

Mayor Coleman Delivers 2009 State of the City Address

Excerpts:

“The State of our City in 2009 is strong because we understand our obligation to one another and the community we serve.”

Economic Development

“We are fortunate to have a President who understands the importance of investing in cities across America ... Just as James J. Hill ushered in a new era to Saint Paul based on rail, we will see a renaissance of our community through a high-speed connection ... Connecting Saint Paul’s Union Depot with Chicago is an opportunity we will seize and make a reality.”

- Healthcare – Hospitals in Saint Paul have invested more than \$400 million in expansions in the past few years. The work being done draws in complementary businesses, yields innovation, and gives rise to a growing industrial sector.
 - *Employer Solutions*, in partnership with the Saint Paul Port Authority, and with support from the McKnight and Saint Paul Foundations, has launched the *First Step-Next Step Initiative* to provide Regions Hospital with job candidates who have been specifically trained to meet their entry-level requirements as well as train existing workers to advance within the hospital. www.sppa.com/employment-services/
 - *The Saint Paul Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board* is pioneering a plan to train and place medical coders. www.rcwib.org

Housing

“Our diverse neighborhoods have always been our greatest strength. But many forces have worked to create new challenges to keeping them strong ... The long-term solution rests in attracting responsible private capital back into the real estate market, and it is our job to ensure that those investments add value to our neighborhoods.”

- The Family Housing Fund established the *Home Prosperity Fund* with support from Wells Fargo, US Bank, TCF Bank and Thrivent Financial. The Fund supports both low and moderate income home-buyers and low and moderate income neighborhoods.
- Through the City’s own First Time Home Buyer program, the new *Take Credit!!* program offers a 20% federal income tax credit for qualified first time home buyers who buy homes in the city. www.cityliving.org
- *Saint Paul Heroes*, a First Time Home Buyer Loan program for qualified active duty military personnel, veterans, firefighters, police officers, health care workers, teachers and public employees, offers a \$15,000 no-interest loan to those taking

advantage of the mortgage credit. Repayable at the time of sale—or forgiven if the borrower lives in the home for longer than 10 years—these loans are a way of saying “Thank you” to those who serve our community in so many ways.

www.stpaul.gov/ped

Education

“While many of the challenges we face are urgent, the best path forward lies in looking to a long-term vision for our city. I believe that the success of our city has always been rooted and will forever depend on how well we educate our children.”

- Through the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship program, more than 900 3- and 4- year olds have been granted scholarships or allowances enabling them to attend high quality-rated early childhood programs that will prepare them for kindergarten and, the research confirms, success in school. www.stpaul.gov Click on City Projects>Education Initiatives>Early Childhood Education.
- As part of our Second Shift initiative, three circulators have given 22,000 rides to young people over the past two years, connecting them with afterschool and no-school day programs. The City’s recreation centers have linked up with community partners to program no-school days and our libraries have redoubled their efforts to expand literacy, college access and employment resources. www.stpaul.gov Click on City Projects>Education Initiatives>Second Shift Initiative
- Over 700 Saint Paul and Minneapolis high school graduates enrolled in college through the Power of You in its first two years. More than 70 percent were students of color, many of them the first in their families to attend college.
<http://archive.metrostate.edu/powerofyou/>

Saint Paul VIP: Volunteer•Inspire•Prosper

“Our success as a community will be anchored by the willingness of our residents to engage and serve – and not just in times of crisis. It is the every day effort of neighbors helping neighbors that makes us great.”

Saint Paul VIP is a new page on the City’s website linking opportunities in the City to those who want to step up and help out. From our libraries and recreation centers to parks and schools, volunteers can contribute their talents and expertise to help meet the needs of a growing and changing community. www.stpaul.gov/volunteer

Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman

2009 State of the City Address

April 20 – St. Joseph’s Hospital

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

Before we begin, I'd like you to join me in a moment of prayer for our friend, Rosie Bostrom, who is seriously ill this afternoon. Dan is with her--as he has been so faithfully through her long struggle--and we want to hold both of them and their wonderful family in our hearts.

