voice of our entire community. It is important to know that people are willing to stir a pot. In the work environment, when someone is a negative, talking negatively about something going on or of an employee or supervisor and it starts growing in the company, it becomes extremely damaging. Social media does that in our community. I would love to say all of our social media outbursts should be solution-oriented. If we could do that, we would build a strong community. It can be a powerful tool to communicate and change things. But in communities across this county, it can be damaging. Next thing you know, a comment is steamrolling down the hill. I would like to see us tackle social media in our community to have a positive impact.

Councilmember Eastman

To that point, what I hope my magic wand is, when we’re done with COVID and have community events, that will help drive that change because you see people that can throw in a
dumpster fire, but if you had face-to-face discussions with that person, they're not that way. They may think they're invisible on social media.

**Mayor Napier**

This was pre-COVID. A lot of my communication is not on social media. It’s verbal, emails, and phone calls, and I hear a totally different story. I hear everything that is brought up and heard other things not brought up that are good things going on in our community.

**Councilmember Gulley**

I would like us to consider our communication and response strategy, which involves all of our City Staff. I would love to have a sense of, at what times we will communicate, what the messaging will be, the understanding and unpredictable outcomes we can see, and how we can get ahead of it. In our Town Hall meeting last week, I was talking about recruitment of City Staff and ideas on how to get creative and change the way we recruit, but there were some comments made against talking about diversity and inclusion. We need to talk about it.

Mayor Napier: I don’t appreciate the way everyone handled that situation and there were some mistakes made that day that should be addressed. However, I would not want this conversation to go on without everyone present. We will always have Councilmembers who have their own opinion, but I would defend any one of you in this situation. Out of respect, I don’t think it’s appropriate here.

Dr. Waldron suggested that Mayor Napier have an initial sit down meeting to discuss the concerns, and being more aware and more careful on how we work together.

Mayor Napier: We will always have someone with their own opinion and not always agree. I like the idea of having a conversation with someone to say I know you’re passionate and concerned about something. That’s what should happen for all of us.

Dr. Waldron: I agree with Mayor Napier, and a reasonable approach would be for the Mayor to state that this came up and we have a couple of Councilmembers concerned about how they’re being reacted to. City Manager Schroeder could be a part of it or not. Initially, I think that’s a good first step. Sometimes the first step works and that can clear it up. Sometimes it doesn’t, and you need to bring in HR folks and get everyone in the room to work through it.

Mayor Napier: I like that approach, and it would be the next first step. I have no problem having that conversation.

Councilmember Eastman: One of the challenges we’ve had in these meetings is because it’s just us in the room and not the constituents. You kind of forget that people are watching television and reacting in real time. The other part as a new Councilmember and the outcome from COVID, I feel a lost opportunity, especially with OCWS because we have them in the Chambers and on television. If there was a way to get to know each other, like when the OCWS were going on in the Fishbowl conference room. Talking about EDA plans or commission appointments, this Council and our predecessors, papers were being exchanged and conversations being had, that I miss. I thought everyone knew what was on the agenda.
before everyone else, but I quickly found out that you didn’t. I didn’t understand as much of the restrictions about Open Meeting Law. I thought people knew each other better. When I went to the Foundation Training at the League of Minnesota Cities, there was conversations with other cities. A couple of Mayors said that their past practice is that they would, once a month, have a time together before OCWS over a meal with the City Attorney so they knew City business wasn’t discussed. They talked about their families and jobs and other things going on, which helped build relationships.

Mayor Napier: This is a great point. OCWS done at a roundtable, basically. There’s a reason for that. It’s different. I always said that sitting in the Chambers having OCWS, which is an absolute get down in the weeds work session, is more effective at a table across from someone. There is a piece you’re missing out on that was an important piece. It wasn’t about the lack of transparency, but the fact that it was so much more lifting, and something about a roundtable makes it flow better. It’s so difficult to sit at the table in a line.

Councilmember Justen: When I was elected, I ran against Anthony Fernandez and then we were both at the same table. I had some anxiety about that I had lost to him two years before. That OCWS scenario totally diffused anything we were both worried about. I attribute that to the feeling of informality and that we both figured out that we wanted to get the sidewalk thing fixed. We started finding connections and ways to do things together. If we had come in during COVID, I don’t know if it would have taken six months to get there. It’s such a different feeling. It’s wonderful that they’re televised, but if we could have a camera in the Fishbowl, I think all of these issues would be fixed by that. I think that’s a big component.

Councilmember Berry: I did not know what to expect with former Councilmembers Fernandez and Pace and then Mayor Napier set me between them. If it wouldn’t have been for those closer tables, I think the awkwardness would have been extended. It made it easier to connect in that room.

Dr. Waldron: I’m a great believer in roundtable sessions and having a meal as part of it. Over the years, I saw the constant approach for policy, and strategy went from Council to Council, Mayor to Mayor, over 21 years in Oakdale. I think a lot of it was the result of the positive work session. You get to know the other person when you’re having a hamburger together. They always treated each other with respect. I think this is a good idea if you can figure out how to get back to that. You get better decisions and, most importantly, better relationships.

Councilmember Gulley said to City Manager Schroeder, I’m sorry for the way it came across. I hoped it sounded like friendly banter, but it clearly didn’t. Councilmember Eastman and I have been in this job for 60 days and not having the support of the Council in this is really hard. It felt like a lot, and I would like some backup when it comes to things like that.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: Most of us chose not to touch this on social media and I would take position to go to the Neighbors page, but I don’t think that’s constructive, so you won’t find that from me. What would backup look like then?
Councilmember Eastman agreed: If there is anything we can do and have an opportunity in some way for Council to move on, we’re a team and we are all here trying to do the right thing. A lot had to do with stability, respect and acknowledgement. We don’t always agree, but I think we can all do better in recognizing tone and things like that.

Councilmember Justen: The subcommittee made every effort to explain to the City Manager candidates that we have an incredibly aligned and unified vision on the Council. That makes the whole thing sting a little bit more. We have tons of shared ideas and vision, so it hurts even more to see it degenerate a little more into personal disagreement. Whenever there was a chance to talk about it, I said that everyone on the Council is fantastic and great. Our approaches might be different, but I was being honest with them that they have the opportunity to come to a City that is very active and shares so many of the same goals and visions. When this happened, the citizens don’t see the same as I see. That we have two years of full forward momentum in front of us and everyone is committed to that. It’s so essential. Mayor Napier had division and warfare between the two sides during his time but he kept the respectful tone at that time. It troubles me deeply to field those phone calls and texts and try to explain what was happening. It was an unfortunate incident. We are in such a great position, and I cannot let us derail that with an increasing problem. I think these ideas are great, and getting people together will help alleviate everything.

Mayor Napier: I will make a commitment to do better and have one-on-one conversations with Councilmembers. My role is how can I create synergy on the Council? I think I can do that with one-on-one conversations. Some Councilmembers reach out to me more, and I love that and will commit to do more of that. Reaching out to Councilmember Gulley after that meeting to ask what’s going on, which will help me create some synergy for all these people here to do their job. I will commit to that today. If I haven’t done it to the level that is needed, I am sorry.

City Manager Schroeder thanked Councilmember Gulley for her comments. I appreciate it. The team here is focus forward, he said. The point is, if everyone starts with...‘this is my teammate,’ whomever that is, then what do you do with your teammate? You support your teammates. You may disagree with your teammates, but you always support them. I would suggest if we keep that in mind, the rest will fix itself.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: Sometimes when a meeting has been more challenging or there is challenging blow-back after a meeting, I will call Mayor Napier myself for counseling because he’s not able to read our minds. He’s a great leader, so give it a try.

Dr. Waldron: That will go a long way. Are there any other issues we need to talk about before we break for lunch?

Councilmember Justen
This may be more into the discussion we will have later. But one thing I think is a burning issue is that we have items coming forward from the Planning Commission or the Environmental Committee and we’re trying to codify some of their approaches so they will have more freedom to be able to work on things without continually having to specify that they are pollinator friendly or such. I am starting to see a little bit of concern on the part of
committee members that they are not being fully embraced for their recommendations. We just had an item with the Charter Commission regarding the number of people on this committee. I’ve heard from some of the Planning Commissioners that they put forward items to Council but it wasn’t fully considered. One, in particular, that came up recently was the parking minimum they pushed forward to us but that kind of died at the table. So I think we have to be cognizant in making sure that our volunteer committees feel fully respected and that their voices are really heard. Some of that will be through taking action. Not all of their recommendations will be right, but I’ve seen some concerns from long-term Planning Commissioners, as well as short-term Planning Commissioners, that why should I do this job if nothing I do gets done? That’s a concern.

Councilmember Eastman: I think that may be a future opportunity for us. If we plan a joint work session with some of our bigger committees like Planning, Environmental and Parks & Recreation, we could hear from them and get their guidance on some of these things.

Dr. Waldron: I’ve seen this happen all the time in every place I’ve been. Where the commissioners work hard on an issue but the Council takes a different position. The commissioners do tend to get upset. The solution that I’ve seen is, first of all, when you’re bringing them in and interviewing them, remind them that they are an advisory committee and you appreciate what they do, but the Council has a different role with difficult decisions. The other piece, as Councilmember Eastman said, is having a work session with these commissions and talking about things, how you work, why you make certain decisions and, again, reminding them that, as Council, you have to make tough decisions and look at these things from a different perspective.

Councilmember Justen: I think it’s less about that we’re holding down things they want to do. It’s more of things they want to do that never get to a point where it becomes an action item. That’s the frustrating part for them. We have participated in votes where we went completely against the Planning Commission’s recommendations and I think for good reason, with legal reasons behind it. I think they understand that it will not always go their way, but the concerns I’m hearing is more that it’s not getting to the point where they’re even getting their day in court, if you will. I don’t know how you change that.

Dr. Waldron: You have a full plate here right now. It does get difficult to get certain issues, to get things timed out, and then you have COVID on top of it that pushes things off.

Mayor Napier: I think what has really helped me is by watching the committee meetings. For me, watching the work they do, the thought process that goes into it, and some very good questions, it actually has helped some of these items pass through Council without a hiccup. It may seem weird for Council to not have a lot of discussion on an item. But because I watched the Planning Commission meeting, I watched all the questions they had, and all of my questions were answered, that I can comment on it. I usually say that the Planning Commission did a great job, I thank them for all the work they did, so I have no questions on this item, and I think they’re on the right track. I would encourage all Councilmembers to watch the committee meetings. It will help you to know that they are doing their job. We aren’t always going to agree with their recommendation, but they need to know that we respect them for
what they’re doing. And that we represent all of our community members, we respect their
due diligence and, at the end of the day, we vote on how it is best for the community as a
whole. And sometimes it’s not the same. I think if we communicate with them and report at
the table, Councilmember Justen is the Planning Commission Liaison, so we look to him for
insights on the meeting. I think we just need to respect their role. They are a volunteer
committee that believes passionately in their community and they are going to give it what it
takes. We put people on committees that are very good. I think we should be having regular
conversations with the Planning Commission Chair, even when there’s not an issue, as well as
the other committee Chairs, just to have those conversations. The Planning Commission Chair
and I talk a lot, so I don’t see an issue there. With the other Chairs, having a regular
conversation to get a feel for what’s driving them and what passions are happening on the
committee will help.

Dr. Waldron: The thing you talk about in terms of showing respect is really critical. Private
meetings with the Chair or having everyone together to express support for the commission and
how important they are, can really make a big difference. Any other issues that you’d like to touch
on before we break?

Councilmember Gulley

We talked about creating some new committees, and I would like us to spend some time on
this. We have a lot of creative folks ready to step up, and we have some opportunities that
exist. Three that we talked about are diversity and equity, a human rights committee with more
legal teeth, and a public arts committee. There may be others, as well.

City Manager Schroeder: I mentioned this to Mayor Napier recently. Any City Manager
should immediately respond as to whether we have the additional resources for it. That’s an
issue to think about when creating committees.

Mayor Napier: We need to let the creative juices flow first before we say no. The bottom line
is the discussion will be healthy and strong and maybe something will come out of it that makes
us better, but I would never expect anything less than Schroeder putting a dollar amount to it.

Councilmember Eastman: Maybe as we have these conversations, we can merge some of these
things into a subcommittee or a work group and have a better way of accepting their work and
feedback on a City level.

Mayor Napier: I have some ideas, and I am sure everyone else has ideas. Perhaps we can
address those in a way that won’t impact our budget.

Councilmember Justen: Because we have three ideas for committees, I think we also need to
look at prioritization of what is the most crucial need and what is the most realistic. I don’t
think we can launch three committees simultaneously. I think that would be a disaster in the
making on a lot of levels. Of course, functionally, this ties back to issue one that we talked
about with the first amendment, human rights piece. Those are very inter-related in what we’re
talking about.
Councilmember Eng-Sarne: One thing in our current and previous initiatives, is that Chief Sturgeon is talking about doing a Police Chief roundtable discussion group. That is still on the table but on hold because of COVID. Also, pulling something from the proposal we received on Thursday goes to what Councilmember Eastman was trying to get at, as well: “Formalizing this work in a way, structure or process to provide additional structure and create a deliberate process for addressing complex issues before they flare into public controversy.”

Councilmember Berry: We talked earlier about a public arts committee. I did a lot of research, and one of the concerns of the Parks & Recreation Committee is that there is no budget. We have no money to do public art, so what does it look like from there? Does that mean we need to find money or only bring it up when someone recommends it? We are depending on people to donate to these projects. That’s how we were fortunate enough to get our current public art project. The financial piece is important to stay committed to these committees.

Councilmember Eastman: In some of these, maybe it is something where it has a shorter lift span to get started until we have the finances for it.

Dr. Waldron: One of the difficulties I’ve had is I always like strong committee structures and planning commissions, economic development commissions and so forth. The difficulty can come up, also, if you move aggressively in some of these areas. The commissions start driving the boat, and they want this done or that done but it doesn’t always flow with the Council’s priorities. So there are times that Staff needs to figure out what to do because their plan has nothing to do with the Council’s policies or strategies. The Chair is pushing them this way, but the Council wants to go that way, so it’s another thing to watch and be careful of with those major committee structures. Some can be happening in terms of what Councilmember Justen was talking about. They want to go in this direction and get stuff done, but it’s not on the top of Council’s priority list and commissioners get upset.

Councilmember Justen: I am very happy that we have this sculpture in the park but, when it came in front of us, I voiced it at the meeting. That I’m supposed to accept a grant for something that—we already picked out an artist, we already chose what we’re going to do and where it’s going to be, but the first time Council heard of it was when Council was supposed to accept it. But where we are at the table, if we had ten different ideas, or the community had different ideas, we had this art park and choices were already made. That would fall into what you’re talking about, and it is a valid concern. At the time, I wasn’t sure how to vote on the grant because I didn’t understand how it got this far ahead of Council. It’s a reality, that’s for sure.

Councilmember Berry

As we are creating affordable housing, my worry is that as we add all these thousands of units, which are really nice, but the ones that are more affordable have less standards and continue to go downhill. Those apartments are affordable for people who live in West St. Paul right now, to stay in nice quality apartments, but it’s an issue. People may live in a two-bedroom apartment now and the apartments coming in are the same, but they won’t be able to afford them. I want to be sure, in some way, that we have affordable housing based on West St. Paul standards.
Councilmember Eastman: I did get some information on affordable housing, information about Dakota County that I shared with City Manager Schroeder. One thing I still have a concern about is that it talks about rents paid, the AMI range, and things like that. But what concerns me, and what I’ve heard from constituents and some others, is that we keep digging down. Because, for instance, when we talk about AMI, one of the challenges we have in West St. Paul is when we are renovating lower end AMI in our city compared to the metro AMI, we’re already lower. When we do these housing developments, it’s based on the metro level. 53% is quite a bit higher than the West St. Paul AMI. We have affordable housing going in but, when I had conversations with my constituents who are renters, one of the things is it’s talking about your gross income. And we have a lot of people who are in our area that are paying over 60-70% of their income for housing costs. The other thing is how this gets figured with rent. The rent figure might be affordable but they pay rent and they also pay fees for storage, garage space, and pets. They also pay the normal power bills and some are being charged for water and trash. Unfortunately, I also heard of cases in the rental community (apartments, rental houses, etc.) that people, whether it’s because they’re on a lower level and they’re making lower income, but they are getting taken advantage of in some cases and getting secretly charged for more things. Such as, if you pay me in cash and a very high amount, we will look the other way that you’re an undocumented worker. Those are big concerns I have.

Councilmember Gulley: Literally, the term ‘naturally occurring affordable housing’ sounds like a good thing and you actually build these but a lot are not being kept up. Sometimes the intercoms haven’t worked for years. And a lot of things that we expect, that are considered amenities or considered a part of the rent for this building, they’re not kept up. Councilmembers Eastman, Justen and I have had conversations about going to those apartment buildings and seeing what’s happening in our city and what we can do about it.

Councilmember Justen: There is a particular block of apartments in Ward 2. They’re all nearly identical buildings form the outside. But when I went in to door knock, I could literally see the difference in which were managed by this company and which were managed by another company. The difference in walking through the same structure, the lighting suddenly drops, the security doors were not locked, the carpet has never been cleaned. The craziest thing of all is, in one building, there is community and the residents are in the hall talking with each other. But in another building, it’s like a graveyard. There’s no community interaction. Spaces create or destroy community. I get a lot of calls from people in rental units with difficulties, whether its security doors or whatever, and it’s always tricky to explain that our ability to get inside an apartment rental unit is very different than our ability to deal with a problematic house. We can use City Code immediately if a garage is falling down or for some other dangerous situation or if the appearance is not up to par. We don’t have that same hand inside our rental properties. And there were a couple I went into that I was thinking – I am not happy that this is in my city or for the people that live here. But I know they live there because it’s naturally affordable and they can keep their rents down because the maintenance is poor. The less the maintenance, the less the rent, the less people stay in there, and the more turnover you have. I start to hear about a lot of crime in their building and these things are all inter-related. It’s disheartening to tell someone that you need to complain to your management company or contact the City. But by the time the City can get there, hopefully it’s been fixed. There’s not any real repercussions and, the next time, it’s the same thing over again.
Councilmember Eastman: Some of the conversations with Dakota County Community Development Agency, Matrix Housing, etc., I don’t have a good handle on the insecurity here in our community, and that’s likely to grow. I had a conversation with a constituent who is a high school teacher. Though not in our community, but it is indicative of students who are homeless, in transitional housing, and moved around to get on those housing lists. Dakota County has a waitlist of 10,000 people. They’ve been taking more names for the waitlist but cannot get to it to vet it. It’s a problem.

Councilmember Gulley: I’m excited for the City survey. As we predicted, we had a very low response from non-homeowners and it doesn’t give information for those who did not complete the survey. How do we get to them? We have to figure out how to get into our whole community.

Councilmember Berry: The demographic now allows us to get that information from the survey.

Dr. Waldron moved to the strategic initiatives developed by Staff for possible modification.

**Branding**

City Manager Schroeder: Over the last two Strategic Planning sessions, Staff has come sort of empty handed to the meeting and Council created initiatives. This time, however, we didn’t. Back in September/October, Councilmember Justen started the conversation with “I don’t like the word ‘like’ in the initiative,” so this is where it started. While we were responding to that, we thought we could look at all of them and tweak them in some fashion. That’s how this document was created back in October. If Staff were to recommend that Council reword these initiatives, assuming you would stay with the same initiatives, how would you do that? The way this document is organized is to show your initiative then, in bold, some possible alternative wording that may be better suited. We created two additional initiatives, such as one on infrastructure and another on facilities. There has not been an initiative on public safety, and we thought there should be, so we added that additional one. Council may toss it out completely or amend what you have. We are here to listen to you, so this is just a recommendation.

Councilmember Eastman: We talked about the nine goals or ‘bubbles’ on page 18 of the 2020 City Council Actions document. Are these the right nine bubbles or should some be removed, substituted or edited? As we are trying to decide, is there something that is too much for Staff? Are there certain titles that cause more work or reprogramming, for instance?

City Manager Schroeder: We are looking for your initiatives that are general in nature.

Councilmember Gulley: I’ve been trying to think of a new tagline for the city. Is that what you want?

City Manager Schroeder: Our question is, is that topic an important topic? Not what should the tagline be, but is the development of the tagline important? We’ve heard where we talk about West St. Paul being “closer to it all,” that shouldn’t it be talking about what is here and not just what is closer? But the real question is the topic, such as branding.
Councilmember Justen: We need an initiative attracting higher quality or different businesses. Identify development portfolio, #12.

Council agreed to keep branding.

Councilmember Eastman: Suggestion - how do you feel of having the bubble being about communication or marketing, of which branding could be a subset? Councilmembers Justen and Gulley agreed.

