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## RANKED CHOICE VOTING BEGINS THIS FALL

Minneapolis, Saint Paul and St. Louis Park currently use ranked choice voting for municipal elections. It is also used in various other jurisdictions around the country. Voters in Minnetonka also opted for ranked choice voting in the 2020 election.

On election night, first-choice votes are counted. If no candidate has a majority of the votes (more than 50%), the candidate with the fewest number of first-choice votes is eliminated. Voters who picked the eliminated candidate as their first choice have their second-choice vote counted instead. This process repeats until one candidate has a majority.

Give ranked choice voting a trial run. The City is hosting a mock election Saturday, July 31, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. and Monday, August 2 through Friday, August 6, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., at Bloomington Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road. On the mock election ballot, voters will be able to rank their favorite City park, facility and elementary school. This is a great opportunity to have your ranked choice voting questions answered by elections staff.

As the November 2, 2021 election approaches, expect to see more information about ranked choice voting on City social media pages, the City website and in the *Briefing*. Read more about ranked choice voting at [blm.mn/vote](https://blm.mn/vote).

Mock ballot					
Favorite City Park			Rank your first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth choices in the columns below. One to be elected.		
1	1st Choice, if any. Select One		2	2nd Choice, if any. Select One	
	<input type="radio"/> Dred Scott Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Dred Scott Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/> Gene Kelly Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Gene Kelly Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/> Moir Park			<input type="radio"/> Moir Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Running Park			<input type="radio"/> Running Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Southwood Park			<input type="radio"/> Southwood Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Tarnhill Park			<input type="radio"/> Tarnhill Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Valley View Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Valley View Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	
	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; width: 100%;"></div>			<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; width: 100%;"></div>	
	write-in, if any			write-in, if any	
4	4th Choice, if any. Select One		5	5th Choice, if any. Select One	
	<input type="radio"/> Dred Scott Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Dred Scott Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/> Gene Kelly Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Gene Kelly Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/> Moir Park			<input type="radio"/> Moir Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Running Park			<input type="radio"/> Running Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Southwood Park			<input type="radio"/> Southwood Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Tarnhill Park			<input type="radio"/> Tarnhill Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Valley View Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Valley View Playfield	
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	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; width: 100%;"></div>			<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; width: 100%;"></div>	
	write-in, if any			write-in, if any	
6	6th Choice, if any. Select One		3	3rd Choice, if any. Select One	
	<input type="radio"/> Dred Scott Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Dred Scott Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/> Gene Kelly Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Gene Kelly Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/> Moir Park			<input type="radio"/> Moir Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Running Park			<input type="radio"/> Running Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Southwood Park			<input type="radio"/> Southwood Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Tarnhill Park			<input type="radio"/> Tarnhill Park	
	<input type="radio"/> Valley View Playfield			<input type="radio"/> Valley View Playfield	
	<input type="radio"/>			<input type="radio"/>	
	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; width: 100%;"></div>			<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 1.2em; width: 100%;"></div>	
	write-in, if any			write-in, if any	





The Fenley Apartments, at 8051 33rd Avenue South, has 402 units overall with 40 affordable units.

# MAYOR’S MEMO

## HRA CONSIDERS ENTIRE HOUSING CONTINUUM IN STRATEGIC PLAN

By Mayor Tim Busse

The Housing and Redevelopment Authority board recently approved Bloomington HRA’s three-year strategic plan and 2021 work plan. Bloomington HRA’s 2021 work plan addresses the entire housing continuum, including new development, the opportunity housing ordinance, the affordable housing trust fund and homelessness.

This past year has led to an increased awareness of the unsheltered population in Bloomington and their needs. It has also jump-started conversations about how to build housing capacity and other measures the City could take to help with homelessness and housing insecurities.

The City has been a leader in the area of affordable housing in recent years. Our opportunity housing ordinance and affordable housing trust fund are a few important parts of the City’s plan to address homelessness and housing security. As an example, the City of Bloomington acted quickly to create the affordable housing trust fund in 2019 and worked with a bank to fund it. This unprecedented move preserved housing for 306 households at the time.

This is important and impactful work for residents. There is still more to be done to address issues related to housing, health and wellness, including affordable and market-rate development, deeper affordability resources in the affordable housing trust fund and working with people who are experiencing homelessness.

People who live and work here generally have pride in Bloomington, and rightfully so. But we must acknowledge that you can have very different experiences of the city depending on your identity—race, religion, age, etc.—and whether you are housed or unhoused.

Right now, Bloomington doesn’t have shelters for those experiencing homelessness. Bloomington is an urban city. It makes sense for the city to provide resources for those who are unhoused similar to how other urban areas do this in Minnesota.

