



2012 State of the City Address
Remarks as prepared for delivery
March 26, 2012

Thank you Kathy for that nice introduction. And thank you Greg and the entire James J. Hill board and staff for hosting this event today. Welcome Councilmembers Amy Brendmoen and Chris Tolbert to your first state of the city. I'll be watching to make sure you're awake at the end of it.

In 1856, 18-year-old James Hill emerged from the plains of Canada and headed to Saint Paul. His father had died when the young man was only 14. He ended his formal education and went to work to help his family survive. While he received no further school-based education, he was a lifelong learner-- immersing himself in books and learning the ins-and-outs of the transportation industry. He went on to become one of the nation's richest men. He built an empire that stretched from Chicago to the Pacific Ocean. While the mansion he constructed on Summit Avenue still stands as a testament to the wealth he created, other parts of our city reflect his commitment to the community that allowed him to prosper. Today we gather in such a place.

Hill's success depended in large part on reading as many books as he could get his hands on. He wanted everyone in Saint Paul to have that same opportunity. The construction of this library was a reflection of many years of hard work and collaboration. Its mission in the early 1900s was to educate and inform. Though the mission has not changed, the method has; offering education not just through books, but classes, seminars and online learning.

But James J. Hill's story is more than an interesting bit of history. It is a reminder today of the importance of hard work and perseverance. Hill didn't just decide to go into business, and then everything came easy. He fought hard, battling through recession and fierce competition in order to succeed. One of Saint Paul's most famous citizens is a constant reminder that his adopted city must also face difficult situations with determination, hard work and perseverance in order to fully realize its potential.

And that is what we have done. The challenges have been many: Years of the worst economy since the 1930s; fights to ensure that the Central Corridor serves the most transit-dependent members of our community; struggles to keep businesses along the Corridor open during construction; a collapse of the housing market and record numbers of foreclosures; the loss of our signature manufacturer, Ford Motor Company; continued erosion of local government aid; and a persistent achievement gap that threatens the future of far too many children.

It is a list that could send any city into a spiral. But just as Hill would be neither deterred

nor defeated, Saint Paul has strengthened its resolve and we have met our challenges head on. We joined forces across the community and began work that will not only strengthen our city, but transform it for future generations.

That is why the state of Saint Paul is strong and getting stronger. It is why I am proud to stand here as Mayor, look out across this magnificent room to see so many key partners and be fully confident that Saint Paul is on the right track.

Every morning, as I walk into City Hall, I see the following words etched into the walls outside the door: abundance, agriculture, law and order, education, transportation, industry and commerce. Though enshrined in the building during the Great Depression, these words could easily be a mission statement for today. Each of them guides our work in 2012 and frames the conversation just as they did over 80 years ago.

LAW AND ORDER

There is nothing more central to our mission as a city than public safety. Our commitment has never wavered, even though budget challenges have tested our ability to support the men and women who work to keep Saint Paul safe. In the last several years, we have increased the numbers of officers on the street and firefighters in the stations. We have also made sure that the third leg of public safety, the City Attorney's Office, is adequately staffed to prosecute cases, reach out to the community and give new life to community-based crime prevention strategies.

Both Chief Butler and Chief Smith do a great job of recognizing civilians and their own men and women who demonstrate extraordinary valor or persistence. I want to call one such recognition to our attention. Just a couple of weeks ago, Chief Smith recognized several members of the law enforcement community for their tireless pursuit of the killers of three people in the North End, including 15-year-old Brittany Kekedakis in 2007. The officers pursued every possible lead - many of them dead ends. Nothing deterred them. Like the city they served, they would not give up. Their persistence led to the arrest and conviction of those who committed those murders.

