East Metro
VOTER GUIDE
ST PAUL AREA CHAMBER

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Candidate Bio

I believe my leadership skills and extensive experience in local government, in both large and small cities, uniquely qualify me to serve as Mayor of Mendota Heights.

I have served on the Mendota Heights City Council since 2025 and served 39 years on the Mendota Heights Fire Department, including 32 years as Fire Chief. During my leadership, the department was twice named Minnesota Fire Department of the Year. I also held leadership positions in county and state fire organizations.

I have been a registered Professional Engineer in civil and traffic engineering for 41 years, including 33 years serving the citizens of Saint Paul in traffic operations, as City Traffic Engineer, and for 12 years as City Engineer. In 2015, the City Engineers Association of Minnesota named me Engineer of the Year.

I am a lifelong Mendota Heights resident. My wife Lynne' and I raised our three daughters here. I graduated from Henry Sibley High School, earned a civil engineering degree from the University of Minnesota and a mini-MBA from the University of St. Thomas, and completed the Latimer Leadership Program at the Humphrey Institute.

What style of leadership would you bring to this position?
I would describe my leadership style as responsive: a blend of participatory and servant leadership. Having been involved in local government throughout my career, I gain energy from helping people and solving problems in ways that allow people to truly feel they participated, were heard, and were included in the final outcome.

That means treating everyone with respect and recognizing that the financial resources residents and businesses provide to the city are incredibly valuable. Those Financial resources must be used fairly, responsibly, and for the purposes for which they were intended.

What are your top three priorities if elected, and how might they be affected by growing uncertainty around state and federal funding?

1. **Authentic resident and business engagement.** We need to identify community needs by truly listening to residents and businesses. Mendota Heights has a history of listening, but I believe we have moved too far toward an attitude of "we know best." We need to remember that we serve our community.
2. **Fiscal responsibility.** City costs have increased significantly in recent years. Residents face higher property taxes, new gas and electric franchise fees, increased sewer and stormwater rates, and street assessments, in addition to county, school district, and state tax increases all in addition to the inflationary increase on day to day needs such as food, housing clothing and transportation. Government must control spending, distinguish needs from wants, and provide essential services efficiently. Some residents can absorb higher costs; others simply cannot.
3. **Protecting local control.** State and Metropolitan Council proposals increasingly threaten local authority over zoning and land use through one-size-fits-all approaches. These decisions could permanently and significantly affect how Mendota Heights looks and feels in the future.

Uncertainty in state and federal funding makes fiscal discipline even more important. We must establish priorities and avoid commitments our residents cannot sustainably support.

What is the biggest challenge facing Mendota Heights right now, and where do you see the greatest opportunity?
I hear from residents who strongly feel the City Council is not listening to them and that decisions move forward before the community has a meaningful opportunity to participate.

Two recent examples are the proposed wireless communications tower and the new municipal campus for Police and City Hall. In both cases, many residents did not become aware of the issue until a proposed solution had already been developed.

Our greatest opportunity is to involve residents earlier and include them as an integral part of finding solutions. Our community is engaged and wants to participate. We should welcome that.

There is almost always more than one way to solve a problem. We should not become so committed to an initial solution that we overlook alternatives. We should encourage feedback and challenges to a proposed solution. Solutions often improve as more information and perspectives emerge. Community support and buy-in are critical to how people feel about the outcome, particularly because residents and businesses ultimately provide the financial resources that make those solutions possible.

How would you characterize the business climate in Mendota Heights, and what role should city government play in partnering with the business community to attract jobs, develop the workforce, and address shared challenges?
Business is crucial to Mendota Heights. Our business park provides jobs, supports restaurants and other service businesses, broadens the tax base, and helps reduce pressure on residential property taxes.

Recent additions to our community include Consolidated Precision Products (CPP), which produces structural components for the global aerospace industry and is constructing a facility scheduled to open in 2027 bringing 200 well paying jobs to our community. Happy Joe's Pizza & Ice Cream and Bricksworth Brewing have also opened, or are opening, bringing additional gathering spaces for our community.

As Eagan and Inver Grove Heights continue developing along our southern border and available property becomes more limited, Mendota Heights will become increasingly attractive. Our proximity to both downtowns, the airport, and major freeways provides an excellent location for businesses.

City government should work collaboratively with existing and prospective businesses, understand their needs, remove unnecessary barriers, and help create an environment where they can succeed while ensuring development remains compatible with our community.

What do you view as the most pressing public safety challenges in your community, and how would you address them?
We have dedicated police and fire personnel who do an excellent job keeping our city safe. We are fortunate, thanks in large part to their diligence and professionalism, not to face a single overriding public safety crisis at this time.