Bloomington HRA’s strategic three-year plan recognizes that we must address homelessness in the city proactively and be open to innovative solutions. This work aligns with the City’s strategic priorities of engagement and transparency, focused renewal and equity and inclusion.

It’s Bloomington HRA’s job to work along the whole housing continuum. The 2021 work plan and three-year strategic plan set the stage for progress.

# NEW TOBACCO ORDINANCE FOR BLOOMINGTON

On April 26, the City Council continued its leadership of protecting youth against the harms of commercial tobacco products by adopting a new tobacco ordinance. The effort is two-fold—first, it prohibits the sale of flavored tobacco products and second, it stops new tobacco retail licenses. On January 1, 2022, retailers will no longer be able to sell flavored tobacco products in Bloomington. After June 30, 2022, no new retail licenses will be issued.

Retailers who currently hold a tobacco license can renew their license annually, if they continue to meet renewal requirements. However, if a retailer closes, relocates or sells their business, their license will be retired. Over time, the number of tobacco outlets will reduce to zero.

This measure is in response to trends of youth tobacco use. Flavored tobacco products, including menthol, target new, young smokers. Menthol products have also been proven to be more addictive than traditional cigarettes. On April 29, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced that they will begin the rulemaking process to ban menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars.

Research shows that decreasing the number of tobacco retailers in a community and removing flavored tobacco products from stores and social circles reduces the number of youth who start smoking. Bloomington joins a growing list of Minnesota communities banning flavored products and will be the first to promote health equity and public health through tobacco licensing restrictions.

For more information, including resources for cessation support, visit [blm.mn/tobacco](https://blm.mn/tobacco) or call 952-563-8911.



# BRIEFING

Volume 29, Number 07

The *Briefing*, published monthly by the City of Bloomington, is mailed to residents and businesses. Direct 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](https://BloomingtonMN.gov)

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Elected officials presented for informational purposes.

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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.

Upon request, this information can be available in Braille, large print, audio tape and/or electronic format.



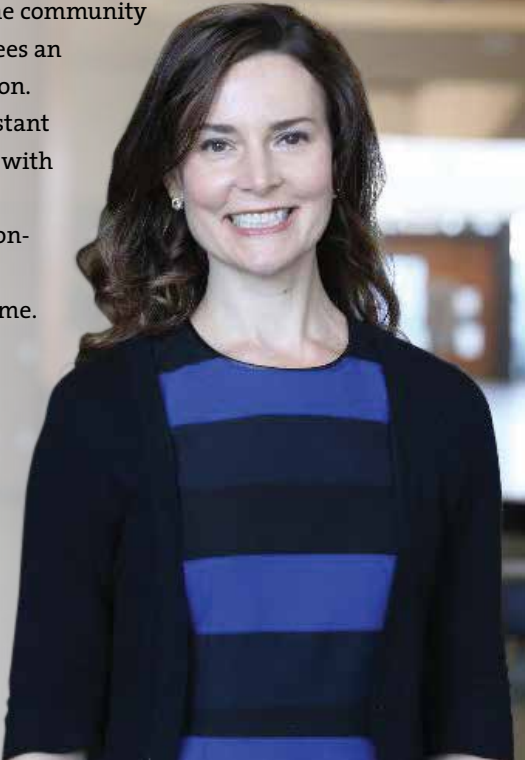
# At Your Service: Budget Manager Kari Carlson

With a degree in accounting and a designation as a certified public finance officer, Kari Carlson knows and works with numbers—big numbers that affect the community in big ways. As the City of Bloomington’s budget manager, she oversees an annual budget which includes 30 individual funds totaling more than \$190 million.

In 2008, Carlson joined the City as an accountant and was promoted to assistant finance manager and then to the position she holds today. Carlson works closely with all departments to analyze revenues and expenses, compile budget requests and produce long-term financial models. This information is used in the City’s decision-making process.

Carlson enjoys the opportunity to contribute to the community she calls home. “I find the work that we do at the City very rewarding and I love working in the city where I live,” Carlson said. “I also enjoy working with the wide variety of departments that provide services for residents, visitors and businesses.”

Last year, due to COVID-19, the budget process became more open and transparent to encourage more participation from the community. All budget analysis information was published and shared with the Community Budget Advisory Committee. It was the first time that the City engaged citizens and businesses in multiple community listening sessions to obtain feedback on services and proposed budget scenarios. “I am proud of the level of public engagement we brought to the budget process and am looking forward to continuing it into the future,” she said.



