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ICE Impacting West St. Paul Businesses: Sales Down, Employees Scared, Customers Staying Home

📅 January 20, 2026 👤 Ella Barry 📁 Commerce 💬 Leave a comment

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The increase of ICE activity in West St. Paul is severely impacting local businesses. Many businesses in the community are facing temporary closures or reduced hours, and a loss of customer traffic and revenue.

Examples: [Grande Sunrise](#), which just opened in October, is temporarily closed, as is [Frutlandia](#). Micho Love has been closed, but [just reopened](#) last week. We previously reported on the struggles [Garibaldi](#) is experiencing. El Taquito made [national news](#) after what the owners allege is racial profiling by ICE. Federal agents gathered in the parking lot of [Pineda](#), and now the restaurant has been locking their doors and only opening for customers.

Why: In many cases, people are afraid regardless of their immigration status as ICE has repeatedly detained U.S. citizens.

ICE Impact on Local Businesses

To learn more about the ongoing impact, we specifically spoke with three West St. Paul business owners about the struggles they've faced since the increase in ICE activity.

Eco Chico

Krystell Theisen Escobar owns [Eco Chico](#), a used children's clothing store focused on sustainability. She says part of their mission is to bring more diversity into reuse and second-hand shopping.

Sales Down

"Since about November of last year, many of our customers, primarily in the Latino and Somali community have just stopped shopping," said Theisen Escobar.

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She said the store is losing revenue, which “impacts our ability to pay rent, to pay our bills.”

Theisen Escobar said they had hoped to expand their staff in the coming months. They had also hoped to offer better incentives for people bringing in clothing. Instead, they've had to cut some of their staff's hours and are currently only offering store credit.

Stress

Theisen Escobar said she feels a need to be vigilant, and keep an eye out for ICE, not just for her business and employees, but for the other businesses located in Signal Hills.

“Instead of paying attention to other things like marketing my business or working on my bookkeeping and stuff like that, I feel like I constantly have to be monitoring what's going on, seeing if there's anything posted by any of the managers in the strip mall.”

“This is a really inappropriate and unconstitutional use of force that is affecting all businesses,” Theisen Escobar said. “it's also causing a level of stress on the entire community that is just unhealthy.”

Theisen Escobar said one of her employees, who is a Hispanic U.S. citizen, “had an ICE raid in her apartment building and felt that she was not safe to stay there.”

What Can We Do?

“It is really important that we communicate with our elected officials at every single level that this is a huge threat to every single resident,” she said.

“For people that are interested in protesting in an impactful but safe and silent way I really, really encourage you to support small businesses, to shop second hand, to do business directly with your neighbors every single change you get.”



El Destino Market

Claudia Rangel is one of the owners of [El Destino Market](#), a grocery and convenience store that sells a variety of food and snacks from Mexico and other Central and South American countries.

ICE Raid

According to Rangel, the store was raided by ICE last week. “It's affected our sales. We also had to close down for a few days last week because of the raid that happened at the store with ICE. Our employees did not want to come back to work.”

“We did give the employees the option to stay home and we delivered free groceries to them as well.” Rangel said employees who are staying home will still have a job waiting for them if and when they feel safe to return.

Rangel and her husband have been covering most of the shifts, and they had to limit the store hours. “We just can't run the store all by ourselves.”

Customer Safety

The door is locked, and customers must ring a doorbell to be let inside, which is a precaution they added in December 2025.

"We've had a lot of customers who've been detained by ICE," Rangel said. "We go on social media and we'll see our customers that we've known for years and they've been detained and we no longer see them."

Speaking to her customers, Rangel said, "I just want them to know that there is hope and that there is help out there. El Destino Market along with the community is there to support however we can."

Food Delivery

Rangel and her husband have started a volunteer-based food delivery system. They've listed a phone number on their [Facebook](#) page for people to text their grocery orders. There is no charge or minimum for delivery.

"I'm just so grateful to the community because we've gotten donations so we can cover the expenses of groceries," Rangel said.

"Just a couple days ago we had a lady who is a single mom of two who's a frequent customer here, and she called crying because she hasn't been able to go to work and she had no food left," Rangel said. "She just wanted to feed her kids. Thankfully, with those donations we were able to deliver a week's worth of groceries to this lady."

Clothesline Laundromat

Britt Frandsen is the owner of [Clothesline Laundromat](#), as well as the building which houses the laundromat, El Destino Market and [Calisota Boys Customs](#).

Sales

Frandsen compares her weekly sales to the same week from the previous year, and since the increase of ICE activity in West St. Paul, sales are down significantly.

- The week of Dec. 8 2025 her sales were down 16.4% from the same week in 2024.
- By the week of December 15 her sales were down 33.1%.
- Last week her sales were down 46.3%, her worst sales week since she bought the business in 2018.

As for why sales are declining, Frandsen said, "I think people are taking it harder, they're hiding more, they're taking it more seriously."

Customer Safety

Frandsen has become accustomed to seeing customers consistently, and with traffic way down, she's worried about her customers, especially the ones she hasn't seen lately.

"I miss my customers, I don't see a lot of my regulars."

"Laundry is really ritualistic. I have customers that come in every Thursday at the same time and they bring their dog," Frandsen said. "It comes down to people's patterns. They have been forced to change because of ICE."

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