



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF BLOOMINGTON PARKS

Work has been underway on the Park System Master Plan for about a year. The plan will serve as a road map to shape the future of our neighborhoods, address our community's quality of life and determine how the City meets the needs of park users. It will be used to plan and complete park improvements, help with City capital improvements and ensure that changes and investments to the park system fit into the bigger picture of better serving the community.

In January, the City Council reviewed the draft language of the vision, mission and guiding principles of the Park System Master Plan. These will serve as the foundation for future decisions.

The proposed vision is an accessible system of vibrant parks, diverse recreational facilities, sustainable park resources and engaging programs and experiences. The mission is to build a sense of community and enhance the quality of life for all residents. This will be attained by managing high quality parks and natural areas, and by providing exceptional experiences through innovative recreation programs, arts activities and park facilities.

To achieve these goals, Parks and Recreation staff needs input from park users and residents. Parks and Recreation staff have worked with Community Outreach and Engagement and Communications staff to ensure the planning process is transparent. Residents, user groups and other stakeholders have had ongoing opportunities to provide input.

The planning process will be done in the summer, but there's still time to tell Parks and Recreation staff your priorities for Bloomington's parks. To read and comment on the current plan draft, visit blm.mn/letstalk and click on the Park System Master Plan topic or contact Assistant Parks and Recreation Director **Renae Clark** at ext. 8890 or rclark@BloomingtonMN.gov.



COVID-19 VACCINES CONTINUE AT THE CITY

Bloomington Public Health staff has been vaccinating certified emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and public health nurses who vaccinate others for COVID-19 for about a month now. In February, Bloomington Civic Plaza became a new COVID-19 vaccination site. With vaccinations underway at the City, many employees have asked when they might be able to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

"That's a pretty simple question with a somewhat complex answer," said City Manager **Jamie Verbrugge**. "Because limited doses are currently available, Bloomington Public Health is following guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health about how to prioritize vaccinations. Their current guidance directs the City to focus our public health response on vaccinating health care workers and other individuals who are in MDH's 'Phase 1a' group."

A limited number of vaccines is also available through a state program for Minnesotans aged 65+, pre-K through grade 12 educators and childcare workers. Minnesotans who are eligible are asked to call toll free at 833-431-2053. You can visit mn.gov/findmyvaccine to learn more.

Employees have the option to decline the vaccine for any reason, or no reason at all.

BY THE NUMBERS

97 parks in the city

45 playgrounds

40 miles of off-road trails

17 picnic shelters

16 park buildings

2 golf courses

1 art center, community center, public beach, indoor ice arena and outdoor aquatic center

INSIDER

VOLUME 29, NUMBER 02

The *Insider* is distributed to all City employees during the first pay period of each month. Please send your comments and suggestions to the "insider" mailbox in Outlook.

HELLO

- Civilian Police Dispatcher **Emily Peters** started January 19.
- Public Health Nurse **Afaf Saleh** started January 19.

CONGRATS

- **Liz Sanborn** was promoted to IT Desktop Support Specialist on January 25.



FACILITATION IS A POWERFUL RESOURCE

Having a hard time making your virtual meetings engaging? The City's network of trained facilitators can ensure all voices will be heard at your meeting and you will accomplish the meeting's goals. Facilitators are free and easy to request. The Facilitation Core Team also maintains a library of ways to build engaging virtual meetings online on CityBIZ. Check out the Facilitation network's page at blm.mn/fact for more information.

REMOTE PRESENTATION TIPS AND TRAINING

Many of us have run into a technical glitch when presenting remotely at a meeting on Webex or another online platform. Check out the flyer at blm.mn/remotetips for tips to help your presentations run smoothly.



MANAGER'S MEMO

A BUSY YEAR AHEAD

By City Manager Jamie Verbrugge

The first couple of months in each year is when the City Council reviews the work plans for the various volunteer Boards and Commissions. So far in 2021 they've heard from the Parks, Arts, & Recreation Commission, the Planning Commission and the Sustainability Commission.

The Council is also actively working on issues right now with the Advisory Board of Health and the Human Rights Commission, and will see the Creative Placemaking Commission's work plan in April. Judging by the presentations and issues in process, it's going to be a busy year for our commissioners and the staff who support them.

It's also going to be a busy year for the City Council. Some of the high profile issues they will be working on include implementation of ranked choice voting, considering changes to curbside recycling and organics recycling, and consideration of changes to the Opportunity Housing Ordinance and the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. But wait, that's not all ...

