

STAFF SUSTAINABILITY UPDATES

Mid-August through Mid-October 2021

Initiatives

ADMIN

- **Sustainability Commissioner Recruitment**
 - Commissioner Bouta, Commissioner Erdmann, and Commissioner Flagg will reach their two-term service limit on February 28, 2022. Sustainability Commission applications will be posted the first week in November to fill these positions. Applications will close on December 22, 2021.

MULTIPLE AREAS OF SUSTAINABILITY

- **Public Health, Racial Equity, and Sustainability Coordination**
 - Bloomington's Sustainability Coordinator, Racial Equity Coordinator, and Health in all Policies staff member are continuing to collaborate to integrate sustainability, racial equity and health priorities. Staff are working on visuals to help communicate priority intersections.
- **Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together. Data Handbook**
 - The City will soon begin a strategic planning process. Communications staff are working on formatting a data handbook for the community planning team. In late August, Coordinator Struss worked with staff to provide water, transportation, energy, climate change, solid waste, and ecological land stewardship data for the data handbook. This will be the first time sustainability information is included in the strategic planning process.
- **Staff Onboarding Tools**
 - Coordinator Struss is developing materials to help new staff know basic information about the sustainability problems facing Bloomington.
- **American Public Works Association Minnesota Chapter Fall Conference**
 - Coordinator Struss is presenting on a sustainability panel on November 18th.

ECOLOGICAL LAND STEWARDSHIP

- **Buckthorn Background for City Council**
 - City Council Members have requested some background information regarding the possibility of creating an ordinance requiring the removal of buckthorn in Bloomington. Deputy Director Biales will provide some preliminary information about how buckthorn is regulated in Minnesota, what other cities are doing related to buckthorn management, and some considerations for moving forward with an ordinance, as an informational item at the 10/25 Council Meeting.

ENERGY (NATURAL GAS AND ELECTRICITY)

- **Energy Assistance Program**
 - Applications for the state's [energy assistance program](#) were posted on October 1st. New this year to the program is water bill assistance. The City posted information about the program via its social media channels the week of 10/4. On 10/16 Coordinator Struss will be at the Bloomington Farmers Market with program information.

- **CenterPoint Energy Community Dashboard Data**
 - CenterPoint Energy provided the City with 2020 dashboard data maps for 1-4 unit residential buildings on 9/27. Coordinator Struss had a follow-up meeting to discuss the information with CenterPoint on 10/6.
- **Energy Burden Data**
 - CenterPoint Energy and Xcel Energy provided data on delinquent bills in June and September of this year respectively. Coordinator Struss compiled this information and shared it with staff on 9/20.
- **Community Codes Support Program**
 - Building and Inspections staff and Coordinator Struss attended a kick off meeting with Xcel Energy, CenterPoint Energy, and Center for Energy and Environment (CEE). The Community Codes Support Program will assist the Building and Inspections division in reviewing commercial building plans for compliance with the State's energy codes. Bloomington is the first City to participate in the program outside of the pilot.
- **CERTs Seed Grant Application**
 - On 10/8 the City submitted a grant application to support three community energy resource workshops in fall 2022. The purpose of this project is to connect residents, especially those with higher energy burden, to resources that will lower their energy bills, reduce greenhouse gas emissions from residential energy use, and improve community health. We know many homes in Bloomington are lacking insulation and could benefit from air sealing. Through [community energy conversations in 2021](#) City staff learned many residents are confused or unaware about energy program offerings. The City also learned about the barriers residents face when signing up for the energy assistance program and/or weatherization assistance program. The purpose of these workshops is to address those barriers. Project partners include: CenterPoint Energy, Xcel Energy, Sustainable Resources Center, Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County, and the Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota.
- **Home Energy Phone Calls**
 - Coordinator Struss followed up with residents who had signed up for the energy listening session that was canceled this summer due to weather. On 10/5 two residents from census tract 254.01 participated in 30-minute conversations on home energy use and one inquired about energy resources through an informal conversation. The other residents did not respond to the rescheduling inquiry.
- **Attic Insulation Video**
 - On 10/5, Video Production Specialist Emily Taplin, filmed insulation contractors working on an attic insulation project in Bloomington. The process took four hours. Coordinator Struss and Video Production Specialist Taplin worked with the Center for Energy and Environment to find a Bloomington household willing to be filmed. The footage will be used in multiple videos to help educate residents about insulation projects and the new Time of Sale Energy Disclosure program.

