

2021 REPORT TO OUR COMMUNITY

# Making Connections that Count

**ST PAUL**

AREA CHAMBER

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### LETTER FROM CHAMBER PRESIDENT AND BOARD CHAIR

The St. Paul Area Chamber is on a journey, and while last year was one none of us wants to repeat, we learned a lot about ourselves, our members and the gravity of the work ahead of us. It was a year of disbelief and division, of kids, cats, and chaos in the “workplace.” Of doing more with less, of missing you. Many of you have shared that you ended the year with more gratitude for the professional and personal relationships in your lives. It’s notable to us that in a year in which our divisions have been so visible, our bonds also grew deeper.

Chaos and crisis don’t follow a calendar and we fully realize we have much work ahead. This Report to Our Community highlights the work your Chamber accomplished with you and in service to you even in our most difficult moments and outlines how we are moving forward together.

Through the tragedy and struggle and adaption that described 2020, we are adapting in ways that will take us forward.

We know that inclusion and access are different. We also know that the best measure of any community is its ability to create a quality living experience for all members of that community.

We know that advocacy on behalf of business priorities that drive economic investment continues to be important work. We know that the best path to success is a good paying job. Indeed, jobs and the experience of inclusion and access can shape the psychology of a community. Business, employers, people, carry a great burden of responsibility as a result.

Ultimately, the power of this organization IS IN YOU. At our last annual meeting we talked about the idea that “Business Is Good.” In this last year, we bore witness to the truth that “Business Does Good.” This coming year, our commitment is to listen and give voice to your priorities. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you in this work. It is truly an honor.

B Kyle  
President and CEO  
Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce

Duchesne Drew, Board Chair  
President  
Minnesota Public Radio



# A Year of Pivots

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

In addition to challenges due to COVID-19, we are in the midst of a global reckoning of racial inequality that permeates our society. Delta's board Chair, Frank Blake, was quoted in a 2020 interview as saying, "Crises don't build character; crisis reveals character."

### Businesses Doing GOOD.

#### GROWING OPPORTUNITY — OPENING DOORS

As a Chamber, we were forced to change everything about how we work and serve our members. We saw how our members pivoted too and, despite significant economic stress, many stepped from the notion of business is good to business doing good.

### Advocacy

- ▶ Connected a record 45,000 unique users to candidate profiles in 86 different elections in the **East Metro Voter Guide** in the five months before Election Day.
- ▶ Organized 22 sector-specific roundtables to provide feedback on recovery.
- ▶ Mapped entire Chamber membership to their elected officials, from city council to Congress, which gave us the opportunity to send hyper-local information and engagement opportunities just to the members it affects.
- ▶ Adopted a new bill tracking system.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our equity work continues, ensuring we further develop resources to business leaders to dig deeper, strengthen our own journeys. **Highlights include:**

- ▶ **New Equity Statement** that strives toward more impactful change.
- ▶ Pivoted the **Equity Series** to an online platform, providing a place for leaders to convene and reflect on managing equity amid COVID-19 and processing the turmoil surrounding the death of George Floyd.
- ▶ **Equity Summit III** provided space for leaders to learn more about regional initiatives and how to equip and engage in driving change.

**DEI Collaborative:** The Chamber was chosen as the permanent home for this regional program when The Wilder Foundation needed to shutter the Center for Communities. Through cross-sector cohort learning, the DEI Collaborative transforms employer organizations to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive by facilitating deep learning with senior leaders.

### Read more.

When you see an orange box around text, it is a link to additional information.

Give it a click ◀

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

## Enhanced Communication and Targeted Programming

- ▶ Prioritized our role as a trusted resource and conduit for information, establishing a regular Situation Report to connect members with resources, funding opportunities and breaking information from state economic development officials.
- ▶ Distributed 1.4M masks to the business community. Ours was the first program to mobilize, thanks to RiverCentre partnership, member volunteers, and the White Bear, Midway, and T.C. North Chambers, as well as the Maplewood Fire Department among others.
- ▶ Partnered with the Federal Reserve Bank to survey the business community on COVID-19 impacts.
- ▶ Pivoted to online programming, doing our best to continue creating connections that count and promoting others who offered information useful to our members as they faced each new crisis.
- ▶ In that new virtual format, throughout the year we executed 156 virtual events, double the number we had planned, and delivered 80% of those free of charge.
- ▶ Intentionally focused on promoting members through social media, Member Monday and newsletter spotlights.
- ▶ Piloted two new event concepts focused on professional development and networking for small businesses. **The Business Learning Toolbox (BLT)** shared knowledge for professionals in the small business community and an informal networking series alternating between **Coffee & Convos** or **Cocktails & Convos** connected small business members who need business development opportunities.