The first City Council meeting of the year traditionally includes an opportunity for each of the members to talk about issues that are important to them and which they'd like to see the Council and/or staff pursue during the year. This year, Councilmembers had a lot to say. In fact, they identified 22 different issues that are on their radar.

This year I tried something new. Rather than having that conversation and then moving on, I thought it would be good to have Council weigh in on those ideas and see how much

consensus there was by the Council on their relative importance. As it turns out, the Council is largely on the same page about the issues that are important to the community.

Seventeen of those 22 items gained a majority of members saying they were important. So we narrowed it a bit further by weeding out the ones that

staff is already working on and got down to 12 issues. Of those 12, there were five issues that had a strong consensus with six of seven members saying they were important.

At the most recent City Council meeting, staff recommended that the Council have a mini-retreat in March to work through the prioritization of these issues and to do that in the context of everything else that is already on the work plan for 2021.

Each of the departments have at least five significant activities this year, some departments have more, that will garner a fair amount of staff time. This is on top of the regular day-to-day work that each of you do to deliver excellent services to our community.

This year is going to be busy. And when we consider all of the work plans for the Council, Commissions and Departments, it's reasonable to ask if it's realistic. I would submit to you that not only is realistic, it's necessary. Our organizational culture values continuous improvement and embraces change—for ourselves and for the community we serve. Cities are dynamic and in a constant state of change, and that describes Bloomington well.

Together, we are rising to the challenge.

COFFEE WITH A COP COVID-STYLE

Bloomington Police have been hosting Coffee with a Cop events since 2016. The events serve as a powerful way for officers to connect with community members in a casual environment. While COVID-19 made in-person gatherings less feasible, BPD staff got creative and found a way to continue to offer the events. In January, Bloomington officers had fun talking with community members as they drove through the McDonald's drive-thru at the Southtown Center, at right. Officers helped run the drive-thru window and handed out more than 100 coupons for a free small brewed coffee or soda.



ENJOY ARTISTRY EXHIBITIONS FROM NEAR OR FAR

Let local artists bring some color to your winter days. Check out the unique, complex contemporary string sculptures in Woven, the exhibition in the Inez Greenberg Gallery until February 19. It is not only a meditative respect for the medium that artists Teresa Audet, Martha Bird, and Amy Usdin have in common. They each wrap, weave, tie and string together their preferred materials to create artwork as a way to process their personal stories and move toward a sense of wholeness and healing.

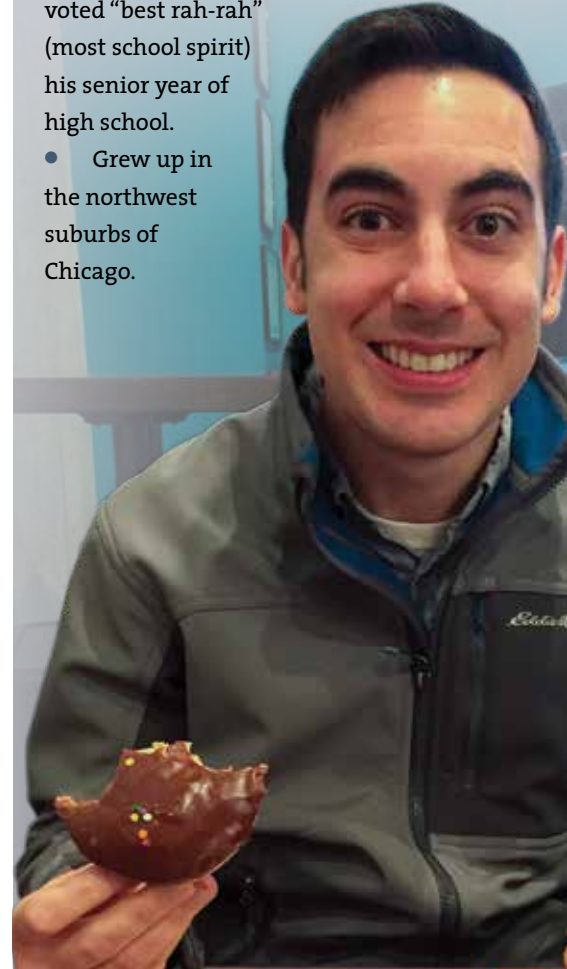
In the Atrium Gallery, you'll find Minneapolis brush painter Bob Schmitt's landscape paintings capturing iconic Minnesota scenes interpreted through his training in and practice of Chinese brush paintings through February 26. Viewers will recognize many locales including a monumental five-panel depiction of Minnehaha Falls in winter. Meet the artist in the Atrium Gallery on February 16, 1 p.m. or February 18, 10 a.m. to learn more about his work.