I want to join in the praise of those the Chief honored:

Sergeant Tom Bergren - Medal of Commendation
Sergeant Jane Mead - Medal of Commendation
Sergeant Shay Shackle - Medal of Commendation
Retired Sergeant Tom Dunaski - Medal of Commendation
Retired Sergeant Jane Laurence - Medal of Commendation
Officer Rob Merrill - Medal of Commendation
FBI Agent Matthew Parker - Chief's Award
USAO Jeff Paulsen - Chief's Award
USAO Chris Wilton - Chief's Award

Among those honored was homicide detective Sergeant Tom Bergren. Last Friday, Tom retired after 32 years with the department.

Perseverance truly does pay off.

TRANSPORTATION

Just as it did in the 1920s and '30s, transportation plays a central part in our work today. Obviously, the Central Corridor dominates the conversation – as it should. Today, the Central Corridor is 40 percent complete. By the end of 2012, the most disruptive part of the construction will be finished. From its first stop at the Union Depot, it will roll past Regions Hospital and the Capitol, along University Avenue, through the U of M into Minneapolis and eventually, after the Southwest corridor is complete, on to Eden Prairie. After 30 years of discussion, we now talk about months until completion, opportunities to be seized and finally connecting our residents to jobs, schools and services.

The renovation of the Union Depot will also be complete just two years from now. It will be one of the best examples of a multi-modal transportation strategy in our region. It will serve light rail, buses, Amtrak trains and bicycles. Congresswoman Betty McCollum, County Commissioner Jim McDonough and his colleagues on the County Board understand the importance of transportation, and they have led the fight for the Union Depot, the Central Corridor and the Gateway Corridor. I want to thank them for their support on these critical infrastructure projects.

We are also moving forward on a study of street cars in Saint Paul. Street cars can strengthen neighborhood commercial corridors by connecting them to regional transportation networks. Thanks to the many partners that provided the resources necessary to make this study possible, including the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, the Mcknight Foundation, the Saint Paul Foundation and Councilmember Russ Stark.

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

It isn't too surprising to see that, in the midst of the Great Depression, the leadership of Saint Paul was focused on industry and commerce. Coming out of the worst recession since then, we are equally focused on helping our business community grow.

Many of our efforts are regional in scope. Whether helping entrepreneurs accelerate their growth from the garage to the market or helping our companies enter foreign markets through our export initiative, we have joined forces across the region and with the State of Minnesota to help this region grow. And it is paying off in many ways.

Just last week, a survey named the Twin Cities as the best place to find a job in the entire country. An article in the Orange County Register stated that we were an “unlikely upper Midwest city” to take the top spot. Well, I guess if you're from Orange County it might seem unlikely that we would be number one. But those of us who don't suffer from “coastal centrism” don't find it so surprising. In fact, the only surprise is why it took them so long to notice.

To address this lack of knowledge of our region, we came together in a great public-private partnership and launched Greater MSP. After too many years of not being on the list of site selectors and corporate executives, we have, in a short period of time, reestablished this region's reputation as one of the best places to do business. With a highly educated workforce and a quality of life second to none, we know we can compete with any region in the country or the world. Thanks to Michael Langley and his team for their great work to date. We're looking forward to great success in the future.

While much of our work is focused on larger employers, we cannot forget that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. Research shows that small businesses represent 99.7 percent of all firms in the United States and they create 60 to 80 percent of the net new jobs.

Small business owners face many obstacles: Securing financing, marketing their products, and wearing multiple hats from CEO, CFO, COO, to cashier and janitor. City government must not be just another obstacle to success.

That is why we went to bat to assist Kevin VanDeraa, the owner of Cupcake. I respect the hard job of balancing city policies dealing with parking requirements with the needs of business owners. But we have to be better at getting to "yes" than we are at getting to "no."

I urge the City Council to take up the resolution laid over last week this Wednesday and allow Cupcake to move forward with its Grand Avenue store. I want to thank Kevin for his persistence. And I want to thank a member of my staff, Erin Dady for her persistence. She embodies the determined spirit of J.J. Hill.

While the walls of City Hall don't have the words *vibrancy* or *entertainment* inscribed on them, it is clear that they play a critical part in decisions that business leaders make to locate their companies. People want vibrant places to work. Business owners know that vibrancy helps them attract top talent.