## WorkStream

Learn about the many services provided.

Chamber powered professional services for values-aligned nonprofit and public partners.

- ▶ Successful first year contract serving the **Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce**, housing an Executive Director and raising both funds and public awareness.
- ▶ Launched a 50-member Community Advisory Board in support of the **Rice & Larpenteur Alliance** partnership contract between the Cities of Maplewood, Roseville, St Paul, and Ramsey County. Made ongoing progress toward community development vision.
- ▶ Provided staffing for **Oakdale Area Chamber of Commerce**, supporting a leadership transition, Board and Member relations, communications, and events and programming.
- ▶ Completed a 4-year contract with **Ramsey County Public Health’s Worksite Wellness** program to provide microgrants and training to businesses for projects that improve employee health.
- ▶ **New for 2021:** Awarded contract with the **Minnesota Black Chamber of Commerce** to provide full time professional services in support of the Board of Directors and Chamber membership.

“Crises don’t build character; crisis reveals character.”

— Frank Blake  
Board Chair, Delta

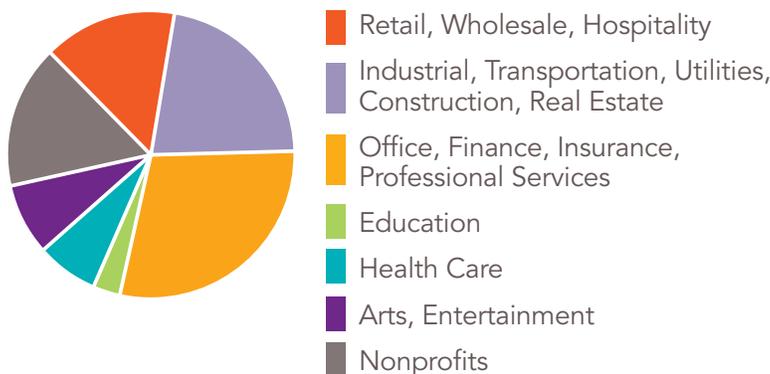
HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

## Economic Development and Small Business Support

- ▶ Partnered with regional economic leaders to set up rapid response for businesses impacted by COVID-19 and in the aftermath of the civil unrest.
- ▶ Launched the **Nordic-American Hackathon**, attracting more than 150 land developers, contractors, utility and other energy partners, community advocates, to break the code on traditional investment models and develop solutions to optimize investment and enhance outcomes for greater livability and inclusion.
- ▶ Partnered with **Ramsey County** and community development organizations on three rounds of small business relief funding through the **Ramsey County Small Business Relief Grant Program**.
  - ▶ Targeted outreach to businesses owned by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) leaders to apply.
  - ▶ Reached 3,000 businesses and worked to build an infrastructure for direct outreach from credible sources to help promote and encourage application.
- ▶ Built awareness in business community of the importance of BIPOC business to our economy and opportunities to strengthen these businesses by increasing capacity and accelerating growth.
  - ▶ Launched **Pay It Forward**, a small business advisory resource with our East Team partners with the goal of matching culturally competent volunteer business advisors and mentors with businesses owned by BIPOC leaders.
- ▶ **Created the Future Today internship program**, in service to 24 college graduates whose next steps in their careers had been interrupted by the pandemic. This program was funded by Ramsey County CARES dollars and was a success for both the interns and the companies who employed them. More than one internship translated into a full time position within the business Chamber community.

## Membership

- ▶ Launched an Affiliation Pilot program for shared member benefits between Chambers, increasing our membership from 1,200 to more than 1,700 and opened the door to building deeper relationships with Chambers and Associations across East Metro.



**Chamber members ready to connect with you.**

1,700+ members strong from multiple sectors and a vast area of St. Paul and the East Metro.

# The Foundation

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

### We ♥ St. Paul | We ♥ Midway

The Foundation answered a call to action to raise funds and create a grant program to help the businesses that were damaged, destroyed or closed in the Midway and throughout St. Paul following the unrest following the death of George Floyd. The work is not over, but we are proud of how the community came together to support each other in such a challenging time. Together we:

- ▶ Partnered with **Midway Chamber** and **St. Paul Downtown Alliance** to establish the **We ♥ St. Paul | We ♥ Midway** fund, raising nearly \$1.3M in contributions.
- ▶ More than **700 individuals** and **70 companies/foundations** donated.
- ▶ As a result, we were able to distribute **\$900,000+ to 80 organizations**, helping them recover, re-open, and rebuild. The balance will be disbursed in early 2021.
- ▶ More than 80% of the organizations helped so far (65) are BIPOC-owned.

