

Opinion **Community Voices**

Hospitality community steps up during the holidays; now Minneapolis residents and officials should, too

Minneapolis hospitality operators know best when it comes to their businesses, and they have repeatedly demonstrated their loyalty to their employees and this great city.

By Angie Whitcomb



Manny's Steakhouse sign, downtown Minneapolis

MinnPost photo by Corey Anderson

Nov. 29, 2023 Gathering with my friends and family for Thanksgiving last week, I've been reflecting a lot on the hospitality business owners and workers who

joyfully (and anxiously) prepare for the first rush of the holiday season. These dedicated individuals take great pride in being a part of these important holidays for all of us.

That pride is why recently, hospitality operators strengthened their commitment to Minneapolis, [partnering with](#) city leadership to bring more people to areas like Nicollet Mall and support more BIPOC and women-owned small businesses in vacant storefronts downtown. As we work toward revitalizing the city and preserving the vibrancy of our diverse neighborhoods, you can depend on the hospitality industry to continue being the beating heart of downtown Minneapolis.

Heart, after all, is what hospitality is all about — something that we see in the long hours and hard work the people in the industry put in around the holiday. Thanksgiving, in particular, is filled with moments of service among our hospitality workforce. Hotels across the city provide meals for first responders, and restaurants stay open or even extend hours to make sure their communities have options for meals. Minneapolis residents have the opportunity to match this commitment — and I encourage them to dine, shop and give as they can over the coming weeks.

Looking ahead to the new year, with people returning to their [offices downtown](#) and month-over-month [employment gains being made](#) across hospitality and food service industries in Minnesota, momentum is moving in the right direction. This is very welcome news after several challenging years for Minneapolis' hospitality industry.

Without a doubt, this momentum will depend on sustained investments in the hospitality workforce. Operators across the city continue to provide opportunities for professional development, management and entrepreneurship. This is especially true for marginalized communities, where hospitality remains a pathway to careers and personal growth.

Maintaining the independence of hospitality operators is essential to their ability to continue delivering on these efforts to improve our communities. Minneapolis operators know best when it comes to their

businesses, and they have repeatedly demonstrated their loyalty to their employees and this great city.

Minneapolis already has some of the most robust worker protections in the country ranging from our minimum wage to earned sick and safe time to expansive wage theft laws at the state and local levels. And yet, some are saying that the city and the City Council are not doing enough and that new unelected boards should be set up to create additional layers of regulations.



Angie Whitcomb

If our current laws aren't being enforced adequately, the agencies with oversight should receive more funding. If our current laws aren't sufficient, the City Council should work with all parties in a transparent way to develop new policies that work for employees, employers and the city as a whole. Collaborative solutions like this are crucial to ensuring the strongest possible employee protections for all hospitality workers and employers.

As we prepare to navigate another year of economic uncertainty, we look forward to partnering with policymakers at all levels to ensure operators are well positioned to lift up the industry's most valuable asset — our workforce.

As we gather with family and friends throughout the holiday season, let's be thankful for the hospitality businesses and workers that bring joy and comfort to our communities and our lives.

Angie Whitcomb is president and CEO of Hospitality Minnesota in Minneapolis.

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