- **Municipal Facilities- Renewable Energy Workshop**
 - Coordinator Struss worked with Xcel Energy Partners in Energy facilities to hold an educational session on renewable energy and City energy use on 10/1. On 10/4 staff from eight different divisions met to develop a recommendation to the Sustainability Commission around a GHG reduction goal for municipal facilities. Follow-ups include getting more information about the cost of renewable energy options.
- **Fire Station 4**
 - Coordinator Struss helped Maintenance Staff put together an informational poster that highlights the importance energy efficiency in City buildings. The poster is used at Fire Station 4 community engagement events. Commissioner Drummond volunteered at the 10/9 open house.
- **Single Family/ Two Family Home Standards**
 - Coordinator Struss is serving on a project team lead by Planning staff to evaluate the City's current single and two family home standards. One of the upcoming sessions will focus on sustainability and health.
- **Annual Energy Action Plan Update**
 - Coordinator Struss is scheduled to provide Council an update on Bloomington's Energy Action Plan on November 15th.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- **Racial Equity Strategic Planning**
 - Coordinator Struss has been working with Coordinator Jackson on incorporating equity foundations training recommendations into the City's racial equity strategic planning process.

SOLID WASTE

- **Annual Recycling Materials Sort**
 - Laura Horner, Solid Waste Program Coordinator and Ellen Biales, Deputy Director, worked with the hauler's consortium to develop a process for this year's Recycling Materials Sort. Several samples of Bloomington's weekly recycling are sorted to provide a representative makeup of our recycling materials. That representative sample is used to set recycling rates for the following year. This year's sort took place on the Week of September 20.
- **Recycling Set Out Study**
 - Laura Horner, Solid Waste Program Coordinator worked with the hauler's consortium to develop a representative study area that will gather information about the percent of residents that are participating in the recycling program by setting their recycling carts out for collection. This year's set out rate study will take place during the month of October.
- **Organics in City Facilities**
 - Meg Hannasch, PW Intern, and Laura Horner, Solid Waste Program Coordinator, developed an E-Training program for City Staff to promote organics collection within city facilities. 85 staff completed the voluntary training. Collection of organics was expanded to Public Works, Public Health and Civic Plaza restrooms. They are beginning to work with Creekside Senior Center on improving recycling and adding organics recycling this fall.

- **MN GreenCorps Member: Waste Reduction, Recycling & Organics Management Focus Area**
 - Jane Peuser, MN GreenCorps Member is serving with City of Bloomington focusing on waste reduction, recycling and organics management. Jane’s work plan includes: assisting in roll-out of curbside organics program, assisting in roll-out of sustainable bulky item management program components, improving multi-family, improving organics recycling at City facilities, planning a food waste reduction campaign in Bloomington, and researching sustainable packaging ordinance best practices. Jane’s service year runs from Sep 2021 – Aug 2022.
- **Hennepin County Stop Food Waste Challenge**

Hennepin County’s virtual Stop Food Waste Challenge runs from Oct 13 – Nov 14th. Participants will receive email updates with resources and tips for reducing food waste, access to informational webinars, and opportunities to connect with others. Staff promoted the challenge on social media as well as in the Sustainability E-News.
- **Learn to Lead**

Coordinator Horner attended the Public Works Learn to Lead Event on 10/2 and presented an overview of the City’s garbage and recycling program.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Data Share**
 - Coordinator Struss is convening staff in the beginning of November to share transportation information regarding available data, plans, goals, communication pathways, etc. This information will inform the process for setting quantitative climate goals for the transportation sector.
- **MnDOT’s Highway 77/Cedar Ave Study**
 - Coordinator Struss and Coordinator Brewster received an update regarding [MnDOT’s Highway 77/Cedar Ave. Study](#) on 10/1/2021. Staff inquired about the demographics of study participants. Below is a 10/5 follow-up note from MnDOT’s consultants working on the study.