### Leadership St. Paul

While not able to fully celebrate its 40th year in 2020, Leadership St. Paul (LSP) succeeded in many ways and carried on despite twin pandemics of COVID-19 and a racial reckoning.

- ▶ The LSP curriculum committee shelved pre-planned curriculum to respond to the pandemic and move the program to an all-virtual format.
- ▶ The LSP curriculum committee re-evaluated the curriculum a second time after George Floyd was tragically killed and the Midway burned. The committee built on the planned equity learning to finish the year with much learning, courageous conversations, and connections for the LSP Class of 2020 – which will forever be known as “The Most Resilient Class Ever”!

## A YEAR OF TRANSITION

While 2020 was challenging in so many ways, we know we must also look ahead beyond COVID-19. Over the last year we took time to thoughtfully create a new strategic plan and an accompanying brand that harnesses the energy and momentum of our board, our members, and our community.

We look forward to working with you on the priorities and strategies listed below and we can't wait to see you in person and continue to make connections that count!

# 2021-2023 Strategic Plan

## OUR PURPOSE:

We champion our diverse employer community for an economically vibrant, inclusive, and globally competitive region.

## OUR PRIORITIES:



### CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS

We are in the business of relationships and so are you. From connecting new business opportunities across sectors, or between the employer community and government institutions and policymakers — we help make connections that count for your organization.



### GROW LEADERS

Our members tell us that a ready workforce is key for their companies' growth and success. We develop talent along the leadership continuum, from young professionals to executives through training and education, leadership development, cohorts, and opportunities to serve on boards and committees.



### DRIVE PROGRESS

The Chamber has a bold vision for an economically vibrant and globally competitive region. To get there, we must unlock the potential of our diverse local workforce and businesses and reimagine our economy to meet the needs of our rapidly evolving market. We accomplish this work through partnerships with companies, public agencies, regional partners, private investors, and the communities where we live and work.



### BUILD CAPACITY

By working together with our members, partners, and investors, the Chamber builds capacity at an individual, organizational, and regional level. We help businesses and individuals achieve together what they cannot do alone.

# Our Core Values & Beliefs

THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR WORK

**Equity is the lens through which we do all our work.**

- ▶ Individual companies and our overall economy will maximize our potential when we fully engage our diverse labor force and challenge the assumptions and barriers that have created unacceptable disparities that threaten our economic future.
- ▶ We create an inclusive member experience ensuring we have a fully engaged diverse workforce and leverage our influence to drive positive impact on our region.

**Quality of life matters.**

- ▶ We recognize the economic value of personal and professional fulfillment.
- ▶ We maintain a supportive and fun work environment for our team, create enjoyable experiences for our members, and contribute to a livable community that attracts and retains top talent.

**A strong business climate equals a strong community.**

- ▶ Strong businesses invest in the community through good jobs for every worker and a tax base that supports infrastructure, public safety, schools, and other key community priorities.

**Catalytic leadership drives progress.**

- ▶ We bring people together to set the agenda for transformational change. We take a genuine interest in others — leading from passion and strength of character.
- ▶ We communicate across sectors to inspire a new way of working together to achieve the region's highest aspirations.

**Courageous, deep listening effects change.**

- ▶ We make space for courageous conversations, opening us up to change. Connections happen when we are seen and heard, and by listening — we bring people together.

## Our Strategies

HOW WE DO THIS WORK

- ▶ Develop our membership by creating exceptional member value.
- ▶ Advocate fiercely on behalf of the business community.
- ▶ Support economic recovery for small and medium sized business.
- ▶ Create exclusive opportunities for best-in-class talent and leadership development.
- ▶ Seek partnerships to expand the region's tax-base and add jobs.
- ▶ Develop new ways to meet community needs through nonprofit consulting, community development, and innovative partnerships.

# Thank you

We have deep gratitude for everyone who makes up the colorful mosaic that is the St. Paul Area Chamber!

Thank you to our 1,700+ members, sponsors, and community partners.

Thank you to our talented staff who are committed to delivering world-class service every day.

Thank you to our team of more than 60 committed Ambassadors who help recruit and retain our members — facilitating deeper engagement and more meaningful member experience.

Thank you to the St. Paul Area Chamber Board of Directors

Thank you to the St. Paul Area Chamber Charitable Foundation Board of Directors.

EXPLORE THESE LIVE LINKS BELOW

Click here to see the photo mosaic from the Annual Meeting.

Explore the Member Directory.

Meet the staff and find their contact info.

Meet the Ambassadors.

Meet our Board Members.

Meet our Foundation Board Members.

Get weekly news on local businesses, events, offerings and more. Click here and subscribe today!

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# ST PAUL

## AREA CHAMBER

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