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Bloom in Bloomington interns celebrate before their graduation ceremony in August. Left to right: Isela Mendiola, Larecia Harrison, Ruby Cibik, Jordon Jackson, Weemon Yeakehson, Jazzmyrna Alcenat, Eman Mohamed and Alexis Gutierrez Navarro. This program is part of the *Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together.* equitable economic growth priority.

## COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN MOVES FORWARD

Cultivating an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be is no small task and it is the mission of the City's latest strategic plan, *Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together.* Staff provided the first quarterly progress report to the City Council in July. You can check progress on the strategic plan anytime on the online, interactive dashboard at [blm.mn/btt](http://blm.mn/btt).

### BY THE NUMBERS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE QUARTERLY REPORT

Between April and July, overall progress on the plan jumped from 10% to 18%. Staff checked off 16 milestones, which are larger tasks within initiatives. There are 22 key staff leading the teams working on projects in the priority areas of a connected and welcoming community, a healthy community, and a community with equitable economic growth. Since the last quarterly report in April, half of the initiatives previously listed as upcoming are now in progress.

"That represents an increase in workload," Noah Faldet of the City Manager's Office said. "We are at roughly the same number of 'on track' initiatives. Managing tasks and initiatives is just one way to make progress on the City's goals."

### PROGRESS IN ALL PRIORITY AREAS

There has been progress in all three priority areas. The Park System Master Plan launched an Adopt-a-Park program. The Office of Racial Equity and Belonging hit two milestones ahead of schedule with its Welcome to Bloomington program. The Solid Waste Reduction Plan has hit three milestones, including the citywide rollout of the curbside pickup program for reusable and recyclable bulky items. The Small Business Development Center has hit five milestones. The Bloom in Bloomington internship program also wrapped up, *pictured above.*

### READ THE QUARTERLY REPORT

You can find the full *Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together.* first quarter report or find the interactive dashboard to learn more about the tasks and progress under each priority online at [blm.mn/btt](http://blm.mn/btt).

### A CONNECTED, WELCOMING COMMUNITY



- PEOPLE CAN CONNECT WITH NEIGHBORS
- PEOPLE ARE WELCOMED BY THE CITY INTO THE COMMUNITY
- RESIDENTS ARE VALUED BY THE COMMUNITY

### A HEALTHY COMMUNITY



- IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
- IMPROVED HUMAN HEALTH
- INCREASED SAFETY SECURITY

### A COMMUNITY WITH EQUITABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH



- ECONOMIC GROWTH IS MORE EQUITABLY DISTRIBUTED
- EXPANDED DIVERSITY IN BUSINESS OWNERSHIP
- EQUITABLE JOB GROWTH FOR WORKERS

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BLOOMINGTON MN 55431-3027

## CHECK OUT THE ELECTION GUIDE INSERT IN THIS ISSUE

The special insert provides information about early voting, finding your polling place, races that will be on the ballot and the ballot questions about the three projects outlined in the community investment plan Bloomington Forward. See pages 1 – 4 of the Election Guide insert to read more.

The *Briefing*, published monthly by the City of Bloomington, is mailed to residents and businesses. Direct your comments and requests for Braille, larger print or computer file to Communications Administrator Janine Hill, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington MN 55431-3071; PH 952-563-8819; MN Relay 711; FAX 952-563-8715; Email: [jhill@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:jhill@BloomingtonMN.gov)  
**Website: [BloomingtonMN.gov](http://BloomingtonMN.gov)**

## BLOOMINGTON CITY COUNCIL



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 BloomingtonMN.gov

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*Elected officials presented for informational purposes.*

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[council@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:council@BloomingtonMN.gov)

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Karl Keel, <i>Public Works</i>	952-563-8731
<a href="mailto:publicworks@BloomingtonMN.gov">publicworks@BloomingtonMN.gov</a>	
<b>General phone number</b>	<b>952-563-8700</b>

*The City of Bloomington does not discriminate against or deny the benefits of its services, programs, or activities to a qualified person because of a disability. The City will provide a reasonable accommodation or modify its policies and programs to allow people with disabilities to participate in all City services, programs, activities, and employment. The law does not require the City to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden on the City. To make a request for a reasonable accommodation, ask for more information, or to file a complaint, contact the Community Outreach and Engagement Division, City of Bloomington, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431-3027; 952-563-8733, MN Relay 711.*

## MAYOR'S MEMO BLOOMINGTON FORWARD

By Mayor Tim Busse

**B**loomington Forward is the official name of the proposal to invest in three major community projects using a local option sales tax.