Councilmember Gulley: Communication is about communicating with a lot of different people, and branding is a part of that. Part of it is really looking at what we want to convey about our city.

Mayor Napier: As much as I don’t think the tagline does enough for our city, it is huge in attracting people to our city. I hear about how wonderful geographically it is to get to anything around us. The airport or 20 minutes to the Twins game. It’s unbelievable how close we are but with that small town feel. We have it all… but we don’t have a Wendy’s, yet, so we don’t have it all.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: At the agency, we create messaging hierarchies. What is our main message and sub-messages? I’m hearing a lot of those here. Branding is not just a logo. What our story is, all the things you’re saying, and it would be used to sell the city.

Councilmember Eastman: I still think that’s a subset. Our messages are part of that.

Dr. Waldron: I think communication and marketing captures it all.

Councilmember Justen: Branding and identity is the story of what we are.

Invest in Infrastructure and Public Facilities
Councilmember Berry: I like the idea of separating these.

City Manager Schroeder: On this one, whether we talk about the infrastructure, facilities, or money, one thing I really wanted to talk about was the idea that we mention from time to time. We would like the Council to get started or adopt what we do as we pay down debt. Do we just pay down debt? Do we reduce the tax levy? Or do we spend it on items that provide value? We are recommending that three quarters of it go to infrastructure and facilities, as we reduce the debt, and a portion of it be returned to the taxpayer. How that would work is that a portion would go to operations so you don’t have to levy for that portion. In some fashion, we are suggesting, if we spread it out, the spreadsheet in Council’s packet would show how that would look. Spread it to buildings, neighborhood streets, alleys, pipelining, and sidewalks. And if you happened to look at this in detail, what it shows you in the exhibit is, as you pay down debt, it’s a moderate return to early years. Over the first ten years, you make a little headway. Beyond that, it really starts picking up. If you can get to 2036, the dividends are amazing at that point. In the meantime, we have a stated goal and memorandum of raising a certain amount of money for buildings. About ten to 12 years out, we’ve raised enough using current dollars. Same with pipeline and alleys. As you get to the point where you have cash in each of those categories, you no longer need cash in those categories, so you spread it. What’s exciting by the end of the table, you’ve created $3 million a
year towards streets and sidewalks. That kind of solves a lot of problems. In the meantime, the sales tax will be one and done about that same amount of time. On the one hand, if the sales tax goes away, you have a little more money that what it generates. But I would also suggest that the Council may need to evaluate whether you attempt to extent that sales tax. There are two sides to that. It’s revenue that’s not property tax dollars. As someone mentioned at a Town Hall, it’s generated from people in town but also from people outside of town. I would really like to see Council say something on this debt savings plan. Such as we adopt as a Council in policy. So finance and infrastructure people all know that, if we pay off this bond issue, that will result in this, and they can plan on it.

Mayor Napier: Does that plan have a name, such as the “Schroeder Legacy?”

City Manager Schroeder: “If you watch your dimes, your dollars will grow.” If the organizational culture is patience, adopting the plan and sticking to the plan as it relates to these sorts of things, the dividends will be dramatic, just not immediate.

Councilmember Gulley: From my perspective, what people are paying in taxes right now, that’s a pain they already know. To get $200 back on my taxes every year will make no difference in my life. It will make a huge difference to me to see improvements to our infrastructure and our parks. We have these tax rates, they are familiar to us, so take that money and put it into great services. Communicate so people know what we’re doing with their money and the investments we’re making in our community.

Councilmember Eastman: It could be a bubble, a mission statement, whatever, but that we strive for excellence in our city operations that is managed and wise in fiduciary responsibilities.

Mayor Napier: City Manager Schroeder wants the future Council to not go crazy, so we as a Council can set that. I believe strongly that we should get that down so it’s not just what we’re passionate about, but it’s a policy for our city.

Councilmember Justen: I would like to make a motion to adopt this. I fully support it and would love to see “continued investment in infrastructure and continued investment in facilities.” Reflect that we are maintaining, rather than creating, that investment.

Councilmember Gulley: All of these say kind of the same thing. Maybe all could include the word “continually,” such as “continually improve recreational...,” etc. Everyone agreed.

Councilmember Justen: Reflecting what we’ve done and what Councils before us have done, as well. But we’re not the first to do some of these things and that should be recognized, as well.

City Manager Schroeder: The last three years, this Council really has accomplished things that not a lot of cities have accomplished fiscally.

Councilmember Eastman: I’ve heard that, statewide, some cities are just getting to this infrastructure in their older cities and wish they were where we are today.
Dr. Waldron: What you’re doing with this Schroeder Legacy plan is one of the trends I mentioned. Cities are getting requests for facilities and services but residents don’t want to pay for them. You’re already paying this amount and your residents are comfortable with it. Down the road, you’ll be able to do so many things. This was a good decision and bodes well in terms of policy and the future. I’d love to be the new City Manager and have that in place. What a nice thing to have.

Councilmember Gulley: Identify opportunities to bolster...outreach. We are already a diverse city. The points should be about engagement with everyone. Unless the point is to bolster the city and recruiting more diversity to our city. Wordsmithing this one would be helpful. I would like to add something about environmental sustainability in our city.

Councilmember Eastman: Increase maintenance for parks and improvements. We could make it environmental. For what they’re trying to codify with the Environmental Committee and the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: I would support this.

Councilmember Eastman: Renaming the parks and recreation one to a broader environmental.

Councilmember Berry: I would rather have two bubbles on this. One for parks and one for environment. Environment seems like sustainability and power.

Councilmember Justen: Is everyone okay with separating infrastructure and facilities?

Councilmember Eastman: Is even the broader bubble about fiscally managed City operations? And then a chunk is facilities and a chunk is infrastructure. Maybe we need to keep things separate but putting the plan in that our goal is a strong discipline in City operational management that includes thoughtful fiscal investments in those elements.

City Manager Schroeder: Infrastructure and facilities are similar. Probably every place I have worked, infrastructure is important. Conversation on facilities, talking about City Hall or the Public works facility, why would we need to do anything better than what we’re doing for Staff? Or the conversation that they should be happy to have a job. To split it out is to identify that we have infrastructure but also take a new approach to facilities. Every ten years, you know you’d have to remodel the interior of a franchise, for instance, to keep things fresh. Same as a City Hall. You build a brand new City Hall but that’s the last time you think about it until about 30 or 40 years later. If you haven’t fixed the roof or replaced the carpet or it wasn’t maintained, you may need a new one. If there had been ongoing investments in the workspaces, you would have happier people. But Cities don’t think in those terms. What is intended here, there is a concept of how a rehab of the general portion of the government building could be done. I have issues with some things it, if we were going forward with a rehab. So don’t take the document in your packet as the concept. But why it’s in this packet is to reinforce that we do need to put some asset investment into our people, and that means you fix things up occasionally. Since I’ve been here, I have had Staff coming to me saying we need a new City Hall and I know you can build it. They were so excited about that. But my response was, there is nothing wrong with this building, it’s just not
designed appropriately. The window in the conference room was to show that it could be done. We fixed the roof and the HVAC. I think the City should assess that language. We are doing enough, but we are setting money aside so that, in the next decade, we can rehab the general portion of City Hall, the administration portion of the Fire barn, and upgrade the systems at Public Works to get that done in the next ten years. We can do this with a little more investment and hope in five years or so from now it could be done on a cash basis like we did with the Police Department remodel. Some folks may be subscribed to that, others may be disappointed because they want a new City Hall. But I think you just need to maintain the current one better. The dividends would occur in many different ways. It’s a goal I think City Council should have, to work towards that approach, and that, yes, we are going to invest in existing infrastructure.

Mayor Napier: There is so much to what City Manager Schroeder has said here. I appreciate the fact that we were able to do some renovations, but the general government area just doesn’t show that we care.

Councilmember Gulley: We are all really invested in the idea of maintaining our infrastructure and resources. I would love to see a long term plan on how our infrastructure should be updated. We know when things will time out, such as the HVAC system, but having a plan for a date when we need to start planning for replacements would be really helpful so we can do the right thing and maintain our existing facilities. I would like to see a bubble on economic development. Investing in this idea of how we can build relationships, not just with developers but with businesses.

Councilmember Justen: One of the nice things as we talk about City Manager Schroeder’s plan, not only does this create what we want, it is fiscally responsible. We are trying to do that without the burden on taxpayers. Things don’t get cheaper if you wait. Or, in economic collapse, it will cost more to replace than if we do it earlier. I like everything about that, and it’s a great goal to emphasize.

Councilmember Eastman: I wholly support the pay as you go plan. Do we need to state that more strongly?

City Manager Schroeder: It’s actually in a few different places on purpose, but we will come back and amend the policy that will reinforce it.

Dr. Waldron moved on to the next goal: Improving accessibility, walking, biking, wheelchairs

Councilmember Berry: It should definitely stay.

Councilmember Eastman: On accessibility, do we need to talk about accessibility as a bit of a social injustice of the broader sense of access? It could be a subcomponent of diversity.

Councilmember Justen: More words can muddy what you’re trying to say. We want people to be able to walk around. So accessibility is important, but it’s not the whole of that concept. The way it’s worked now, it’s a much more visionary concept than what it states.
Councilmember Gulley: We could say improve accessibility and equity? As in equitable access looks like physical, infrastructure, different ways to get around or interact with the City.

Councilmember Berry: Equitable access.

Councilmember Eastman: If we know part of accessibility is the physical access tings, and then you have other things such as translation services, closed captioning, newsletters in multiple languages and such, you could count it against that goal.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: Does the equitable piece move into the mission? Council agreed that the mission statement is the place for ‘equitable.’

Next goal: Blighted properties.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: Dos it need to stay because it’s used in state and federal funding?

Councilmember Justen: Even so, it doesn’t need to be in the big bubble. No one wants to be told their property is blighted.

Councilmember Eastman: It could fall in the economic development bubble.

Councilmember Justen: Could be ‘maintain quality of housing stock.’ With the implementation that our housing stock is good and we want to keep it good. Goals should be positive whenever you can.

Councilmember Berry: Did we include businesses in that?

City Manager Schroeder: There is housing and there is economic development.

Councilmember Eastman: What if we say ‘maintain or support quality housing’ which could be homes or affordable housing. ‘Execute quality housing.’

**Parks**

Councilmember Gulley: “Increase maintenance and improvement of parks.”

Councilmember Justen: We are actively improving, so we should be reflecting the momentum from when we created these goals.

Councilmember Gulley: Prefer that it is an active sounding goal.

Councilmember Justen: Would like to reflect that we’re known for a fantastic park system.

Councilmember Berry: We should continue pushing forward, as well.

City Manager Schroeder: I think what this Council wants to do, in a proactive way, is to plan for what each park, neighborhood, or community needs and create an action plan to accomplish that
in a reasonable timeframe. That’s what I am hearing. We are coming to you in March with what our thoughts are, so you will have it in front of you.

Councilmember Justen: “Build on our strong park system and plan for further improvements.”

Council agreed with Councilmember Justen’s suggestion.

Recreation
City Manager Schroeder said this City has made significant strides since 2012 and has improved its park infrastructure. We have resulted in some debt we still have, but in the last few years, we have been building fund capacity in the parks area, particularly with park dedication fees. We are pretty comfortable that the Marthaler trail system will go in this year and, after that, it should be fairly straightforward for the rest of Marthaler in 2022-2024. Our hope is that we focus on that, with minor other improvements that need to occur, and then get into the next stage of neighborhood parks, including redoing Harmon.

Recreation for all ages and abilities
Councilmember Justen: I would love to see about partnerships with Dodge Nature Center and our School District.

Councilmember Berry: Partnerships to enhance our recreation.

Councilmember Justen: Recognize that we have great partnership. When we’re talking recreation, we have to include the lucky aspect that we have Dodge Nature Center and our schools. The playgrounds are part of our recreation. It doesn’t need to be the main bullet point, but it’s important to include that.

Councilmember Eastman: “Deliver recreational opportunities with partners.”

Councilmember Gulley: I had a conversation with the School District and they were interested in partnering with the City.

Councilmember Justen: Schools are listed under initiatives and opportunities but we should add Dodge Nature Center.

Mayor Napier: The partnership that has been growing in the past five to six years is great. There is an opportunity there and we should have it as one of our goals.

Councilmember Justen: It’s the first place I take out of town visitors to.

Councilmember Eastman: Some of our recreational opportunities could also be community type events. Even with recreation, it’s Police and Fire.
Councilmember Eng-Sarne: The relationship with Dodge -- we briefly touched on the West St. Paul Days, Winter Fun Fest. How can we expand in our roles to help enhance those programs. They go hand in hand.

Councilmember Gulley: Dodge has such a great relationship with the schools. If we’re looking for models on what that partnership would look like, that would be a place to start.

Councilmember Justen: Remove ‘golf course’ from management of recreational facilities.

Dr. Waldron: We have a strategy relating to economic development listed. Do we want to modify that?

Councilmember Justen: We would be remiss if we didn’t get responses from the survey into the bubbles. Given all the limitations, we have to be careful of what we promise here.

Councilmember Gulley: We should talk about Walmart. We need to find a way to work with them.

Councilmember Eastman: Agreed, but deeper, are they still under TIF funding? Or did that retire?

Finance Director Stark: They are still under that TIF.

Councilmember Eastman: For future consideration looking at TIF opportunities for development, what are some requirements as a City perspective? You want our help with financing, here are operations or management or acknowledgement of our practices and policies.

City Manager Schroeder: I don’t know much about the history and Walmart has been unresponsive.

Police Chief Sturgeon: I talk to the Manager on a weekly basis, so I can make sure it happens.

Councilmember Justen: It’s not a Robert Street problem, it’s a Walmart problem. Target and Hobby Lobby are cleaner than the Walmart parking lot.

Mayor Napier: You can go to a Walmart a few miles away and it looks like a totally different store, so there is no reason for it.

Dr. Waldron moved on to the strategic initiative regarding diversity.

Councilmember Gulley: We are already a diverse community, so the goal that I would like us to have in mind is how we engage everyone in our community. How do we go to them and bring them in?

Mayor Napier: I like the word bolster.
Councilmember Eng-Sarne: The issue is we are all reading this differently.

Mayor Napier: What if you say ‘expand’ instead of ‘identify’?

Councilmember Justen: The word bolster may not be working.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: “Identify opportunities to bolster outreach around diversity and inclusion.”

Councilmember Berry: I would prefer ‘expand’ not ‘identify.’ Others agreed. Suggestions:
“Expand opportunities to bolster outreach around diversity and inclusion”
“Expand and bolster outreach”
“Culture”
“Expand and bolster outreach for the purposes of diversity and inclusion”
“Expand and strengthen outreach for the purposes of diversity and inclusion”
“Expand and strengthen outreach”
“Strengthen engagement with all communities”

Councilmember Eng-Sarne asked Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki to take this away and come back with suggestions on wording.

Councilmember Justen: The key word is emphasizing outreach because outreach is that piece to go to where they are. I want that word to jump out to them.

Councilmember Eastman: Let’s ask Nowicki to research. I will ask others, as well, if outreach is a welcome term or if it is a weaker term.

Dr. Waldron asked Nowicki to provide five options.

Councilmember Justen: We need to be sure the words match the statement we want to say.

Public safety
Councilmember Eastman: Some additional words in the first sentence: “Build relationships and trust with our public safety programs.”

Mayor Napier: Where improved community awareness came from is we do a lot of public safety outreach. Trying to get the word out – look what we are doing and we want to do more.

Police Chief Sturgeon: We do 220 outreachs a year, prior to COVID.

Mayor Napier: We weren’t even aware of how many you are doing.

Council added this as an additional bubble.
Councilmember Justen: There is a fair amount of our community that would like to see a statement about preserving our high quality public safety organizations. There are some that came into my shop asking if we were defunding the Police. We need to reflect that we are not. If we have a public safety piece, we need to talk about that we are continually supporting the good work of our public safety.

Councilmember Eastman: On positive mental health programs, being a leader, sharing that stuff, people pay attention and appreciate it.

Councilmember Justen: “Improve community awareness” is good but the other part sounds like we’re coming from behind.
Councilmember Eastman: We have comments on the survey about that.

Councilmember Justen: I don’t want anyone to read that we are undermining our Police and Fire. There’s something about getting everyone to understand your goals and, if it can be read two different ways, you will confuse those who have a lack of confidence. We don’t want others to think there is a lack of confidence.

Mayor Napier: “Improve community awareness of public safety programs.”

Councilmember Eastman: “Continue to build.” “Expand community awareness of public safety programs and community outreach.”

Police Chief Sturgeon: I start off some of my reports and talking to others with “maintain and improve upon.” It’s all about marketing and partnerships. When we have community outreach events, the more that Council is involved, it strengthens the whole organization and all of City government. In the Hispanic population, we’ve made great strides in their trust. With your partnerships, they don’t have the trust of the elected officials. Where they come from, elected officials and the Police, they don’t talk to them. We’ve done great efforts to do that. Council and City government need to make that effort. Making a team effort is important.

Councilmember Berry: We need to be partnering with public safety.

Councilmember Justen: We talked about EDA but we didn’t talk about that.

Mayor Napier: We need to clarify it somewhere in our initiatives.

Dr. Waldron: You have the economic bubble and the effort to higher quality businesses part of it.

Councilmember Justen: It needs to be the visible part, so they need to see it specific in the bubble document. If we say ‘actively.’

Mayor Napier: “Establish economic development goals that retain and attract desirable businesses.

Councilmember Justen: Agreed. We just need to make it visible to the public. It’s crucial to have it front and center.
Councilmember Gulley: We are not a tourist city, so we don’t have a tourist bureau, but we could have a map with little pull-out bubbles, including our small restaurants or all of them.

Mayor Napier: That would be a Nowicki initiative. It’s a great idea. It has been a moving wheel. We are at a place now that it would be great. When I was younger, they had a layout of West St. Paul.

Councilmember Gulley: Print and have them available at City Hall.

City Manager Schroeder: Anything printed would have to be updated fairly rapidly.
Councilmember Justen: A dedicated page in every West St. Paul mailer. Update it every time it comes out.

Mayor Napier: It could be a balloon of a new one.

Councilmember Gulley: Highlight different kinds of businesses. In this issue, we highlight all the local independent businesses, next all the taco places, etc.

Councilmember Eastman: In EDA meetings, we could take an area a week and talk about restaurants as a “Did you know?” piece.

Councilmember Gulley: There are more opportunities than just-restaurants.

Councilmember Justen: There are a ton of really cool businesses. If you have a categorical list and a map and change it every three months, that would change the perception.

Mayor Napier: One thing we learned in every survey and the meeting over the last eight years is they read the newsletter. It’s the most popular way to communicate than things printed in the lobby. We also used to do packets that were put together for new homeowners. Councilmembers would hand deliver them. What was cool is that businesses contributed to it. Free guitar lessons, $5 off Starbucks, and all this stuff for new homeowners. Councilmember Armon put that together and it was great.

Councilmember Justen: That’s an easy first action item to attract and retain desirable businesses and, right out of the gate, we promote those businesses.

Councilmember Gulley: It would be a nice bonus to give a call to those business owners and let them know we’re going to be highlighting their business. It would go a long way in partnership with those businesses.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: I love the fact that we’re having this discussion. What I’m hearing is removing this blighted section out completely with new language to ‘retain and attract desirable businesses.’

City Manager Schroeder: Councilmember Eng-Sarne is correct that the economic development bubble does talk about blighted properties.
Councilmember Eng-Sarne will email her suggestion to Schroeder.

Dr. Waldron: The important thing you did was move forward and advance your financial policy. If you did anything today, that was outstanding and bodes well for the future. To close out the day, think about everything we’ve talked about and the issues. In terms of getting where we want to go, think about the strengths and opportunities to help us get there. What are our strengths for opportunities to help us get this critical stuff done?

Mayor Napier: High quality staff. We have a really good team of staff members. And with that, we haven’t had a lot of turnover, so they are invested.

Councilmember Eastman: We are starting from a good foundation of quality. We are not inventing from scratch. We are launching from a good place.

Councilmember Justen: It’s a good sign that what we are largely talking about is changing the perception, rather than changing the realities. We are doing a lot of these things, but the public is not as aware as we want them to be.

Mayor Napier: It’s a huge advantage for Councilmembers now at the table, that their perception is different.

Councilmember Eastman: We have an engaged community.

Councilmember Gulley: We have a lot of passion and enthusiasm for our city. That goes for Council, Staff, the community, volunteers, committees and commissions.

Councilmember Justen: I want to bring commissions and volunteers into a totally separate bullet point. We are lucky to have them.

Mayor Napier: To lose our leadership and, as tough as it is, we are positioned well financially and can bring in new leadership with good expectations.