This is why supporting events such as Jazz Fest and Concrete and Grass or the Live Nation concert on Harriet Island this summer are such an important part of our work. It is why we said yes to a crazy idea to have hockey players hurl themselves down a luge track starting at the steps of the Cathedral.

It is also why we have not stopped our pursuit of the Penfield project. We are, perhaps, only months away from breaking ground on that project, thanks in large part to the work of Planning and Economic Development Director Cecile Bedor and Councilmember Dave Thune. When completed, it will bring 260 units of market-rate housing along the Central Corridor and a first-rate grocery store to the center of our town. It will join the

Lofts at Farmers Market as the newest housing in downtown. That project, completed only a few weeks ago, is already 72 percent leased – far exceeding projections.

It is why we support the new 1,100-seat addition to the Ordway's McKnight Theatre. It's why we continue to invest in Como Zoo, which maintains its status as one of the largest tourist destinations in our region.

And it is why we have to build the Regional Ballpark in Lowertown.

We are closer than ever to seeing that project into reality. Governor Mark Dayton showed his strong support for the project by including the full amount requested, \$27 million, in his bonding proposal. Great champions like Larry Howes and Alice Hausman continue to push it forward.

Thanks to Matt Kramer and the Chamber of Commerce for taking the lead on this project. We're close. But we must redouble our efforts these next few weeks to get this project funded. Call the leadership in both the House and the Senate and tell them that businesses need this project. Families need this project. Saint Paul needs this project.

When we get the bonding request funded, we will begin construction this spring. As of this morning, I am proud to announce we have an agreement between the Port Authority and the owners of Diamond Products. We'll own the land. Now let's build the ballpark.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture may have been more at the heart of Saint Paul's daily routine 80 years ago. But even today, agriculture plays a key role in our city. Community gardens are sprouting up across the city, allowing families to grow their own fresh produce. Many are working to build a network of sustainably grown local foods. Restaurateurs such as Lenny Russo are increasingly turning to food sources within a short drive of Heartland Restaurant. And in Frogtown, a group of community members are dreaming of transforming part of the old Wilder campus into Frogtown Farms.

The proposal for Frogtown Farms includes a recreation area, a nature preserve and space for a neighborhood farm where residents can come and learn about sustainable agriculture, the importance of locally grown food and how to create a similar garden in your very own backyard.

This is a tremendous opportunity to provide healthy foods in sustainable ways in a neighborhood desperate for green space. I want to thank the Wilder Foundation and the Trust for Public Land for their partnership, and Councilmember Melvin Carter for his leadership. There is still much work to be done on this project, but we are hopeful for what lies ahead, and what it will bring to the Frogtown neighborhood and our city.

EDUCATION

All of our work together is important. All of the words that frame City Hall guide us. But there is no word more important to me, or to the future of our city, than *education*.

I have had a chance to be principal for the day twice this last year at Central High School and at Maxfield Elementary. I truly enjoy the opportunity to see the incredible work being done by our building leaders and our teachers. I love talking to the kids, especially the grade-schoolers. They ask important questions such as: Am I rich (no); do I know President Obama (yes); do I have a dog (yes); do I have a big house (no).

But while I am inspired by seeing our schools up close, I also know the tremendous challenges we face. We have made progress, but we have a long road yet to travel.

We heard the great news last fall that Saint Paul students' Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment scores increased by four points, early evidence that the District's Strong Schools, Strong Communities plan is working. And Saint Paul's Latino students had the highest math scores among their peers in the state. Our schools are heading in the right direction with gains in the number of students on track to being proficient in math and reading, especially in the elementary grades.

Six years ago, I arrived in office determined to make education a priority. I dedicated 30 percent of my staff to education issues. We formed unprecedented partnerships with schools, our teachers, our principals, our school board members and now our great Superintendent, Valeria Silva.

Many questioned why the city was taking such an active role in education. Now, no one believes that the challenges we face can be met without everyone in the community, including the city, playing a key role.