## Bloomington Has a Big Year for New Development

Despite the pandemic, 2020 was an active year in Bloomington for new development and property renovations. Bloomington had nearly \$220 million in new construction in 2020. This contributed 1.5% to the City’s total market value. It was the most new construction for commercial, industrial and apartments Bloomington has seen since 2016. In 2020, 496 hotel rooms and more than 1,500 multifamily units were added. The residential construction supporting the City Council’s goal of reducing the shortage of housing in Bloomington.

## Council Considering Sick and Safe Leave Ordinance

The City Council is considering an earned sick and safe leave ordinance for workers at Bloomington businesses. An earned sick and safe leave ordinance would require employers operating in Bloomington to provide some amount of paid sick and safe leave to employees. Three of Minnesota’s largest cities—Duluth, Saint Paul and Minneapolis—have already adopted similar ordinances.

“For the past couple of years, a number of councilmembers have shared their concern about the inequities experienced by workers who do not have a right to take time off from their jobs when their personal or family circumstances require it,” Mayor Tim Busse said. “Going through a pandemic only heightened that concern as we’ve seen disparities in how the virus has affected people working in service industries that don’t often have the benefit of paid time off.”

Last year, the City Council directed staff to conduct research on the topic and return with an outline for how the City might consider such a policy. The City Council decided to form a working group with stakeholders representing employees and employers in Bloomington that would study the issue through the summer and fall. The group will bring a recommendation to the Council toward the end of the year. Visit [blm.mn/letstalk](http://blm.mn/letstalk) for opportunities to share your feedback.



## Let’s Talk Bloomington

The City of Bloomington is currently seeking feedback on several projects with its online engagement tool, Let’s Talk Bloomington, at [blm.mn/letstalk](http://blm.mn/letstalk). Register to join in the conversation. Here are a few projects now posted:

**PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

The City is committed to providing a cost-effective maintenance program for Bloomington’s 340 miles of streets. From crack sealing and sealcoating to much more extensive full street reconstruction projects, the pavement management program ensures safe streets for all users—drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. Check out some areas targeted for street maintenance this year at [blm.mn/letstalk](http://blm.mn/letstalk).

**RACIAL EQUITY STRATEGIC PLANNING**

The Racial Equity Strategic Planning Committee is charged with developing a shared vision and identifying collaborative policy and operational strategies to achieve the City’s racial equity goals. In keeping with the City’s commitment to authentically engaging underrepresented communities in the governing process, the committee will prioritize the voices of those directly impacted by racial disparities. The committee will build upon input shared by the community to develop a final report that City Council and its partners can implement. Share your experience or ask a question at [blm.mn/letstalk](http://blm.mn/letstalk).



## City Welcomes New Ice Garden Manager

The Bloomington Ice Garden has a new manager. In April, Lenny Schmitz joined the City with a background in parks and recreation, budgeting, facility management, food and concession operations, and contract and vendor management.

From his impressive record of professional and volunteer work in the public sector, Schmitz is poised to excel in his new role. His breadth of experience encompasses more than two decades of service with Three Rivers Park District, as well as Carver and Dakota counties. His expertise includes providing leadership for park operations, events and programs, along with the supervision of staff and volunteers.

For six years, Schmitz was a dedicated volunteer serving on the City’s Parks, Arts and Recreation Commission. He served as the commission’s chair for five years.

As a Bloomington resident, Schmitz is honored to work as ice garden manager.

“The Bloomington Ice Garden has a history of excellence as a world-class facility for hockey and figure skating,” Schmitz said. “I look forward to strengthening those traditions within the Bloomington community and for our many visitors.”

## Hayden Grove Provides Options for Seniors

Crews completed construction on Hayden Grove Senior Living, 8715 Portland Avenue, a 166-unit senior living building. The Bloomington Housing and Redevelopment Authority assisted the project with housing tax increment funds and secured 34 affordable units to seniors with an income of 50% or below the area median income. Hayden Grove welcomed its first residents April 12. Hayden Grove offers independent living, assisted living, memory care and care suite units.

In April, Mayor Tim Busse, Housing and Redevelopment Authority Chair Cheryl Lewis, former HRA Chair Mark Thorson, Community Development Director Karla Henderson and HRA Program Manager Bryan Hartman attended the ribbon-cutting event for Hayden Grove.





### KEEP AWAY FROM ALGAE

Blue-green algae blooms can resemble pea soup or green paint floating on the water. Harmful algae can be found everywhere in Minnesota, but they prefer warm, nutrient-rich water.

