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# B L O O M I N G T O N BRIEFING

MARCH 2026

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ECRWSS  
POSTAL CUSTOMER

COMMUNITY  
HEALTH AND  
WELLNESS  
CENTER UPDATE  
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CURBSIDE  
CLEANUP IN  
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BUILDING A  
STRONGER  
COMMUNITY  
PAGE 8

IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THE TREES ARE BUDDING AGAIN. VISIT [BLM.MN/HIKEBIKETRAILS](http://BLM.MN/HIKEBIKETRAILS) TO FIND A NEW SPOT TO GET OUT IN NATURE THIS SPRING. THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN ALONG NINE MILE CREEK. TURN TO PAGE 4 TO HEAR MORE ABOUT THE RESTORATION PROJECT HAPPENING NOW.



## BRIEFING

Volume 33, Number 03

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

## MAYOR'S MEMO

### THE CITY'S RESPONSE TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

By Mayor Tim Busse

As Operation Metro Surge comes to an end, we need to acknowledge the deep and painful impact it's had on Bloomington. Over the past months, families have lived in fear, children have worried about their parents coming home, workers have stayed away from their jobs and small businesses have struggled. The emotional and economic toll has been significant, and the trust that holds our community together has been tested in very real ways.

Bloomington is strongest when every resident feels safe and valued. As we move forward together, my hope is that this community will be committed to restoring stability, supporting affected families and reaffirming that public safety in our city means safety for everyone.

I also want to commend our Bloomington police officers and first responders who have worked under extraordinarily challenging circumstances to maintain calm and protect all residents. Their professionalism, grounded in respect, ensured that our city remained safe. While the City could not interfere with federal operations, we took meaningful actions in response to Operation Metro Surge.

In January, we joined nine other metro-area suburbs in filing a supporting brief in a lawsuit led by the Minnesota attorney general and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, seeking a court order declaring Operation Metro Surge unlawful and unconstitutional. While an emergency request was denied for procedural reasons, the lawsuit continues to challenge federal activities that have created fear and disrupted education, public safety and the economy.

Bloomington joined the Cities for Safe and Stable Communities coalition, representing 20 Twin Cities suburbs, calling for federal accountability, de-escalation of ICE operations, and potential state relief funding in 2026. We are stronger when we work together for the common good.

The Council approved up to \$350,000 in local affordable housing aid funds to support emergency rental assistance in response to rising needs, and up to \$400,000 in small business assistance grants for businesses impacted by recent immigration enforcement actions. Learn more about business grants at [blm.mn/businessgrant](http://blm.mn/businessgrant).

The City has provided access to information on its website that includes support for those who need it, including food, home items, rental and utility bill assistance, links to immigration legal resources and more. Visit the City's website at [blm.mn/community](http://blm.mn/community).

I've been inspired seeing so many community members stepping up to support each other during this time. I am more proud than ever to be from Bloomington.

## CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES ON NEW COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER

Construction is well underway for the new community health and wellness center at 9801 Penn Ave. S. Following demolition of the old Creekside Community Center late last year, crews moved quickly, installing footings, laying foundations, installing underground utilities and raising vertical precast walls. The building is starting to take shape.

The new facility, approved by Bloomington voters in 2023 and funded with a half-percent local sales tax, will replace aging spaces with a modern, inclusive hub for health, fitness and community programming. A local sales tax is a transaction-based tax added to the purchase price of taxable goods and services.

When completed in fall 2027, the center will offer recreational amenities, public health services and flexible spaces designed for people of all ages and abilities.



## INDIGENOUS FILM SERIES COMING SOON

In recognition of Women's History Month, you are invited to a screening of "Bring Her Home," directed by Leya Hale (Dakota/Diné), on Friday, March 20, 6:30 - 8 p.m., in the Schneider Theater, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road. "Bring Her Home" follows three Indigenous women as they seek justice for relatives lost to violence against Native women, while confronting generational trauma and systemic oppression.

This screening marks the start of the City's 2026 indigenous film series presented by the Bloomington Human Rights Commission, Parks and Recreation, and American Indian Education.

## REDRESS ART EXHIBIT AT CIVIC PLAZA

Throughout March, an installation of empty red dresses will be on display at Civic Plaza, serving as a powerful reminder of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. For more information, reach out to Amanda Crombie, equity and inclusion program manager, [acrombie@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:acrombie@BloomingtonMN.gov).

[BloomingtonMN.gov](http://BloomingtonMN.gov)



**HOW ARE WE DOING? YOUR OPINION COUNTS!**

The City's newsletter, the *Briefing*, is mailed to all households and businesses in Bloomington each month. The issue you are reading costs about 38 cents per issue to print and mail. What do you think of the *Briefing*?

Where do you get your information about the City of Bloomington? Check all that apply.

