



community
outreach and
engagement
d i v i s i o n

celebrating
2023

BLOOMINGTON.
tomorrow. together. ●

message from the COED manager

COED is thrilled to commemorate the accomplishments of 2023, a year dedicated to service, connectivity, and collaboration. We eagerly anticipate the unveiling of our strategic plan in late spring and the progress it will bring to Bloomington, aligning with Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together. priorities of the City. Let's reflect on the past year, acknowledging the efforts made in service to both our colleagues and the community.

ERIC HOLTHAUS,
COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT MANAGER



message from the community services director

In 2022, the City Council adopted its Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together. strategic plan. A key component is creating a welcoming, connected community. Throughout 2023, the Community Outreach and Engagement Division has taken steps to help community members feel connected to their neighbors, welcomed and valued by the community as a whole. You'll find examples of how COED has advanced the City's mission of creating an enduring and remarkable community demonstrated throughout this annual report.

DIANN KIRBY,
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR



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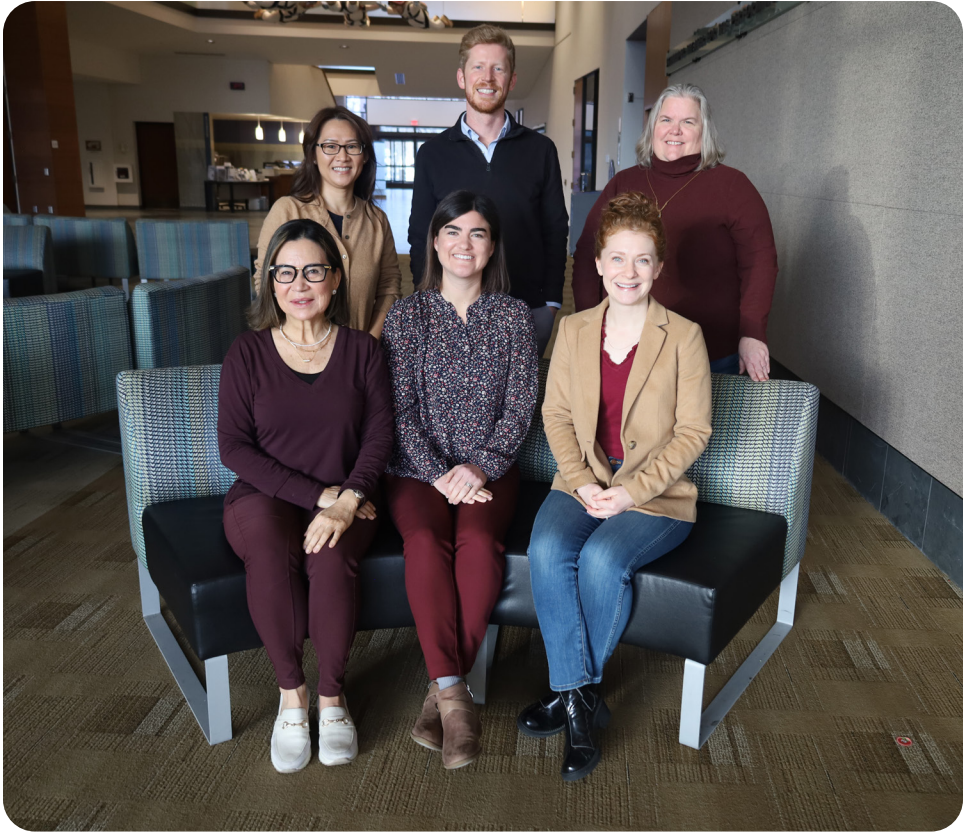
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Top (left to right): Amanda Crombie, Eric Holthaus, Tracy Smith

Bottom (left to right): Nancy Brewster, Emily Larson, Kayla Dvorak-Feld

COED'S PRIORITIES

COED is built on the pillars of facilitation and public participation (P2). Playing our part to advance the goals of Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together., we serve three core priorities:

1. **Engagement support:** We liaise with departments to design and implement public participation strategies.
2. **Community outreach:** We grow community relationships, community, and trust.
3. **Capacity development:** We support leadership, training, and facilitation to create inclusiveness and good decision-making.



ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT

What we do: COED staff liaise to City departments to design and implement engagement on City projects. In this role, COED partners with the community and project consultants to create a well-rounded engagement approach.

Engagement, or public participation, is a process for making better decisions that incorporates the interests of stakeholders and meets the needs of the decision-making body. The P2 spectrum describes five levels of engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower.

“[COED] were great to work with. They were focused on connecting with people and were especially good at helping us meet people where they are – through pop-up meetings and focused conversations at key locations in the community.” —Tim Burkhart, Director of Transportation Planning Alliant Engineering, Inc.

ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT ON COVID-19 RECOVERY GRANTS

COED helped Public Health staff to build a community engagement strategy. Staff assistance in creating a diverse stakeholder list and assisting organizations in securing and utilizing grants, supporting community health with successful awards in 2023.

“[COED staff] played a key role in designing the community engagement plan, demonstrating a deep understanding of our community’s needs, and ensuring our approach was both comprehensive and effective.” —Abdikhaliq Sahal, Public Health Specialist

LET'S TALK BLOOMINGTON

Let's Talk Bloomington, the City's online engagement portal, complements in-person interactions for projects, offering simplicity and ensuring continuity and transparency throughout a project's lifecycle.

2023 LET'S TALK STATS

- 44 projects were launched on the platform
- 4,000 residents were informed of projects
- 1,300 residents provided input on projects important to them



LET'S TALK CAPABILITIES

- Forum | Drive discussion, debate and dialogue.
- Ideas | Online ideation made easy and engaging.
- Places | Put community feedback and ideas on the map.
- Stories | Give your community a voice.
- Guestbook | Simplify and moderate your online feedback.
- Questions | Simplify issue management.
- Quick Poll | Get answers fast.
- Survey | Measure community response and votes.



FORUM



IDEAS



PLACES



STORIES



GUESTBOOK



QUESTIONS



QUICK POLL



SURVEY

Registration isn't required for the public to provide input, however it does help the public stay connected and informed about new projects and ways to provide input.

"The value of Let's Talk is that you have a page to point people with the latest and greatest project information. You can continually update to show your progress on your project. I benefit from the variety of engagement tools. You can build your site in a way that people with different interests and available time can engage." —Mike Palermo, City Economic Development Analyst

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

What we do: We develop connections and partnerships with residents and organizations to advance the mission of Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together., a more Connected, Welcoming Community.

SOUTHGATE APARTMENTS



COED collaborated with Public Health to strengthen connections with Southgate Apartments residents and staff, organizing six family-centered events.

Community events enhanced neighbor relationships, promoted physical and mental well-being, facilitated access to essential resources, improved economic situations, and spread joy. COED and Public Health staff conducted an Appreciative Inquiry evaluation to identify strengths and opportunities.

Partners: Homeline, Tree House, Oxboro Library, Three Rivers Park District, Home Instead

“The kindness of the team. I have not had that before, and I like it. Our children like the activities and events and so do we. The events have made me feel at home. I felt comfortable and appreciated the attention we received which is something not many give to us.” — Resident at Southgate

VETERANS APPRECIATION EVENT

COED organized three events with over 200 veterans at Creekside, Presbyterian Homes and Hayden Grove Senior Living. Building on 20 years of success, we strengthened ties with dedicated senior living staff. The events provided a platform for veterans to feel appreciated, share their stories, and connect with each other. Veterans Appreciate event at Creekside video, blm.mn/veteranevent



Partners: Presbyterian Homes, Hayden Grove Senior Living

“It’s nice to be recognized for some things that people don’t even realize perhaps they’ve even done, ‘cause so many of the veterans kinda keep things to themselves because [it wasn’t] necessarily a good experience.” —Wayne Andersen, Resident, U.S. Army Veteran

LATINO CONSERVATION FEST



Photos courtesy Drew Arrieta.