Councilmember Justen: The position we are in gave us the opportunity to have exceptional applicants, 32 of them, and a difficult process to whittle it down to four finalists. Other Cities with things on fire would not get that many applicants. We should pat ourselves on the back that we have a functional, visionary, and aligned Council.

Dr. Waldron: That is huge to have everyone operating with the same vision and on the same page. That doesn’t happen and is really critical. Do you all feel good that City Manager Schroeder’s successor will be able to take a look at this and figure out where you want to go? Everyone agreed and said yes.

Councilmember Eastman: Call out that we are operating across many areas with extreme excellence. Cities should be envied. Our City Engineer, Public Works, Parks & Recreation, First Responders, they want to steal you guys.
Councilmember Justen: Someone should be head hunting our Financial Director, as well.

Councilmember Eastman: But we want to keep them all.

Councilmember Gulley: We have great staff in West St. Paul. Great businesses, schools, parks and amenities. It’s a great place to live.

City Manager Schroeder: The partnerships with the School District, Dakota County is a huge partner. When I got here, there was a lot of conversation about the County. But in the past four to five years, especially, they have been such a good partner for this community. I think they were perceived as not to be trusted. But thank God they are our big brother.

Councilmember Justen: The County built us a tunnel and made it the greatest I’ve seen.

Councilmember Gulley: We may want to look at what Dakota County has done. We could take some lessons from them and how we communicate with others. The biggest area of growth is communicating and sharing with people. It’s an area we need to continue to grow in.

Councilmember Eastman: ‘Accessible.’

Councilmember Gulley: ‘Transparency.’

Councilmember Justen: Representative Rick Hansen and Senator Matt Klein, our two Legislators. They have worked hard for us on the lift station bonding bill, local sales tax, and much more.

Dr. Waldron: The last piece: Problems.

Councilmember Berry: We don’t have unlimited funds.

Councilmember Eastman: COVID is an obstacle. Perceptions could be an off-shoot of COVID. Social media. Loss of our local newspaper. Hurdles to overcome.

Councilmember Justen: Zoning alignment with some of our visions for how we want development to go. Zoning sometimes contradicts the understanding of our comp plan.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne: Increase in political polarization.

Councilmember Eastman: Isolation.

Mayor Napier: Aging infrastructure. We have a plan but some of the rough streets are not on our list for a few years. People need to understand that it has to be paid for and there is a rating of pavement. It just doesn’t get fixed overnight. Our pool needs work. We are slowing getting there but, in the meantime, do people understand that we are a first ring suburb with aging infrastructure?

Councilmember Eastman: For perception, it’s perception-expectation problems.
Mayor Napier: Social media. People thinking we have an impact on what businesses come or don’t. It’s a huge roadblock. It’s time to overcome this misperception.

Councilmember Justen: General mistrust of government. They inherently don’t trust government. And think there are backroom deals for contractors.

Mayor Napier: Understanding Council’s role as elected officials and uniting to accomplish all of our established goals. It’s easier said than done, and it’s a challenge that we face and need to address. We are no longer just a resident of the community. We have a duty to uphold to all of our constituents.

Councilmember Gulley: Strict rules on how we interact as a Council. Taking away less formal interactions is really challenging.

Councilmember Eastman: It’s a restriction or a limitation as an elected official. We won’t talk on social media or comment or attack someone.

Councilmember Justen: There was a hockey booster thing where Mayor Napier, Councilmember Vitelli and I went to Tappers. We had a great conversation, not City business and we cannot do that, even if we stay under the limits of Open Meeting Laws. We used to be able to do that. It’s a healthy thing, but it’s an obstacle.

Mayor Napier: Three can get together.

Councilmember Justen: But COVID is creating a situation that even that outlet doesn’t allow us to.

Dr. Waldron: Transition won’t be easy.

City Manager Schroeder: It’s an opportunity.

Dr. Waldron: It’s both. It’s new blood and a new transition, but not easy on anyone.

Councilmember Eastman: Access. You can watch Town Square Television, but you can only watch if you have access to those local cable channels or only if you have internet.

Councilmember Gulley: Internet didn’t show up on the list of goals, but we need to think about it with new development.

Councilmember Eastman: That is also a point on accessibility. Same as for isolation in our community. Even though there are tools and technology that the schools have given, sometimes it isn’t working in their home. Or lower funding and they don’t have it to help their kids.

Councilmember Justen: Those who are barely making rent, the first to go is internet. The flipside of an engaged community is the unengaged community. We are hearing the voices of some but not of others. But it’s an obstacle to get that to them and get their concerns in front of you.
Councilmember Eastman: For Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki, I heard from some asking if the surveys could be mailed or if we could include the survey in the newsletter with a return envelope.

Dr. Waldron: I think you’re in a good place, and I enjoyed working with all of you today.
Councilmember Justen: Could we do a mini version of this meeting with the new City Manager? Perhaps an hour?

Mayor Napier: That’s a great idea. We may not need to bring in Department Heads, but just Council and the City Manager.

City Manager Schroeder: How far in? He may want to get his feet on the ground first.

Councilmember Justen: Let him have some time with Staff first.

Mayor Napier: Thank you, Dr. Waldron, and everyone for spending the day with us. We are hopeful that we are nearing the end of COVID and can come back a little closer to normal and allow us to get out in the community. I am looking forward to summer, to our new City Manager, the strengths in our system, and new Councilmembers with new energy. Thank you.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

[Signature]
Shirley R. Buecklesler
City Clerk
Mayor Napier welcomed and thanked everyone for joining us at our Town Hall meetings.

Present:  Mayor Dave Napier  
Councilmembers Wendy Berry, Julie Eastman, Lisa Eng-Sarne,  
Robyn Gulley (attended virtually February 11), John Justen, and Dick Vitelli

Also Present:  City Manager Ryan Schroeder  
Fire Chief Mark Juelfs  
Assistant Fire Chief Terry Johnson  
Police Chief Brian Sturgeon  
Lieutenant Matt Swenke  
Parks and Public Works Director/City Engineer Ross Beckwith  
Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn  
Finance Director Char Stark  
Marketing & Communications Manager Dan Nowicki  
City Clerk Shirley Bueckslser

Congresswoman Angie Craig attended virtually

On February 27, 2021, Mayor Napier welcomed and introduced Congresswoman Angie Craig who spoke to the Council, Staff and the West St. Paul community.

"It is an honor to be here to greet and talk with everyone in West St. Paul. Our local units of government have been on the tip of the spear as all of us have dealt with COVID-19. Congress finished up voting about 2:00 am this morning. It was a long night and little sleep, but we got the job done. Conversations with local leaders and County Commissioners really led me to lend my support last evening to the American Rescue Plan. There is support in there to accelerate distribution of vaccines, but I also can tell the Mayor and Council that, under the American Rescue Plan, $65 billion dollars will be allocated to our nation’s cities, and it is estimated that, under this plan, about $3.6 million will come to the City of West St. Paul. All of the efforts you have all been going through, in particular our local city leaders, thank you for your leadership. Obviously, the healthcare challenge that we face is unprecedented. Making sure we have enough vaccine doses, that the manufacturing is accelerated, is really good news that Johnson & Johnson is going to be on the market and that manufacturing is going to ramp up, especially by the end of June. We need to get our kids back in school, and this package that we approved to the Congress last night, is going to help us do that, to help our schools pay to be able to test our teachers and our students, to be able to keep people back in learning, where the local guidelines for positivity rates supported. I’m really proud of the package we approved last night. On that topic, so many of our main street businesses have really been struggling over the past year, in particular our main street restaurants, our local restaurants. I’m very proud of the bill I support to get grant dollars to restaurants, not just the paycheck protection program forgivable loan, but grants, $25 million to restaurants in grants is in
this package. My team is going to be in touch with the City, with our Chambers, and with our County officials to make sure our businesses know how to apply for those grant dollars. This is signed into law. While here, I wanted to share a little bit about what I’ve been tracking in West St. Paul. I know that the City has spent a lot of time and attention addressing your financial health and that you’ve improved your cash liquidity by 25%. For someone who has spent 25 years in business, that warms my heart. I know, also, that the housing market in West St. Paul was rated number one in the metro area by the Star Tribune. That, together with the excitement of the new housing units to be built on the Signal Hills footprint, is an indication of serious forward movement in the city. Thank you for your leadership to this Council. West St. Paul, I know you used yours CARES ACT money to help local businesses and to provide relief to your taxpayers, so I just want to say thank you for that. And the public safety team in West St. Paul, I know you’ve been recognized for your work on the pilot program with South St. Paul and Dakota County where, if someone calls 911 with a mental health issue, a social worker is dispatched along with law enforcement to help get the situation under control. I know the pilot program has worked so well that it is now serving as a model for a parallel program between Rosemount and Apple Valley. I know the Police force was one of the first in the state to be officially compliant with the U.S. Department of Justice’s standards for certification on use of force for state police and local communities. I want to thank you for your leadership to this community. I am so honored to be the representative of such a community. Finally, I want to say thank you to City Manager Ryan Schroeder for all of those years of dedicated service to West St. Paul and for your service to your communities. It’s going to be difficult coming out of COVID and we’re all itching to get back and get out. It’s a beautiful weekend here in Minnesota, so we will be getting out socially distanced outside this weekend. I want to make a commitment to West St. Paul that I will continue my focus in Congress of helping to support our local communities, showing up, knowing what you’re up to, focus on creating good jobs, especially in the trades, careers skills and technical education, which is a key priority of mine. It really is just an honor to represent you. Thank you.”

~ Congresswoman Angie Craig

On behalf of the City of West St. Paul, Mayor Napier thanked Congresswoman Craig for all the work you do in your district and, more specifically, the work you do for West St. Paul. Thank you.

Mayor Napier said we are here live with Councilmembers and Department Heads in the West St. Paul Council Chambers. This is a three-step process to listen to you, our community. We have held these each year with great success. Please get involved and let us know what is important to your community, and we will put them into action items at our Strategic Planning session on March 6, 2021. With the help from staff and input from our residents, we will be able to establish a road map of what we want West St. Paul to look like. There will be opportunity to ask questions during this presentation by phone and email.

Mayor Napier said he appreciates everyone’s input. We are coming out to our community virtually for part of this, so please be patient. We are used to going into the community in person, in churches or schools and having a great question and answer session. We will still do that process, so there will be an opportunity to call in and email during this discussion. Mr. Edgar Herrera is assisting us and translating this conversation into Spanish. Watch Town Hall discussions on Channel 18, and on Channel 21 in translation form.
City Manager Ryan Schroeder introduced:

- Parks and Public Works Director/City Engineer Ross Beckwith
- Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn
- Fire Chief Mark Juelfs
- Assistant Fire Chief Terry Johnson
- Police Chief Brian Sturgeon
- Lieutenant Matt Swenke
- Finance Director Char Stark

City Manager Schroeder said we will talk about 2020 and 2021, as Department Heads discuss what is happening in their departments. 2020 had its challenges. We also made a number of forward strides that Staff are proud of and the community should also be proud of. The annual report prepared by Staff includes all of the items that Council addressed throughout the year. Another piece talks about individual departments, some of which their items made it to the table and some didn’t. Since we are only highlighting this today, if anyone wants to see the detail of the annual report, they can do so by requesting the annual report by contacting Staff or go online to the City’s website at [https://wspm.gov/27/Your-Government](https://wspm.gov/27/Your-Government) and scroll down to the 2020 Annual Report in the lower right column. While West St. Paul government addresses a lot of things in a lot of areas, we have some primary areas of responsibility, which includes maintaining streets and public land (City Engineer Ross Beckwith), planning and conducting development reviews of private property and proposals for development (Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn), and providing for public safety (Fire Chief Mark Juelfs of South Metro Fire Department and Police Chief Brian Sturgeon). We will wrap this up with Finance Director Char Stark to discuss financing. Following this will be the citizen portion of the meeting. In past years, this included an interactive survey. In this virtual format, we are doing a much more detailed survey. If what we do talk about peaks some interest, I hope citizens know that they should feel invited to reach out to anyone here, either their Councilmembers, in their ward or not, or Staff to respond to whatever questions, concerns or ideas people may have.
Public Works/Parks/Infrastructure
City Engineer Ross Beckwith welcomed everyone and presented the following information:

Construction projects for 2021:

Moreland Avenue is a full reconstruction project from Delaware Avenue to Robert Street from May through October with new watermain, full sub repair, sidewalk, curb and gutter. It will be treacherous to travel through this summer. In the southeast part of our city, the forcemain is a sanitary sewer pipe that carries uphill. Lift Station #2 is being reconstructed this year. Lift Station #1 will also be a reconstruct this year. It’s our largest lift station that pumps one third of the city’s sewage. They were built in the 1960s. By Lift Station #1 is the pond maintenance project that is nearly complete. MnDOT will have a mill & overlay project on Highway 52 this summer from Concord Avenue to 494. From Concord Avenue to Plato Boulevard is planned concrete rehabilitation for that section. There will be eight directional closures and ramp closures, so stay tuned. The good news is MnDOT wants to complete this by end of July.

St. Paul Regional Water Service (SPRWS) will piggy-back on our street projects. This year, they have added four independent projects to replace the watermain. SPRWS will run these projects themselves and have reached out to everyone in the area. Wentworth Avenue – the median will be extended from Robert Street to Livingston Avenue. The River-to-River Trail crossing under Robert is halfway done. Expect work from May through August with one lane open in each direction between Wentworth and Thompson Avenues. The trail extends almost to City Hall on Wentworth Avenue, goes to Livingston Avenue, then behind the library and back to Wentworth Avenue. This is part of Dakota County’s River-to-River Trail system. Running through Marthaler and Garlough Parks is the next piece of the River-to-River Trail and it is currently out for bid. This is a big City-County funded project. If bids are favorable, we will move ahead. If not, it will be constructed in 2022. At Thompson County Park, the County is investing into this park this year with a plaza area,
new playground, and an art interpretation center. Go online to the Dakota County website for some cool renderings of the plans for Thompson Park.

The 5-Year Streets Capital Improvement Plan:

The next five years’ street projects include Moreland Avenue this year, Crusader and Humboldt Avenue cul-de-sac in 2022, then Annapolis. The City is working with St. Paul to align our capital improvement programs from Smith Avenue to the city limits. There will be two construction seasons: Smith Avenue to Robert Street in 2023 and Robert Street to the east in 2024. One design, one contractor, but two separate years. 2025 will be Delaware Avenue, a county road, but similar to the Wentworth Avenue project we completed. Storm sewer, trails, etc. 2023 Thompson Avenue mill & overlay – this section is a County road right now from Robert Street to Highway 52. The City will be taking over this street after the County improvements. Likely late 2023 or early 2024 after the mill & overlay and roundabout at Thompson Avenue/Oakdale Avenue in 2023. We have applied for third party funding.
**Future Walks and Trails:**

We have a lot of projects coming up, including the Thompson Avenue turn back. Bidwell Street between Butler Avenue and Thompson Avenue with a sidewalk on one side in 2023. Oakdale Avenue from Wentworth Avenue to Butler Avenue – it is a County road programmed for 2021 construction but we are working with the County to push it up a year. Butler Avenue will have a trial study between Robert Street to Concord Avenue in South St. Paul to see which side the trail should go on. The study will get to 30% plans and the goal is to take that study and find extra federal or state funds to pay for construction of the trail.

**Lift Station & Forcemains:**
Lift Station #1, Lift Station #2 and Forcemain #2 will be started in 2021, finishing up in 2022. Forcemain #3 and 4 and Crusader Avenue are part of the 2022 Street Improvements Project. Lift Station #4 is on the south end and the Forcemain on Smith will be 2022. This is the most important infrastructure improvements that we are doing in the city, as this infrastructure is from the 1960s.

**Inflow & Infiltration Reduction Program Map:**

Since 2008, we have been working in infiltration. On the north end, there are Met Council flow meters that show all of the sewage flowing through these meters out of West St. Paul. They monitor the spike and flow, which is what started this off in 2007. If it rains and the flow meters show a lot more flow, it means that clean water is getting into our sewer system. SPRWS was here on February 8, 2021 for a discussion at the Open Council Work Session. We have been able to reduce our peak flows by 40% in West St. Paul.

Since 2020, we have conducted over 3,000 inspections since 2008, which is about 60% of the city. West St. Paul is the leader in Inflow & Infiltrations. Mounds View has taken our plan and started their own program. West St. Paul I & I Inspector Eldon Rameaux has been helpful with other cities to show the successes and pitfalls in our program. West St. Paul is also the I & I consultant for the City of Newport.

The FOG program (Fats, Oil & Grease) has identified issues with buildup in the sanitary sewer system. 83 businesses were identified. Grease traps are being installed, and we keep track of their grease disposals. Businesses have to submit a report every few months to the City. The goal is to keep our sewers clean.
Parks & Facilities:

West St. Paul Pool
- The pool is planned to be back open in 2021 following all the required state and federal safety guidelines regarding COVID-19.
- The YMCA will continue to run the operations and provide lifeguarding.
- We are exploring programming options that could include water exercise classes.

Harmon Park
- Park activities should be more regular this summer including youth baseball, softball and soccer and recreation programs.
- Splash pad will be open Memorial Day – Labor Day.
- Bathrooms will be open regular hours with a regular cleaning schedule.
- Neighborhood Center will be available for rental with some restrictions due to COVID-19.

West St. Paul Ice Arena
- Arena will be open for rentals using COVID-19 protocols.
- Open skating may be offered on a limited basis.

West St. Paul Dome
- Dome will be open for rentals using COVID-10 protocols.
- Open Walking will continue to be available morning hours, Monday-Friday.
- Open Dome will be offered with a modified format.

Recreation Programs:

Youth Sports
- Tennis and golf lessons will be offered jointly with Mendota Heights.
- Week-long sports camps will also be offered.
- Youth sports (t-ball and soccer) will be offered mornings and evenings.

Youth Enrichment
- Theater camps
- Art camps
- Music Together
- Safety Camp

Summer Playgrounds
- Multi-day, morning and afternoon options for 4-6 year olds.
- Fascinating Fridays for 6-12 year olds.

Free Programs
- Tour De Rec offered weekly at different parks (run jointly with Mendota Heights)
- Movies in the Park

We are looking forward to at least one Movie in the Park in 2021 and more activities out of doors.
Community Development & Planning

Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn oversees seven Staff members consisting of Planning, Zoning, Building, Code Enforcement, and Community/Industry Development. 2021 will be the year of construction like no other year and provided the following information:

Community Development 2020 Projects:

A lot of projects take multiple years and we are happy to say that some of them are starting this year. We teamed up with the County on the Gateway Place project. This project has been going on for 15 years now. We bought a number of properties. This is now a project that had a groundbreaking this year, followed by construction of 54 affordable units. Suite Living will be 32 senior apartments with some memory care. Jameson’s and FoodSmith both received community development grants to help with remodeling and interior work. Signal Hills is a priority for Council. Dominium will construct two apartment complexes – 247 units and 146 units of affordable units, 393 total units. Roers/Town Center 1 has been in the works for many years, and they should be in the ground this year. 200 market rate units with retail on the bottom floor. A Dakota County Redevelopment Incentive Grant will help reduce some of the business subsidies on this project. Westlyn has 153 market rate units. The Wetland mitigation is on the former Thompson Oaks golf course site. The County’s plan is to surround the wetland area with housing and, in the near future, working on a townhome complex on the east side of that project with about 64 townhome units. The wetland mitigation will sit in the middle of this. The River-to-River Trail connects a lot of the redevelopment projects. M&I Company of 64 townhomes may not see construction until 2022. Canine Coach has expanded their store. The Dakota County Northern Service Center is making over $1M in improvements to their facility. Cub Foods Out-Lots include Chase Bank, Starbucks and another unnamed prospect that is currently looking at this area. 2021 was the year of plans.
We worked with the Met Council on their 2040 plan. We worked on a housing plan including market rate, affordable, townhome and senior units. Developers want to see rooftops.

Building Department:

The Building Department has broken records in some ways, with 1,432 building permits, $825,801 in fees collected, and permit valuations of $53M.

Quality Housing Plan & Program Includes:

- Housing Rehabilitation Loan
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
  - $126,000 for 2021
- Housing Replacement
- Outstanding Property Recognition
- Rental Licensing and Inspections
- Code Enforcement
- DARTS – Outdoor Chore Service
- Habitat for Humanity
- Metropolitan Livable Communities

Commercial Programs and Incentives Include:

- Pandemic Response Small Business Grants
- Open to business
- Opportunity Zone Tax Incentives
- West St. Paul Commercial Development Grant
- West St. Paul Commercial Exterior Grant
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
- Dakota County Community Development Agency Redevelopment Improvement Grant (RIG)
- Minnesota Investment Fund and Soil Cleanup
- Metropolitan Council Programs

South Metro Fire Department

Fire Chief Mark Juelfs presented. Assistant Fire Chief Terry Johnson presented in his absence on February 24. COVID-19 had a huge impact on our operations. We saw a reduced number of calls in the beginning of the pandemic, down 30-35%. People were unsure what would happen if they went to the hospital. The pandemic had effects on staffing, more personal protective equipment, gowns, and face shields, along with limited movement between stations. What impacted us, also, was getting out into the community with activities like Safety Camps, park activities, inspections we could do, and teaching CPR. South Metro Fire Staff received our first and second rounds of vaccines. If you are getting vaccinated, note that the second dose tends to be worse than the first.

