



CITY OF SOUTH ST. PAUL MEETING AGENDA

WORK SESSION

Training Room
125 3rd Avenue North
South St. Paul, MN 55075

Monday, April 27, 2026
7:00 PM

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. DISCUSSION ITEMS**
 - A. 2026 Goals - Strategic Priorities Discussion
 - B. Summer Meeting Schedule
- 3. COUNCIL COMMENTS & QUESTIONS**
- 4. ADJOURNMENT**



WORK SESSION AGENDA REPORT

DATE: April 27, 2026
DEPARTMENT: City Administrator
PREPARED BY: Ryan Garcia
AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 2.A.

MEETING TYPE

Regular Meeting

AGENDA ITEM

2026 Goals - Strategic Priorities Discussion

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED OR DESIRED OUTCOME

The City Administrator will share a brief summary report from the 2026 Goal-Setting Retreat with the City Management team.

The City Administrator is seeking preliminary input on how Council envisions approaching the 2027 Goal-Setting effort.

OVERVIEW

At the [January 12, 2026 City Council Worksession](#), Council reviewed the strategic goals and priorities that were adopted by the Council in May 2025 and confirmed that these goals continued to resonate as foundational pillars for City policy and priority. As a reminder, the goals as adopted are:

- Provide accessible, resilient and welcoming City Buildings and Facilities to support the community's service and recreational needs.
- Continue to recruit and retain a skilled and service-oriented workforce.
- Maintain a healthy, viable and stable housing stock.
- Continue to facilitate the redevelopment of under-improved, unimproved, and distressed properties to support the growth of the property tax base and private employment.

Also at the January 12 Worksession, Staff shared that for 2026 the plan was to hold a strategic planning retreat with the City's senior management team to strengthen the focus and alignment of our departments' work with these goals. This session was held in late January, and we've attached a summary report from the day's session for Council review and information.

Finally, Staff would like to get Council's early feelings about how to approach goal-setting in early 2027. Historically, the City has held Council Goal-Setting sessions in the year following City elections (odd-numbered years) and often - though not always - these sessions have been facilitated by an outside consultant to include a bit more intensive front-end engagement and after-the-fact reporting. Staff would like to understand Council's expectations for 2027, so that as we begin to approach the 2027 budget we can be mindful of those expectations and any potential

for budget impact.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

1. Goal Setting Report (2026)

2026 GOAL SETTING

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2026

8:15 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.

SKY LOUNGE at THE YARDS

Facilitated By

Ryan Garcia, City Administrator

PARTICIPANTS:

Shelly Anderson, Asst. City Administrator/HR Director

Howard Steenberg, Public Works Director

Kelsey Gelhar, City Engineer

Tiffany Greene, Housing Program Manager

Ian Hardie, IT Director

Michael Healy, Planning and Zoning Manager

Joe Heimkes, Chief Building Official

Mark Juelfs, Chief of South Metro Fire Department

Andrew Wall, Airport Manager

Deanna Werner, City Clerk

Brian Wicke, Police Chief

Shannon Young, Parks & Recreation Director

In January 2026, South St. Paul's Senior Leadership Team convened in a full-day retreat to rebalance and focus its efforts to ensure collaboration and conviction in meeting the City Council's primary Goals as adopted in May 2025. This document serves as a summary of the outcomes and takeaways of the retreat.

Context – Council's Adopted Goals (May 2025):

In May 2025, the South St. Paul City Council adopted the following goals as priorities, which were reaffirmed by Council in January 2026 prior to the Staff's January 22 retreat:

- Provide accessible, resilient and welcoming City Buildings and Facilities to support the community's service and recreational needs
- Continue to recruit and retain a skilled and service-oriented workforce
- Maintain a healthy, viable and stable housing stock
- Continue to facilitate the redevelopment of under-improved, unimproved and distressed properties to support the growth of the property tax base and private employment

Context - City's Mission and Core Values:

As part of the 2025 Goal Setting process, the City Council and Senior Leadership Team confirmed the City's Mission and Core Values as articulated in the following statements:

Mission

South St. Paul is dedicated to enriching the quality of life by providing our Community with exceptional services that are responsive to the City's changing needs, delivered in a professional, courteous, and friendly manner.

Core Values

- *Respect – Recognizing and celebrating the goodness in oneself and others, seeing our differences as strengths and showing care and appreciation for people, property and the entire SSP community.*
- *Pride - A welcoming, inclusive and supportive Packer community that honors and celebrates its rich history while collectively inspiring new traditions.*
- *Collaboration - Building community together through trust, hard work, innovation, and a shared commitment to building the South St. Paul that our community aspires to be.*
- *Integrity - Being thoughtful, honest, transparent in our words, and actions, and accountable for our decisions.*
- *Resilience - The courage to adapt, change and persevere when presented with*

challenges and opportunities.

- *Equity - A safe and supportive environment that provides opportunities for all to be seen, heard, and valued.*

Purpose/Overview:

The purpose of the 2026 goal setting retreat was to develop consensus on top strategic priorities for the City for 2026 and beyond, in the context of the City Council's adopted Goals from June 2025.

The retreat was purposed to align departmental priorities with City Council direction, organizational capacity, and upcoming budget realities. The session provided a structured opportunity for department leaders to reflect on the past year, identify key challenges and opportunities, and collaborate on shared priorities for the organization.

The retreat began with an overview of the purpose and ground rules for the day, emphasizing organizational thinking, candid discussion, and a focus on outcomes rather than individual departmental activities. Participants reviewed lessons from the previous year by sharing major successes, ongoing challenges, and recurring issues affecting their departments. This discussion helped highlight patterns in cross-department collaboration, resource constraints, and operational handoffs.