One year ago, we gathered at the Wilder Foundation for the annual State of the City address. At that time, though dark clouds of economic hardship were visible on the horizon, we were filled with optimism for the future of our city. The Central Corridor was moving forward; the building in which we gathered had recently opened with acclaim for its innovative design; and our efforts to prepare children for school and help them progress towards graduation had recently been launched.

Much has changed in the intervening year. We faced a near collapse of the financial markets and a deepening international recession. We are struggling with a historic State budget deficit. In the City, we've made significant cuts in our own budget...cuts that are not numbers on a ledger but people who served the City with distinction for many years and reductions in the very services that keep our city healthy and growing.

Whether seen through the eyes of a business owner struggling to keep the doors open, a City striving to balance its books and deliver essential services or a family unsure if it will meet next month's mortgage payment, these are excruciating times.

Yet I continue to be optimistic about this great city. One by one, obstacles to the construction of the Central Corridor have been removed, new bars and restaurants continue to thrive throughout Saint Paul, and plans for development continue to progress--from the mixed use development at 2700 University Avenue to the East Side site where 3M once stood.

So, while the city has been shaken by what economist Paul Krugman likened to a global Ponzi scheme, we resolve to come through these times stronger than ever, with a solid foundation for future growth. Saint Paul has been and will be again a national model for how communities respond to tough times.

Historian Mary Wingerd reminds us that, as the national economy began to teeter in 1928, Saint Paul voters, by a margin of more than 70 percent, approved a \$15 million bond issue to fund a five-year program of civic improvements.

A cornerstone of that program was the construction of a new City Hall, commissioned to be built entirely by Saint Paul workers in what turned out to be the midst of the Great Depression. Every door handle, light fixture and stair railing was produced by Saint Paul craftsmen and women. Every laborer was respectfully paid. And the building they built stands today as testament to the values that have defined our city from the beginning.

Through the lens of history we can see that Saint Paul's strategy for economic recovery was the same strategy that President Franklin Roosevelt relied on when he launched the WPA four years later, putting millions of Americans to work rebuilding our country and its economy.

Saint Paul, once again, will lead the way to a stronger and better future by

- Focusing on the fundamentals;
- Playing to our strengths; and
- Making sure that all of our children are prepared for their place in a global economy.

We start with the fundamentals. What government does best is setting the table for families and businesses to thrive. The most important tool at its disposal is quality infrastructure supporting the production and transportation of goods and services as well as the creation of jobs. It is roads and bridges, but it's also a modern transportation system, clean land for new industry, cutting edge—and accessible—communication technologies, and diverse energy options. Beyond the bricks and mortar, it means public safety and quality neighborhoods.

This is why the Central Corridor is so critical to the future of Saint Paul. When it opens in 2014, it will connect 44,000 riders a day with jobs, school, places to eat and places to shop. It will connect our city with communities from Bloomington to Big Lake, creating access to more jobs and new markets. It will relieve congestion on our highways, reducing the cost to companies whose trucks now sit in traffic for the equivalent of 43 hours each year. It will open up opportunities for transit oriented housing and commercial development all along University Avenue and into downtown.

We are fortunate to have a President who understands the importance of investing in cities across America. This was made abundantly clear last week when President Obama released his “Vision for High-Speed Rail in America” that included a route from Chicago to Saint Paul. His vision and his dedication to investing responsibly in our country’s infrastructure will lay the groundwork for new economic development opportunities and connect the Midwest like never before.

Just as James J. Hill ushered in a new era to Saint Paul based on rail, we will see a renaissance of our community through a high speed connection. The President has given us the momentum we need, and now it falls to all of us to show the resolve and the unity required to get this project done - Connecting Saint Paul’s Union Depot with Chicago is an opportunity we will seize and make a reality.