In 2020, South Metro Fire, Stations 1 and 2, responded to 6,760 calls for service, of which there were 5,021 EMS related, (1,651 patient transports), 89 incidents (45 were in a structure), and 1,650 other calls (gas leaks or spills, burning complaints, assist uninjured persons). Two new fire
engines were received to replace 20 year old apparatus. If we are able to get out into the community in 2021, citizens will get to see those up close.

Looking forward in 2021, we continue to expand our health and wellness. Through our experience with Firefighters having PTSD and suicide plans, Fire Chief Juelfs said this was his primary focus to ensure our Firefighters are healthy. The big issues killing Firefighters are cardiac and cancer issues and emotional health issues. There are programs, health and wellness physical programs, and facilities that enable our Firefighters to work out. They have yearly screenings, and work with Minnesota Fire Initiative (MnFIRE), a non-profit statewide advocacy organization that equips firefighters and the people who care about them with resources to address the growing health crisis in the Minnesota fire service.

A big project starting now is the replacement of Ladder 1. This truck is a 1993, coming up on 30 years old. This is typically the life expectancy of these vehicles. Fire Chief Juelfs is working with both the Cities of South St. Paul and West St. Paul to replace Ladder 1 in the near term.

In 2020, Firefighter Tom Brooks retired and was featured on Town Square Insight 7 regarding PTSD. Two Firefighters moved on to the private sector and we have one member deploying to the Middle East for a year. Four new personnel will start on March 8th. The new Firefighters will do an onboarding academy for 8 weeks and a joint academy with Burnsville and Eagan Fire. The Fire Inspector position was filled in-house with Angeline Appelholm.

Along with Firefighter wellness, we hope to re-engage with the community. We all realize how much we enjoy being together and for us to get out and see the public and the kids. We miss that and will be making more frequent public education visits. One that came about was the drive-by birthday program, which was successful. Fire inspections were reduced in 2020 due to COVID-19. We restarted that program in late summer/early fall 2020. We also offer hands only CPR training to the community. We did some virtual events, but it's more productive to coach and instruct in person. We also offer fire extinguisher training to businesses. Station tours have not been done since last March. We are closed but we hope to open them up in the spring. The blood pressure check program is also on hold due to COVID-19. In partnership with the American Red Cross, we do smoke alarm installations. The Red Cross donates alarms and we install them. Reach out to the Fire Department if you need one, as we are doing these currently. We work closely with the Police Department and Parks Department, providing opportunities for you throughout the year, as well as Safety Camps in West St. Paul and South St. Paul.

**West St. Paul Police Department**

Police Chief Brian Sturgeon presented. Lieutenant Matt Swenke presented in his absence on February 24. The number one question he gets is regarding statistics. People are concerned about crime in our community. Overall, our statistics are pretty good, with the exception of theft and larceny, which we have seen an increase of in the past couple of years. I believe it is the addition of numerous self check-outs at stores, as well as this past year it has been hard to hold individuals accountable due to COVID-19. The court system is backlogged due to COVID-19 restrictions. We have also had an increase in motor vehicle thefts. Burglaries decreased in 2020 from 102 to 87. Aggravated assaults remain steady, robberies are down, and sexual assaults increased from 8 to 16. Why that is, Chief Sturgeon said he is happy to say our Domestic Abuse Assault Advocate is
making great strides in our community and victims are much more apt to come to the Police Department. Numbers don’t look good but it’s great that the community is coming forward to report these issues to us. These stats are part 1 crimes, which are considered violent type crimes. However, theft is included in that, but theft is not a violent crime.

Part 2 crimes are everything else. Disorderly conduct citations jumped dramatically and it could be blamed on COVID, with people unable to get out and about. Drunk driving arrests have gone down. Narcotics violations have gone down considerably and that is due to the drug task force is focusing not so much on users but in the drug trafficking organizations. Weapons offenses have remained steady, vandalism up slightly, and fraud and forgery have gone down slightly, as well as other civil assaults.

In the future, statistics will look different. We have been on a two and a half year program to adjust how we report these offenses to the Federal government. We will go now to the NIBERS system (National Incident-Based Reporting System), a mandate from the Federal government put in place several years ago. Currently, when reporting an offense to the Federal government, it would take the most serious offense and that’s what was reported (i.e., an armed robbery and auto theft would have only been reported as an armed robbery). What you will see with this change is every offense affiliated with a particular situation. Both the armed robbery and auto theft will be reported. Numbers will go up because of this detailed reporting system but it’s a lot more accurate information going out to the community.

Much of this year has been taken up by the pandemic. As also the Emergency Manager, Chief Sturgeon said most of his time has been spent dealing with COVID-19 on a city, county and state level, as well. Many weekly meetings with the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Minnesota Department of Public Health (MDH), Dakota County Public Health, and many other partners to develop policies and procedures for other departments within the City. During the beginning of the pandemic, Department Heads and other Staff met at least twice a week to ensure the safety of visitors at City Hall and the programs the City provided. Kudos to Dakota County Public Health. They have been exceptional in the partnership, the roll-out, and the education of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the vaccination. Enough cannot be said about the vaccine program they have rolled out. They have done an excellent job.

In 2020, West St. Paul has not seen civil unrest, looking and other violence to the degree we saw in May and June. Thankfully, with our partners, we were able to address that situation, and we continue to plan and prepare for other potential civil unrest throughout the metro area and in West St. Paul in the coming months. We have a coordinated partnership with Ramsey and Washington Counties, where we are going to make sure that our community is safe. Planning has been going on for months, and we will continue to plan and prepare and be able to respond to whatever comes our way.

In the area of diversity and recruitment, we have a number of collaborate efforts in the works with our Human Resources Department. In 2019 and 2020, we attended the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) job fair in Minneapolis, in partnership with the League of Minnesota Cities. We look forward to continued partnership with that event.
On social media, we will be promoting an event that we have been working on for two and a half years. We are partnering with the Minnesota Department of Justice for a Career Fair April 10, 2021 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at TCF Bank Stadium. This is only the second of such events in the country put on by the Department of Justice, and we are their main partner. Also partnering is Hennepin County, Dakota County, Crystal Police Department, FBI and ATF. Our Marketing & Communications Manager Dan Nowicki has been an integral part of this marketing and putting together flyers. Crime Prevention Specialist Laura Vaughan has spent many, many hours to put this together. The keynote speaker and many other speakers are coming from Asia, Columbia, El Salvador, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan, who are law enforcement officers here in Minnesota. They will give their perspective on what it is to be a Police Officer and a diverse individual providing those services to the community. We are very excited for this event, and more information will come out on our social media accounts in the future.

In addition to diversity and recruitment, we are at Henry Sibley High School in their career mentoring program and have restarted our internship opportunities. We have a female resident from West St. Paul that is currently an intern with our department. She is currently a senior at Hamline University and wants to be a Police Officer. We look forward to working with her. She brings a unique perspective and has already brought forward some ideas for us. We are looking to expand our Reserve program with a big recruitment drive once the COVID-19 pandemic is under control. Similar to the Fire Department, our outreach efforts were hampered in 2020, but we look forward to when we can continue those outreach efforts in partnership with South Metro Fire, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation.

We are very proud of our Fit for Duty Program. We have expanded this to address not only the mental well-being of Officers but the physical, financial, and other areas, as well. We are looking at a more holistic approach with financial advisors to provide ideas and information on their finances, as well as nutritionists and some chefs will be coming in to give us ideas on healthy cooking. The West St. Paul Police Department was mentioned in a national law enforcement journal on our Fit for Duty Program. We have been contacted by many departments across the country for ideas on how we do it, how we implemented it, what works and what does not. Chief Sturgeon said what we are doing here is seen across the country and he is very proud of that.

**Finance**

Finance Director Char Stark provided information on the City’s finances.

**Financial Goals:**

- Find 3rd party funding sources; looking for grants to improve infrastructure.
- Improve infrastructure; we have made improvements to City Hall and the Police Department. More improvements are planned for the future. The local option sales tax brings in revenue from our citizens and others coming in to shop in our city. This revenue is restricted for street improvement and will allow us to increase our budget to improve infrastructure, including roads, street maintenance and sidewalks.
- Lower debt; the City has a goal not to issue debt for several years and become financially manageable.
- Improve cash position; we have set goals for each of our funds to achieve those goals by 2027-2028.
- Lower tax rate; each budget cycle, we work hard to lower the tax rate.
Financial Policies:
We have many policies that help us manage our goals:
- Revenue management
- Cash and investments
- Reserves
- Operating budget
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Debt management
- Accounting, audit, risk management, purchasing & budget adjustments

Property Tax 101:
- The State has developed a property tax classification for each property, based on use.
- The County Assessor’s office estimates the property market value, based on a physical visit every four years, sales in the neighborhood, building permits pulled on your home, and the market, in general.
- Tax capacity – Example: A $175,000 residential home’s tax capacity is 1% of the value. In other words, $1,750.00 is the Gross Tax capacity. This is used in the calculation of the overall tax on this property.

Property Tax Levy:
- Determination of the local government (West St. Paul) tax levy.
- Total budget less all non-property tax revenue = City Levy.
- 2021 Budget.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Budget</th>
<th>Other Revenues</th>
<th>Tax Levy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$45,914,694</td>
<td>28,170,269</td>
<td>$17,744,425</td>
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City Tax Rate:
City Levy/Taxable tax capacity of the City = City Tax Rate
Calculating City Tax Bill:
City Levy/Taxable tax capacity of the City = City Tax Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calculated City Tax Rate</th>
<th>2021-69.285%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated Market Value</td>
<td>$175,000 residential primary home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homestead Exclusion (This is a sliding scale, as the value of the home increases the exclusion is reduced.)</td>
<td>(21,490)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taxable Market Value</td>
<td>153,510</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class rate (primary residential home)</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Tax Capacity</td>
<td>1535</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tax Rate</td>
<td>69.285%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property tax for the City portion</td>
<td>$1,063.60</td>
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Outstanding Debt/Cash Ratio:

Debt Reduction – Infrastructure Increase – Tax Levy Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2026</th>
<th>2027</th>
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<th>2030</th>
<th>2031</th>
<th>2032</th>
<th>2033</th>
<th>2034</th>
<th>2035 Sum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure/Facilities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>650,000</td>
<td>650,000</td>
<td>650,000</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>805,000</td>
<td>975,000</td>
<td>975,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
<td>1,070,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property tax reduction</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>95,000</td>
<td>175,000</td>
<td>160,000</td>
<td>155,000</td>
<td>155,000</td>
<td>155,000</td>
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<td>155,000</td>
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<td>275,000</td>
<td>350,000</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Levy</td>
<td>4,354,162</td>
<td>4,315,165</td>
<td>4,351,167</td>
<td>4,351,125</td>
<td>4,551,169</td>
<td>4,545,412</td>
<td>4,450,853</td>
<td>4,354,267</td>
<td>4,487,178</td>
<td>4,514,138</td>
<td>4,053,317</td>
<td>4,031,155</td>
<td>1,705,918</td>
<td>1,885,956</td>
<td>1,977,536</td>
<td>186,604</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mayor Napier thanked Staff for putting all of this information together. It really shows that West St. Paul is doing a lot and not standing still and he is glad we were able to share this with everyone today.

**Listening Sessions / Q&A**

**Q&A from the February 11, 2021 Town Hall:**

1) **Email:** “General development question for Jim. Thanks for doing this! There have been a lot of complaints about new businesses coming in – frustration that we don’t have more sit-down restaurants, entertainment, or shopping. Can someone talk about what kind of control the city has (or doesn’t have) about the kinds of businesses we attract? What role does the city play in attracting new businesses?”

   - Mayor Napier said he came on the Council thinking he would have more influence on bringing certain businesses in, but it really is about zoning. We can control things through zoning but if a business comes in and wants to take over a vacant building and their business model and everything that they’re bringing in fits the zoning ordinance, there is really not much we can say. Basically, if we want to establish guidelines, we would need to do it through the City Code and zoning.

   - Community Development Director Hartshorn said the one thing you can say is that we have programs, such as business subsidies, that we offer to bring in businesses that we’d like to see here. We don’t have to give businesses anything, but to get the ones you want, that’s what we do. It’s very competitive, it’s very tough right now. Retail is really struggling in this time of the pandemic. We were very fortunate to get the housing, rooftops and such that we got, because it sets us up in a good position for down the road when we do want to go after certain retail. Restaurants are struggling. Staff has a good idea of what the Council is looking for, and I think it’s just a matter of time that we will make folks happy. We are getting more interest right now. I’ve had several calls regarding Signal Hills because of the Dominium project going in there. They all want to be next to a project that’s bringing in 369 units. It’s a matter of time, we’ll get there.

   - Mayor Napier asked if it’s safe to say that Hartshorn has marketed our city to a wide variety of businesses that we’ve heard through the community and the Council that we want?

     - Hartshorn said, yes, when he finds out who the developers are, he visits them and invites them to town. I’ve had all of the top developers on Robert Street at one time or another. They are very much aware of what we have and they like what’s happening. I don’t have to do much to sell it. They are impressed with this city. When they see all the projects, it’s an easy sell.

   - Mayor Napier added that the project at Signal Hills will bring more people to our community and they will spend their money somewhere. Businesses want to be around that, and he sees good things happening. We will talk more about it in our Strategic Planning meeting.

   - Councilmember Justen said what is important for citizens to understand that, when you’re asking us for this or that thing, that is communicated regularly to Hartshorn at work sessions and everything else. It’s not falling on deaf ears. We are constantly giving
Hartshorn information and he is working hard to recruit businesses that the citizens in our city desire. It is being communicated and we work hard to get things that you want here in your city.

2) Email: “During the overview of projects upcoming/in progress in WSP, the plans for the Hy-Vee were skipped over. Is there still a plan for Hy-Vee to be built? I read a few articles from newspapers/websites, and none of them mention a Hy-Vee in WSP when they talk about new Hy-Vee stores coming.”

- Mayor Napier said we addressed this at Monday’s Council meeting. Hy-Vee is a business that keeps to themselves, they work the plans through the City, which they have done. All plans are active in our city. They’re not very vocal about when the project starts. As long as we know that all permits are being pulled and the process is beginning, we believe the construction of that building is going on as planned.
- Community Development Director Hartshorn said we have no reason to believe that Hy-Vee is not coming to West St. Paul.

3) Caller: “I heard a little bit about the pool and wondering if there will be any talk or negotiations so that residents don’t pay more than YMCA members for membership.”

- City Manager Schroeder said our Assistant Park Director has been meeting with the YMCA and he anticipates that they will be bringing proposals for a new one year contract to the Council for consideration in the next month or so.
- Mayor Napier asked if it sounds like it will have that component to it?
  - City Manager Schroeder said because of these on-going comments, that has been a significant portion of the discussion.

4) Caller: “With this meeting, and with Council meetings, if you could please identify yourselves, you’re not always in sync with the picture and sometimes when people talk, it’s hard to know who is talking if the camera is not on them. Some Councilmembers sound alike. If they could say their name first, it will help your audience.”

- Mayor Napier thanked the caller for this reminder.

5) Email: “Please provide a little info on why Thompson maintenance will be turned over to West St. Paul. I have had wonderful experience on the snow plowing and hope that will not change.” And “Where can I find statistics/info on fire calls and police calls (such as number of calls to a certain address)”

- City Engineer Beckwith said the earliest we will take this street over is winter of 2023-2024. The biggest thing is snow plowing and maintenance will be done by the City instead of County Staff and our plow drivers are the best around. You will probably see an increase in this level of service. The County will mill & overlay and build a roundabout at Thompson and Oakdale prior to handing it over to the City. We do receive some cash from the County for maintenance of future reconstruction.
- Fire Chief Juelfs said the only way to access that would be to put in an information request in to the Fire Department. We don’t put out information on specific addresses where we go to calls on any website. At this time, we are working on creating a live dashboard of call counts on a weekly basis. This is one of his priorities to get more of an open process where people can go on our website and see all of our call counts.
- Chief Sturgeon said you can go on their website for an interactive service that shows what type of police calls are current in that block, but it does not include the specific address. If you want information on a specific address, you can make a data request to our Department and we will provide you what information we can.
6) **Caller:** “What will the safety precautions be for the Robert Street tunnel? I have lived in towns before where the tunnels were built but nobody used them because they were afraid to go into them. Hoping you will have some safety devices there.”
   - Mayor Napier said we received a report from Dakota County on other tunnels and what they do. It will be maintained by the County and there is some that they put in place for safety.
   - Chief Sturgeon said the City Engineer and I worked closely with the County. We will have video cameras within the tunnel. We will be maintaining those cameras and logging the feeds from there. The County will not, so we will have direct access to that. There will also be plenty of lighting inside and outside the tunnel.

7) **Email:** “Want to thank the Fire, Police and whoever was involved with the parade with Santa. It was enjoyed by so many.”

8) **Email:** “Did I hear the Police Chief correctly? Sexual assault crimes went from 8% to 16%? Not sure what that is a percentage of, but I also believe he said those crimes went up “slightly.” That’s double, not slightly! And Chief may speculate that there is more reporting than previous, but what data supports that? Maybe if he was a woman he’d understand that’s not trivial!”
   - Chief Sturgeon said it went from 8 to 16. It has a lot to do with our domestic abuse advocate who is out there in the community, and people are more willing now to talk to the Police to report this. No doubt, we had 16 sexual assaults. There are dozens and dozens more that go unreported. We are not alone, this is across the country. Sexual assaults are the number one crime that goes unreported in the country and we need to make sure the victims of these offenses trust not only the Police Department but the advocates we have here. You can look at it two ways. It doubled, but I look at it as a lot of people are coming forward, and I am grateful for that.

9) **Email:** “Great meeting thanks for all the info. One question, in a city I lived in prior to West St. Paul the city collected Park Dedication fees. Will West St. Paul collect park dedication fees on all of its upcoming projects. It’s a great way to keep parks up and add amenities.”
   - Community Development Director Hartshorn said we are planning to collect park dedication fees on our projects and we always have. There is no reason not to. It’s a great way to help fund the park projects. It is 8% of market value of a large scale project. If it’s a housing project, it’s a percentage of the units. It goes by about $1,000 per unit on a big scale project. It can either be by the value or by the unit. But a commercial project doesn’t have units, so you go by the percentage of the market value. It’s a great program.
   - City Manager Schroeder mentioned that if a property is being redeveloped and that property has already paid park dedication, it is not going to pay it again.
   - Community Development Director Hartshorn said they can also do a land swap as an alternative. It would be as valuable as the park dedication fees. We have allowed that in the past.
   - Councilmember Justen said when you say large scale construction and large scale housing, is there a dollar amount you’re working on or above a certain line?
     - Community Development Director Hartshorn said the projects that he went through earlier, such as Dominium, that would go by market value, 8%. That would be a large scale project. Small scale projects also pay park dedication fees but, obviously, not as much.
Councilmember Eastman asked about projects with TIF. Does the City receive the park dedication fee at once, similar to building permits, or does that have to do with the delay of TIF?

- Community Development Director Hartshorn said it is paid when they get their building permit, so we get it up front.

10) Email: “During construction, will the lake path be available to the public?”

- City Engineer Beckwith said the Thompson County Park project is run by the County. It is not a city park, facility or project. By going to the Dakota County website and searching Thompson County Park project, there is a contact you can reach out to for more information and specific questions about the construction itself.

- Councilmember Vitelli asked if Staff could speak about our West St. Paul sales tax and our plan going forward for not bonding street reconstruction?

  - Schroeder said when the citizens approved the sales tax, what our expectation was is that the City would receive $1.3M per year for 20 years. A total of $28M. If we receive that $28M prior to the termination of the 20 years, it stops, even if it only takes 17 years to get to that same $28M and the sales tax would retire, unless the City goes through the process with the Legislature to gain an extension. The purpose of the sales tax is to do reconstruction and mill & overlay projects on major roadways. So it would be municipal state aid roadways and other collector streets, such as Charlton, Smith, Livingston, Emerson, or roads like that which would receive those funds. Going forward, given that we now have funding to do a significant portion of those collector streets, our challenge is how to raise revenue for the neighborhood or the more local streets, cul-de-sacs, and such, that are failing but we don’t have a revenue source for them. There are two possible answers. One is Public Works has been doing center line paving to hold streets together in an interim fashion. The goal is typically four or five, sometimes longer. Public Works Staff put an inch over the top of what is already there. The second piece that the previous Council started is that we have a $300K levy in this current budget to start accumulating money for neighborhood streets. $300K is a very small number, however. The Finance Director showed information on the levy and infrastructure, but what is intended under the policy in the Capital Improvements Program, is that as that levy declines, we are able to exchange that for an improved levy towards those neighborhood streets. That’s the goal, and if we can get that levy up to the $2 or $3M mark, which we ought to be able to do, then we will be able to satisfactorily do the neighborhood streets.

