

InSight's Ideas to Consider for St. Paul's 2027 Operating and Capital Budgets

Reduce the Operating Costs of Government

1. Immediately freeze filling any vacant positions.
2. Terminate any temporary hires by the end of the year and do not rehire in 2027. Do not extend employment for any positions paid for by grants once the grants expire.
3. Freeze salaries for all assistant mayors, department directors, and any assistant directors for the remainder of this year and all of next year. Discuss with unions their ideas to reduce costs and spending and future salary adjustments.
4. Review all overtime use by city staff and discontinue any routine or regular use of overtime unless absolutely necessary.
5. Do not establish any new contracts with consultants for services nor extend or amend any existing contracts for services. Terminate any contracts with consultants that currently do not have any work underway.
6. Immediately freeze all purchases of new vehicles for the fleet and eliminate the use of take-home cars for staff.
7. Identify park and recreation facilities that are underutilized to determine whether they should be closed and their programs relocated to other parks, or determine if other organizations can provide these programs at underutilized facilities that could reduce the city's costs for ongoing operation and maintenance.
8. Evaluate staff levels at any department that has seen significant increases over the past 5 years. Are the increases in staff still justified and effective?
9. Eliminate all out-of-state travel for conferences, seminars, etc.

Website Page and Facebook Post/AD

Manage and Control Capital Improvement Project Costs

1. Evaluate all Public Works projects in the Capital Improvement Budget to determine which ones can be delayed or revised to reduce costs. Are we prioritizing the worst streets first? Are complete street rebuilds necessary and prudent? Could projects like the Summit Avenue rebuild between River Road and Fairview be performed as a mill and overlay project saving significant dollars, yet extending the life of that road by 10 years+ since it is very lightly trafficked?
2. Postpone any spending for any new parks such as the River Learning Center, River Balcony, and Athletic Complex until the costs to build, operate, and maintain these facilities are determined. Focus capital expenditures on repairing and maintaining existing assets to eliminate the backlog of deferred maintenance.
3. Require fiscal notes for all capital improvement projects to know the full costs of each project, both capital and operating, and the impact upon the property tax.
4. Revise the CIB document to include a five-year horizon to fully identify project implementation costs. Any changes in project scope, financing, partnerships, etc. must be identified in the document every year for all projects.

Increase Revenues and Expand the Tax Base

1. Decertify any and all TIF districts that can be decertified.
2. Immediately begin the discussion about Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) with the large, non-profit organizations that do not pay property taxes.
3. Evaluate charging fees for all non-city residents and organizations that use park facilities, especially those attending the Como Zoo and Conservatory, water parks and pools, golf courses, and athletic fields.

Legislative Initiatives

1. Seek to amend the state statute for the use of the 1% sales tax to permit its use for all roads in the city needing repair, not just those identified by the referendum.
2. Begin crafting the city's legislative request to fund PILOT for the capitol complex and its events that require police, fire, and emergency services.
3. Request full funding for the city's regional parks as provided for by state law.

Fiscal Strategy Moving Forward

1. If TIF is to be used, direct its use towards commercial and industrial development, which provides greater property tax revenue.
2. Require the city's Audit Committee to evaluate new programs within three years of operation to ensure these new programs are meeting financial and other performance standards.
3. Do not subsidize the conversion of commercial property to residential property downtown. A more economically effective strategy for a fraction of the cost of residential conversion would be to attract office users.
Request that Ramsey County determine whether it is making investments in low-income housing equitably across the county and not just in the city of St. Paul.

NMD 9-3-2026