That does not mean we can become complacent. We must remain vigilant, support our public safety personnel, maintain strong emergency response capabilities, and stay ahead of concerns as they emerge.

Public safety requires continuous attention, appropriate resources, good planning, and strong communication between the city and the community. My 39 years with the Mendota Heights Fire Department, including 32 years as Fire Chief, taught me that preparedness and prevention are every bit as important as responding effectively when an emergency occurs.

What ideas do you have to address housing shortages and affordability, and how do you view the role of rent control policies in that process?
Housing affordability is a difficult issue with no easy answer. Our economy largely operates through supply and demand. When demand is high and supply is limited, prices rise.

My concern is that simply increasing the number or density of housing units in Mendota Heights does not automatically create affordability and could negatively affect some of the characteristics that make people want to live here. Housing prices are high in Mendota Heights in part because it is a desirable community.

We should carefully consider opportunities to address housing needs while respecting community character and maintaining meaningful local control over land-use decisions. Housing policy should recognize that different communities have different circumstances rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all solution.

I do not support rent control policies because I believe they can discourage investment and lead to disinvestment in the community.

How would you improve transportation infrastructure and safety for drivers, transit riders, cyclists, and pedestrians in your community?
The Highway 62 speed limit was raised to 60 MPH in 2025. I believe this moves in the wrong direction, particularly when I-35E is posted at 55 MPH and it is a document fact that speed significantly increases the probability of death or serious injury. Highway 62 through Mendota Heights should function more like an urban boulevard, with a speed closer to 50 or even 45 MPH.

Our development pattern is not conducive to effective traditional transit routes, but microtransit or other flexible services may offer alternatives worth exploring.

Mendota Heights values its open spaces and extensive walking and biking trail network. Upcoming county projects include improvements on Delaware Avenue from Marie Avenue to Dodd Road and a grade-separated underpass on Dodd Road north of Highway 62.

Additional connections should be explored along Dodd Road north of Highway 62 and Delaware Avenue south toward Eagan. These projects depend on funding and community support but likely would significantly improve connectivity and create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Residential property owners across the region are feeling significant strain from rising property tax bills. How would you approach balancing fiscal responsibility with the demand for services when setting the city levy?
Strong community involvement is essential when balancing taxes and services. Property owners need meaningful opportunities to provide input, particularly when distinguishing between true needs and wants.

There are basic services our city must ensure are provided: roadway maintenance and snow removal, police, fire and EMS services, wastewater treatment, and safe drinking water. That does not necessarily mean every service must be provided directly by city employees, but the city is responsible for ensuring essential services are delivered effectively.

Consolidating or sharing services may make sense in some circumstances and not in others. Residents may decide that maintaining a particular service internally is worth the additional cost.

These decisions should be transparent and based on clear information about costs, benefits, alternatives, and service levels. We must recognize that while some residents can absorb additional taxes and fees, others cannot. Fiscal responsibility means respecting both the services residents expect and their ability to pay for them.

What are the two or three issues where you believe city government is best positioned to lead — and why the city rather than the state or county?

1. **Community land use and planning.** Residents are best positioned to help decide how their community develops. Land-use decisions should reflect local conditions, community input, and expectations. There is no one-size-fits-all approach that works equally well for every city. Diversity in development is important and healthy, but decisions should meaningfully involve those most directly affected.
2. **Public works and public safety.** Residents have a much more direct impact at the city level, and concerns can often be addressed more quickly locally than at the county or state level.

Many residents know their City Council members and view them as their first stop when they need help. Fewer personally know their county commissioner or state representatives. That accessibility and accountability are among the greatest strengths of local government. Decisions about services that directly affect residents every day are often best made as close to those residents as possible.

What does real taxpayer transparency look like to you, and what specific steps would you take to achieve it — both in terms of financial reporting and public engagement?
Real taxpayer transparency means involving residents in budgets and major financial decisions **before** decisions have effectively been made.

Residents should be brought into discussions while alternatives are still being considered, not after the city has selected a solution and is ready to announce what it plans to do.

Mendota Heights does a good job informing residents about what the city has done and what programs are available. We can improve by telling residents what issues are coming, what alternatives are being considered, where we are in the process, and how they can participate.

We should use existing communications such as *Friday News* and *Heights Highlights* more intentionally to explain upcoming issues and invite participation early.

I would also consider citizen task forces for specific high-impact issues when appropriate, particularly when an issue does not fit naturally within existing commissions. These groups could bring residents directly into the process and provide regular public updates on their work.

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