11) Caller: “On the subject of taxes, particularly property taxes, we heard about quite a number of very large residential projects going up and that should bring in quite a bit of money for taxes. So I am wondering whether that is going to impact the ability to improve the roads and lower the property taxes?”

- Mayor Napier said street projects will be taken care of for the next 18-20 years, but the big thing is any tax relief we can get through additional taxes brought in is going to help us level off our levy, ultimately.

- Schroeder said he doesn’t have numbers in front of him, but some of the development that occurs each year is kind of normal standard development that does absolutely effect the tax base and, therefore, has a direct impact on the bottom line. Some projects,
however, are tax increment projects. In those cases, the goal is – in the long run, it will help the citizens a lot. But in the short run, only in much smaller ways, such as we do get some of the money for administration and park dedication fees, things like that. Some positive impact but not as dramatic as will occur at the end of the TIF district. The largest impact to the City’s bottom line in the tax area is that reduction in debt. If we can continue on the path of not issuing additional debt for things like buildings and parks and roadways, like the current plan is, within a very few number of years, the citizens will be able to realize the impact either on tax reductions or better improvements to the infrastructure.

12) Email: “With West St. Paul Days shutting down, does the city have any plans to take up the parade or put on open house events?”

- Mayor Napier said, with COVID, things haven’t taken off. I believe in our Strategic Planning session we will be talking about the idea that this community event is not taking place by the current organizers. We believe there is some availability of resources that they had and we would have access to. We will talk about how we want to move forward. If you have any feedback, please get it to your councilmembers so we can bring it to the table that day.

- Councilmember Justen said he assumes we will still do the Open House aspect of that when it’s safe to do it. The Open House was always done by the City.
  - City Manager Schroeder added that we are looking at September. It seems reasonable to expect that things will loosen up a little about then.
  - Mayor Napier said this is the Open House that we have here at City Hall that has become a real community event.

13) Email: “Can you give an update on the city manager search?”

- Councilmember Berry said we are going to be looking at resumes and doing interviews soon. Councilmember Justen, Mayor Napier and herself will be on the subcommittee to do some interviewing and we’re pretty excited about it.

- Councilmember Eng-Sarne added that the City hired a consultant who is an expert in this field and was recommended by the League of Minnesota Cities and other organizations. He has conducted an extensive search after interviewing each of us about what values we think are really important. We each had an extensive honest conversation about what we love about Ryan Schroeder, our current City Manager, and what we would like to see in a future candidate. The entire Council cannot review all of the applications together, as that would violate Open Meeting Law, so a subcommittee of the Council was formed. Councilmember Berry is an expert in the HR field, and we are lucky to have her expertise.

- Mayor Napier added that the big reason is, if you’re a candidate in a search for a major metropolitan City, candidate names are not announced to the public until they are a finalist for the position. We want to narrow it down without effecting their current employer, which is the reason behind it, and we feel we have a process in place that will do that, respectfully.

Q&A from the February 24, 2021 Town Hall:

1) Email: “Any news of what might be developed on the Burger King site?”

- Community Development Director Hartshorn said the plans are to come back with a new Burger King. The new franchise owners got in touch with Staff this winter and are going
to bring in plans this spring to demolition the current building and create a bigger one. It will still be a Burger King, just under new ownership.

2) Email: "Good evening, could you please explain what is required by homeowners who are selling their single family homes in regards to sanitary sewer inspections and/or expected relining old pipes or replacement."
   - At the sale of your home, Mayor Napier said you need to be sure that you have had your line going from your home all the way out to the street inspected and signed off by the City, which basically says there are no issues or concerns and the new homeowner can come in and know they have a signed off property. When you have an inspection and it passes, the inspection is good for 10 years.

3) Email: "With the planned reconstruction of Annapolis, are there any plans for improving the 3-way intersection with Charlton and Dodd? A roundabout, perhaps?"
   - Councilmember Justen said the unfortunate answer is trying to align the intersection. Three corners are West St. Paul and one corner is St. Paul. In order to do anything with that, whether it be a roundabout or any other solution beyond different traffic signaling, the project would need to be lined up between the two Cities and that is extremely difficult. We do hope to do something in the future for this intersection.
   - Mayor Napier said it is due to be reconstructed in 2023. There is time if we want to lobby and develop a connection for them to make this a safer intersection.

4) Email: "Do you know if there are going to be handicapped units at the new gateway place building being built at Robert and Annapolis?"
   - Community Development Director Hartshorn said he does not have that information and the best answer would come from the Dakota County Community Development Authority (CDA). He will forward this email to the appropriate person at the CDA.
   - Mayor Napier said his mother lives in a County building and there were several that accommodated for persons with disabilities.

5) Email: "Hi, thank you for opening up this town hall meeting to comments. We hope the city is looking at consolidating trash hauling. Every week there are six different trash haulers that drive our street. These are some of the heaviest trucks that use the street. Studies have shown that 90% of road breakup is due to truck traffic. The need for road maintenance should be reduced considerably if multiple heavy trucks used for hauling trash didn't travel the same streets duplicating routes – have only one hauler on each street. Other benefits from using a single hauler would be decreased fuel consumption, decreased air pollution, and decreased traffic flow of large vehicles making for safer streets for the neighborhoods that use them. I understand there may be a desire for private sector competition, but it seems clear the benefits of a single hauler far outweigh that. Therefore, we encourage the city leaders to propose a single hauler plan or a multiple hauler plan with only one hauler operating in each section of the city. Thank you for your consideration and, hopefully, moving ahead with this."
   - Mayor Napier said this has been a priority for the city and we have talked about it many times. I think we made some pretty good strides in this area.
   - City Manager Schroeder said, in 2018, Council made changes to the ordinance with goals to reduce traffic within neighborhoods and impact of vehicles on roads. At the same time, there was a goal of trying to continue to maintain choice for the end users and to see if there wasn't a way to accomplish some meaningful change with hauler support. That was extremely important at the time because St. Paul was going through a similar thing at the same time and there was a lot of consternation that was occurring
there. We wanted to make sure the same level of disruption and community upset didn’t happen here. Ultimately, what ended up happening, is we reduced the number of days in which hauling could occur and we also reduced the number of haulers. We grandfathered in haulers so if a hauler was currently licensed, they had the opportunity to continue to be licensed, unless they lost their license or gave it up or were purchased by another hauler. We limited it to four haulers and we are, essentially, down to four. Some of the haulers are still using vehicles from the company that they purchased. So if someone says there are six haulers in my neighborhood, they might be different names on the trucks, but it’s really four haulers. Unless it’s commercial haulers or roll-offs, which is not part of the ordinance. Both commercial haulers and roll-off service didn’t seem appropriate to the Council in 2018 to regulate either of those.

- Mayor Napier said the message is clear to us as a Council that this is important to people to see if we can reduce the amount of trucks.
- Councilmember Gulley said if we’re thinking about the way we do trash, I would like to see an option for city-wide composting.
- Councilmember Eastman added that there is a great Dakota County compost program at Thompson Park. Look it up, sign up – it’s a great way to reduce what you put out on the curb, and it’s free.

6) Email: “I tried following the directions to find when my street will be redone but can’t find the chart that was talked about. Please clarify again – I couldn’t find the “finance” tab nor the schedule once I got into the finance department.”

- Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki clarified that this can be found on the City’s website (www.wspmn.gov) under the Your Government tab, then go to Finance, and scroll down to the 2020 tab for the CIP to find out when your street will be redone. Also, the Town Hall survey is on the homepage of the City’s website. To report a pothole or other concerns, go to Report a Concern, click on that and choose which category it best fits into. They go directly to the department in charge of these categories. Staff is fantastic at responding to your questions.

7) Email: “Thank you very much for hosting these town halls. I want to express my gratitude for your dedication to our community. When do you anticipate city inspections resuming at the larger apartment complexes? Does the city inspector solicit input or feedback from residents at these buildings?”

- Community Development Director Hartshorn said we have Staff who attend ROMA meetings and meet with the building managers who come to those. Inspections will continue as soon as we can get back into buildings.
- Mayor Napier suggested that he gather some information for the City Manager to add to his update to Council.
- Councilmember Justen clarified that renters can go to the City’s website as Nowicki provided instructions for and click on Code Violation.

8) Email: “Are there any plans to resume the city-wide shred events?” And “Is there a central number to report malfunctioning traffic signals? It’s not easy to determine when lights are owned by the city, county or MnDOT.”

- Nowicki said the shred events were put on hold in 2020 due to COVID. The next one is scheduled for April 10th from 9:00 am to Noon at the Sports Complex. Go to our website to the calendar for more specifics.
Mayor Napier said residents can call or email Beckwith regarding malfunctioning lights. He will know who to contact to get answers. He has also worked hard to adjust the speed in which traffic signals change.

**Q&A from the February 27, 2021 Town Hall:**

1) **Email:** “Other cities have posted tips about carjacking prevention (on the rise). Can WSPPD do this?”

   - Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki will put some information on social media.

2) **Email:** “First off, I want to send a big Thank You to the Mayor, Council, and all our City Staff for holding these virtual town hall meetings. I also really appreciated the revisions that were made to the survey. So much better!!

Next, I’d like to express how much happier and more confident I feel in our city government seeing so many women on the council. A huge thank you to all the women who ran.

I would hope it’s obvious that this is in no way a dig at any of the fine councilmen and mayors serving now or previously. For me it quickly instills a much stronger sense of hope and trust in the decisions made by any powerful group when it’s members represent a broad cross-section of perspectives and life experiences – and the more closely they mirror the people their work affects, the better. I know I’m not alone in that.

So I can’t thank you all enough for choosing to work very intentionally to build a city governance organization that more closely mirrors our WSP residents, and one that is overtly welcoming to all, by including this work in your top strategic initiatives. Going forward I’m excited to see more and more voices have their due influence, representing the many other large groups who’ve never been adequately represented in our city government or city management. It is so pivotal to our future success – and yet another area where WSP can lead the way!

Can you talk a little more about your specific plans for moving this work forward this year? And over the next 2-3 years? Is your diversity/inclusion plan accessible by the public? If so, where might I find that?

Thank you again! All your hard work is very much appreciated.”

- Councilmember Justen asked Nowicki if this is on the website? Nowicki said there is not a formal document but we may have something more solid to include after the Strategic Initiatives meeting.

- City Manager Schroeder said this was a Council initiative two years ago and suspects it may be a Council initiative going forward and, essentially, while there isn’t a document published, our practices and our approaches have changed dramatically as a result of that Council initiative. Our results have, as well. We are in an industry that is fairly heavily male dominant. Public Works and Police represent 70% of our workforce. Even so, we made some improvements there. As Council knows, across our workforce, 27% of our workforce is female, 11% are persons of color. I looked this morning at recent hires. Within the leadership strata of the organization, exempt personnel, we have only had 6 hires or promotions in the last 4 years. Of those, half are female and one is a person of color. There are only 2 white males within those represented there. We have been making some headway and we will continue to. As you go through this strategic planning, the net of that is to provide a work plan for the next City Manager. Those applicants that I’ve talked to so far, I’ve told them that they should expect that this will be a big part of the work plan.
• Councilmember Justen said the recruitment process for the incoming City Manager significantly emphasized those goals. In the subcommittee was a constant conversation we had when reviewing the finalists and determining the finalists. I am confident by who I saw come through our subcommittee, that those are goals deeply held by those candidates and that was a priority both in the overall guidance from Council, the guidance that we carried through the subcommittee, the guidance that will see us working on finalists. The City Manager is a big component of that, and the good thing is our incoming City Manager candidates are all very attune to that and that is going to be an emphasis of the City Council when we're determining who our City Manager is.

• Councilmember Gulley said I graduated with a Master's in public policy 13 years ago. More than 50% of our class were female. When I hear that there are not women going into city governance, I wonder what we need to be doing as a City to reach out and recruit people who are coming through these programs. There are people who are going into governance and going into grad school so they can do this work but we may not be doing what we need to do to get them. I am deeply committed to this and have connections and relationships with the University of Minnesota and Metro State University where I would be happy to build those connections and help us recruit people who are coming out of governance and leadership programs. I think it's important to say that if women are not applying for these jobs, it's not that they aren't going through programs that will put them on that path. Responding to the question on diversity and inclusion, we have the Strategic Planning meeting coming up and I am excited about that. I am committed to working with the whole Council on accessibility in our public spaces and infrastructure where we have some really excellent things happening. I will work to make sure we continue to follow through on the sidewalk plan. We are really interested in looking at opportunities for different commissions, especially now that volunteeringism is so high in our city. Three commissions we considered are a diversity and inclusion committee, a human rights committee, and a public art committee. All three of those things would go a long way on our work on equity and inclusion in our city. I can see some great possibilities for those. One of the biggest things we can do is make sure when people come to the Council that there is no dismissiveness, no cutting them off, and that we're letting folks know we want them here and there voices are valuable. Even if we can't solve their problems immediately, that we are thinking about how we can be creative and thoughtful about moving ordinances and moving structures in our city that will say, if you're experiencing an issue and it's not working for you, we're going to think about how to make this better. And how we can make sure our city is doing the right thing for everyone.

• Councilmember Vitelli said I don’t want to be argumentative, but all this talk of inclusiveness and diversity is making it sound like the City of West St. Paul has been run by a bunch of dinosaurs for the last 50 years. We had a female City Manager, and statistics point out that we are not being systematically discriminatory towards women or anyone. Just because people are going to college for some of these jobs, maybe they’re finding places that pay more or do different things. The City of West St. Paul is not a bad place for women. We have never been discriminatory to minorities or women, so please keep that in mind, fellow Councilmembers.

• Councilmember Eastman added that, as we talk about the strategic planning and future opportunities for us either in OCWS or community meetings, there is a lot of work going
on locally at the state legislature on these topics. I shared Ruth Richardson, who is our State Representative from Inver Grove Heights. She was a co-chair of the House Select Committee on racial justice. They did a report to the legislature and I shared that with the City Manager. As well as in the policing area of the state legislature, Chief McCarthy of Mendota Heights is the President of the POST Board. They did a lot of work and a report last summer. There is an ability for us as a City and a Council to clarify what this means for our community, how we can adopt terms, and motions going forward. I also want to comment that there has been a lot of talk at the Capitol that they have recognized that systemic racism is a public health issue. There are a lot of organizations across the state and fed government and we should be a part of that, as well.

- Councilmember Berry said systemic racism is a public health crisis. Hiring for diversity is a marathon. There are a lot of steps we are doing better and we can still do better. Our Human Resources Director has been super open to that topic, and I feel very confident in her desire to do that, which I am happy for. Thank you, Debra Gieseke. We are very lucky to have Kayeae Johnson in our community, who started Residents of Color Collective (ROCC) in West St. Paul. I know she talked a lot about it with Chief Sturgeon, along with a discussion at a previous Council meeting. It was a good start in us leading folks of color to feel confident that we have someone who is open to these conversations. I feel good that we are headed in the right direction, but it will take a while to get to the perfect place. I don’t feel that we’ve hired racist dinosaurs, because there have some really good people on this table before us, also.

3) Email: “The home at 1565 Christensen is in a single family home neighborhood. It was purchased by IHHI properties, which is owned by the Blackstone Group from Chicago. That group purchases homes and turn them into rental properties. This home is a 3 bdrm 2 bath home, yet there are up to 10 cars parked there on a regular basis. I do not know how many unrelated people live there.

Does WSP have an ordinance that restricts single family homes being turned into rental properties without control over how many unrelated people can live in that home. Does WSP inspect these properties. Affordable housing is a real problem, but permitting homes to be turned into mint apartment complexes in neighborhoods that are designed for single family homes is not a solution to the affordable housing issue.”

- Community Development Director Hartshorn said we have a rental ordinance program and a rental density of 10% of rental properties on all our single family blocks. He will look at this property. Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki will forward the email to Hartshorn.

- Mayor Napier said this is one of the biggest most challenging things we do in our community is balancing homes being converted to rental property and how that impact the neighborhood. I think we’ve done an excellent job on managing that to a level that does not impact the community but can enhance it. With those troubled areas that may be expanding beyond their properties with different issues, we will deal with that, and it is definitely a priority.

- Councilmember Justen said we just visited the ordinance that deals with people that are unrelated and can live together in a home. It clarified the language. It’s not the wild west and we do have ordinances in place to take care of if a situation is problematic or doesn’t follow ordinance.
“Has the group home at 1546 Christensen been closed down? Does WSP require that homes being purchased and used to house vulnerable adults notify the immediate neighbors of that intent? Last year, after the murder that occurred at that residence, neighbors being interviewed by media said they were not aware it was a home for vulnerable adults with mental issues. Shouldn’t they be informed?”

- Chief Sturgeon said, as far as he knows, that group home is still operating. He had some correspondence with the State of Minnesota on that a couple weeks ago and it was all good. They just wanted to thank us for the work we did on the homicide that occurred there earlier this year. I do have to say that we were not aware of that group home there and had no calls for service there except for the homicide that happened. As far as notifying residents, there is a lot of data practices laws that go into effect and there is no requirement for notifications on that. The Community Development Director could talk about restrictions regarding group homes and those type of residents in residential neighborhoods. West St. Paul and South St. Paul do have the majority of group residential housing in Dakota County, just over 50% of the organized group residential housing in our communities.

- Councilmember Gulley said she doesn’t think we could require notifications because of restrictions on sharing medical information.

- Councilmember Justen said there are specific laws about notifications like this.

- Community Development Director Hartshorn said it should be noted that we tried. It was on the docket a few years ago. We sat down with the County but there wasn’t much we could do. We tried to limit group homes but didn’t have much luck. We have a verbal on the limit but no contract with the County that they can’t do it. But we keep good track on these homes.

- Councilmember Justen asked if that falls under rental density? Hartshorn said no, it does not.

- Mayor Napier said the big thing is it helps us to know if we have to send services.

- Councilmember Gulley said it’s helpful to know but we have to be careful about stigmatizing people with mental illness and assuming there would be more criminal activity there than anywhere else. There may be more people living in the house but that’s not against any of our laws.

“Recently, WSP officials have answered citizens’ concerns about Perkins and Bakers Square being replaced with yet another laundromat and car wash by explaining that the purchasing companies met all zoning requirements for those particular lots, and WSP cannot prevent those sales. Is the council and mayor working on any plan that would continue to encourage development but yet give the city some power to get more variety, or less repetitiveness in new businesses.”

- Mayor Napier said in 2012 he came in all fired up to bring in businesses he had heard our community wanted to be here and, for all the years he’s been on Council, it is the same story. We can create the environment for them to come and create a welcoming ordinance, zoning, all of that, but if they don’t want to come, they don’t want to come. I believe we set ourselves into a position right now where we will see more of those coming in. they want to be around certain businesses. We have one business that will be developed here soon and, once it is here, I believe others will follow. It’s hard to explain if you don’t understand how development works. It’s not as easy as saying come to our city, we want you here, here’s a spot. They need to want to come here and Hartshorn
has given them every reason to and has sought them out. But at the end of the day, you can’t make them come here. What I can tell you is where we are sitting right now, the next year to year and a half, we’re in a position to attract those businesses people want. The sit down dining and other retail. We are doing all we can as a Council. It’s been a priority for years and we will keep fighting for that.

- Councilmember Eng-Sarne reminded everyone to support your independent businesses as much as possible. We see all the time a long line at Canes or Starbucks but you also have FoodSmith, Amore and other locally owned independent businesses that you can support. And the more you support them, the more others will come. After the civil unrest in Minneapolis, we even saw a business from Lake Street move to West St. Paul into Signal Hills. We can continue to create an environment to support these businesses and I agree the new developments are going to be paramount to this. Signal Hills is already seeing more interest. When a new business comes to town, support it and be kind to it on the internet.

- Mayor Napier added that we are doing our part. Looking at Signal Hills development with 386 units, these are residents that are going to be living here and will have the opportunity to shop and visit our businesses. I see the things we are doing right now and we are positioning ourselves to really expand our development and also increase the activity at our current businesses.