We've been talking about this for a while. Looking back, we realized we spent more than two years gathering input from residents as Bloomington Forward, our long-term investment plan, took shape.

Using all that community engagement and conversation, the City developed a \$159 million investment plan to build a new community health and wellness center, support major renovations at Bloomington Ice Garden and provide new amenities and habitat restoration along the Nine Mile Creek corridor.

I've talked in the past about the need for each of these projects. We need a new ice-making system at Bloomington Ice Garden because the current refrigerant used depletes the ozone layer and has been phased out around the world. The Public Health building and Creekside Community Center have served us well for over 60 years. However, both facilities cannot accommodate current program and service demands and are limited in how they can be remodeled or expanded. A larger and modern community health and wellness center will be able to meet the needs of the community's population for years to come. The Nine Mile Creek corridor provides key access to regionally significant trail networks—survey results confirm that Bloomington residents love their parks and trails.

If our goal is to make Bloomington an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be, Bloomington needs to invest in key infrastructure. As I've talked about in the past, a sales tax would give us a way to share the costs with users across the region. It's estimated that at least 67% of a local sales tax would be paid by non-Bloomington residents. If these three projects were paid for with property tax revenue, the cost would fall on Bloomington property owners.

On Tuesday, November 7, Bloomington voters will have the opportunity to vote on the Bloomington Forward proposal. This is a big decision for this community, and I believe that all big decisions should be well-informed.

The City has created a website to provide you with details and resources about the projects so you can make an informed decision when you cast your vote this fall. Please, visit the website—[bloomingtonforward.org](http://bloomingtonforward.org)—and take some time to read through it. There's a lot of information, including videos and a frequently asked questions page. There's also a place where you can submit questions or feedback and again, I'd encourage you to do so.

You'll be hearing a lot about Bloomington Forward between now and November, and I sincerely hope you'll make every effort to be as informed as possible on this important question. More information is included in this issue and at [bloomingtonforward.org](http://bloomingtonforward.org).



## SHARE YOUR PRIORITIES FOR THE 2024 BUDGET

Let your voice be heard in the City's 2024 budget planning process this month at one of these upcoming events. Learn more about the budget planning process on the City's website at [blm.mn/budget](http://blm.mn/budget) or call 952-563-8790.

- Farmers Market, Saturday, September 16, Civic Plaza, east parking lot, 9 – 11 a.m. (Market is open 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.)
- Fire Open House, Saturday, October 14, Fire Station #1, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. (Open house runs from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.)



Bloomington Leadership Program participants Anne Beattie, Tony Comer, Makayla Buckman and Simran Usuf present their group's work.

## STRIVE FOR SUCCESS WITH THE BLOOMINGTON LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**K**een on sharpening your leadership skills? Immerse yourself in your community by applying for the Bloomington Leadership Program. Bloomington residents 18 years and older, with the ability to attend at least eight of 10 sessions (no more than two absences), may apply. During this free, two-month, interactive program, participants can:

- Develop leadership skills through educational sessions that are engaging and relational.
- Build connections and network with City staff, elected officials and local nonprofit representatives.
- Increase understanding of local government.

Sessions will take place Tuesday evenings, February 1 – March 21, 2024, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m., and on two Saturday mornings during this period. The program will be held at Bloomington Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road.

Visit [blm.mn/leadership](http://blm.mn/leadership) to apply or for other information or call 952-563-8733, MN Relay 711, to be mailed an application. Your application must be received by October 31, at 4:30 p.m.

## SUBMIT YOUR VETERAN PHOTOS

**T**he annual veterans photo wall will be on display at Creekside throughout November. Send in your photos and stories online at [blm.mn/vet-photos](http://blm.mn/vet-photos). When submitting a photo, keep the following in mind:

- Submit a photo only if you are the photographer or copyright owner of the image, and only if you grant the City the right to use the photo in any of its online and print marketing and communications.
  - If your photo was taken at a non-public event, you must obtain permission from everyone whose identities are recognizable in the photo before submitting it.
  - High-resolution images are preferred but not required.
- Avoid submitting files that are more than 10MB in size. High-resolution images are preferred but not required.