“Hi Emma,

Thanks so much for participating last Friday. Greatly appreciate all your questions and insights.

I wanted to get back to you regarding the make-up of individuals that have participated to date.

- **Focus Group Sessions with: cities of Bloomington, Richfield, Burnsville, Eagan, Apple Valley, Hennepin and Dakota County and Metro Transit, Met Council, and MVTA. Reps included those in the planning and community engagement areas and multimodal (bike/ped).**
- **Small Group Listening sessions with: Metropolitan Airports Commission, Mall of America, Apple Valley Chamber, Dakota County Chamber, 494 Corridor Commission, State Patrol. Please note that outreach extended beyond this list, but only these participated.**
- **Equity Session: variety of representatives participated – especially from the City of Bloomington, but also MICAH, and Americorp Visa. Please note that I didn’t coordinate this effort, but believe outreach extended beyond this list, but only these participated.**
- **Public Input Opportunity #1: survey’s completed with demo information shared:**
 - **98%: white, English speaking**
 - **15% Female, 25% male, 60% unknown**

- 15% post college, 20% college, 2% tech, 63% unknown
- **Public Input Opportunity #2: survey**
 - 34% Female, 60% Male, 6% unknown
 - 81% white, 14% prefer to not answer, 4% multiple, 1% Asian, 1% Hispanic
 - 95% English, 5%, prefer to not answer
- **Public Input Opportunity #2: pop up events (Apple Valley transit Station and Eagan Farm Fest)**
 - No data collected

In addition, we did have several of those above spread the word through their outreach channels – which included a more diverse audience.

I'm always open for suggestions and additional ways to reach into communities – whether for this project or others.

Again, appreciate your insights and info you shared during the session!

Take Care,
Brenda”

- **EV Car Sharing Program Research**
 - On 9/2 Coordinator Struss attended a meeting about researching the feasibility and interest of EV carsharing in suburban communities. Edina, St. Louis Park, Minnetonka, Golden Valley, Washington Co., Hennepin Co, St. Paul, HourCar were in attendance. After the meeting Coordinator Struss met with City staff to discuss capacity to research this topic in 2022. Staff were supportive of this research, but no one could commit to taking it on.
- **2021 EV Expo**
 - Deputy Director Biales and Michael Keim, Fleet Manager participated in the 10/9 EV Expo at Oak Grove Presbyterian Church. Keim gave two presentations on the future of EVs for the City’s fleet and showcased one of the City’s Nissan Leafs.
- **I-494 Corridor EV Charging Stations**
 - Staff are discussing locations for EV chargers with MnDOT for the I-494 project.

WATER

- **Assistant Utility Superintendent Interviews**
 - Superintendent Scott Anderson asked Coordinator Struss to serve on the interview committee to help integrate sustainability priorities into the assistant utility superintendent hiring process.
- **Ecosystem Enhancement Project**
 - Resource Environmental Solutions (RES) was selected as the contractor for the 2021 Ecosystem Enhancement project. There are two locations that will be worked on. These are Bogen pond and the median at 98th street and Nesbitt. A \$10,000 grant from Nine Mile Creek Watershed District was secured for the Bogen Pond portion of this project. The goal of both projects are to create resilient and adaptable ecosystems.

- **Cattail Management Program**
 - A cattail management program at Bush Lake is in its beginning stages. An RFP for that work is in its draft stage. The intention of cattail management is to diminish the dominance of cattail where it is currently dominating, remove it from areas that it is not dominate and to increase the wetland plant species diversity across the entire lake.
- **2021-901 Storm Sewer Maintenance Project**
 - The project was substantially completed the week October 11th.
- **2021-902 Oxboro Lake Maintenance Project**
 - The project is currently being advertised. Bid opening on October 26th with construction anticipated to start in December 2021.
- **Additional Funding for Irrigation Program**
 - The Metropolitan Council has funded part of our irrigation program for the last 2 years. They recently contacted Deputy Director Biales to see if Bloomington could make use of funds that had been turned back to them. Deputy Director Biales is working with them to update the paperwork necessary to receive the additional funding.