Working remotely or in a different building? Check out a short video on these exhibitions produced by Communications staff at blm.mn/youtube.

MEET MIKE

Planner **Mike Palermo** has been with the City for four years.

- Enjoys hiking and camping with his family while he's not at work.
- Is a fan of all things *Star Wars*.
- Favorite hobbies: Running and playing soccer.
- Little known fact: Was voted "best rah-rah" (most school spirit) his senior year of high school.
- Grew up in the northwest suburbs of Chicago.



WHAT ARE WE WORKING ON?

GROWING TREE SALE SERVICES

The City's 2020 annual tree sale opened for orders last February, right before the first COVID-19 cases were found in Minnesota. The Parks Maintenance team had to come up with a new way to do things since the usual pickup event in May would not meet social distancing guidelines.

"We were required to make a change because our usual event at the Civic Plaza building where residents would come and pick up their trees wasn't safe given the circumstances," Assistant Maintenance Superintendent Dave Hanson said. "We ended up delivering the trees to residents last year."

Given that delivering the trees saves staff time and is more convenient for residents, Hanson says the change will stick around even after it's safe to gather again. Are you a Bloomington resident interested in ordering a tree in 2021? Ordering is open. Learn more about the tree sale and how to order at blm.mn/treesale.



NANCY KAUFMAN'S SKATING START

Bloomington Ice Garden Office Assistant **Nancy Kaufman** was the Minnesota Ice Garden Manager's Association's (MIAMA) highlighted member in January. In the feature on the MIAMA website, Kaufman talks about how she got started in the industry.

"I started ice skating lessons in 1959 at the old Ice Center in Golden Valley and in 1960 my brother and I (pictured above) started our competitive career as a US National Pairs Skaters from 1960-1969," Kaufman said. "In 1968 I began teaching ice skating lesson for the University of Minnesota while in college."

She started working at Kenosha Arena at the age of 20. She worked in various Wisconsin and Minnesota ice arenas for 18 years before retiring in 1988. Her retirement lasted nine months before she became the manager at Parade Ice Garden and Fort Snelling Golf Course and worked there until 2000. After 2006, former BIG Manager Andy Baltgalvis invited Kaufman to lunch and asked her to work at BIG. She's been in Bloomington since.

KUDOS TO YOU!

Congratulations to Crime Prevention Coordinator **Katie Zerull**, at right, on receiving the 2020 Excellence in Service Award from the Minnesota Association of Police Women. Katie has been instrumental in the success of the Police Department's crime prevention and community engagement programs since she started in 2015. She coordinates more than 430 Neighborhood Watch groups and 700 Block Captains as well as events both large and small, including 385 Neighborhood Night Out events in 2019. Kudos to Katie!



Communications Specialist **Lee Ann Owens**— Good snowy morning, we got our copy of the January Bloomington Briefing and we're pleased with the picture and story. Lots of comments from family and friends. We hope others get inspired to use the trails and enjoy the outdoors we have in Bloomington. Thanks!

— *Steve and Carol, residents*

Building Inspector **Dean McNeal**—I just wanted to do a shout out to Dean for being an awesome team player and coworker. Dean had some time in his schedule to accommodate a last-minute inspection request. This makes our schedulers' life way easier. And the resident thanked Dean and said she has worked with him before, and knew working with the City directly was a good decision, even in a last minute scenario. Thanks, Dean!

— *Office Support Specialist Meredith Vandewege*

Building and Inspections—Residents at both my inspections this morning gave compliments to our schedulers. One specifically mentioned Office Support Specialist **Jean Smidt**. The homeowner commented on her patience and great explanations of how to prepare and what to expect during the inspection.

— *Building Inspector Dean McNeal*

SMALL BUSINESS EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM GETS GOOD REVIEWS

I really appreciate all of your help! It is very satisfying to receive support from the City of Bloomington during this most difficult year. Thanks again for your time today and your concern for our business!

— *Brian Schrupp, Sunshine Photography*

Thank you for your help in these challenging times. The struggle continues, but this loan/grant from Bloomington has been a big boost.

— *Chris Heeter, The Wild Institute*

I cannot thank you enough for this lifeline at a difficult time.

— *Kathleen M. Pytleski, Sekstant*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

FEBRUARY

F 12 Payday

M 15 Presidents Day. Offices closed.

M 22 City Council meeting