Certain varieties of blue-green algae produce toxins that can make you or your pets sick, but you can't tell if toxins are present by looking at it. When in doubt, be cautious and avoid all contact with the algae.

There's more than one kind of algae. The mat-forming, stringy-looking "filamentous algae" is common but nontoxic.

"When in doubt, stay out," Water Resources Manager Bryan Gruidl said.

Though often referred to as algae, blue-green algae are not algae at all, but a class of bacteria called cyanobacteria.

Report potential harmful algae blooms to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency at 651-757-2822. For more information on harmful algal blooms visit [blm.mn/bgalgae](http://blm.mn/bgalgae), call 952-563-4870 or email [engineering@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:engineering@BloomingtonMN.gov).

### STOPPING SEWER SYSTEM SLAYERS

Think twice before flushing products down the toilet. Anything except toilet paper and human waste does not disintegrate. Small things like toys and batteries can cause big problems for wastewater collection and treatment facilities systems, and can be harmful to water quality and fish.

Don't use toilets or drains to dispose of grease, wipes or pharmaceuticals. To discard grease, pour it into a container, or use dry paper towels to soak it up and throw the paper towels into the trash.

Keeping sewer systems free flowing is in your best interest. Plugged kitchen or service lines can be costly to clean or repair. Some backups and blockages require City crews to clean main sewer lines to maintain flow to the wastewater treatment plant.

Personal care products are potential sewer collection system slayers. Discarded disposable wipes (the biggest culprits), dental floss, tampons, facial tissues, paper towels and cotton swabs can clog pipes. While some of these items seem innocent, their collective impact can be huge.

Only human waste and toilet paper should be flushed down the toilet. Everything else should go into the trash.

For more information, call 952-563-8777 or visit [blm.mn/sewer](http://blm.mn/sewer).



### EARTH ACTION HEROES COMMUNITY GARDENERS DAVE AND MARCEIL SHAUGHNESSY

Equipped with a shovel, a watering can, a change of shoes, and several tomato cages, Dave and Marceil Shaughnessy came prepared to do some digging. The Bloomington residents have a garden plot at the Brookside Community Garden, 10150 Xerxes Avenue South, behind the Bloomington Covenant Church, and aim to make the most of it.

The Shaughnessys are ready for sustainable gardening. They even brought a coffee can filled with homemade gnat repellent. It's a vinegar and soap mixture designed to attract and trap pesky gnats.

Before digging into the dirt, they used an electronic soil testing meter to check the pH level and performed a fertilizer analysis. The test confirmed the need for compost. No worries, they had a few bags on hand.

It takes ongoing work to successfully garden a 10-by-15 foot plot. Carefully placed fencing keeps out deer and rabbits. Beans, carrots, lettuce, onions, peas, potatoes and tomatoes are planted in tidy rows marked with wooden stakes. Using the companion planting method, everything is positioned to strengthen surrounding plants and help them thrive. The strong smell of onions and marigolds deters pests without the use of chemicals.

"We're just learning. It's a hobby and something for us to do in our retirement," Marceil said. "Gardening keeps us busy." Even though this season is far from over, the Shaughnessys are already talking about what to do next year. There's always more to plant.

### COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOTS OFFERED

Parks and Recreation manages the City's community garden program, which has three sites in Bloomington. In 2021, a total of 178 garden plots were available to local gardeners. Participants pledged to garden organically and follow good neighbor rules.

It's a popular program. Plots sell out in the winter, long before planting begins. For more information, visit [blm.mn/gardens](http://blm.mn/gardens) or call 952-563-8877.



### ONLY RAIN DOWN THE STORM DRAIN

Did you know what goes into storm sewers ends up in the nearest body of water? Storm drains and the storm sewer system do not drain to wastewater treatment facilities. The storm sewer system carries stormwater runoff and discharges directly to the nearest stream or water body without treatment. Help keep our lakes, ponds and streams clean. When pollutants enter the storm sewer system, it's called "illicit discharge."

Illicit discharges enter the storm sewer system through either direct connections such as piping either mistakenly or deliberately connected to the storm drains or indirect connections such as infiltration from cracked sanitary sewer systems, spills collected by storm drains, or paint or used oil dumped directly into a drain. The result is untreated discharges that contribute high levels of pollutants to receiving waterbodies.

Don't dump paint, motor oil and other chemicals into the street. Take unwanted paint, pesticides and other household materials to the Hennepin Recycling and Problem Waste Drop-Off Center, 1400 West 96th Street, 612-348-3777. Visit [blm.mn/hcdropoff](http://blm.mn/hcdropoff), to check hours and accepted items.