Include the name, military branch and years of service of the person in the photo. Contact Community Outreach and Engagement at 952-563-8733, MN Relay 711 or at [outreach@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:outreach@BloomingtonMN.gov) with any questions.



Specialist 5, Debra Tone Johnson, US Army 1973 – 1976.

## RECREATIONAL CANNABIS AND YOUR HEALTH

**M**innesota is the 23rd state to legalize recreational cannabis (marijuana). It is important to keep in mind the health impacts of this new policy. Health considerations include:

- No one under age 21 can buy or use recreational marijuana.
- Like alcohol and cigarettes, there is no safe amount of marijuana if you're pregnant.
- People who breastfeed or chestfeed are advised by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention to avoid all cannabis use; there is no safe amount of cannabis for infants.
- Keep any cannabis products out of young children's reach. These products can make them sick and cause a severe reaction requiring hospitalization.
- As with tobacco, secondhand smoke from cannabis may negatively impact health in multiple ways, from child development to heart and lung health.
- Cannabis use has harmful effects on youth including a higher chance of addiction. Read how to discuss the health effects of cannabis with your children at [blm.mn/talkingtips](http://blm.mn/talkingtips).
- Do not drive under the influence of cannabis. Cannabis inhibits coordination, reaction time, and decision making. It can also impair your perception, which compromises safe driving. It can take six to eight hours for these impacts to resolve, so use caution and plan accordingly.
- First-time users need to carefully learn their limits to avoid harmful reactions to the overconsumption of cannabis. The physical effects of using this substance will vary based on the product used, a person's surroundings and mental state, and if a person uses other substances.

Learn more about the health effects of cannabis at [blm.mn/cannabis](http://blm.mn/cannabis).



## FYI: FENCE BUILDING GUIDELINES

**W**ith the nice weather, people are spending more time in their yards making improvements. Planning to install a fence on your property? Generally, the City Code allows a maximum four-foot-tall and 50% opaque fence in the yards adjacent to a street. Opacity refers to the degree to which something is unclear or difficult to see through. A maximum six-foot-tall privacy fence is allowed in side and rear yards not adjacent to a street. However, there are exceptions. A permit is not required for fences below seven feet tall.

If you have questions, see [blm.mn/fence-handout](http://blm.mn/fence-handout) or call the Planning Division at 952-563-8920 before installing a fence.

## LEARN MORE AT CANDIDATE FORUMS

**B**e an engaged and educated voter. The League of Women Voters Bloomington, with support from the City of Bloomington, invites you to four candidate forums during the month of September. All forums will take place in Council Chambers at Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road.

**School Board Candidate Forum**, Wednesday, September 13, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

**Mayoral Candidate Forum**, Tuesday, September 19, 6 – 7:15 p.m.

**City Council-at-Large Candidate Forum**, Tuesday, September 19, 7:30 – 8:45 p.m.

**City Council Districts I, II, III and IV Candidate Forum**, Wednesday, September 20, 6:30 – 8 p.m.

In advance of the forums, email your questions to [lwvbloomington@lwvmn.org](mailto:lwvbloomington@lwvmn.org). You are encouraged to submit questions on issues relevant to the offices that the candidates are seeking. At the forums, submit your questions in writing on index cards, which will be provided.

Recordings of the forums and five-minute video presentations by the candidates will be posted by September 22 online at [lwv-bloomington.com/candidate](http://lwv-bloomington.com/candidate).

League of Women Voters is a 100-year-old nonpartisan organization dedicated to defending democracy, protecting the right to vote and encouraging informed and active participation in government. The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.



# BLOOMINGTON FORWARD: A CO

**T**he City of Bloomington is a popular destination to live, work, shop, play and raise a family. As our city grows and evolves, Bloomington needs to continue making investments in community amenities that bring residents together and enhance their quality of life. After more than two years of gathering input from residents, the City of Bloomington developed a long-term investment plan, called Bloomington Forward, that would support three major community projects for better health, wellness, athletics, recreation and improved natural areas.

On Tuesday, November 7, Bloomington voters will consider a half-percent local option sales tax to finance \$155 million in bonds to pay for the projects as part of a citywide referendum. Because this is an important community decision, a website, [bloomingtonforward.org](http://bloomingtonforward.org), was created to provide Bloomington residents details and resources about the projects to make an informed vote on or before November 7.

