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Saint Paul Downtown Improvement District officially forms

New district will provide additional services to improve cleanliness, safety and vibrancy using funds from participating commercial property owners

SAIN'T PAUL, Minn. – The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance today announced the formation of the Saint Paul Downtown Improvement District (SPDID) and its board to provide additional services to a core area in downtown Saint Paul, as well as the hiring of a director of safety strategies for the District's Safety Communications Center. The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance will act as an umbrella organization for the SPDID, which encompasses Saint Paul's most prominent artistic, cultural, and entertainment venues and is home to corporate headquarters for several large businesses including Ecolab, Securian Financial, Travelers, and others.

"Downtown improvement districts are a proven, private sector-led method of increasing safety, cleanliness and vitality, lowering crime and commercial vacancy rates in communities large and small," said Joe Spencer, president of the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance. "The leadership of our commercial property owners has brought us here today, and the timing could not be more crucial as we look to protect and recover our downtown economy during COVID-19 and beyond."

The formation of the SPDID

Earlier this year, a group of downtown Saint Paul commercial property owners came together to petition City Council for a downtown improvement district. Owners representing 25% of the designated area needed to sign on for the petition to move ahead. The SPDID received more than 60%. The formation of the district was approved, with less than 5% objecting.

Along with voluntary contributions from the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County and other tax-exempt property owners, the SPDID will be funded by participating commercial property owners and governed by a board made up of members of the District. Clinton Blaiser, partner at Osborn370 and president and CEO of the Halverson and Blaiser Group, Ltd., will chair the

founding board with Zach Atherton-Ely, vice president of strategic growth initiatives at Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures, as vice chair. Other members include Pat Skinner (Wells Fargo Place), Kris Taylor (Ecolab), Todd Geller (Grace Building, Victory Parking), Dean Freeman (Frauenshuh Inc., Infor Commons), Pat Wolf (The 428, Golden Rule), Matt Majka (Minnesota Wild), Julio Fesser (Securian Financial), and Greg Sharpe (Travelers Insurance). The Saint Paul Downtown Alliance will partner with the SPDID board to implement and manage the services of the District.

“Now more than ever, we know how intertwined our collective community’s success is to that of our own,” said Blaiser, SPDID founding board chair. “Our hope is that this coordinated, concerted effort will create an environment of resiliency and innovation where all of the District’s stakeholders thrive.”

John Bandemer to head up Safety Communications Center

The SPDID has also hired former Saint Paul Police Senior Commander John Bandemer as director of safety strategies for the Safety Communications Center. Bandemer has spent more than three decades at the Saint Paul Police Department, most recently serving as senior commander, chief of staff and executive officer to Police Chief Todd Axtell. Over the course of his career, he has served multiple districts and specialized units.

“John’s devotion to public service and ability to bring together and manage complex efforts is unmatched,” said Saint Paul Police Chief Todd Axtell. “While he will be greatly missed on the force, I look forward to working with him in his new role on behalf of downtown Saint Paul.”

As part of phase one of the SPDID, the Safety Communications Center will coordinate streamlined communications between downtown outreach services, private building security teams, and the Saint Paul Police Department to ensure efficient and prompt responses to issues, emergencies, and events. These central communications hubs exist in most downtown improvement districts and are commonly referred to as “fusion centers.” The Safety Communications Center will be located on the skyway level of the 401 building and will launch by January 1, 2021.

For more information, visit SPDID.org.

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