Use a phosphorus-free fertilizer and immediately clean up any excess fertilizer from hard surfaces. Don't use the storm sewer or local ponds or wetlands to dispose of unwanted goldfish and other aquarium fish or aquatics plants. They pose a threat to native species and can harm waterbodies.

"If you wouldn't put it in your lake, you shouldn't put it in the storm sewer," Water Resources Manager Bryan Gruidl said. To report an illicit discharge, call 952-563-4870 or email [engineering@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:engineering@BloomingtonMN.gov).







## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT IS BACK

After a year of social distancing, National Night Out will provide residents an opportunity to gather and enjoy a summer evening with neighbors, good food and share information or learn about keeping their communities safe. Bloomington's 37th annual National Night Out event is Tuesday, August 3.

"Last year, we weren't able to gather for National Night Out because of the pandemic," Crime Prevention Specialist Katie Zerull said. "This year, officers and firefighters are looking forward to getting back to one of our favorite events of the year, visiting parties and meeting residents."

For more information or to register your National Night Out party, visit [blm.mn/nno](http://blm.mn/nno) or call 952-563-4900. Party registration closes July 26. The chalk drawing contest will also return this year with prizes given for the most creative piece, best overall and most representative of National Night Out.



## HOW TO TALK ABOUT VACCINES WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS

Do you know someone who is hesitant about COVID-19 vaccines? It can be difficult to talk about vaccines. Many things can cause vaccine hesitancy and it's important to take the time to hear what concerns someone has and avoid judgments. Try to start the conversation from common ground you have with the other person and go from there. Here are some points to share:

- The vaccines are safe, effective and free.
- Some people who are hesitant are concerned about the speed in which vaccines were developed. It's important to understand no safety steps were skipped. Many resources were put into developing vaccines. Medical researchers were able to make the vaccines quickly because of years of earlier research and funds from the federal government.
- Side effects are mild compared to the effects of COVID-19. Headaches, tiredness, low-grade fever and other mild symptoms are signs your body is responding to the vaccine. Having no side effects is fine, too.
- Risks of not getting the vaccine are much greater than the incredibly rare side effect of potentially having an anaphylaxis reaction (sudden and severe allergic reaction).
- Very few people should not get the vaccine. It's recommended for almost everyone.
- Some members of our community, such as our Black, Indigenous and People Of Color (BIPOC) population, have legitimate reasons for vaccine hesitancy. It's important to acknowledge their concerns and to listen.

For more information, visit [blm.mn/vaccine](http://blm.mn/vaccine) or call 952-563-8900.



## COVID-19 BREAKTHROUGH CASES RARE

Have you heard of someone getting COVID-19 after being vaccinated? Before you get concerned, it's important to know that an extremely small number of vaccine breakthrough cases are expected. COVID-19 vaccines are effective and are critical to bringing the pandemic under control. However, no vaccines are 100% effective at preventing illness. It's possible that a small percentage of people who are fully vaccinated will still get COVID-19, resulting in what are called breakthrough cases.

It's also good to remember that it takes a full two weeks after a final dose for a person to be fully vaccinated. Some people could get exposed to COVID-19 right before or after their vaccine when they are not fully vaccinated yet. These situations would not be considered breakthrough cases.

The bottom line is that vaccines are effective and safe. Millions of people in the United States have been fully vaccinated. Despite COVID-19 being prevalent in the community, the U.S. is experiencing a very small percentage of breakthrough cases. The CDC recommends that everyone eligible gets the vaccine as soon as they can.

For more information, visit [blm.mn/vaccine](http://blm.mn/vaccine) or call 952-563-8900.



## PERMITS REQUIRED FOR DRIVEWAY WORK

Are upgrades to your driveway on your to-do list? Keep in mind all driveway construction—including new construction, repairs, replacement, or expansion—requires a driveway permit. Planning and Engineering staff are available to answer questions about what is needed from contractors and homeowners to get permits.

Permits are required in order to ensure safety to homeowners, construction workers and the traveling public while the driveway is constructed. The permit also allows oversight to protect the investment on existing roadways, curbs and sidewalks made with taxpayer funding and helps to minimize taxpayer costs on future projects.

To apply for a driveway permit or for other information, visit [blm.mn/driveway](http://blm.mn/driveway) or call 952-563-8920.



## NEW FIRE STATION 4 PLANNING UNDERWAY

The existing Fire Station 4 is more than 50 years old and no longer meets the needs of the community or the Bloomington Fire Department. The existing station does not have adequate space for firefighters to train or work at the existing station. The new station will provide enough room for safe operation of equipment and for firefighters to stay if they need to be on site for more than 24 hours.