## THE PLAN

Guided by feedback from residents, the City has put forward a \$159 million investment plan to build a new community health and wellness center, support major renovations at Bloomington Ice Garden, and provide new amenities and habitat restoration along the Nine Mile Creek Corridor. The City will ask residents to consider a half-percent local option sales tax to finance the Bloomington Forward plan with a separate ballot question for each of the three projects. If approved, the sales tax would generate up to \$155 million dollars for the three investment projects over a 20-year period. The remaining four million dollars for the projects would be provided by the State of Minnesota.

The plan focuses on three major community projects that support health, wellness, athletics and recreation:



## BUILD A NEW COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER

The single building would replace the outdated Bloomington Public Health and Creekside Community Center buildings. Potential amenities planned include: gymnasiums, an indoor walking/jogging track, indoor playground, supervised child play area, exercise spaces and fitness studios, multi-purpose rooms for community events, spaces to support senior programming, a pool with family locker rooms, public health programming, exam and counseling rooms, a lobby and reception area, and Public Health and Parks and Recreation offices.

### WHY NOW?

Due to age, the Public Health and Creekside Community Center buildings are no longer functional. Both facilities are more than 60 years old. Estimated renovation costs exceed the cost to build new.

### WHY IT MATTERS

A new community health and wellness center would feature three times as much space as the current Creekside and Public Health buildings.

**COST: \$101.8 MILLION**



## RENOVATE THE 50-YEAR-OLD BLOOMINGTON ICE GARDEN

Bloomington Ice Garden (BIG) needs new refrigeration and mechanical systems, improved accessibility, a new roof and more to improve guest experience.

### WHY NOW?

The BIG building is in need of major upgrades. Along with aging mechanical systems, the ice rinks use R-22 refrigerant, which is being phased out due to its ozone-depleting properties. Currently, to remain operational BIG must use recovered, recycled or reclaimed R-22, which is increasingly expensive and harder to get.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Bloomington Ice Garden is a destination for hockey and skating enthusiasts and draws many visitors to the city. The proposed upgrades will improve accessibility, bring the facility up to current building standards and enhance guest experiences.

**COST: \$37.2 MILLION**



## ENHANCE AND PROTECT THE NINE MILE CREEK CORRIDOR AND MOIR/CENTRAL PARK

This project would improve trails, restore riverbanks, protect habitats and add new park amenities to support outdoor recreation. Planned improvements include 12,000 feet of stream restoration, 131 acres of woodland and wetland restoration, invasive species prevention, new outdoor gathering space with restrooms, new playground and shelter building, ADA accessibility improvements, trail widening, a new boardwalk connecting to Moir/Central Park, seven new trail bridges within Central Park and 12,400 feet of new trails.

### WHY NOW?

To ensure the Nine Mile Creek corridor and Moir/Central Park continue to connect residents to nature and outdoor activities, eroded riverbanks need to be restored, natural habitats must be protected, and parks and trails should be improved for expanded for hiking and biking opportunities.

### WHY IT MATTERS

The Nine Mile Creek corridor is a popular destination for residents and visitors alike. It also includes several acres of "remnant prairie" that predate human settlement and require careful upkeep to maintain their health.

**COST: \$20 MILLION**



# BLOOMINGTON Forward

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY

## COMMITMENT TO QUALITY LIVING

### WHY FUND WITH A SALES TAX AND NOT A PROPERTY TAX?

When cities need to invest in their facilities, they generally have two options to raise the funds: a sales tax or a property tax. In May 2023, Bloomington received legislative authorization to present voters with a referendum to fund Bloomington Forward investments through a half-percent local sales tax. Here is how the sales tax compares to the property tax alternative.

### WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SALES TAX RATE IF ONE OR TWO OF THE PROJECTS ARE APPROVED INSTEAD OF ALL THREE?

The sales tax rate would stay the same no matter how many questions are approved by voters. The tax would be 0.5% so long as one, two or all three projects are approved in November.

The sales tax will end when the approved project(s) are fully funded. The maximum term for the sales tax is twenty years. If just one or two projects are accepted by voters, the sales tax will still end when the project or projects are fully funded, likely before the maximum term.