In Saint Paul, strong neighborhoods are an essential part of our infrastructure. We know that companies and colleges looking to attract the best and brightest depend on us to “seal the deal” by offering great places to live. Whether it is our historic homes, our parks and trails - the diversity of our music and theater - or our clean streets and downtown flower baskets, Saint Paul is a city that is well-loved and carefully tended.

- We see it in Lowertown where the Barrio is slated to join the Bulldog as two more attractions in a neighborhood where the annual Concrete and Grass festival has become an instant success.
- We see it on Rice Street where the award-winning—and green--Winnipeg Apartments are welcoming new residents and businesses are welcoming new customers.
- And we see it on the East Side. The 3M site will be cleaned, planned and ready for new businesses that will be the building blocks of a green economy. The East Side bore a disproportionate share of disinvestment in the seventies and eighties. The construction of Phalen Boulevard and the Williams Hill and Westminster Junction business parks were a great start.

Our work there is not finished. And just as we did a generation ago, we will use those assets to set the table for new economic growth in one of Saint Paul’s proudest neighborhoods.

In challenging economic times, it is critical that cities understand what makes them strong and work to enhance those assets. Here in Saint Paul, we are fortunate to have a strong and growing health care sector. Over \$400 million are being invested as we speak in new health care facilities in Saint Paul. Those expansions have meant both union construction jobs and permanent living wage jobs at United, Regions, St. Joe's and Childrens – jobs not only for doctors and nurses and technicians, but for hospitality and food service workers, accountants, custodians and customer service personnel.

More importantly, we know that the work being done in our hospitals draws in complementary businesses, yields innovation, and gives rise to a growing industrial sector. That doesn't happen overnight. But it happens. It is the consequence of extraordinary corporate leadership, strategic investments in research and development, venture capital and an entrepreneurial spirit that says, "There is a better way."

Leveraging that strength for maximum public benefit is more art than science. It requires that we be nimble in recognizing opportunities, creative in forming partnerships and diligent in making the most out of every dollar invested in our city.

As new jobs are being created in the health care sector, we are stepping up to make sure that Saint Paul residents are prepared to compete for those jobs.

- Employer Solutions, in partnership with the Saint Paul Port Authority, and with support from the McKnight and Saint Paul Foundations, has launched the *First Step-Next Step Initiative*. The effort is designed to provide Regions Hospital with job candidates who have been specifically trained to meet their entry-level requirements as well as train existing workers to advance within the hospital. Employer Solutions works with community based organizations to identify and recruit residents who would benefit from the free training and direct access to employment. 100 people will be trained in 2009 and another 100 next year.
- In another health care related initiative, we will partner with the Saint Paul Ramsey County Workforce Investment Board in developing programs to train and place men and women in specific health care professions. Some of these occupations, such as medical coding, didn't exist a few years ago, but are now integral to the delivery of quality health services.

And as we gather here today, in the newest expansion of Minnesota's oldest hospital, there is no question that these investments and partnerships will position Saint Paul as a regional center for healthcare well into the future.

Our diverse neighborhoods have always been our greatest strength. But many forces have worked to create new challenges to keeping them strong. Recognizing this, we launched Invest Saint Paul to surround those neighborhoods in the greatest stress with the services and resources they need to thrive. Now, the nation-wide phenomenon of the mortgage foreclosure crisis has intensified the challenges. The long term solution rests in attracting responsible private capital back into the real estate market and it is our job to ensure that those investments add value to our neighborhoods