What started off as an idea to extend the learning day for students, first dubbed the Second Shift Initiative, has now evolved into a comprehensive network of out-of-school-time options called Sprockets.

The overall goal of this program is to connect youth with their interests and create a seamless learning day all year long. Researched-based programs have proven that high-quality afterschool and summer learning experiences help kids succeed. Sprockets is grounded in data about how children learn and provides an easy way for parents and kids to find programs near them. It tracks students' progress so that we can determine what is working and what isn't—and then builds on that information.

After just one year in action, the Sprockets database has already tracked more than 3,500 students' progress with the help of 11 organizations. There are 19 sites enrolled in training programs to improve their quality. In the next year, those numbers will double, with an additional site at Payne – Maryland, a project near and dear to Councilmember Dan Bostrom. And we will continue to grow Sprockets until every child in Saint Paul has the opportunity to attend a quality out-of-school-time program that will help them

achieve their full potential.

We have also made great progress on Saint Paul's **Promise Neighborhood**.

In 2010, Saint Paul obtained a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a Promise Neighborhood plan for 250 blocks in the Summit-University and Frogtown neighborhoods. The planning initiative was led by the Wilder Foundation with the city, the School District and Ramsey County, but also included extensive participation by community members and organizations. Local philanthropic partners matched the federal funds. Over the course of a year, we developed a rigorous, evidence-based plan to improve academic and life outcomes for children in these neighborhoods.

While we were not selected as one of the five cities to receive implementation dollars in the first round of funding, Saint Paul's Promise Neighborhood is well positioned to be selected in the next round of funding, possibly as early as this fall.

Parent Engagement Plan

There are many great initiatives underway to help close the achievement gap. But there is one in particular that I find has tremendous potential to change outcomes for our children: The Parent Academy in Saint Paul Public Schools.

Research is clear: When parents are involved in their children's learning, children have higher grades, test scores and graduation rates; better school attendance; increased motivation and better self-esteem; lower rates of suspension; decreased use of drugs and alcohol; and fewer instances of violent behavior. Parental involvement (such as reading to your children and communicating parental expectations with them) is twice as predictive of a student's academic success as family socioeconomic status.

The School District currently enrolls 750 parents each year in parent academies. It intends to triple that number in coming years. The academies provide classes for parents who want the knowledge and skills to help their children be successful in the classroom and at home. These six-week academies, presented in the parent's native language, focus on topics such as brain development, positive discipline, the role of health, nutrition and active learning, the home environment and motivation, and how the school system functions. Parents also visit a college campus during their time in the academy.

To give you a sense of the impact that the academies have, let's watch a short video.

The work of the academies is powerful. But just as a child's education is not solely the responsibility of schools, neither is support for parents.

In the coming months, the city will expand the work of the academies and launch community-based efforts to help our parents become advocates for their children. I am recommending a \$300,000 city investment that will:

- Train librarians to help parents use the Parent Portal, especially those who, because of the digital divide, don't have a computer and aren't able to regularly track their children's progress.
- We will provide funds to increase the number of parents attending the Parent Academy and we'll provide incentives to motivate parents to complete the academy. This will include stipends so kids can attend high-quality summer and after-school programs they might otherwise not be able to afford.
- We will work with Saint Paul Public Schools to promote the *Think College Early Fair*. What started in 2005 as a project of Progressive Baptist Church, Reverend Earl Miller and JoAnn Clark, has grown to serve all Saint Paul Public School students. Parents' high expectations that their children receive a postsecondary education are essential, and we need to make sure that as a city we're supporting activities that help parents and youth navigate their way to higher education. Each fall, Reverend Miller and JoAnn load up busloads of kids and take them on a tour of colleges, particularly historic black colleges. I have had several opportunities to participate in the send-off. My favorite part is seeing the younger brothers and sisters anxiously anticipating their opportunity to take that trip in the future. Let's thank Rev. Miller and JoAnn for their great work.

SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

While much of our efforts are directed toward after-school programs, new research suggests that the most significant contributor to the achievement gap is summer learning loss. While students across all income and race categories make similar progress during the school year, children from low-income families experience greater learning loss during the summer months than middle- and high-income kids. Low-income students start the school year already behind their peers due to a lack of summer learning activities. They're less likely to travel, access technology, take a field trip, go to camp or participate in other forms of summer learning.

Together with the Saint Paul Public Schools, Ramsey County and the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, we are beginning a campaign to focus on powerful changes that kids and parents can make together to keep their brains and bodies active and learning all summer:

- 5 days a week of active play
- 4 new places to visit
- 3 fresh fruits and veggies daily
- 2 summer projects
- 1 (once) a day with a good book

We will promote these changes in the media, in flyers sent home in backpacks, on our city website and on the Sprockets website. We will also have suggestions for free field trips and learning activities for kids and parents tied to these six elements of health and learning.

To put the learning loss challenge to the test, with funding from the Saint Paul Children's

Collaborative, and working hand-in-hand with Saint Paul Public Schools, we are piloting a new summer learning program model in our Promise Neighborhood that combines academics and enrichment – free of charge, for six weeks, six hours a day. And we are going to seek help from Metro Transit so that organizations serving low-income kids can receive assistance with free field trips, an essential component of an enriching summer learning experience.

If the research connecting summer learning loss to the achievement gap is correct, then we in Saint Paul are poised to make a giant leap forward in finally closing the gap.

ABUNDANCE

Many measure abundance in material ways. I measure abundance in the hopes and dreams of our children.

I am constantly amazed at the resiliency of our children. We often hear the stories of the children who fail-- the sad stories of the children who drop out, get involved in a gang, or otherwise head in the wrong direction. But almost every year since I've been Mayor, I have had the honor of attending the Beat the Odds dinner hosted by the Children's Defense Fund. CDF gives out four scholarships of \$4,000 each to students who have overcome obstacles that would stop most of us from getting out of bed in the morning. Two weeks ago, I had the honor of meeting three such students from Saint Paul Public Schools, two from Como Park and one from Highland. We are honored to have two of them here with us today. The third, Raymond Perez, couldn't join us today.

Anne Sinner is a senior at Como. Her father was imprisoned for abusing her sister. Her mother was unable to work or provide for her children. Her sister who had been abused became suicidal. Her cousin, who she was very close to, was murdered. But Anne was undefeated. She found support in her teachers, worked hard to earn a 3.95 G.P.A. and scored 33 on her ACT. She received notification just the other day that she has been accepted to Carleton College.

Lashay Thompson was born just outside of New York City. Her mother became addicted to crack. When she was unable to pay for her drugs, the dealer started abusing Lashay as payment – she was 7. After she was removed from her mother's home, she was placed in the home of a wonderfully caring foster father who nurtured Lashay. She was thriving until her foster father was killed in a car accident. In the meantime, her mother had moved to Minnesota to receive treatment for her addiction. Her mother was turning her life around and providing a stable environment for Lashay when she was diagnosed with cancer and died shortly thereafter.

Lashay did not give in. Instead, she found a mentor through Genesys Works. Today, she is an intern at Cargill and plans to attend Clark Atlanta University.

Neither Anne nor Lashay gave up. And we celebrate these amazing stories of survival. But as a community, we have to change the odds for our children, not simply applaud the

few who overcome them. For every Anne or Lashay, there are far too many kids who never rise above the challenges they face. If we are to close the gap, if we are to help all of our children succeed, it will take all of us working together to remove the barricades our children face. Every one of them has the potential to be an Anne or a Lashay.

James Hill, a century and a half ago, beat the odds and found a community that would support his wildest ambition. The future leaders of our community lie within. Let us nurture them. Let us support them. In turn, they will give back to us in ways we can't even imagine.

The state of the city is strong. But the future of Saint Paul will be even brighter when we allow all to shine.