### SALES TAX VERSUS PROPERTY TAX BLOOMINGTON FORWARD TOTAL INVESTMENT: \$159 MILLION

**0.5% SALES TAX**  
(PROPOSED)

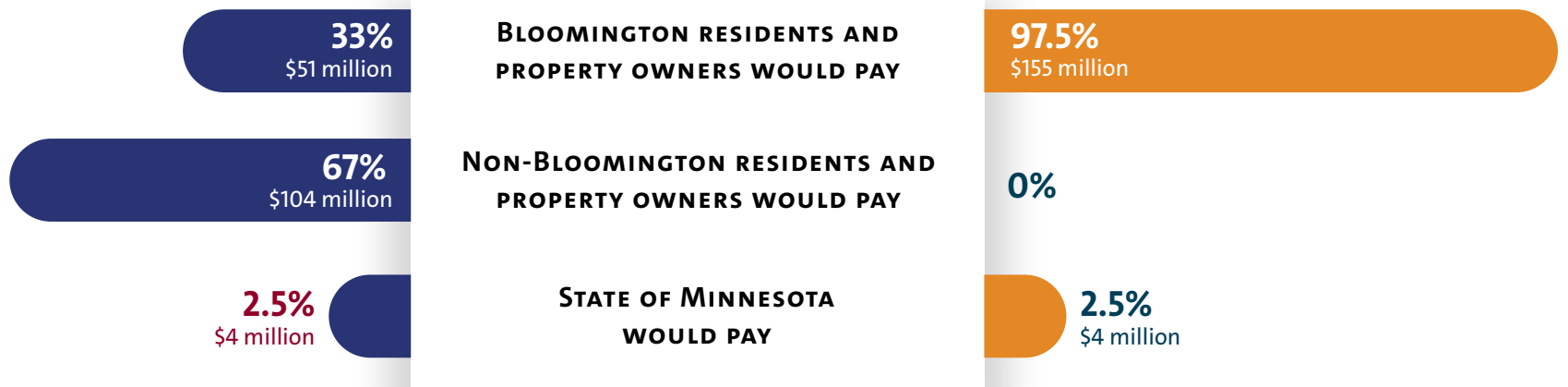


Estimated cost of the half-percent sales tax approximately **\$94 per Bloomington household per year or \$7.86 per month**



**PROPERTY TAX**  
(RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL)

Estimated cost for a median-value **Bloomington homeowner** approximately **\$223 per year or \$18.60 per month**



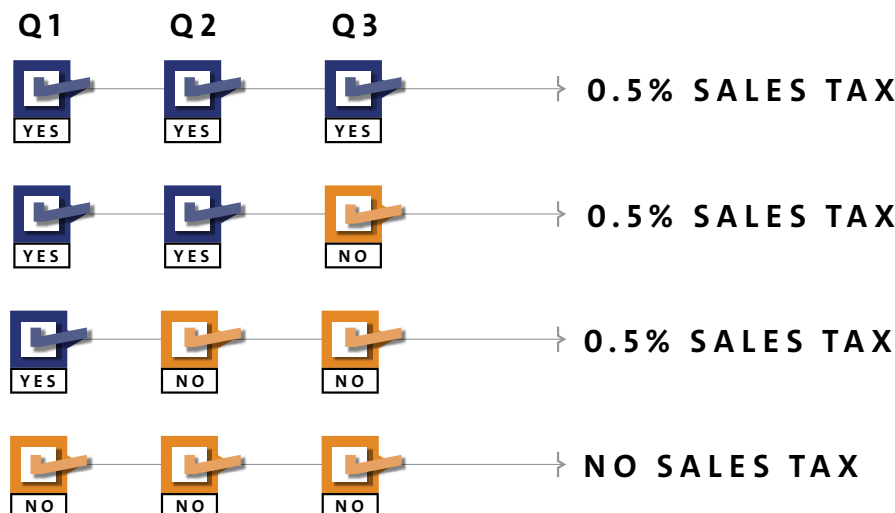
### ARE THERE EXEMPTIONS TO THE SALES TAX?

The local option sales tax has the same exemptions for purchases as the state sales tax, including groceries, clothing, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, feminine hygiene products and baby products. Sales of motor vehicles and boats are also exempt.

For more information, view this list of taxable items and this list of most nontaxable items from the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

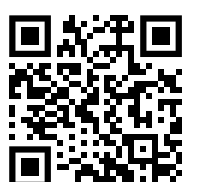
### WHAT THE VOTE MEANS

If one, two, or all three questions are approved by the voters, the City is only authorized to impose a half cent (0.5%) sales tax increase for a maximum of 20 years or until enough sales tax revenue has been raised to pay for the costs of the voter-approved projects.