- Just last week the Pohlada Family Foundation announced a million dollar investment in Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services to help families buy homes before the end of 2009. The \$8,000 grants to individual home-buyers do not have to be repaid if they stay in their homes for seven years.
- We are using the City's own First Time Home Buyer programs to strengthen the housing market in all Saint Paul neighborhoods. The Take Credit program offers a 20% federal income tax credit for qualified first time home buyers who buy homes in the city.
- In addition, Saint Paul Heroes, a First Time Home Buyer Loan program for qualified active duty military personnel, veterans, firefighters, police officers, health care workers, teachers and public employees, offers a \$15,000 no-interest loan to those taking advantage of the mortgage credit. Repayable at the time of sale—or forgiven if the borrower lives in the home for longer than 10 years—these loans are our way of saying, “Thank you” to those who serve our community in so many ways.
- And we are beginning to see results. Our for-profit and non-profit development partners, with extraordinary support from the City's vacant building staff, rehabbed 900 vacant structures in 2008, all of which are reoccupied. While 2000 vacant housing units in the city is still too many—and the impact on some neighborhoods is devastating—we are proud that the number of vacant structures did not increase between June 2008 and March 2009 which was the housing market's most challenging period.

All of these efforts are emblematic of what we have been striving for with Invest Saint Paul – smart investments that help working families prosper.

While many of the challenges we face are urgent, the best path forward lies in looking to a long-term vision for our city. I believe that the success of our city has always been rooted and will forever depend on how well we educate our children. In a recent documentary on Saint Paul Central High School, it was pointed out that the early settlers of Saint Paul understood that if they wanted to attract new immigrants to their community, a strong education system was the most important thing they could offer. For the past three years, we have worked systematically to surround our public, private and parochial schools with educational opportunities designed to close the achievement gap, prepare our children for school and instill a commitment to excellence among those who will be our 21st century workforce.

- More than 900 3, 4, and 5 year olds have been granted scholarships or allowances enabling them to attend high quality early childhood programs that will prepare them for kindergarten and beyond.
- Three circulator buses have given 22,000 rides to young people over the past two years, connecting them with after school programs. Our rec centers have joined community partners to offer no-school day programs, and our libraries have redoubled their efforts to expand literacy, college access and employment resources.
- Over 700 Saint Paul and Minneapolis high school graduates enrolled in college through the Power of You in its first two years. More than 70 percent were students of color, many of them the first in their families to attend college.
- Not only will our children be ready to work when they complete 12, 14 or more years of school, they will be ready to work in a global economy. Our children enter school speaking more than 70 languages. For those who are not yet multi-lingual, 11 world languages are offered in our schools. Corporate leaders tell us that few skills will be more important in our new economy.

We make these commitments knowing that we are facing one of the most difficult budget years in more than a generation. And let's be honest - there are no short cuts to economic prosperity. People who suggest that we can maintain the standard of living we value without paying for it are lying.

People who believe that we can have economic growth without investing in infrastructure and education are fooling themselves.

The State of our City in 2009 is strong because we understand our obligation to one another and the community we serve. This is demonstrated every day by the thousands of residents who give freely of their time to help our city. We depend on 1800 volunteers to operate the Como Zoo and Conservatory. We rely on volunteer tutors in our libraries. We know there are dozens of people who shovel snow from their neighbor's walk or the local ice rink.

Neighbors in Lowertown are having a hard time accommodating all the volunteers who want to garden in Mears Park. And in coffee shops from Polly's Coffee Cove to Jerebek's volunteers gather to come up with new ways to support their neighbors.

Today, we are launching a new effort to make it easier to serve our community. Our Volunteer, Inspire, and Prosper Initiative is a new effort that will put all of the city's volunteer opportunities on one site. Our success as a community will be anchored by the willingness of our residents to engage and serve – and not just in times of crisis. It is the every day effort of neighbors helping neighbors that makes us great. And starting this afternoon, visitors to stpaul.gov will find the information they need to serve our community.

Last year I traveled to Atlanta on an intercity leadership visit. Having been on a few of these trips, I always return inspired by what I see but even more confident in Saint Paul's greatness. While in Atlanta, I was privileged to visit the Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy. We were greeted by four 7th graders who recited their daily pledge. They said, in part:

I will refuse to be ordinary.
I will devastate mediocrity.
I will take responsibility for my actions
I will lead the way....

This is the leadership challenge for our time. It is a challenge Saint Paul has always embraced.

We, in Saint Paul, have always refused to be ordinary. We have taken responsibility. We will continue to lead the way.

Thank you.

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