- Councilmember Justen said the way you get businesses to come is to support like-minded businesses that are here. People come in because they see a need. Nobody moves a business in to fail. I always use the example of, it’s one of those things when you see a lack of diversity in businesses, my personal business for example, West St. Paul has three music instrument stores and a music school. Most communities don’t have anything like that and the reason is because we are all supported. If you support these businesses, you will get the businesses you want. To put it a different way and to demonstrate the limitations that we can do at this table, if you own your house and you decide you want to sell it to someone, obviously you want to sell your house to that person. In the same way, if you are an owner of a commercial lot and someone approaches you and fits everything and pays you the money you want, you have to give that property owner the same sort of credence that you give to a homeowner, where you have every right to get the money from the person you choose to, as long as they follow all the guidelines of the City. We work very hard to encourage and do outreach and that’s why we have a separate board for econ development. We do reach out and try to find businesses that you’re asking for.

- Councilmember Gulley said one things she sees a lot on social media that is really helpful are comments that someone just had dinner somewhere. That’s one thing that takes a small effort to support our local businesses. It may be a place that someone else didn’t know is right here in West St. Paul.

4) Email: “I think Ross forgot to update on the Butler trail study under the upcoming major street projects.”

- City Engineer Beckwith provided an update on the Butler trail study.
- Mayor Napier complimented the Councils before us and the current Council. This remains a priority and, ultimately, we will reap the rewards of having all that infrastructure completed.
5) Email: “Please allow for answers before moving on to the next questions/topics. What is the city doing to upcycle items like plants, large rocks or bricks for use in other locations? I noticed when work for the tunnels started, many just purchased items were dug out. We should always be striving to reuse these items or offer them to the public.”

- Mayor Napier said contractors are held to a certain level of environmental control, so they have to be able to preserve and reuse products. They are held to standards set by the state. Someone would have to approach the contractor directly if they wanted to ask about black dirt or such from a contractor.

- City Manager Schroeder said for most of them, we have minimal control. Someone else is the owner and has the contracts. The closest we have control is when we reclaim a street and have the opportunity to reuse the material.

“As for new developments, I see we always add grass areas. Have we considered more sustainable greens such as clover that takes less mowing, water and is good for pollinators. Additionally, I would like to see a city wide effort to collect and shred clean leaves in the fall for use as mulch in city gardens and beds as well as offered to the public. In the same vein, the curbside composting for food waste is a great idea, however the finished product should also be offered to the public. While we do have public lawn waste compost available in the area, it more often than not contains bad weed seeds and is not as lovely as food compost. Kaposia Landing in SSP features some fantastic solar lighting for all of their paths. I am not seeing or hearing a lot about utilizing solar where we can, in any of our new or rehabbed street plans. With the advent of the auto industry moving towards more electric cars, what is the city doing to plan for that likely future to add in public charging stations in parks, and new developments. Even if its not done right away, it should be a large part of our planning.”

- Mayor Napier said the County has done some things with charging stations, one being at Thompson park and composting there. As far as the other times related to plantings, I would encourage us to push the Environmental Committee, specifically, to the question that was asked. We have a great team there that could work on this and help us with some of our initiatives we establish. I was approached from someone involved with selling electric fleet vehicles and will get them in connection with Engineering/Public Works to see if there is anything we can do long range. I’m sure budgetary wise we would have to budget for this expense but I see it as a possibility down the road. We should be talking about it and making those connections.

- Councilmember Gulley said she wholeheartedly agrees that these questions should go to the Environmental Committee, as well as the one about if there is any way for us to coordinate with developers to recycle some of the things coming out of the ground, recognizing that we don’t have any actual control, doesn’t mean we cannot ask.

- Councilmember Eastman said for County projects, the County does have a lot of landscaping and construction recycled within the county, so I’m going to keep my fingers crossed that maybe those are where some of those things are going. Also we have a lot of opportunity locally to advance some of areas like local composting and maybe where we can get it. You probably won’t get it for free but you can get some of that very high quality compost soil at some events, we’ve done that in the past with the schools.
"I really want to see an art committee and or council formed. Not only for the Art Park but for city wide art opportunities. SSP has quite a bit of art murals and we don't come close in comparison. Both SSP and IGH did a fantastic Holiday Lights program that was just wonderful! In that same regard I think we need some sort of Social Events director beyond the Park and Rec. So many cities do such wonderful things to draw in visitors. Anoka is the Halloween Capitol of the world. Grand ave has Paws on Grand and the Grand Meandre to draw people to shop and eat there. Ice sculptures were placed in several Mpls Parks this winter. Zug Zug and Zarah, Cave woman and Cave man appeared in blocks of ice in two different parks for people to discover and enjoy. With the pandemic hopefully coming to an end or at least calming down a lot and the absence of WSP days, it would be lovely to have many, low cost events that are simply fun. Human Happiness Happenings if you will. The lighted fire truck parade was fantastic! I can see events along the River to River Greenway once complete, perhaps with local art sales, food booths for restaurants, local shops to sell their wares and draw people in to spend money in our town. Maybe even plan a pandemic palooza in September along Robert street and feature sidewalk sales, food, local bands such as Hot Broccoli or the Ally Ratz, all outdoors. With that we can also do fun and creative fundraising ideas to help support these ideas."

- Councilmember Berry said we recently had a Parks & Recreation Committee meeting to talk about the public art commission, which I know our Assistant Park Director Dave Schletty has been talking to folks in Cottage Grove about and how they got theirs up and running. With the interest we saw in creating the public art park, it didn't really make sense to drop that on the Parks & Recreation Committee, so we did talk about creating its own committee. The Parks & Recreation Committee was favorable to that idea. So we will continue that conversation in our Strategic Planning meeting. We also have a great Programming Director for Parks & Recreation who is really excited about some of these things. This past summer, she implemented a Story Stroll to attract people to go the parks, so she's looking for these ideas, also.

- Councilmember Justen said we are obviously serious about looking at the public arts committee, and one thing that would help is the fact that there was a mural many years ago that was extremely controversial on the optical shop. One thing we could do is reach out to the business community. There is a lot of confusion because there was controversy and problems with the City to do with that particular mural. A lot of business owners, myself included, would like to paint something but are not sure what we can do. You want to businesses to also be empowered to do art on their structures but we need to have clear communication for them to have that opportunity but also understand what is within bounds and what is not. Murals are a great way to bring attention to what you're doing but also contribute to the community. I encourage us to reach out and have communication with the business community.

6) Email: "Is there a park and ride plan?"

- Mayor Napier said there is a park and ride at the Sports Complex at Wentworth and Oakdale that gets very full. People in the local area park there and take the bus to work. I don't know if it's currently used as much right now with people working from home during COVID but contact Metro Transit for more information.
Mayor Napier asked Council to address the community.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne
Thank you for being here. We are all available for calls and emails whenever you need us. I look forward to working with this team and hearing from the community. The two main things she has heard from the community is policing, public safety and recruitment of officers, which I appreciate the work our Chief of Police has been doing, as well as communication of what we are doing. We are rolling out more information so the public.

On February 24th, I was on a call with the West St. Paul/Mendota Heights Rotary with Attorney Land. They presented about all the different services the Mexican Consulate provides. They are located near downtown St. Paul. If you're ever looking for any resources, I would be happy to send links for it. This is a really great resource for our community.

Mayor Napier
Please reach out to Council and Staff with any creative ideas you may have. Going back to Council of eight years ago, there was vision and a foresight. We have a lot of things happening and these are exciting times. Community Development Director Hartshorn's report of $825,000 worth of fees in 2020 and $53M in valuation shows that we are doing some great things. South Metro Fire is running with 6,700 calls, the Police Department is doing great things, and you saw the financial report that shows we have a plan to get out of debt. It is really upon this Council and future Councils leading up to 2035 that we accomplish that. It takes that type of vision and commitment. We have positioned ourselves, thanks to City Manager Schroeder and his team, to not stop. We are moving forward, thanks to the community in voting for the half cent sales tax. That has helped us to keep improving our roads and building our infrastructure. Roads and walkways are going to create a strong community that will attract people to come here. If you ask the real estate market, it's hot right now in West St. Paul. I met with South St. Paul Mayor Jimmy Francis and we had a great conversation. I believe they are also benefiting from our development. Experts tell you that your first ring suburbs help the next layer of communities. We are doing a fantastic job, we have a great team here and a great staff. We are going to be replacing Ryan Schroeder and we have some great candidates. This whole Council will interview candidates on March 12th. This is a big step to replace leadership, and we are positioning West St. Paul to do great things. That's why this survey and the community's involvement with Town Halls will really drive us to where we need to go.

Last year, we were a late player in the national Mayor's Water Conservation Challenge. This year, we have staff on board ready to rock and roll with this and it starts April 1st. Look for that to come out. It's a way that you can practice following water conservation and be good stewards. Ultimately, as a whole community, we can compete with other cities to see how good we can do. With our marketing team and committed residents, we finished second in our size of city that competed. I think we can win this and show the entire nation that we can do good things and conserve water. Please look for this to come out.

Each month, he and the City Manager attend the Mayors and Managers meetings, where they get together with other Mayors and Managers in Dakota County. Cities take turns hosting this meeting and celebrates something they’ve recently done. The next one coming up will be in South St. Paul. This time, I will be sharing a lot of things that we've been doing.
Councilmember Vitelli
Our email and phone numbers are on the website, if you have any concerns about anything. Feel free to contact me, I am open for conversation at any time. I've been involved in West St. Paul City government for 37 years and I have been on the Council for most of those years, as well as the Parks & Recreation Committee in the beginning. The progress we have made in the last eight years has been the greatest in my tenure here. I think redoing Robert Street spurred all of this development that has been happening. I've seen more sidewalks built in this city than I ever anticipated, and I am grateful for that. I go back and point to the leadership of Mayor Napier and Mayor Halverson, her time on the Council as Councilmember and as Mayor, we have accomplished many things to make this a better city for all of our residents. I'm proud of that.

Councilmember Eastman
I spoke with Representative Rick Hansen, and he sends his regards and wishes he could be here, but he is in session. Also, regarding the interest in business development and ideas of what we can bring to the city, I have had people in the past reach out to me, and I always sent them to Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn. If you are looking to expand your business or know of a business that wants to come here, please let Mr. Hartshorn know.

The Town Hall surveys are confidential and anonymous. You can sign in on the City's website with your profile, but you do not need to provide any information to complete the survey. That is just part of our software that is used for other services. She asked Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki to post a copy of the Town Hall presentation to the City's website. I am looking forward to the Strategic Planning meeting. We take your survey information and have conversations about where the City should focus and our priorities for the next two years. We have a lot of exciting, positive things going on in the city.

Councilmember Gulley
I appreciate everyone tuning in today. If you think of a question later, please do reach out. I am also having open office hours on Thursday, February 16, from 11 am to 1 pm, if you're interested in joining me. I am open for comments, questions and ideas anytime. My goal on Council is to think about creative ways we can make our city better — more inclusive, more accessible, more livable for everyone, so reach out anytime.

While she was campaigning in the community, she got a good sense of things that are important to our community and people want a lot of different things. A brief overview of some of the things she has heard includes public gathering spaces, family style restaurants, local flavor with smaller businesses and restaurants, community center, skate park, pedestrian safety, kids walking to school safety, bus safety, safety walking at night, wages and earned sick time, tenant protections, equity, diversity and understanding why it matters and actionable items to improve how we welcome people and that their voices are valued in our city, public art, and environmental protections.

On February 25th, Xcel Energy is hosting a public meeting, along with City Staff, to talk about some areas of our city that have experienced significant power outages. Some have experienced upwards of five or more in a year, which is considered unusual by Xcel's standards. The details are up on her social media and on Next Door. If you have questions or want to find out how to participate,
call Councilmember Gulley at 612.558.6019. I will get you the details for the meeting, as well as some devices if you need it to access the meeting.

Councilmember Justen
The survey is great and will be very helpful in giving us information we haven’t had before. The more responses we receive, the more prepared we will be for our Strategic Planning Meeting, so I encourage everyone to complete the survey. We cannot emphasize the survey enough because it gives us a ton of information and tells us about our community and what is important to you. I think we will have a lot to discuss at the Strategic Planning meeting but the more you can give us, the more we can talk about.

Councilmember Berry
What we learn from you will help guide us during the Strategic Planning session coming up. We have ideas, but we are just seven people in this city. The more we learn from you, the more we can cater to what makes sense for the whole city. In just the two years since I’ve been on Council, the input we have heard and seen has helped shift changes. As we continue to hear those things from you, we can do more. I had one of our Park & Recreation board members ask if it is the same survey as in past years, but no - it is absolutely different.

- Marketing & Communications Manager Nowicki said this is not the same survey as in the past five years or more. We decided to expand the survey, and it will only take about 5-10 minutes to complete. We will get such good data from this and it will help guide the people in this room for future policies. There are a few simple ways to get to the survey:
  - Go to the City’s website at www.wspmn.gov and on the home page is the Town Hall survey. It is available in both English and Spanish. Responses will be presented to Council prior to their Strategic Planning meeting.
  - If you don’t have access to the internet, paper copies are available at City Hall in both English and Spanish.
  - All surveys must be submitted by March 3rd.

Councilmember Berry said she was driving south on Annapolis to Marie and there is a lot of things going on, it’s really exciting. These changes will be for the better. It is a much better survey this year than last. The information you provide in this year’s survey will really help us with what we can do for you as residents and business owners in this city.

City Manager Schroeder said the best way for a member of the community to find out when their street or their neighborhood park will have something happen to it, is the Capital Improvement Program. It’s a lot of numbers but there is also 16 pages of narrative on the front end that talks about how these things happen and how they’re funded. If you get into the tables, go to the street section and you’ll see whether your street is scheduled to be done. In the first five years of the plan, it’s fairly close to accurate, though not absolute because it is just a planning document and priorities change, especially in the street and pipe area. Those projects take years to plan and engineer, but we pretty much have the first five years locked in. If your street is at year four, for instance, it will happen in year four. If you go to the finance tab on our webpage, the most recent CIP is under the 2020 tab. That’s the best way to figure out what’s happening in your neighborhood in the near term. The second thing I want to mention is Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route. Metro Transit made a
recommendation today to the Board and Council that on March 25th, Met Council is scheduled to make a decision on where the next BRT routes will be. The Rice/Robert Street transit route is currently recognized as being the second one to be constructed. The next route is planned for some time near 2030. It’s exciting but not done until Federal funding is gained. We weren’t really even envisioning having a high likelihood of that happening a year ago and now it’s on planning documents.

In closing ~
Thank you to Town Square Television for being here with us for these events. It’s great that we were able to broadcast this to the community. Without you it would be challenging, at best. Thanks, also, to Edgar Herrara for translating these meetings into Spanish on Channel 21. I really appreciate him stepping up as a resident of our community to help us.

Thank you to our City Manager Ryan Schroeder for helping get everyone in place to do this, Marketing & Communications Manager Dan Nowicki, City Clerk Shirley Buecksler, Police Chief Brian Sturgeon, Lieutenant Matt Swenke, Fire Chief Mark Juefts, Assistant Fire Chief Terry Johnson, City Engineer Ross Beckwith, Community and Economic Development Director Jim Hartshorn, and Finance Director Char Stark for their work in putting this together.

Thank you to my colleagues at the Council table for being here to help do this. This really is the stepping stone to our next two years and to our future. I appreciate all your work, fielding calls from people, and bringing as much energy as we can to our Strategic Planning Meeting on Saturday, March 6th. The work we do at this meeting will be handed off to the new City Manager that comes in. It’s nice to have clear direction and focus from the Council.

Thank you, Everyone.
~ Mayor Naper

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley R Buecksler
City Clerk/Recorder
2021 WEST ST. PAUL
TOWN HALL SURVEY RESULTS

CITY OF WEST ST. PAUL

2021
DEMographics

**I Live In**
(316 Answered)
- West St. Paul: 90%
- Outside West St. Paul: 10%

**If West St. Paul, What Ward?**
(275 Answered)
- Ward 3: 31%
- Ward 2: 24%
- Ward 1: 13%
- Don't know: 22%

**Household Language**
(317 Answered)
- Everyone in my household speaks fluent English: 98%
- At least 1 person in my household does not speak fluent English, but speaks Spanish: 2%

**Current Living Situation**
(310 Answered)
- I own my home in West St. Paul: 84%
- I do not live in West St. Paul: 9%
- I rent an apartment in West St. Paul: 5%
- I rent a single-family home in West St. Paul: 2%

**Race or Origin**
(355 Responses - Check all that apply)
- White: 290
- Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin: 31
- Some other race or origin: 10
- Black or African American: 8
- Asian: 7
- American Indian or Alaskan Native: 8
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander: 1

**Current Employment Status**
(362 Responses - Check all that apply)
- I work full-time: 177
- I'm retired: 67
- I work part-time: 24
- I'm currently unemployed: 30
- I own my own business: 24
- I work more than one job: 15
- I'm a student: 11
- I work gig economy jobs: 4
WHERE DO YOU WORK?
(253 Answered)

I work in St. Paul or Minneapolis: 32%

I work in a city other than West St. Paul, St. Paul or Minneapolis: 27%

I work at home: 20%

I work in West St. Paul: 18%

I work gig economy jobs in multiple cities: 3%

HOUSEHOLD FOOD & SHELTER SECURITY
(317 Answered)

I currently have food and housing security: 94%

I currently have food insecurity: 3%

I currently have food and housing insecurity: 2%

I currently have housing insecurity: 1%
# Ratings

## Quality of Life

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The overall quality of life in West St. Paul</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>149</td>
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<tr>
<td>West St. Paul as a place to live</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>146</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommend living in West St. Paul</th>
<th>YES</th>
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<tr>
<td>I'd recommend living in West St. Paul</td>
<td>269</td>
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## Governance

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
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<th>Fair</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall confidence in West St. Paul government</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>The overall direction that West St. Paul is taking</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>The value of services for the taxes paid to West St. Paul</td>
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<td>101</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>Being open and transparent to the public</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>Informing residents about issues facing the community</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>Overall customer service by West St. Paul employees</td>
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## Economy

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall economic health of West St. Paul</td>
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<td>120</td>
<td>76</td>
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<td>Overall quality of business and service establishments in West St. Paul</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>122</td>
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<td>Affordable places to live</td>
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## Mobility

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## RATINGS

### COMMUNITY DESIGN

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<td>Public places where people want to spend time</td>
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<td>Land use, planning, and zoning</td>
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<td>Property/Housing Code enforcement</td>
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### UTILITIES

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<td>Garbage collection</td>
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### SAFETY

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<tr>
<td>Overall feeling of safety in West St. Paul</td>
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<td>Police Services</td>
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<td>Ambulance or emergency medical services</td>
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<td>Mental Health Services</td>
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<td>Emergency Preparedness</td>
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<td>In your neighborhood</td>
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<td>In West St. Paul's retail and business areas</td>
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<td>68</td>
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<td>From Property Crime</td>
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<td>97</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>42</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall quality of natural environment in West St. Paul</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness of West St. Paul</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West St. Paul open space</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling Opportunities</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>40</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
## RATINGS

### PARKS AND RECREATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Availability of paths and walking trails</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City parks</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreation programs or classes</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation centers or facilities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness opportunities</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>42</td>
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</table>

### EDUCATION, ARTS & CULTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to attend cultural/arts/music activities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community support for the arts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of affordable quality child care/preschool</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 education</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult educational opportunities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
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</table>

### INCLUSIVITY & ENGAGEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents' connection and engagement with their community</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of civic/community pride</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West St. Paul as a place to raise children</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West St. Paul as a place to retire</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness and acceptance of the community toward people of diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracting people from diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities to volunteer</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HAVE YOU DONE THE FOLLOWING IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contacted the City of West St. Paul for help or information</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacted West St. Paul elected officials to express your opinion</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a local public meeting in person</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watched (online or on television) a local public meeting</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered your time to some group/activity in West St. Paul</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigned or advocated for an issue, cause or candidate</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessed the internet from your home using a computer, laptop or tablet</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessed the internet from your cell phone</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Additional comments or information you want West St. Paul officials to know.
- Please, for the love of everything, attract some additional/better internet options to WSP. US Fiber is rolling out in south Minneapolis and I’d love to see that option here. Comcast/Xfinity is consistently sub-par in value, and now with more and more things being on line their data caps are overbearing. This could impact our children’s ability to get schooling, and definitely has impacted by ability to work remotely. Century Link’s option is also very poor in value.
- Life in WSP has changed in the last 10 years and not for the better.
- Primary safety concern is drivers disregarding speed limit and other traffic laws. I support following the core cities’ lead and implementing a 20 mph citywide speed limit as well as improving intersections and streets to calm traffic.
- “Walkability is poor, as I said, but it is headed in the right direction.
- A tiny and non-representative (but admirably well-organized) clique has taken power at several levels of city government, and demands more power still. This has led to several missteps, and will lead to more if left unchecked. Of course, that clique contends it is displacing a prior clique which made its own missteps, which has some truth to it.”
- While most police functions are very good, need police chief to be more educated about issues that may affect minorities, not just the dominant culture. Don’t believe he is a bad person, just could be more educated, more sensitive, reach out more to non-white-male persons and communities. Needs to be aware that ANY sexual assault is too much and that an increase, regardless of his perceived reasons for it, is not acceptable, is not trivial, and address ways to combat it. NOT excuse it.
- More trails and sidewalks, please.
- I would like to see shoreline protections extended to Lilly Lake.
- High hopes for new council. Looking for a great deal more representation of women, BIPOC, and bi-lingual city staff, especially in leadership positions and police. Community center (and indoor park) is greatly needed, especially with the Y gone. More information in multiple languages, more sidewalks
and cycling infrastructure is needed. Not confident city has marketed itself well to black owned or targeted retail businesses, such as Ethiopian, Cajun or Soul food, black beauty products stores and salons, and clothing stores popular with black community. I’d like city council, staff, police, fire, etc. to go through cultural competence training. Important to ask long standing council, committee and commission members to step aside and let others serve.