LEARN MORE

**BLOOMINGTONFORWARD.ORG**





## YOUR STORM DRAIN NEEDS YOU!

**B**e a local water-quality hero by tending to your neighborhood storm drain.

As trees shed in autumn, their leaves get into storm drains and flow directly into local watersheds. Anything other than rainwater going through storm drains can degrade bodies of water. Even naturally occurring things like leaves, grass and branches add extra nutrients to water bodies. Algae feed on these nutrients, which can then turn lakes, ponds and wetlands green.

Participation in the Adopt-a-Storm Drain program is free and it only takes a few minutes, a few times a year, to clean out your local storm drain. To get all the details, visit [Adopt-a-Drain.org](http://Adopt-a-Drain.org).

## PROPERLY DISPOSE OF YARD WASTE

**D**ispose of your leaves and clippings with City of Bloomington yard waste service. The service accepts garden waste, grass clippings, leaves, weeds, soft garden materials, shrub and tree waste, and pruning. Twigs and branches must be three feet or less in length and three inches or less in diameter. Bundles or bags cannot be heavier than 40 pounds. Dirt, sod, rocks and wood chips are not accepted.

Residents with yard waste service can request one additional yard waste cart for a \$37.32 fee. It's acceptable to set out up to 20 bags of yard waste in addition to your cart(s) per week. If you have more than 20 bags, save the additional bags and have them collected the following week. Yard waste season continues through November 24, weather permitting.

To sign up for yard waste subscription, contact Utility Billing at [utilitybilling@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:utilitybilling@BloomingtonMN.gov) or 952-563-8726. Residents can pay per bag for on-call service by purchasing yard waste stickers for \$4.37 each. Call 952-563-8726 to request stickers to be mailed to you. For more information, visit [blm.mn/yardwaste](http://blm.mn/yardwaste).



## HOW TO CONTROL BUCKTHORN

**H**ave you noticed buckthorn around forested areas? This time of year, its shiny, egg-shaped leaves stand out from other vegetation. Buckthorn remains green after other vegetation has faded, even after a couple of frosts. Now through early winter is a good time to remove this nonnative invasive plant.

While it takes some effort and ongoing strategy to get rid of buckthorn, the benefits are worth the effort. Uncontrolled buckthorn takes over landscapes. Native plants have no light to grow. Wildlife habitat becomes impaired as more diverse native species disappear. It's a cycle that can make buckthorn the dominant plant in wooded areas.

Small plants can be pulled by hand, while larger ones, up to two inches, can be pulled using tools called weed wrenches. Bloomington Public Works has a variety of these tools available for residents to check out. Reserve them by calling 952-563-4920. Always replant areas cleared of buckthorn. Use a mix of native flowers, grasses, shrubs or trees appropriate for the conditions of the site. Remember, buckthorn seeds can sprout and grow for three years. Removal is a multiyear commitment to pull, cut, treat and replace.

To see how to identify and remove buckthorn, watch the video at [blm.mn/seebuckthorn](http://blm.mn/seebuckthorn). For other information, visit [blm.mn/buckthorn](http://blm.mn/buckthorn) or call 952-563-8730.



## 2023 CITYWIDE RECYCLING DROP-OFF

**Y**ou're invited to recycle large items and paper for on-site shredding at the City's second citywide recycling drop-off event on Saturday, September 30, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m., at Western Maintenance Center, 10500 Hampshire Avenue South. The event is open to all Bloomington residents. Certain items will be accepted at no cost and fees will apply for other items. Cash and checks are the only forms of payment accepted. Below is the list for what is and is not accepted. For more information visit [blm.mn/drop-off](http://blm.mn/drop-off) or contact Public Works Maintenance at 952-563-8760.

### WHAT IS ACCEPTED

#### Appliances – \$10 each

- Air conditioners
- Dehumidifiers
- Dishwashers
- Microwaves
- Refrigerators
- Stoves
- Water heaters

#### Mattresses and box springs – \$20 each

- Crib mattresses \$5

#### Tires – \$3 each

#### Electronics – \$10 each

- Computers
- Monitors
- Tablets
- TVs

#### Other electronics – No charge

- Cell phones
- Computer accessories, including keyboard and mice
- Cords
- Game consoles

- Headphones
- Printers
- Stereos
- VCRs/DVD players

#### Other items accepted with no charge

- Bicycles (Accepted in any condition)
- Scrap metal (Remove all pieces that are not metal)
- Paper for on-site shredding

### WHAT IS NOT ACCEPTED

- Building materials
- Carpet
- Concrete
- Exercise equipment
- Furniture
- Household hazardous waste
- Light bulbs
- Paint
- Trash



Police Chief Booker T. Hodges, Mayor Tim Busse and City Manager Jamie Verbrugge visits Bloomington National Night Out parties.

## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT NEARS FOUR DECADES IN BLOOMINGTON

**M**ore than 325 people registered to host a party in August this year for Bloomington Police's 39th annual National Night Out event. Each year residents gather and enjoy a summer evening with neighbors, good food and information about keeping their communities safe. Bloomington Police, Fire and other City staff visited nearly every registered gathering.

"It was a beautiful night to learn about crime prevention and connect with community members at National Night Out this year," Crime Prevention Coordinator Katie Zerull said. "This event is always a highlight for us at BPD."

Many residents also entered the annual chalk drawing contest. Winners were announced for the most creative piece, best overall and most representative of National Night Out. For more information, visit [blm.mn/nno](http://blm.mn/nno) or call Zerull at 952-563-8808.

## BPD EXPLORERS PROGRAM APPLICATIONS NOW BEING ACCEPTED

**T**he Bloomington Police Department is currently taking applicants for the 2023 – 2024 explorer post program. Open to participants between the ages of 14 and 20, the program offers an excellent opportunity for youth interested in this field to collaborate with police officers and gain knowledge about different career paths in law enforcement.

Participants must be willing to volunteer time in the community and possess good moral character. Explorers gather once a week on Thursday nights to receive hands-on training, develop valuable leadership skills, become involved in community service projects and make new friends until the state competition held April 18 – 21, 2024.

Applications can be accessed online at [blm.mn/exploreraapplication](http://blm.mn/exploreraapplication) and dropped off at the front desk of the Police Department, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, through September 20. For more information, call 952-563-4900.

## MEET A FIREFIGHTER: LEON CHAMBERS III

**L**eon Chambers III was a paid, on-call firefighter for Bloomington before being hired as a full-time firefighter this year. Three years ago, he also served as a full-time firefighter in Richfield.

While working as a public safety officer at Normandale Community College, Leon met several Bloomington firefighters, who encouraged him to apply.

"Once I became a firefighter, I knew I wanted to do it for the rest of my life," Leon shared.

Dedicated to training, Leon completed basic and advanced certificates, an associate degree and leadership classes. He also joined Northland FOOLS (Fraternal Order of Leather-head Society), a national training organization.

With support from his wife Samantha and his children Amelia and Leon IV—who says "Dada" every time he sees a fire truck—Leon wants to encourage others to consider fire service.

"For many of us, this is the best job in the world," Leon said.

### LEON'S FIRE SAFETY ADVICE:

"Folks, before going to bed, please consider closing before you doze! A closed bedroom door becomes a barrier to heat, toxic gasses, and smoke that can save a life."



## BPD PARTICIPATES IN FAITH AND BLUE

**F**or the second year, the Bloomington Police Department is participating in Faith and Blue. This national program invites officers to visit faith-based organizations for coffee and conversation. This year, October 5 – 9, officers will visit several Bloomington locations. They will also host a winter clothing drive.

By participating in activities such as these, Bloomington officers and residents have an opportunity get to know each other, collaborate in crime reduction and reduce misunderstandings.

Visit [faithandblue.org/events/](http://faithandblue.org/events/) for more details. Check out all police community events at [blm.mn/police-programs](http://blm.mn/police-programs).

## SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS

**S**eptember is National Suicide Prevention Month. In the United States, suicide is a significant public health concern and a leading cause of mortality. In 2022, 835 suicides (two a day) occurred in Minnesota. Suicide was the eighth most common cause of death in our state from 2011 to 2021. Every 11 minutes, a suicide death will occur in the U.S., and every 28 seconds, someone attempts suicide. People of any age group, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status can experience suicide risk.

What are some of the warning signs of suicide?

- Expressing a desire to end one's life.
- Increased alcohol or drug consumption.
- Feeling trapped, in despair or in intense pain.
- Mentions of being a burden on others.
- A sense of meaninglessness.

