



February 4, 2026

Dear Council President Noecker and Members of the City Council,

On behalf of the 90+ members of the Grand Avenue Business Association (GABA), we write in strong **support of the Festivals and Events Security Credit proposal.**

GABA works hard to support our member businesses in a variety of ways, including marketing of Grand Avenue's role as an economic engine for the city as a world-class shopping, dining, and service corridor. While we host many events on the avenue throughout the year to increase exposure of our business community to the region, GABA is most known for its hosting of the beloved rite of summer – Grand Old Day.

Grand Old Day is the largest free, one-day street festival in the Midwest and we are proud of it. This one-day event brings over 200,000 individuals to our neighborhood to celebrate through food, music, commerce, and community. There are unarguable benefits to our businesses and larger Saint Paul community from events like Grand Old Day – regional recognition that sparks business-to-business partnerships, increased public visibility to assist economic development, and social connection that fosters civic pride and builds our community's reputation.

And we know what our community feels when we do not have these opportunities to celebrate together. Grand Old Day was on pause during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only with the strong dedication and determination of our GABA board members and volunteers were we able to reconstitute this great event. But the festival world looks quite different than it did pre-pandemic – costs have increased, corporate philanthropic dollars have shrunk, and our local businesses continue to be stretched thin.

Festivals play such a critical role in sewing the fabric of our community, yet they come with significant costs. Despite our best efforts to secure corporate partnerships, GABA has subsidized Grand Old Day for the last three years. Our most significant cost driver is infrastructure, many parts of which are city operated. This proposal to allocate each festival a credit for security costs would go a long way to helping GABA break even.

In 2025, our police costs exceeded \$95,000, which was 34% higher than it was in 2023 despite a shorter footprint and no major incidents.

We thank Council President Noecker for working with GABA to formulate this proposal. We are so optimistic about the future of our city and look forward to working with other festivals as we all face similar challenges but remain dedicated to doing all we can to trumpet the ongoing success of our local businesses, artisans, and residents. We ask for the City Council's support of the Festivals and Events Security Credit.

Sincerely,

Kim O'Brien

Kim O'Brien, Executive Director

Holly Weinkauff

Holly Weinkauff, Board President