The City’s Creative Placemaking and COED supported planning and implementation of this celebration—a day of music, art, food, and community. blm.mn/culturefestival

Partners: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the City of Bloomington, Indigenous Roots, and Huellas Latinas

“This is my first time participating in an event like this. I enjoyed watching the dances the most, they show our culture” —Festival participant

*I knew some people from before and I had a chance to make new friends through this festival.”
—Festival participant*

BLOOMINGTON LEARNING LINK-UP

COED supported this Bloomington Public Schools event in planning and implementation. The purpose is to connect families to Bloomington’s resources and build a sense of belonging, especially among the 55% of students/families that are from BIPOC community.

Partners: Public Health, Parks and Recreation, Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Office of Racial Equity, Inclusiveness, and Belonging; Bloomington Public Schools; Normandale Community College



“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.” —Maya Angelou (provided by Dinna Wade-Ardley, Director of Office of Educational Equity, responding to “Why is this event important?”)

BABY RESOURCE FAIR

The inaugural partnership between COED, Public Health, and Pond Family Center resulted in an inclusive event featuring educational sessions on breastfeeding, daycare selection, baby CPR, car seat safety, postpartum information, and



considerations for large baby equipment. New parents and caregivers gained education on raising a healthy baby while connecting to valuable resources and support.

“This event is a need that hasn’t been a common thing. So glad Bloomington is making this happen and focusing on young kids.” —Attendee

“Great event! One of the best events I’ve been to. We registered 10 new families. A couple came in and was trying to get an appointment with WIC for a while and they were happy to sign up.” —Rosa Escobar, WIC Clerk

PARTNERSHIPS WITH BLOOMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS (BPS)

COED maintains strong relations with BPS: Bloomington Early Learning Services Parent Advisory Council, Community Collaborative Council (CCC), District Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee (DEDAC), Bloomington Education Foundation

FOOD CO-LAB



COED, approached through enduring ties in the faith community, convened organizations committed to combating hunger in Bloomington. The goals include fostering trust and relationships based on shared values and mutual respect, with a focus on collaborative efforts for the benefit of neighbors in need of food.

Partners: Nativity of Mary, St. Bonaventure, St. Vincent de Paul (Twin Cities), Potter's House, Good in the Hood, VEAP, Meals on Wheels, Bloomington Public Schools, St. Nicholas, Ruby's Pantry, Loaves and Fishes, The Food Group, Second Harvest

"Thank you for bringing us together. I'm grateful for the connection and being able to learn about the other organizations doing different things but having the same goal—to help people." —St. Bonaventure Church Leader

IMMIGRATION RESOURCE FAIR

COED was invited to collaborate and assist in organizing an immigration resource fair aimed at providing legal resources to support the immigrant population. COED built robust relationships with planning partners, while new immigrants benefited from opportunities for free legal consultations.

Partners: Immigration Law Center, St. Stephen Church, Tapestry Church, Public Health

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA

“Working with the City of Bloomington allowed us to expand our reach to be able to invite more immigrants to the summer outreach event and allowed us to provide interpretation services for many common languages spoken in Minnesota. [COED’s] thoughtful involvement in the planning was really appreciated as we worked through different possibilities for the event and problem solved potential issues. It was great having the support of the City and [COED] in particular.” — Tracy Roy, Immigrant Law Center

UKRAINE STUDENT EXCHANGE



The Global Synergy Group hosted students from Ukraine on a multi-week visit to the Twin Cities area. Twenty-nine students, guided by COED, participated in a day of learning and immersion with the City. They explored the City, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and the Mall of America, experiencing a model of local government that teaches democratic leadership. Bloomington Today: The Buzz Aug 23 video, blm.mn/studentexchange

“I think for me, the main goal of our trip, of our journey, of our experience exchange, is that we go back to Ukraine and we rebuild our country with the knowledge we gained here.” — Yaryna, YouLead 2023 Student

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND NEWS NEWSLETTER

Since the pandemic highlighted the need, the biweekly newsletter has delivered valuable information to over 450 engaged residents, organizations, and leaders.