**Where can you turn to for help if you or someone you know is having thoughts about suicide? Call 911. Call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988. Text SAVE to 741741.**

Providing someone in emotional distress with support and a listening ear can go a long way toward keeping a person alive. By being aware of the warning signs, recognizing who may be at risk and knowing how to help, you can save someone's life.

Visit [Save.org](http://Save.org) or [Take5ToSaveLives.org](http://Take5ToSaveLives.org) to learn more.



## WELCOMING NEW BLOOMINGTON CHORALE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**B**loomington Chorale has welcomed Dr. Camilla Horne as its new artistic director. Dr. Horne holds a doctoral graduate of the University of Minnesota and recently returned to Minnesota after more than 30 years conducting groups at the collegiate, community and semi-professional level across the country. Her debut concert with the Bloomington Chorale was “Come Alive! It’s Showtime” in May 2023. Chorale members noted then that Dr. Horne exuded joy, which is fitting, for their next show in December is “A Season of Joy.”

### NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

Want to sing? The Bloomington Chorale is welcoming new members. Rehearsals are Mondays, 7 - 9 p.m. beginning September 11 at the Bloomington Center for the Arts, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road.

## “PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE” COMES TO SCHNEIDER THEATER

**U**nder the direction of Twin Cities favorite Tyler Michaels King, Artistry’s 25th annual production of the fast-paced, phonetic musical comedy “Putnam County Spelling Bee” will be on stage October 5 – 29 at the Schneider Theater, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road.

Audience participation and plenty of effortless improv guarantees a one-of-a-kind, musical theater performance. So, join an eclectic group of six young people as they vie for the spelling championship of a lifetime, sharing laugh-out-loud and sometimes poignant stories of how they discovered their favorite moment of the Bee.

For more information and for tickets, visit Artistry at [artistrymn.org](http://artistrymn.org), email [info@artistrymn.org](mailto:info@artistrymn.org), or call 952-563-8575.



## STEP UP YOUR MORNING: CREEKSIDE WALKING CLUB

**D**on’t miss out on enjoying the great outdoors with the Creekside Walking Club. Bloomington Parks and Recreation offers a free walking program every Tuesday morning at 10 a.m. with a tentative end date of September 26 that may be extended depending on the weather. Participants can enjoy all the benefits of walking while socializing with members, learning from staff and exploring Bloomington’s many parks.

Creekside Walking Club is geared toward active seniors, but everyone is welcome. A staff member will guide participants on one-to three-mile walks of varying intensity. Participants can set their own pace and distance.

Advanced registration is recommended. Meeting locations and routes will be sent via email to registered participants. For more information, call Creekside Community Center at 952-563-4944. Register online at [blm.mn/webtrac](http://blm.mn/webtrac).



## BOARD GAMES, ANYONE?

**C**reekside Community Center is the place to be for board games. The Board Game Group meets the second and fourth Friday of the month from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

The group plays various board games from old favorites, such as Scrabble and Yahtzee, as well as games you may not have heard of yet, such as Bananagrams and Boggle.

Engaging in boards games has been shown to create social connections, make great memories, reduce stress, increase brain power and increase confidence. So why wait? Drop-ins are welcome.

### TOP 10 BOARD GAMES IN U.S.

- |                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 10. The Game of Life | 5. Scrabble   |
| 9. Candyland         | 4. Monopoly   |
| 8. Battleship        | 3. Backgammon |
| 7. Trivial Pursuit   | 2. Checkers   |
| 6. Clue              | 1. Chess      |

Source: MoneyInc.com.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT BLOOMINGTON HISTORY AT RIVER RENDEZVOUS

**O**ne of the finest living-history events in the Midwest returns to Pond Dakota Mission Park in Bloomington! Experience the lifestyles of people living in Minnesota between 1800 and 1870 on Saturday, September 23, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Pond Dakota Mission Park, 401 East 104th Street.

The event is open to the public. Admission is \$10 for adults ages 18 and older and \$5 for children ages 4 – 17. Children 3 and under are free.

Enjoy storytelling and interactive, hands-on demonstrations that cover history, clothing, hunting, laundry, school, foods and drinks, arts and crafts, Dakota language and culture and much more. Tours of the restored 1856 Gideon and Agnes Pond House will be given throughout the day.

For additional details, visit [blm.mn/rendezvous](http://blm.mn/rendezvous).