- how the increase in rental properties affects traffic and saturated businesses (i.e. Signal Hills, Walgreens on Butler/Robert is already small, crowded. Adding the 2 new apartments to Kmart area will increase congestion in this entire intersection and shopping area. Many residents go to other communities for shopping, restaurants. We have basics - nothing more and there isn’t room for anything more. Disappointing.
- “- Would like to see an organized trash collection. As many as 5 garbage trucks drive on my street and alley each week. Way too many.
- Oakdale walking path needs to get done sooner than 2024.
- Police need to step up enforcement of traffic laws. Getti”
- “We need more diversity of businesses in WSP
- (We have too many of the same types of businesses)
- I understand that can be difficult to achieve
- How about writing into ordinances a limit so that you can decline when another car wash or laundromat wants to replace a restaurant
- Thx for your work
- “
- “There needs to be a concrete diversity and equity plan that includes training for all city staff. West Saint Paul is getting more diverse all the time and in order to serve all residents adequately it cannot be the same structure and delivery as when WSP was overwhelmingly white home owners who speak English.
- I also think there needs to be more support for locally owned small businesses. Chains just do not keep their earnings in the community like local businesses. We cannot compete with Woodbury or Eagan, who have much more space, for shoppers of the same national chain restaurants and stores. Unique local businesses are more likely to make us a destination and attract consumers from other areas. Locally owned businesses also do not have the same brand visibility or marketing budget as franchises. They need more assistance to thrive through these times. The easiest way would be to have grants or policies to specifically attract these types of businesses”
- My neighborhood has increasing concern over the Robert Street/Butler Ave intersection with high traffic and the entrances with DQ and Little Caesars (opposite sides of Robert St). Furthermore, the increased traffic from the new construction in Signal Hills also poses new safety considerations.
- “Thanks for all the work the city is doing.
- Love the additional transparency of having meetings broadcast online and archived.
- Love that the town hall meetings and survey were available in Spanish. Thanks for that effort.”
- Thank you for this survey.
- Sidewalks are needed in so many places. Please make this a priority.
- I think the sewer issue is not fair - there should be some type of rebate offered to homeowners or sellers who are required to have this done. Especially older home owners.
- You made a big mess of Robert street by putting in a medium.
- “I had a terrible time with Absolute Towing and Recovery and recommend the city find a new vendor or take it in house. I understand the need for city streets to be plowed and for snow emergencies, but the city’s towing vendor needs to treat citizens with courtesy and have reasonable fees. It was my
first winter living in WSP and I didn’t know about the snow emergency alerts. Absolute Towing and Recovery came to tow my car, hooked it up, I noticed, and then I ran out to get my car. They forced me to pay $100 cash on the spot to unhook my car from their truck. I felt like they were taking advantage of me and this driver just wanted to line his pockets. They did tow my other car and their fees are very expensive and their customer service poor.

- West St Paul should also find a way to inform new residents about snow emergency alerts.

   - West Saint Paul economic development should be called “Free money for friends of the city council” The city reeks of political correctness. Adds 10 to 12 percent to any construction project with phony disadvantaged contractor program. White male contractor can just hire sleazy lawyer to set 51% of company in wife’s name. Make up some business cards and have her sign documents. A nice touch is to add office for her for show. Government compliance workers basically look the other way so they can keep their good paying phony slacker jobs. Building trades have gotten rid of 2 year education requirements because they can’t get slackers to go to school. Labor racketeers endorse this. Women and minorities have special rights and privileges on job hiring. Former police chief Bud Shaver was a racketeer who covered up crime for a city council member who is still on city council. His loyalty was to crooked labor union officials. Stupid policies on road construction add 10% to cost for contingency fund to cover changes and extras. If their is money leftover, the city pockets the money instead of returning it to taxpayer. Try that in private industry and you go to jail. Council makes every effort to add to costs but no added value. Council wastes our money on stupid branding scams like slogans. West Saint Paul has the middle class on the run and I would not choose to live here. 30 years ago we were always near the top of the list when it came to low property taxes. Robert street project had phony bill for about $850,000 to remove muck and replace with fill sand. I have never heard an explanation as to what happened. They were more than one person involved in this. This isn’t the first phony bill and won’t be the last. Slip and fall lawyers will make money off you sidewalk program. As always, it will be a massive burden to shovel a sidewalk in front of my house. Can’t even go away for weekend. Of course the council will try to get more city workers to do the job and waste my money. You keep trying to turn West Saint Paul into a Saint Paul or Minneapolis. High Taxes, High Crime, Lousy Schools, High Density, political correct: shithole.

- done a great job of getting more housing in w.st.paul and trying his best to get other business to w.st.paul

   - Very happy to have Dave Napier as mayor. Kudos to the hard working council members and committee volunteers. Shame on the left leaning liberal residents who shun and bully neighbors who don’t agree with them. More needs to be done about crime and converter thefts from vehicles. More needs to be done about snowbird vehicles that block our streets from being plowed. Keep the WSP pool open!!

   - “We seem to have an exceptionally competent staff, e.g. City Manager, Engineer, and Attorney. PLEASE listen carefully to them when they advise Council members. I am saying this because as I watch bi-monthly City Council meetings, I hear Council members advising on where driveways should go, where sidewalks should go, what we can do legally as a city, etc. It is important to listen to our professional staff.”

   - Also, sidewalks are my biggest concern for our city. Bidwell, Emerson, and Smith should come WAY before a sidewalk on Moreland between Delaware and Smith. I walk there every day and there is very little traffic to avoid with a sidewalk. However, Smith Avenue between Moreland and Emerson is in dire need of a sidewalk. Emerson Avenue is also in dire need of a sidewalk. Bidwell is planned but sorely lacking since middle school children walk on that busy street every day. I know I am not alone in this request.

   - Thank you for listening to our opinions.

   - “I love West Saint Paul. I think it’s a great place to live.

   - If I were to offer any concerns, I think we could work on being more inclusive, especially towards those who are renters or unsheltered. I also know our black residents do not always feel safe, either from the police or from residents (close family friends have been called the N word just when they’re
walking about, at Heritage E-STEM there have been some racial tensions,

- police hassel8nf people just sitting in their cars, and I am completely ignoring the issues with tires/screws and tampons and porches).

- I also think that we could stand to clean our city up a little, I hate to see litter. “
- The city has not been as good about building sidewalk in ward one as they have been in other wards. It seems as though a lot of street rebuilding is being done in newer neighborhoods. Ward 1 seems like a poor relative
- My stepson, a young man of color, was stopped by the police on Robert St at about 10:30 at night when he and his girl friend were going to Taco Bell. There was no reason for the police to stop him (tabs were to date, lights all working, no noisy muffler). The reason the police used, after asking for license and insurance, was that the title of the vehicle is in his father’s name (my husband) who does not have a driver’s license. It is that way because he had helped his son get the loan for the vehicle, a vehicle that was purchased last summer. What bothers me is this could have escalated into a very serious situation ending in another accidental shooting of a young bi-racial man. He lives in WSP and is out and about all the time. Was it necessary to stop him at night?
- “I appreciate your efforts in providing this opportunity to engage on how West St Paul is performing as a community. The survey itself was a bit confusin and I am also wondering about the opportunities for responding more than once or false reporting on self demographics,
- I am also curious about how input is being solicited. I only saw this as I was accidentally on the WSP facebook page. My suspicion is that response rates may be lower than desired.

- My overall recommendation to the Council is to invest in the future. There will always be reasons to avoid the hard decisions, but if there isn’t a strategic and principled plan to think about where the community should be in 5-10 years, you will find yourself consistently in catch up mode... Community pride comes from creating the atmosphere and environment where people choose to invest in.”
- More walking and biking paths would be great. Very interested in how the Butler path study pans out. Would be great if there was more effort to support planting native plants / replacing invasive or non-native (commercial) grasses on private properties and more public green spaces,
- I think WSP government is getting better as it becomes more diverse and more inclusive. I hope to see this trend continue and the city to prioritize affordable housing in city planning. My adult children weren’t able to find housing they could afford in WSP, and had to move to other cities when they left home. We need more opportunities for families and young adults to access recreation and fitness without relying on privately owned gyms that charge fees. More activity-centered businesses in the city are needed as there are largely just restaurants for family “entertainment” and no longer any enclosed malls, movie theaters, bowling alleys, arcades, or even a ymca in WSP. Some areas of the city are very clean and presentable, others are a littered mess. The Walmart store is always very dirty, as is its parking lot and the corner of Robert Street and Wentworth. More pressure needs to be put on Walmart to invest in our community by cleaning up the vicinity of the store or get out of our city. Thank you for your time in collecting these survey results.
- The city needs to work with the business community to promote WSP businesses to people who live and work in downtown St. Paul. The city has been wasting this opportunity for years as downtown residency continues to grow. It was very refreshing to see the Art Park at Butler and Oakdale to finally receive some art. The city should work on enhancing art everywhere in the community by engaging with local artists who may contribute their time and talents to keep the momentum for physical art going . The city should sweep the streets more often and better enforce litter ordinances for businesses who do not clean up around themselves often enough - especially Wal-Mart. The city could better promote adopt a street and hydrants programs and better recognize volunteers in a more public way. The city needs to better enforce leash laws for dogs when they have an opportunity to do so,
- Thank you for your service! Happy to see the blight of Signal Hills about to change. It’s about time,
- I have concerns about the lack of enforcement in regards to shoveling of snow after snow falls. Many sidewalks go unshoveled that results in icy,
slippery sidewalks which are hazardous to those of us that walk daily for exercise. Why is this not addressed.

- The one thing that I'm NOT satisfied with is the snow removal on my part of Felix Street - 1109. For some reason they do a very mediocre job, on just the block from our house to Stanley, and the rest of it looks really good. I have contacted the city a couple of times about this, and there's been a little improvement, but still is not up to par.
- "We appreciate the opportunity to share our opinions. Thanks for asking!
- "
- Thank you to the West St Paul police department for always being out and patrolling the city...I walk a lot and always see them out driving around. Our street and road crews are awesome keeping our streets open during the big storms. We really need some nice businesses for shopping (when I first moved here we had a NICE Signal Hills with Herberger's, JCPenney and a lot of little shops...now??) Target is my favorite place to shop and they are great but that Walmart is a dump. No nice dining places...all we keep getting are fast foods and sports bars...also, how many banks and laundromats do we need? And, don't feel safe walking inane of the parks with their paths...yet walking on the main streets we take our lives in our hands trying to cross some of the major streets like Robert St where sometimes the game seems to be to see how many red lights you can run. (I live a block off Robert and even with a green light I never start out until I look a final time each way to see if anyone is still coming...thanks for giving us this survey. And thanks for the set-up with the town hall meetings on the web streaming site. Zoom is terrible...this is really great!
- I think you do a great job and I feel heard as well as welcomed. I want to help the people in apartment buildings to become more involved in our community. Some that I have spoken with have lived in rentals for decades.
- Public Works is knocking it out of the park (no pun intended). They keep our city operating in far more ways than people realize. Snow removal, parks upkeep, sewers, streets, sidewalks, and many other things. Great work and I'm happy my taxes at work are so successful! Love seeing the City Council members working together and getting things done and new opportunities in the city.
- We need more sidewalks. Sidewalks sidewalks sidewalks. Live near Langer Circle, Emerson is not safe for walkers of any age. Bidwell is also dangerous.
- "We need to work on inclusivity/diversity in our community, starting with the police force. The last 2 hires were 2 white men. I am so glad there are 4 women on the city council, now we need to work to elect people of color and hire people of color at city hall.
- We need more diverse businesses in our community, let's think out of the box to attract more independent businesses or offer incentives for smaller new businesses owners. Especially those businesses offering services or goods for a diverse population, nobody is moving into our community if they can't find services/goods that reflect their cultural/ethnic needs. Why not a marketplace like global market on smaller scale? We need some of these white people to experience something other than white culture. Love the Tii Cup and Pepper Thai. More of that is good.
- We are behind with recycling in our community, we need to encourage curbside composting pick up and other ways to keep landfills free of items that can be recycled. We need to be good stewards of our resources.
- How about more activities for the youth besides sporting events in our community? Like drop in teen center? A safe place for arts/music for this age group outside of the schools? Especially for those adolescents and young adults experiencing homelessness. How bout job corps for the youth in our community?
- Lastly, we need a legitimate free/sliding scale clinic that provides reproductive health care for women and adolescents, not the pseudo health pregnancy centers like being rebuilt on Robert Street. In addition a free clinic/sliding scale clinic for families. Again, think out of the box and entice St Mary's free clinic to set up shop once weekly in a community space like a church or school on the bus line. Or contact a university that has nurse practitioner/nursing program to offer free clinic. Augsburg offers free clinic in their neighborhood, St Kate's recently opened a school based clinic in White Bear Lake schools for uninsured and underinsured students and families in the district. Not everybody in West St Paul has access to health care. If we want a healthy community, we need healthy community members and that's tough to do without health insurance.
- As we have more diverse families move into our community, we need some sort of forums to educate our community of the value of diversity. Ignorance...
breeds racism, we have enough of that already in our community.

- Thanks for this safe space to let my voice be heard. I appreciate all that the new council is doing to make my community a more open, progressive and kinder one for all. “
- John Zanmiller was the single greatest mayor this town every had. I named my kids after John Zanmiller and more people should do the same.
- “I am a life long WSP-er. I am very disappointed in the executive decisions by the council and planning commission to keep adding car washes, auto parts stores, laundromats, tire shops - such REPETITION to what is being allowed to take up valuable Robert Street retail space! Why keep allowing these same types of businesses? I would prefer Robert Street have a VARIETY of businesses, including more sit down restaurants, mom and pop small businesses, even unique chain places. Covid has killed lots of sit down restaurants and now WSP is choosing to instead fill those spaces with repetitive businesses.

- Also - WSP Walmart! ISH! The City of WSP needs to hold Walmart corporate accountable for keeping a better establishment here. Lets force Walmart to clean up the litter from their parking lot and surrounding properties (the wooded area between Walmart and Hobby Lobby looks like a deserted landfill!). Have Walmart regularly/daily clean up debris from their grounds which blows around our town.

- The new Robert Street improvements are already falling apart! The wall that was put in by the oil change shop on Robert/Moreland is already crumbling. Fancy fences are ending up being blowing trash nets. It seems we spent money on Robert Street only to let it go bad quickly. Lets get these issues fixed before they get worse.

- WSP desperately needs more family friendly options - we let Chuck E Cheeses close (which is now ANOTHER auto parts store!), we lost the YMCA. LETS put it in the plans now to get a community center - somewhere where kids can play/swim, residents can work out, have meeting spaces, and a community space we can be proud of. Until that happens please do everything you can to keep the WSP swimming pool open.

- Thank you to Dave Napier and all who help make WSP a good place to work/live/be.”

- More street lights in residential areas

- “west St Paul is a great place to live. Last year the crime level was up because of the riots sparked by the George Floyd killing. I hope that this year is different and the crime level decreases not only in West St Paul but across this city and the nation. Hopefully new restaurants can come in to the city replacing those that closed. Thank you for putting in new sidewalks making it a lot easier for those who walk around. I do have a suggestion that where there is a bus stop/shelter it is the responsibility of the business/store or resident to clean off the side walk or street so folks can board the city bus safely. I had this checked out by Metro Transit. The reason I am bringing this up is because last winter the bus stop for the #75 at Livingston and Minn dota Road was never cleaned out making it difficult to get on the bus with groceries. That stop in right behind Cub Foods. Another thing that I want to express my concern is sometime like last winter I had a hard time getting to Robert St because when I walked there a number of my neighbors never shoveled there sidewalks off. I have called the city and complained I may have to keep doing that. Please check out by who is responsible for cleaning out the bus stops by calling Metro Transit 612-373-3333 and if I am correct pass an ordinance to that effect. The elderly population including myself it counting on you for our safety.

- Thank you very much.

- “

- The feeling of safety has gone down. Crime seems to be rampant and unchecked. The police can only do so much. They need the support of elected officials and the judicial branch as well. As long as criminals don’t have serious repercussions they will continue. As long as the larger cities of Minneapolis
and Saint Paul allow the crime to go unchecked it will spill into our neighborhoods and ruin what used to be a decent city.

- Trash, dog poop and sidewalks not shoveled have been out of control. I wish there were more natural areas around ward 1 aside from Thompson. I like the parks. They are green space but not really natural. I wish there were more trash and recycling receptacles, not just in the parks. I'm worried about carjackings and auto/ cat converter theft. I want a large friendly fenced dog park.
- Please pay more attention to climate change and environmental issues
- “I think wsp could use more amenities and less rental property. Our housing is affordable and we now have enough affordable apartments for rent. I definitely do not want the rental density ordinance to go away. Code enforcement is important and vital to keeping up our neighborhoods’ appearances. Thank you for your service to our city.”
- “I live in Mendota Heights. I am afraid to go most anywhere by myself these days because of the rise in violent crime, carjackings, etc. I used to shop on Robert Street but am hesitant to do so now unless my husband is with me.
- On another note, it would be nice if there were some better restaurants on Robert Street. We are not interested in chains like Applebee’s, Denny’s, etc, We are more likely to eat out in Highland or along West 7th.”
- Thanks for asking
- “No more laundry mat.
- No more banks.
- Straighten Robert Street out!!
- So dangerous when making a left hand turn. CRAZY that was even approved."
- West St. Paul has poor shopping experiences if u are not a bank or car. Becoming a dangerous communities with the additions of more apartment buildings. Robert St being torn up again when just newly updated several years ago. Poor council planning. Traffic will become impossible on Robert, Thompson and Butler. Our quiet beautiful community is becoming a noisy crime riddled community. It is not convenient anymore for seniors.
- Too much rental property. Too many low rent apartments. W St Paul is turning into a mess. Do not feel safe and hope to leave. It used to have a clean small town feel. Now it is a Walmart dump.
- “I’m very grateful to live in West St. Paul, where I’ve owned a home for the past 16 years. I love the quietness of my neighborhood, the low-key atmosphere, and the general level of community commitment. I’m thrilled with the development and direction of elected city leadership over the past several years - the priorities they represent, their style of governance, and their hard work. I’m pleased that the elected officials who abused their positions by bullying, harassing, and intimidating colleagues and constituents are no longer serving. This was a shameful period in our town’s history.

- It was hard to answer some of the questions on the survey because my feelings about West Saint Paul residential and park areas are very different than my feelings about Robert Street. While I appreciate the facilities and resources on Robert Street, I’m troubled by the enduring issues of commercial vacancies, blighted lots, and some enduring ugliness, despite the renovation. I’m encouraged by the Signal Hills residential development, but I feel the town won’t be really thriving until Robert Street’s health is improved and stabilized.

- Finally, while I’m thrilled by the leadership developments in the past few years, especially considering the alternatives, it’s still painfully obvious that the town’s leadership, elected and hired, does not represent the diversity of populations and communities it serves. More needs to be done to develop leaders of color - in administrative and elected roles. Moving in this direction will build health and well-being in the community. Right now we reflect the constructions of American society over the last century - its reinforcing biases and norms. It’s time to push our lived reality into the present, and become a truly multi-culturally representative society,
Thank you for doing the Town Halls! I have learned a great deal this morning.

The city needs to focus on making WSP look less like University Ave and more like Woodbury or Apple Valley. We have too many laundromats, car part stores and not enough retail or sit down dining. It looks ghetto.

Thanks for town meetings. Well run. Interesting and informative.

"Storm water run-off"

The rain/snow melt is directed into our pond on Carmel Ave, but has no way to exit so that the pond can clean itself. There needs to be water current in order to keep it clean and odor free. Since this pond is a help for WSP, otherwise Carmel floods when it rains, it would be helpful to have a way to clean it.