Plans for the new Station 4 are currently in the development and design stages. The City will go out for bids on this project in the fall or winter of 2021 and construction is expected to begin in spring 2022. The new station will be constructed on the current site at 4201 West 84th Street.

Visit [blm.mn/letstalk](http://blm.mn/letstalk) to share stories of your interactions with Bloomington firefighters and more. For more information, visit [blm.mn/station4](http://blm.mn/station4).





### FARMERS MARKET OFFERS FOOD AND FUN

Have you visited the Bloomington Farmers Market this season? Come join in the fun at this weekly gathering where farmers, growers and producers sell their own products. Look for broccoli, cabbage, green beans, radishes, raspberries, strawberries and other farm-fresh produce. Find staples including baked goods, candy, cheese, eggs, honey, maple syrup, salsa, soap and more. Selection varies week to week.

Visit the market, Saturdays through October 23, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m., in the East Lot, at Bloomington Civic Plaza, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road. Before your market visit, check out the latest on vendors and social distancing rules. Visit [blm.mn/fbookfarmers](http://blm.mn/fbookfarmers), or call 952-563-8877 for more information.



### CALL FOR PARKS, ARTS AND RECREATION AWARD NOMINATIONS

Do you know someone who is dedicated to improving parks, arts and recreation in Bloomington? Nominations are open for the Bloomington Parks, Arts and Recreation Award of Excellence. This annual award is given by the Parks, Arts and Recreation Commission to recognize continuous community service and dedication toward the advancement of parks, arts and recreation programs and facilities in Bloomington. The 2021 award will be presented in the fall. Nominations close Monday, July 26. Nominations may be submitted at [blm.mn/park-rec-award](http://blm.mn/park-rec-award) or call 952-563-8877.



### BLOOMINGTON AQUATIC CENTER OPEN FOR FUN

After remaining closed all of last year due to COVID-19 precautions, the Bloomington Family Aquatic Center, 201 East 90th Street, is open for business this season. At the time of this printing, state guidance eliminated all COVID-19 restrictions as of July 1. Masks are not required on the pool deck, in the lobby and check-in areas or the locker rooms. Masks are discouraged when in the water. The pool is limited to a capacity of 500 people.

Concession stands will remain closed. You can bring your own food and beverages to enjoy in a designated eating area. BFAC safety practices are subject to change, and the latest guidelines will be followed. For more information, visit [blm.mn/bfac](http://blm.mn/bfac) or call 952-563-8877.

### ARTS IN THE PARKS DATE CHANGES

A few dates printed on the Arts in the Parks page of the June Briefing have been updated. The Medalist Concert Band performance will take place July 13, at 7 p.m., as part the Tuesday Night Performance series. The Country Night with Hitchville concert will take place July 15, at 7 p.m., with food service starting at 6:30 p.m., as part of the Thursday Night Blockbuster Series. Both performances will take place at the Normandale Lake Bandshell, 84th Street and Chalet Road, For more information about all the Arts in the Parks 2021 events, visit [blm.mn/aip](http://blm.mn/aip).

### BECOME A LIFEGUARD

Enjoy the pool? How about working as a lifeguard for the City of Bloomington? Seasonal lifeguard opportunities through August 15 are available at the Bloomington Family Aquatic Center, 201 East 90th Street. To apply, visit [blm.mn/lifeguards-2021](http://blm.mn/lifeguards-2021) or call 952-563-8877. Applicants must be 16 or older and able to pass the American Red Cross lifeguarding prerequisites (swim test). Lifeguards are asked to commit to a minimum of 20 hours per week, up to 40 hours.

### PROJECT P.L.A.Y. RECEIVES AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Project P.L.A.Y. (Providing Leisure Activities for Youth) earned an Award of Excellence from the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association. The annual award is given to increase public awareness and appreciation of excellent parks, trails, and recreation services.

Through Project P.L.A.Y., Bloomington youth had opportunities to participate in programs, including a Medallion Hunt, Pop-up Soccer, Take Home Summer Camp Kits, Winter BINGO and more. The quantity and diversity of programs, activities and events developed within Project P.L.A.Y were noteworthy. Nearly 30 unique programs were offered, providing 200 individual opportunities for recreation.

Project P.L.A.Y. was created and put into place in response to COVID-19. Due to budget limitations and CDC guidelines, new programs were needed to provide safe recreational opportunities that were fun, engaging, active, imaginative and inclusive for youth of all ages and abilities.