“Your community emails with so many available resources make me feel so fortunate to be part of this community. Thank you,” —Kaye, Resident

“Thanks...for these amazing emails! I have sent it to my block captain to get it out to the block so they are all on the email list, they may be already but this is so great and want you to know I do read through it and enjoy it! Thanks for all you do for the community!” —Julie, Resident, Realtor

FAITH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

COED staff curate a biweekly newsletter for 58 faith communities on news and resources important to their communities.

*“Thank you for your great work of communicating important things for our faith community.”
—Bloomington Covenant Church Leader*

BLOOMINGTON PRIDE



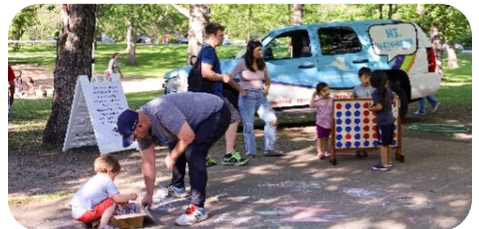
Listening to needs of the community, developing programs or activities around those needs, and ensuring community ownership are strengths of COED. Members of the LGBTQ+ community asked for COED’s help in creating an uplifting, family-friendly event. This led to the creation of Bloomington Pride. In 2023, COED provided a successful transition of leadership from the City to Twin Cities Pride and Bloomington residents. 2023 saw a record 3,500 attendees at Bloomington Pride. 10 residents and Bloomington business organization served on the planning committee.

Partners: Twin Cities Pride, Mall of America, Larkin Hoffman, Bloomington Convention and Visitors Bureau, Great Wolf Lodge, Normandale Community College, Skywater, AM950, St. Stephen Lutheran Church

BLOOMINGTON ENGAGEMENT VEHICLE (BEV)

COED’s BEV provides mobile joy and excitement across the community.

2023 highlights: Neighborhood park planning, Southgate Apartments, Public Works Open House, Bloomington Learning Link Up, Immigration Resource Fair, Baby Resource Fair, Tod Pod Trunk o’ Treat, Bloomington Pride, Indian Mounds Elementary School, Juneteenth, Sister City Picnic, Presbyterian Homes Centenarian Parade, Veterans Appreciation Events, Ukrainian Student Exchange event.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

What we do: COED coordinates important programs and services to support a Connected and Welcoming Community.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS



City's 11 advisory boards and commissions provide for community participation in issues concerning the City and its residents.

In 2023, a 3–5-year strategic planning process was launched to work towards enhanced engagement, alignment, and collaboration among boards and commissions. Additionally, staff launched a monthly newsletter.

“I genuinely feel like the staff and council members value my input. The city has gone to great lengths to get people involved.” —Sustainability Commissioner

AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) COORDINATION

COED provides ADA Coordination by ensuring people with disabilities have equal access to programs, services and activities of the City and acting as a resource for residents with general questions about the Act. In 2023, staff responded to inquiries regarding accessible portable toilets in city parks, parking, bathroom requirements, accessible paths of travel and others.

“An ADA coordinator is instrumental in keeping city services, facilities, programs and activities accessible.... An ADA coordinator is trained and certified not only to know the law, but also to look at each situation from the point of view of a variety of community members with varying accommodation needs. —Dani Indovino Cawley, resident

LANGUAGE ACCESS ADMINISTRATION

Supporting Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, COED manages contracts and payments and assists with staff training for Language Access Services, usage of which grew significantly in 2023.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP TEAM AND VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Volunteer coordination is a Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together. commitment to nurture and grow volunteer efforts across the community. COED facilitates the Volunteer Management Leadership Team. Annually, COED coordinates the Volunteer Recognition event to celebrate volunteers' contributions to City programs and events.



"I wanted to thank you for the lovely morning...My husband joined me, and it was nice to talk with the Mayor and our Councilmember. We also had an opportunity to visit the art gallery."
— Event participant

SOCIAL SERVICES CONTRACTS

COED administers contracts with social service agencies to extend the City of Bloomington's ability to deliver services to our community that support health, safety, and wellbeing.

IAP2 TRAINING



COED had the opportunity to train City Council on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) method in April, focusing on International Association of Public Participation values and principles in action. This follows 2022's focus on Citywide staff training.

