

Public Affairs | 2016 in Review

For nearly

150

years, the **Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce** has advocated for a vibrant business climate in the East Metro. To promote a healthy economy, the Chamber's public affairs team actively engages with local, state, and federal government officials on issues that impact the business community. This report highlights the Chamber's advocacy and public affairs accomplishments in 2016.



Direct Advocacy

We relentlessly provided day-to-day assistance to our members as they faced the challenges of operation. We worked closely with numerous East Metro elected officials and municipal staff on issues of concern to our members as a whole and individually.



Some of the individual issues we helped members solve included:

- Resolving a problem with a city contract which had increased a business' specific fee by 1000% by ensuring that elected officials understood the harm that would be caused by this increase;
- Reclassifying a small area of land to a new zoning code so that a member could make new use out of an existing building;
- Altering the parking system on a city street to tailor it for a member business where customers need to be in and out quickly; and
- Amending a city's ordinance related to signs so that a member could appropriately advertise their presence and investment in the East Metro.

On a broader level, we assisted members by:

- Ensuring that the business voice was heard during the planning processes for the Earned Sick and Safe Time ordinance in Saint Paul;
- Digging deep into proposed changes to the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area that would impose burdens on businesses wanting to emerge or expand in certain areas near the river, and writing extensive comments to the Administrative Law Judge overseeing the project;
- Providing an understandable and comprehensive memo on Saint Paul's Right of Way Assessment fees so that members are aware of what that fee pays for.

Fun Fact!

Between now and 2040, East Metro counties are forecasted to gain up to **393,000 new residents** and up to **159,000 new jobs**.

Wellness

This year SPACC and Saint Paul/Ramsey County Public Health partnered granting funds to businesses interested in starting worksite wellness programs. The partnership used money from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) covering four areas of wellness: physical activity, healthy eating, nursing mothers support, and tobacco cessation. The partnership was very successful and gave out grants to over 20 businesses in Ramsey County. If you are interested in participating in next year's grant round please contact Katie DiSanto.

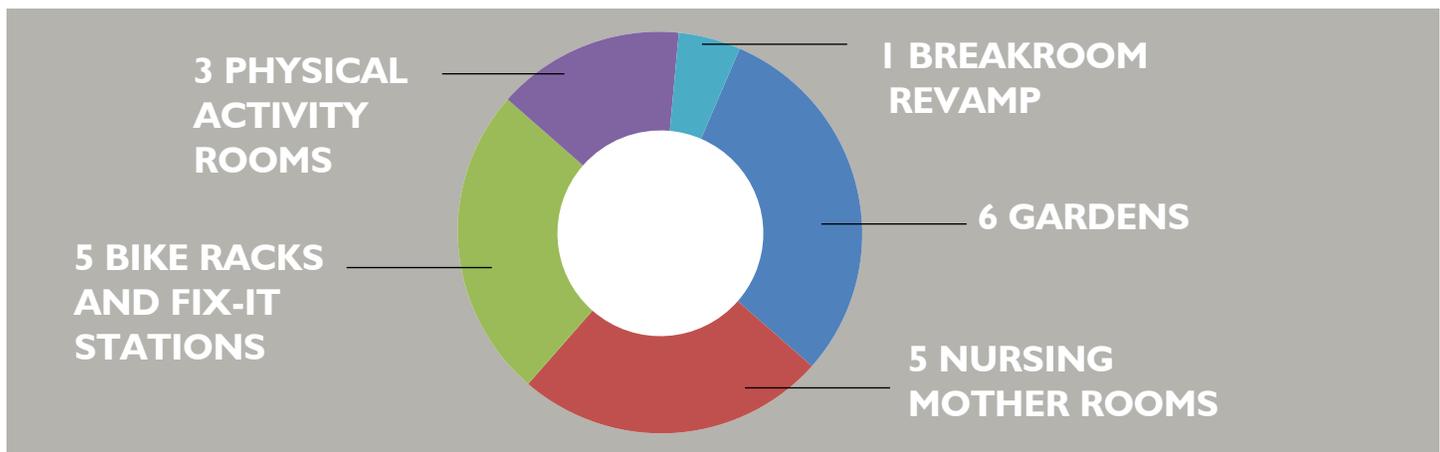
Fun Fact!

Everyday, Saint Paul Regional Water Services provides **40 million gallons of water** to residents.

- 21 Ramsey County Businesses received grants
- Gave over \$9,800 in worksite wellness grants
- 6 businesses encouraged healthy eating by cultivating giving gardens
- 5 businesses supported nursing mothers by creating a dedicated space for pumping
- 5 businesses helped their employees' bike commute go smoother by providing bike racks and bike repair equipment
- 3 businesses provided a physical activity station so their employees could get up and move during the day
- 1 business re-vamped their breakroom making it easier for employees to bring healthy food to work



In addition we developed an [online toolkit](#) for wellness that anyone can download from our website.



Campaign Finance and Elections

The SPACC Political Action Committee (PAC) screened candidates and endorsed a winning slate of three pro-business candidates. The PAC held two very successful Politics @ the Pub fundraising events.



For the sixth year, thousands of people visited the Chamber's online East Metro Voter Guide to inform themselves about candidates for office in our area. The site provided candidate questionnaires completed by candidates seeking office for county commissioner, city council, and mayor positions so that voters could hear directly from candidates about issues facing businesses and other organizations in the East Metro.

Transit and Transportation

Our East Metro Strong initiative continues to drive transit advocacy for the East Metro area. We significantly advanced the Riverview Corridor, linking downtown Saint Paul to the airport, and continued work on the Rush line and Gateway Corridor.

We continue to emphasize to stakeholders at all levels the importance of providing funding in a predictable, guaranteed format so that we can accelerate the transit build-out of the East Metro.



The Chamber supported adding pedestrian and bike lanes in Saint Paul, specifically the Capital City Bikeway. The Bikeway adds a dedicated walkway and bike lanes in downtown, with the first portion already completed on Jackson Street.

Fun Fact!

Metro Transit set a new one-day ridership record in September when Minnesotans used transit to attend events in the East Metro.

Programming and Events



Our Public Affairs Series continued a winning tradition by providing over 1,000 guests with compelling speakers educating us on local, state, and even national issues. During our Political Leadership Luncheon we celebrated local elected leaders and communities for their work in building a stronger East Metro.



Our Public Affairs Committee provides members with updates on projects and issues in the region, including transit and transportation issues.

Fun Fact!

On October 17, 73,000 people registered online to vote in Minnesota, smashing the previous daily record of 27,000.

BizRecycling

SPACC partnered again with Ramsey County to make it easier for businesses to recycle through the BizRecycling program.

Organizations received free consultations on how to save money on their trash bill and make recycling systems more efficient. One member is now saving over \$20,000 a year on trash costs by diverting organic waste and revising their overall recycling systems.

Fun Fact!

Two-thirds of the United States' recycling is shipped to China.



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