Participants then examined the broader strategic context shaping the City's work. Discussion centered on Council priorities, the upcoming budget outlook, potential capital projects, workforce and succession planning considerations, and regulatory factors that may influence departmental capacity. This segment helped frame the realistic constraints within which departmental and organizational priorities are set.

During the afternoon sessions, each department presented its top proposed priorities and discussed where collaboration or support from other departments would be needed. Through facilitated discussion, overlapping initiatives and opportunities for cross-department alignment were identified. The group then worked collectively to rank and narrow proposed initiatives into a smaller set of citywide priorities, recognizing the need to focus limited organizational capacity on the most impactful work. Finally, participants began translating and synthesizing the highest priorities into specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound commitments—while identifying lead departments, supporting partners, and potential risks. These prioritized initiatives are identified on the pages that follow, with each initiative landing within one of three tiers based upon the group's overall ranking:

- **Tier 1: Enterprise-Critical Initiatives:** Initiatives that are essential to achieving the City's core mission or avoiding significant risk. If these fail, the organization materially suffers.
 - *Key Characteristics:*
 - Unambiguously tied to Council Goals or other mission-critical outcomes

- High urgency and high impact
 - Requires active involvement from senior leadership
 - Cross-functional and resource-intensive
 - Often time-sensitive or externally driven (regulatory, funding, political, etc.)
- *Litmus Test*: “If we don’t accomplish this, does it significantly harm our organization’s success, credibility, or viability?”
- **Tier 2: Strategic Enablement Initiatives**: Important initiatives that support or accelerate Tier 1 outcomes but are not immediately mission-critical on their own.
 - *Key Characteristics*:
 - Moderate to high-impact, but less urgent than Tier 1
 - Likely to improve efficiency, capacity, or service quality
 - May be cross-departmental but can be led within a division
 - Important for medium-term success
 - *Litmus Test*: “Does this meaningfully improve our ability to deliver on Tier 1 priorities or strengthen our organization over time?”
- **Tier 3: Operational / Opportunistic Priorities**: Valuable initiatives that improve operations or respond to opportunities, but can be delayed or adjusted without major organizational risk.
 - *Key Characteristics*:
 - Lower urgency and/or narrower scope
 - Typically department-level ownership
 - Limited cross-functional dependency
 - Flexible timing and resourcing
 - *Litmus Test*: “Is this beneficial, but something we could pause or defer if higher priorities demand attention?”

Overall, the session fostered shared understanding across departments, strengthened alignment with strategic and financial realities, and established a collaborative foundation for developing the City’s organizational goals for the coming year and beyond.

2026 – 2027 Strategic Priorities

	Strategic Priority	Desired Outcomes and Targets	Primary Lead Department(s)
Tier 1 Initiatives	Replace aging facilities and major infrastructure	• 2026 - 2030 CIP Projects completed on schedule • ADA noncompliance reduced • Water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure in conformance with applicable rules and authorities (eg, PFAS)	• Cross-departmental
	Be an employer of choice - retain top talent	• Strengthen culture of support and growth; encourage training and engagement • Create process documents, "roadmap" for leadership positions • Minimize disruptions / reductions in service upon retirements	• Cross-departmental
	Establish a standardized approach to succession planning		
	Implement the Hardman Triangle Redevelopment Plan	• Continue with opportunistic site acquisitions • Retain private development partner(s) for residential and retail/commercial development • Advance with infrastructure planning, bidding and construction • Identify, pursue, and secure funding for public infrastructure (park, roads/utilities, stormwater)	• EDA • Engineering • Parks • Public Works
Tier 2 Initiatives	Improve rental housing stock	• Mitigation of identified problem properties • Decrease in rental license violations / citations • Reduction in "repeat offenders"	• Code Enforcement • Licensing • PD/Fire • Inspections
	Work more intentionally and consistently with County, State, and Federal partners	• Increase success rate in receiving funding support • Expand influence in effectively avoiding negative policy impacts	• Administration • Council
	Upgrade software for operations and service delivery	• Improved efficiency of operations • Improved employee morale • Improved service to public • Establishment of interdepartmental "tech" committee	• Administration (IT)
Tier 3 Initiatives	Identify and advance ordinance and policy changes to support improved operations	• Engagement / community understanding and support • Increased operational efficiency (eg, winter parking regulatory approach) • Reduced costs	• Planning • Public Works • Communications
	Implement a uniform/standardized document naming convention	• Establishment of a standard file / document naming convention • Get staff away from using personal file directories • Increased utilization and mastery of laserfiche	• Cross-departmental
	Implement the results of the 2025 Nan McKay public housing program assessment	• Improved documentation and recordkeeping • Streamlined processes and complaint reporting • Creation of performance measurement methodology/support for employees • Establish policy documents • Institute (at minimum) quarterly board meetings	• Housing
	Plant trees on public property	• Utilize all grant money • Keep trees alive	• Public Works • Parks • Planning



WORK SESSION AGENDA REPORT

DATE:

April 27, 2026

DEPARTMENT:

City Administrator

PREPARED BY:

Ryan Garcia

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:

2.B.

MEETING TYPE

Regular Meeting

AGENDA ITEM

Summer Meeting Schedule

ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED OR DESIRED OUTCOME

Discuss summer 2026 worksession schedule and provide guidance to staff.

OVERVIEW

In 2025, the Council reduced the number of worksession meetings during the months of June, July, and August to once per month. Staff is interested in council's perspectives on taking this approach for 2026. If so, we would tentatively only plan to meet on June 8, July 13, and August 10 for worksession this summer. If business demands, we would "hold" the calendar for June 15 (or 29), July 27, and August 24 and provide ample notice to Council if meetings on any of these dates were needed.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

n/a

ATTACHMENTS

None