"I feel fortunate that we have staff who can do this work at the City of Bloomington." — City Council member

"I have better appreciation of the work that goes into engagement and the time it takes." — City Council member

BLOOMINGTON LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AND ALUMNI NETWORK

COED designed BLP to promote civic engagement, develop leaders in the Bloomington community, break down barriers, and increase understanding of local government.

In 2023, COED focused on launching the BLP Alumni Network, partnering with alumni

to host regular event to promote ongoing connection among the alumni network. In 2024, COED kicks off the next BLP cohort, a diverse team of 19 inspired Bloomington residents.



“I felt confident to take on a board leadership role with a local nonprofit organization to promote voter engagement and education.” – BLP Alum

“[The program] helped me deepen my sense of volunteerism and I felt more connected to the City. As a result of the BLP, I joined the Board of the Bloomington Community Foundation.” – BLP Alum

RIPPLE EFFECT MAPPING

COED orchestrated the implementation of Ripple Effect Mapping, a distinctive program evaluation tool, designed to assess experiences and outcomes in programs with extensive reach and substantial qualitative metrics. A graduate team from the University of Minnesota collaborated with COED staff to reach and comprehend the experiences of Bloomington Leadership Program participants.

Spiraling Up: Exploring impacts of Bloomington Leadership Program using Ripple Effect Mapping, blm.mn/rippleeffect.

Ripple Effect Mapping data conclusively demonstrates the effects of the Bloomington Leadership Program in building leadership capacity, affirming its positive impact. Seeing the value, Community Services will introduce Ripple Effect Mapping for further evaluations of City programs.

“I really found my sense of connection and community within Bloomington. The primary reason I joined BLP was to figure out what the city had to offer and meet my neighbors. I have made many great friends and connected with this city on a whole new level.” – Bloomington Leadership Program Participant

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (HRC)

The HRC aids and advises the City Council in ensuring equal opportunity in the areas of human rights protected by law and the social standards of the city for all community members in the city of Bloomington. The COED manager liaises to the HRC, supporting their annual work planning, events and programs, proclamations honoring peoples' rights and cultural heritage, and partnerships with the community, City commissions, and important partners.

FACILITATION NETWORK



All 6 members of the COED team are trained in ToP Facilitation Methods and participate in the City's facilitation network to promote participatory processes across the organization. Collectively COED staff provided facilitation services for over 20 requests across the City.

COED staff coordinate a network of facilitators to meet the need for facilitation in the organization. The Facilitation Core Team (FaCT) supports monthly and quarterly events, training on topics like: Tools: Focused Conversation, Consensus Workshop, Action Planning, Accelerated Action Planning, Strategic Planning, World Café, and more! In 2023, the Facilitation Mentorship Program was launched to welcome and support new facilitators.

"It makes a big difference with overall staff engagement when we go through this process where all voices contribute and have buy in." —Staff

"Facilitation helped us to identify a new norm for how we relate to each other and how we relate to our work. It set an example of something more inclusive and functional." —Staff

"Facilitation proves to be a strong tool for building understanding and alignment amongst a group of people." —Staff

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2024

COED STRATEGIC PLAN

COED's 3-5 year strategic plan will build on our progress and precedence to deliver clarity and alignment with B.T.T. The plan is scheduled for completion at the end of April!

NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY MODEL AND COMMUNITY ASSET MAPPING

A B.T.T. priority is for people to connect with their neighbors. COED will lead and partner on this exciting opportunity to build neighborhood identity and pride.

NEW COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

A B.T.T. priority is to grow the importance and capacity for volunteering in Bloomington. Building off many successes to-date, a new full-time community Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator will be hired by the City and managed by COED in the spring to be the City's central point of contact for volunteering.

MOVING BLOOMINGTON FORWARD

COED is closely partnering with Communications to create and support a Communications and Engagement Plan for the future Community Health and Wellness Center and the Nine Mile Creek projects.



STAY CONNECTED!

COED is moving into 2024 with enthusiasm and readiness to partner up!

- General: BloomingtonOutreachandEngagement@BloomingtonMN.gov
- Manager: Eholthaus@bloomingtonmn.gov