For more information, contact Parks and Recreation at 952-563-8877 or [parksrec@bloomingtonmn.gov](mailto:parksrec@bloomingtonmn.gov).

### SIGN UP FOR A FALL SPORTS LEAGUE

Now is the time to think about signing up for fall sports. The City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department’s fall lineup includes kickball, softball, touch football and volleyball. Leagues are open to players 18 years of age or older. Registration for returning teams began June 28, and the approximate deadline to register for most leagues is August 16. For more information, call Parks and Recreation at 952-563-8877 or visit [blm.mn/adultsports](http://blm.mn/adultsports).

### ENJOY OPEN SKATING AT BIG

Stay cool this summer and come have some BIG fun during open skating at Bloomington Ice Garden, 3600 West 98th Street. Open skating takes place Tuesdays, 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m., now through August 24. No open skating July 13.

Cost is \$5 for adults and \$4 for children 17 or younger. Skate sharpening is available for \$6, and skate rental is available for \$3. To learn more, visit [blm.mn/BIG](http://blm.mn/BIG) or call 952-563-8841. Schedules are subject to change.







# NOTABLE NEIGHBOR: BUDDY ROCKETMAN MICHAELSON

As a business owner, parachute maker and rocket scientist, Buddy Rocketman Michaelson does a lot in Bloomington. As a mask maker, he does a lot for the community. Michaelson sells masks at cost and donates them. So far, he’s donated more than 9,000 masks to organizations, including Bloomington Public Schools, Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People, Loaves and Fishes and local hospitals.

“My thing is keeping the community safe,” the lifelong Bloomington resident said.

Early in 2020, when his regular business of making parachutes slowed down, Michaelson started making masks. In COVID times, Michaelson’s hard work and generosity makes a positive difference in the community.

“Every day I donate masks. People call me from everywhere,” he said. “Wear masks and play safe. It’s the only way we’re going to get over this.”

# NEW ARTBOXES COMING TO SOUTH LOOP

Artboxes transform utility boxes into vehicles for artistic expression. They have several benefits, including reducing graffiti, beautifying neighborhoods, contributing to community character and fostering a more walkable neighborhood. Recently, a stakeholder panel selected designs by local artists to wrap around utility boxes in South Loop this summer.



Artbox Design by Luis Fitch.

“These artboxes essentially create a free, walkable outdoor art gallery,” Creative Placemaking Director Alejandra Pelinka said. “We started installing artboxes in the South Loop back in 2016. It’s exciting to see the collection expand to feature more local artists.”

New artbox designs from artists Robyn Brower, Luis Fitch, John C. Gerber, Jose Rebollo, Shakuntala Maheshwari and Leah Yellowbird will be installed in July in the South Loop.

# BLOOMINGTON YESTERDAY: HOTEL SOFTEL

Opened in 1975, the Hotel Sofitel was a destination for French hospitality in Bloomington. The 300-room complex featured a six-story atrium, a gift shop, a bakery and three restaurants (Chez Colette, La Terrasse and Le Café) which attracted residents, travelers and celebrities alike. President Gerald Ford and French Chef Julia Child visited the property during its heyday.

The Paris-based hotel chain had a reputation for luxury, and dining came with a French accent. How could you say anything but “oui” to crispy baguettes, a cheesy crock of onion soup or a layered mousse dessert? Big buffets were offered for Mother’s Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas and other festivities. Bastille Day was a special event all its own to celebrate the national holiday of the French nation.

In 2013, the Hotel Sofitel closed its Bloomington location at 5601 West 78th Street, ending a chapter of French immersion in the Upper Midwest. In a multimillion-dollar renovation the property was rebranded into a Sheraton which operates today.



Photo taken circa 1980 and courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society, Charles Chamblis collection.



Stemless Lady's Slipper by Linda Powers.

# SEE BOTANICAL ART EXHIBIT

Enjoy botanical artwork that combines scientific accuracy with artistic beauty. Artistry, an independent nonprofit arts organization, presents the exhibit Inspired by Nature, July 1 – August 6, at the Bloomington Center for the Arts, Inez Greenberg Gallery, 1800 West Old Shakopee Road. Nature plays the starring role in this 14th Annual Exhibition of the Great River Chapter of the American Society of Botanical Artists.

The Center for the Arts and the Inez Greenberg Gallery will use appropriate social distancing practices when open. For the most up-to-date information including gallery hours, visit [artistrymn.org](http://artistrymn.org) or call 952-563-8575.

# CREEKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER TO REOPEN

Creekside Community Center, 9801 Penn Avenue South, will open for programming starting Thursday, July 8. Want to find out more? Creekside will host an open house Wednesday, July 7, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Stop by Creekside to learn about program offerings, celebrate the reopening and enjoy a treat. Creekside staff are excited to welcome community members back to the building and look forward to seeing old friends and new faces.

An exciting lineup of favorite senior programs will be returning. With exercise programs, arts and craft groups, card games, and the wood shop and pool room, there’s something for everyone. Look for additional programs being added during the next few months.

Masks are welcomed but will not be required. Anyone who is feeling ill or displaying any symptoms is asked to stay home.

For additional reopening details and program schedules, call Creekside at 952-563-4944 or visit [blm.mn/creekside](http://blm.mn/creekside).



# CHECK OUT THE BLOOMINGTON LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Develop your leadership skills, break down barriers and increase your understanding of local government in the Bloomington Leadership Program . The program is free. Sessions take place September 14 – October 28, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 6 – 8 p.m. To learn more or apply, visit [blm.mn/leadership](https://blm.mn/leadership).

## MEET A FEW BLOOMINGTON LEADERSHIP PROGRAM ALUMNI

### TAI GIWA

Tai Giwa is a senior site manager with Aeon, a local nonprofit property management company in the Twin Cities. In 2020, Tai became a certified master life coach. Her goal is to empower women to discover their life purpose. Recently, she was invited to serve on VEAP’s board of directors. VEAP is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to create pathways to stronger, more hopeful communities, through access to healthy food, housing stability and supportive services. After graduating from the Bloomington Leadership Program, Giwa was involved in the 2020 Complete Count Committee, the Bloomington housing action team and Southgate Collective Impact.

“A good leader leads by example,” Giwa said. “They set out to make a difference and add value to others’ lives.”



### PHIL KOKTAN

Phil Koktan is a licensed professional engineer. For the past six years he has worked as a structural engineer for Meyer Borgman Johnson in Minneapolis. He is also a consultant to MSP Airport, designing building expansions at Terminal 1. In his free time, he coaches Girls on the Run at Normandale Elementary. After graduating from the Bloomington Leadership Program, Koktan was appointed to the Planning Commission in 2020.

“As a Planning Commission super fan, I couldn’t be more excited to serve our community in this role,” Koktan said. “I would not have had the confidence to apply for a seat on the commission without the encouragement of Bloomington’s Community Outreach and Engagement staff and my colleagues in the Bloomington Leadership Program.”



### CHAO MOUA

Originally from Wisconsin, Chao Moua has lived in Bloomington since 2015. He and his wife have two very active toddlers. They enjoy participating in “all of the great programs Bloomington has to offer” and building relationships with their neighbors. Since graduating from the Bloomington Leadership Program, Moua has served on the Community Budget Advisory Committee.

“It was a great experience that allowed me to use all of the information that I learned in BLP and apply it to our community to find budget solutions that were brought on by the pandemic,” he said. “This was my first time serving my community in a formal way and I take pride in the dedication and work that the CBAC put into finding solutions for our friends and neighbors.”



### CASEY SPEAKER

Casey Speaker has been a Bloomington resident for eight years. She lives right off of Nine Mile Creek with her husband and two kids who enjoy all of the wildlife in their backyard. Speaker is an account manager for SAP Concur, a tech company. In her spare time, she has loved becoming involved in the community and meeting new people. Since graduating from the Bloomington Leadership Program, Speaker co-led a project through a local volunteer group that bought and distributed diverse books throughout local little libraries. The books were purchased by Bloomington’s Human Rights Commission.

“Leadership can take on many forms,” Speaker said. “If you have an idea, start sharing it with others. You may be surprised how you can take an idea you have, connect with others and bring that idea to life through community resources.”



### JESSICA LINARES-KUNKEL

Jessica Linares-Kunkel is originally from Lima, Peru. She has lived in the Twin Cities for 26 years and holds a master’s degree in international management from Mankato State University. She is the senior sales manager for Latin America at Ergotron. She leads strategic efforts to expand distribution markets in Central America, South America and the Caribbean. Since graduating from the Bloomington Leadership Program, Linares-Kunkel has participated in the Latino Community Leaders monthly meetings and joined a couple of peaceful protests organized by the Bloomington Antiracist Coalition. She also served on the Community Budget Advisory Committee in 2020.

“You only need to identify one activity you’d like to do to volunteer,” she said. “Then you will meet great people that will guide you through other activities and so forth. The reward of volunteering is bigger than the time you put into it. You will make new friends, learn how the City works and meet other leaders.”

