



Middle class: keep it, grow it

What's working

Achieving the middle class remains the aspiration for the vast majority of people.

- If you aren't in the middle class, you can still imagine a different life in a middle-class neighborhood. In Minneapolis, those neighborhoods are only a mile away.

Low-income and middle-income people share similar values.

- We're like-minded about families, education, opportunity and safety.

The societal infrastructure that supports the middle class is holding on.

- The residential tax base has grown in recent years.
- All the health campuses in Minneapolis have stayed and grown; as a result, those valuable jobs have stayed.
- Our banks are holding on.
- There is a growing educational level – 37 percent of our population is college-educated.
- There is an in-migration of the creative class.
- Neighborhood stabilization dollars are being used to help the middle class.

What isn't working

The economic downturn is hurting the middle class.

- More middle-class people are at risk for foreclosure and becoming homeless.
- Tax increases and rising prices amount to real money; it means that you can't pay for a roof replacement.

The value the middle class brings to a community isn't respected.

- What you talk about is what's important, but we don't talk about the middle class. The middle class doesn't have advocates.
- The City takes the middle class for granted, yet the middle class is the workhorse for Minneapolis. These are the folks who keep their homes up and give character to a neighborhood.
- The complaints of the middle class aren't respected. We're told we shouldn't complain because others have it worse. When violent crime came to our park, the problem was dismissed as a fluke.
- The City didn't respond to concerns about merchants leaving. The City's threshold is too high and too late.
- The International Baccalaureate program was attractive to middle-class residents, but the school district directed money to remedial programs.

The middle class is losing confidence in Minneapolis' direction.

- The streets are in awful condition. Minneapolis is spending its money on lawsuits when it should be fixing streets.
- The proposal for fancy streetlights feels frivolous when compared to real needs.
- The library financial debacle is another example. We pass a referendum and then learn the libraries were on the brink of financial disaster. Now I pay more, but I have less input into library governance.

- If the middle class isn't confident about the city's safety and quality of life, they won't move into Minneapolis. If they live here and they're not happy, they'll leave.
- There are too many homes being rented out. When there's less pride in yard care and home maintenance and fewer connections to the community, the neighborhood suffers.
- Every park is a safe haven for thugs.

The middle class pays for more services than it receives.

- Some neighborhoods pay the freight and others use it. We focus so much on disparities that we lose focus on the people who are the backbone of our communities.
- The middle class is cheaper to maintain, but there's no program to entice the middle class here.
- Public schools aren't for the middle class anymore. Safety and quality were big problems so the middle class left.
- Minneapolis is funded as a local resource but some programs housed here are used by the entire state. For example, the state's only AIDS outpatient clinic is in Minneapolis. People from all over the state use it, but Minneapolis shoulders all the costs.

It's harder to achieve or remain in the middle class.

- Property taxes are going up and up. If taxes keep going up, there won't be any retirees in Minneapolis anymore.
- Minnesota is not performing as well in job creation as it once did.
- Most jobs will require post-secondary education, yet college is increasingly expensive.
- We don't offer real pathways out of poverty. We're perpetually funding programs, yet poverty stays the same. We lack comprehensive solutions that lead to long-term change.

Middle class: keep it, grow it

What should be done next

Address crime and the perception of safety.

- Addressing crime is job No. 1. Middle class people have to feel safe or they'll stay away.
- Get control of parks that function like vacant homes for thugs.
- Fighting crime is not a two-year fix; it's a 20-year solution. Get early childhood education to north Minneapolis. Ask corporations to put money into early childhood education to combat long-term poverty and crime.
- Deal with mental health problems.

Provide economic incentives and share costs more fairly.

- Cap property taxes for seniors so they can stay in their homes.
- Use neighborhood stability funds to help middle-class folks avoid foreclosure.
- Do things that will make the middle class want to stay rather than flee to the suburbs.
- When the state depends on a program that's only offered in Minneapolis, get the State to kick in some dollars.

Address quality of life issues that are important to the middle class.

- Address lesser crimes and take care of our infrastructure. These are crucial to a neighborhood's quality of life.
- Don't go down the lower taxes road – people won't really see benefits.
- Revisit the homestead credit and its role in deterring home rentals.

Remind the middle class that they do receive benefits and they are appreciated.

- Communicate to the middle class that they do get benefits for owning a home.
- Keep a focus on the middle class. There's great harm when people lose hope of attaining the middle class.
- Communicate that the City cares about education, safety and quality of life as much as the middle class does.

"The middle class is often silent. Instead of complaining, they vote with their feet."

- Resident