Thank you for your time and effort in this matter."

Not currently working because of COVID-19, my job is in Eagan. I think WSP does very good overall. New engaged young residents are a real asset, I see WSP on an upward trajectory.

I used to live here but moved. Property crime was too high and not enough housing options for families to grow. I loved the community, being able to walk most everywhere and a lot of other options with the area. It was a hard choice to leave.

We have plentiful affordable housing. We have too many apartment buildings for the size of our community and our population. We do not have enough housing for retirees, meaning main level living. It forces many to leave the area to move to other communities. Robert Street could attract so many more different businesses. It's disappointing that Granny's Donuts is going to be the sight of yet another apartment building. The former Perkins if going to be the site of another laundromat and the former Bakers Square sight is going to be a car wash. Ridiculous! Non of these are desirable businesses that are going to attract families to move to the area or keep them here. The school district is good but not great. If that tanks, families with other options will leave. West St. Paul has an amazing location. It has reasonably priced homes that can attract young home owners. Providing a safe community, good public services and great public schools will make this a community they'll want to remain in to raise their families.

Stay the course folks, West St Paul is doing fine. Don't get hung up on diversity what will be will be. Treat everyone the same!

"I want to see

-a truly diverse police dept, from the top down.

-less big box development

-better sidewalks

-a community center like SSP has w options and resources for the elderly

-better public transport and biking lanes to main roads leading to schools.

-adherence to the plan created around Signal hills and mixed use development around all population dense development that currently exists."

Interested in getting the Art Park ready for extensive gardens and design.

The West St Paul City Council has great intentions but they are not focusing on the real issues of WSP. The city has continued to develop with businesses and housing (mostly low income/market rate) which brings more and more people to WSP. However, the police department has been given no additional resources to handle the increased influx of people. WSP also has the highest felony level crime per officer in all of Dakota County per the Dakota County Attorneys Office. This is not new and WSP has been leading this sad statistics as the busiest city in Dakota County with the lease amount of officers for years. As the city council and community continue to criticize the WSP police department, I would encourage all of you to do multiple ride-alongs on different shifts to see what WSP is really like. I hear a lot about rude neighbors, noise complaints that are "not addressed" and other quality of life issues. These are absolutely important issues however, I know WSP officers have their hands full responding to shots fired calls, robberies, assaults, etc. The manpower is limited and without the addition of more officers, these calls will continue to be a non-priority as offices begin to burn out and spend their time on higher priority calls for service. There is also very little support from the city council for the police department. Most (not all) of
the city council members continue to publicly critique the police department, call for reviews of nonsense complaints without any background information into those situations, and could stand for a reality check as to what the WSP Officers deal with on a daily basis. The WSP Police do have a diverse group of people working there and applicants are picked based on skills and ability to do their job. The constant critiquing of our “diversity level” takes away from the hard work all our officers (including those who are non white or female) do everyday. Get to know your Officers and what a real shift looks like before you worry about improving a institution you know nothing about, other than what the TV shows you.

- Storm water runoff from local area is directed into the Carmel ave pond. With only one inlet/outlet from Carmel road, causes the pond health to become stinky, green and brackish. It would be helpful to have second inlet/outlet to control the flow for natural cleaning for the pond. Thanks for listening!
- “It’s disappointing to see the loss of sit down restaurants but understand that’s out of your control. But it would be nice to have more options.
- It would be nice to see a larger variety of businesses along Robert Street. I don’t know that any street needs 4 chicken restaurants, 4 or more car washes (with the possible new one) or so many laundromat, which say low-rent district to me. I understand that with the zoning ordinances you have little control on who takes these spots but it would be nice to woo some other businesses.
- Finally, force businesses along Robert Street to clean up their trash! You expect home owners to keep their property nice, but Robert Street businesses and bus stops look like pig pens. It’s disgusting and embarrassing.
- Thank you for reading my comments.”
- “Taxes keep going up and all we get for our money is some lousy bike paths. Just about every road in the city is junk and we keep constructing new infrastructure. We can’t even afford to maintain what we have right now.
- Maybe an adjustment in priorities is worth considering...
- 
- -Concerned Citizen”
- “I miss WSP dearly. It’s a wonderful family oriented City. I feel a sense of new and important things happening. Not a big fan of 2 laundromats within the same block.
- I know you can not pick who wants to open a business in WSP. So how can the City draw the businesses residents desire? Different with so many stores not surviving on line shopping. A community center would be a great asset. And opportunity for WSP school age youth is a good direction to move. I like the opportunity for families with food shortages to be able to get out to the food drives. And if they can not get to the food drive, a group of residents that could deliver the food would be a win, win. It’s a great networking tool.
- Thank you and take care! “
- Overall West St. Paul has so much potential and even more so with some new faces at the council table. But we all know there are major issues with safety for women in this community, uneven policing of people of color and women, and code enforcement. This city needs continued and increasingly bold, progressive leadership for change to keep up with the world and to value the viewpoints and experiences of all its citizens more, as well as climate change, diversity and inclusion, and accessibility. I love living here, honestly, and recommend others do, too, but I also am willing to acknowledge how much change is still needed so that we can move forward. I would love to see that reflected in policy and city initiatives. We have a very serious problem with economic development in this city and I won’t have it that we can’t do something about it. Other cities do. Strategic, visionary, imaginative solutions are needed. There are lots of people who have been punished for their engagement with their city issues, and it has a chilling effect on others who want to be involved but are nervous about the blowback. It doesn’t have to be rooted in conflict. It can be rooted in trying to do the best for everyone who lives
here and loves this city. Thank you for your time.

- Why did the link to the survey take me directly to the Spanish version?
- "Frustrated with the ongoing development of more apartment rental housing. Robert street functions but is such an eyesore with excessive amounts of fast food, tire, and convenience stores.

- A community that values the community would focus on creating connections â€“ community/fitness center and a major Focus must be on making the gems of the city (parks, nature, schools) more accessible to everyone via bike and walkways. Charlton, smith, Moreland, butler, Bernard, bidwell, Livingston, Emerson should all have bike ways and sidewalks. The investments in this type infrastructure in the wealthier, less populated areas of the city is fantastic for those neighborhoods but profoundly inequitable to the safety and ease of use for the majority of the community.

- "West St Paul used to be an excellent place to live. We were hopeful that improvements around Robert Street would make it even better but most of Robert Street is just a blight. It's not attractive or safe. It attracts too many unsavory types and seems to be a great place for crime."

- Also the push to bring in more and more apartments and low income housing has caused overall drop in standard of living."
- Speeding on main roads in Ward 3 is out of control. Please address! "West St Paul's location is both a curse and a blessing. It's five square miles are surrounded by major highways providing easy access to metro areas. This also provides easy access for the criminal element to flee their crime.

- Robert Street provides retail but as retail grows so does the opportunity for crime.

- A variety of housing options are available but more police resources will be needed as more and more multi-housing units are built in West St Paul.

- West St Paul is a city that provides so much to so many people. Those looking for a wonderful thriving community will find it here.

- West Saint Paul needs more quality restaurants and not fast food chicken places. Also some other retailers like Kohl's.
- The Zoning/business model on Robert Street is holding WSP back. There are very few options for dining, and nothing that isn't a chain on the street. It looks junky. Working to attract a variety of quality businesses, something other than fast food and tires, would go a long way toward making WSP a more desirable place to live.
- I think there should be sidewalks on all snow emergency routes. Those streets are busy streets and it's so uncomfortable having to walk down a busy street with no sidewalk. Emerson Ave West is one that gets busy and people drive fast so it can be very uncomfortable at times."
- "Green space, parks, trails, and nature areas are important to us.
- I'd like to see more unique stores and restaurants. Seems like all we have are big box stores, chicken, and hamburgers.
- Racial equity, advancement of women, and LGBTQ issues are very important to our family."
- "In general, a very convenient and safe place to live. Would like to see more choices in sit down restaurants and more family activities."

-
• Facebook cannot be the main way to communicate with WSP citizens.
• I dream of curbside composting. If a commercial business can get a residential-sized composting bin picked up weekly, residents should be able to buy this service too. I get not exactly a city issue but it’s important to me.
• Live In south Saint Paul. Do a lot of business In west Saint Paul.
• Enforce snow and ice removal on sidewalks throughout the city.
• Community communication is a area of needed improvement. The sidewalk on Robert is still terrible.
• PD needs to get a better handle on petty crime or it’s going to explode and increase in severity.
• I grew up in WSP, Went to Grass Jr High And Sibley. My 2 older daughters graduated from Sibley and my youngest son is currently at Heritage Stem. While we don’t live in WSP we do live in Mendota Heights.
• “I’m very concerned about the traffic situation with the building of HyVee. I realize it is a boon for our area, but it is hard for me to visualize keeping pedestrians safe and maintaining a safe traffic flow. I live at 142 Carmel Ave. and the adjacent pond is becoming more stagnant and putrid each year. Last summer the smell was noxious and clouds of gnats were present through July and August. It’s no longer a pond, but simply a quagmire of decaying leaves. I don’t know the solution, maybe fill it in and install a ditch of some kind for drainage? The scum, smell and neglected appearance is not a boon for the area.
• Thank you for your attention.”
• After watching the Town Hall meeting I will be moving out of West St Paul. I have been here for 28 years but watching the City Council I am not happy with the issues the Council see as important. Total lack of focus on what makes a community livable. Dissapointed how a great deal of Council members love to hear themselves talk but really don’t say anything.
• Really excited to see and support the new make-up of the West St. Paul Council. Have had many positive and wonderful interactions with our Chief of police (and department) who are great and caring. Have had many positive interactions with city officials and love that they are accessible and responsive.
• Need more things for kids to do please!
• “West St. Paul police are liars, they suck!
• We need more for children to do. “
• “We are pleased with recent increase in diversity in elected positions (specifically female representation and working age adults vs many retirement age white men previously). Would like to see more racial and ethnic diversity in elected and hired city roles.

• I am concerned with accounts I’ve heard of various community members’ interactions with WSP police. Specifically, harassment and nails in tires likely from Dave Meisinger or other community member against women voicing their opinions and running for office, but also including WSP police interactions with non-white residents and with those experiencing mental illness. I’d like to see more non-white police officers and employees hired into WSP, and I would also like to see more public statements, commitments, dialogue and action on diversity, equity and inclusion.
• I’m pleased to see development happening on Robert Street but am wondering how we might be able to attract more variety in stores and restaurants, Would love Trader Joe’s, TJ Maxx, healthier restaurants, and an Asian grocery store. The loss of the YMCA is a disappointment. Would love to see a bigger, better community pool and water park built in WSP similar to St Louis Park or Apple Valley or Edina, or even IGH or Eagan. Looking forward to the pedestrian/bike tunnel!
• “Section 3 answers skewed due to
Covid isolation

Need more opportunities for teens age 13-15.

Would love more sidewalks for safe walks with children! The children's section at the library could use some sprucing up too.

"It's a nice place to live. It's convenient. The snowplowing has always been good. Our schools are good. We love the small family businesses and small chains.

Safety & crime is a moderately high concern for us. It would be nice to have more for kids to do, though our parks are nice and I appreciate the improvements over the last few years."

"A newly West Saint Paul resident of 9 months....
Formerly long time Inver Grove Heights resident."

"Please NO MORE FAST FOOD OR CHAINS !!! The population in general is overweight or obese, partly due to the poor food options we have in our city."

We need more HEALTHY food choices and options in our community. Also why aren’t there more family owned or privately owned restaurants with real food here?? Why not a vegetarian or vegan specialty restaurant? Why not a bakery? Why not any of the unique independent restaurants that are in South Minneapolis, Eagan or Woodbury as an example?

Why don’t we partner with a chef school and offer a business deal to some chef students to start their own restaurant in WSP? “

Left property code enforcement blank as the question is ambiguous. Business property is poorly maintained with no repercussions yet homeowners are unfairly persecuted by biased enforcers.

I work in W. St. Paul & think it's a great community. Lots of amenities and great individuals. I also think the police are very kind, responsive, & understanding.

"We need senior physical activity as a priority.

Pickleball courts, beyond the 1 or 2 courts being considered.

Harmon Park is the ideal location as the school kids would love pickleball."

Robert Street needs regular trash pick up from Annapolis to Southview. Walmart needs to be responsible for their littered grounds. Parking enforcement needs to start towing snow birds. Vitelli needs to retire from council. Justen needs his massive ego deflated. Berry should never again â€œtalk blackâ€ in council meetings. We do not need any more fast food, laundromats, car washes, tire shops, & auto parts stores on Robert St.

We have lived in west st paul for 25 years and have grown to love it very much. I know that crime is happening all over but we are a bit concerned about the uptick of petty crimes in the area. We love and support our police dept and I am hoping that they continue to get the community’s support to do their job and keep crime at a minimum. We love west st paul.

Love the splash pad and playground at Harmon Park. It is very popular and used by a lot of families! At times, it has even been what I would describe as crowded. Would love to have more space / amenities like the splash pad and playground at Harmon Park. Thank you.

I would like to see more opportunities to connect with my community advertise on social media because I don’t really see them anywhere but I’m sure they’re out there. I also really want a dog park.

"WSP is doing a good job. We do need more businesses -- not chicken, taco or car places,

Disappointed with the code enforcement when it comes to the city sidewalks in the winter. I am a walker

and find it very difficult to walk because a large number of sidewalks are never shoveled. Walking in street is

so dangerous. It seems to be the same households every winter who do not shovel at all.
I have dealt with the city street, parks and maintenance crew, and they always smile and seem happy and try to do a good job. Disappointed with city decisions when it comes to bringing in new businesses. “Love the survey. Love the idea of town hall meetings...meant to go...will go in future. Get us a nice restaurant please and some retail.” Whatever happened to a maintenance district being formed for Robert Street? We need to keep up the plants in the median and keep the litter down. Please work with the Met Council and business community to keep the litter off of Robert and the side streets and especially the bus stops! A clean city is our way to show that we have civic pride and care. I know the police and public works are busy, but when large bags of trash are sitting on the side of the streets, find a way to have someone pick it up instead of just driving past it. Right now caring citizens are the only mechanism in ensuring litter is picked up. Hoping for Pickleball courts in the near future - heard you were meeting about this. Since my wife, myself and our 2 children moved to West Saint Paul in 2013, we have seen fewer and fewer outlets and and places for children to gather. West Saint Paul needs to incentivize the YMCA to return or build a skate park, arcade, emporium, roller rink or rec center for our children to congregate and build fine memories of their home town. It seems that all this town is doing these days, is creating an environment in which our children will be anxious to uproot and begin their adult lives elsewhere. Give it a rest on every little thing geared at racial equality. That is all you ever hear about. Work on making it cleaner. Half the time WSP looks like trash. The lack of truly affordable rental housing (not market rate rental housing) is an issue that I see in West St Paul. I live a block from the border, and work for a church in South St Paul that is close to the WSP border, so we have many members who reside in WSP. Affordability is the issue that I hear most often about from members and friends. Lack of quality in businesses. To many launderets, car wash’s, and auto part places for one city. It sure would be nice to have a community center with actives for all ages. The old K Mart site would have been perfect for the city to buy and use for this. What a lost opportunity... Could you please consider allowing ADUs in the future. Minneapolis and St. Paul have both approved ADUs in the last few years. I would the opportunity to build an apartment for my aging family member. “We need fewer apartments and more retail opportunities. More food options other than drive throughs. Apartments, liquor stores, and fast food chicken is no way to a bright future. We miss the bowling alley. We miss sit down restaurants.” I gave low marks for police services especially because of the fact that they do not tell us what is happening like many other communities do and I know that there are problems that it would help to be aware of and I do not like this secrecy. I am afraid to walk by myself anywhere because of what I know is going on near me. Communication from the police department is very good. They are doing it right. Others need to take note. Excellent public safety. The need to support street maintenance and public safety is very important. “Public safety is well done compared to other cities. They give a sense of welcoming to every individual no matter their gender and/or race. I feel confident in their works and I wouldn’t be afraid to reach out to them as they listen to concerns and consider the opinions of the community.
A sense of welcoming of ALL individuals needs to be more of a focus. Left leaning and right leaning. The left needs to be more welcoming to the right. The right needs to be more welcome of the left. There is a lot of talk about issues of diversity, but that can’t be the faults of single groups such as public safety. How can they have control of certain incidents that happen when it’s out of their hands. How can they control who is applying for law enforcement jobs and how is it their fault that diversity isn’t in the mix. Pointing fingers and putting blame creates stress and doesn’t do well for mental health amongst city workers, especially public safety when they are already under a lot of stress with their job as is. The golden rule... treat others like how you’d want to be treated.

West Saint Paul needs a community center! There are many families with children that would utilize a community center, look at how popular Harmon Park is now. There aren’t many places to gather as a community right now.

I just want to express some concerns about our City Council. I’m not a huge politics person but enjoy watching the council meetings to hear about things happening in our city. A couple meetings ago I noticed one of the council members become very defensive and have a bad attitude that I think really set a bad imagine to our City Council. I have noticed that same member have a very selfish image reflective attitude and I disagree with how they represent themselves. It should not be about how they look in a position of power but yet as a representative for our city. Again I’m not a very political person but I disagree with such self centered attitude. I also want to express concerns our council and some members of the public had with our public safety. I think our Police Chief did an amazing job speaking about awareness with diversity in our Police Department. I have had good and bad interactions with law enforcement throughout my life, but never have I with any Officer in the City of West St. Paul. Most Officers I have interacted with yes have been white but yet their race hasn’t had anything to contribute to their professionalism. I don’t disagree with the thought that sometimes diverse people dealing with diverse people is better but yet with the City of West St. Paul Police Officers they have always been willing to listen and become understanding. I think that our Police Department has done an amazing job with the changing of times and becoming educated. I don’t think the race of an officer should matter in my personal opinion, I would rather have a qualified officer than one who is of a certain ethnic background. I think we need to stop looking at race as a qualification and be more accepting of everyone as a whole. If we are to ridicule the Police Department for hiring two Caucasian officers then we should also ridicule the Council for having no people of color either. To me that just doesn’t sit right and I think race shouldn’t always be looked at. Let’s be more accepting as a whole and keep working together and growing as a city. Keep up the amazing work West St Paul Police Department, thank you for your time,

Robert Street and its businesses are one huge trash heap. If we removed Walmart from our city, it would 100% improve my opinion of our city.

Ward 1 needs more side walks. Many medical practitioners are leaving West St. Paul.

We love WSP! Would love to see more promotion of environmental efforts!

When will the city raise the minimum wage to $15 like St Paul has done?

I’m unaware on what is happening in the city and how to take part of it. It’s like the meetings and stuff are secret and only hear about them after the fact. Many places with no sidewalks and not easy to walk around with my daughter unless we go in the street. Many side streets in my neighborhood need repairs.

I love living in WSP and have been here for 15 years. I was not planning on raising my family here... but here I am with two kids! I really wish the city would enforce code rules though. I have a neighbor who although able to shovel, pick up their trash and mow their lawn, the let that go. I feel so sad for those trying to walk their pets, the mail person trying to do their job and the delivery people. The grass in the summer is at least a foot high and I’m getting trash in blown into my yard which I am constantly picking up. I really love my home and don’t want to say anything to them. I just wish the city could step up and help keep our city clean and beautiful. Otherwise, I am so happy to be here! We have a home that is perfect. Great school, great parks! Excited to use the new bike trail with my kids! Our little slice of nature and beauty in the city!

I moved here 6 months ago from another state and I love it. Due to covid restrictions, I haven’t gotten involved in much locally but once things ease up, I’ll be able to meet people and get more involved. I look forward to that.
• I would like to see more events for community gathering. Somehow I seem to miss some of the great things that are put on (the police dept. Has been doing a great job of having events). The splash pad was obviously a success! Things like that would be great to see more of. Concerts in the park? Things that are easy to attend and mingle with others in a fun environment.
• I’m interested in knowing Who/How to contact Government officials about questions related to my street and my property. Examples: An easement, obtaining a crosswalk or speed limit flashing sign. Thank you.
• We live on the West Side and love West St. Paul. We strongly wish you’d have shopping/dining for those of us with sufficient incomes. Everything seems geared to low income. We worked hard, had good luck, and would love to spend our dollars closer to home.
• We need more police
• Wish there were more bus stops on off streets rather than having to walk miles to get to a bus stop when there are buses that go right past my house on butler. Also have a better plan when dealing with dogs that have been called on more than 7 times. Also know that there racial issues within the community and figure out ways to deal with it when problems arise.
• The following were submitted in spanish and translated to english.
• There should be more sidewalks and better lighting throughout the city. It would be good if the buses would pass more frequently