- Briefing
- Bloomington Today (Bloomington Cable Channel 14)
- City website
- City social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- City YouTube channel
- City E-Subscribe emails
- Bloomington Sun-Current
- Minnesota Star Tribune
- Local broadcast television
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How valuable is the *Briefing*?

- Not valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Valuable
- Very valuable

How would you prefer to receive the *Briefing*?

- In print
- Electronically

Which feature(s) do you enjoy most? (Check all that apply.)

- Mayor's column
- Parks, recreation and arts
- Development updates
- Finance/budget
- Recycling, environment
- Upcoming events
- Human interest stories
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What features or information should we add? \_\_\_\_\_

Other comments or recommendations: \_\_\_\_\_

Return your comments:  
 By phone: 952-563-8818  
 By mail: Ashley Klemer, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431

On the website: Complete this survey online at [blm.mn/briefingsurvey](http://blm.mn/briefingsurvey).

For more information, email Strategic Communications Coordinator Ashley Klemer at [aklemer@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:aklemer@BloomingtonMN.gov).

**PROPERTY VALUATION NOTICES ARE ON THE WAY**

In mid-March, the City will mail 2026 estimated market value notices to property owners. When your notice arrives, review it carefully. If you have questions or concerns, contact the City's Assessing Division as soon as possible at [assessing@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:assessing@BloomingtonMN.gov) or 952-563-8722.

Don't wait. By the time proposed tax notices are sent in November, it's too late to informally appeal your valuation.

**A CLOSER LOOK AT 2025 VALUES**

Overall, residential property values in Bloomington saw modest increases compared to last year. Both single-family homes and townhomes generally saw increasing values, while

condos mostly saw decreasing values. These are general trends and may not reflect your specific property. Values vary based on factors such as location, size, age and condition.

**QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

Property owners may request an informal appeal in the weeks following receipt of their valuation notice. Supporting materials, such as a recent appraisal or comparable sales, can be helpful.

Property owners will also receive their Hennepin County property tax statements in early March. To learn if you qualify for a Minnesota property tax refund, visit [blm.mn/state-tax](http://blm.mn/state-tax).

**HELP US CONTACT DONORS: NINE MILE CREEK MEMORIAL PARK BENCHES MUST BE REMOVED DUE TO CONSTRUCTION**

Memorial benches have been installed in Bloomington parks through the years and now, due to construction for the Nine Mile Creek corridor renewal project starting soon, approximately 30 benches in Moir and Central Park must be removed.

Bench removal will start April 1 to make way for renovations to begin.

The City is asking for help reaching memorial bench donors. If you donated a bench that was installed near Nine Mile Creek, or you know someone who did, email [forward@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:forward@BloomingtonMN.gov) for information on how to reclaim your donation or learn about other options to secure a new bench.

The City will store the benches for one year after removal. Learn more at [bloomingtonforward.org/9mile](http://bloomingtonforward.org/9mile).



**CALLING CEOs AND BUSINESS OWNERS: YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

Leading a successful company can be rewarding and also isolating. To address challenges, from strategic decision-making to managing people and scaling sustainably, consider joining the Bloomington CEO Roundtable for a trusted, confidential space for local business leaders to learn from one another.

This facilitated, peer-to-peer roundtable offers non-competing CEOs a space to share real-world experiences, gain practical insights and sharpen their leadership skills through monthly, confidential discussions.

To participate, you must be the CEO or owner of a for-profit business located in Bloomington, have been in business for at least three years, employ eight or more full-time staff, and generate annual revenue of \$1 million or more.

The annual cost to participate is \$1,250, with the City of Bloomington contributing \$250 per participant for up to 12 CEOs. Space is limited.

Learn more and apply at [blm.mn/roundtable](http://blm.mn/roundtable).

**HELPING SMALL BUSINESSES BLOOM AND GROW**

Bloom & Grow is coming to your neighborhood. The City is bringing free, practical business support directly into the community, making it easier than ever for small-business owners to get the help they need.

Join us for a free business clinic on one of the following dates and times: March 11, 4 - 6 p.m., at 9 Mile Brewery, 9555 James Ave. S.; March 14, 1 - 3 p.m., at Oxboro Library, 8801 Portland Ave.; or March 18, 12:30 - 2 p.m. at Penn Lake Library, 8800 Penn Ave. S. Business advisors will be on hand to review your business information, answer questions, and help you maximize your chances of securing grant funding. These clinics are focused on helping small businesses navigate the financial impacts of recent federal immigration enforcement actions. Learn about the Small Business Assistance Grant Program and get one-on-one guidance on how to apply. Walk-ins are welcomed, but registration is strongly encouraged. Register at [blm.mn/bloomandgrow](http://blm.mn/bloomandgrow).

**What to bring:** A valid ID and/or a document connecting you to your business, such as a driver's license, passport, business card, or utility bill. Come grow with us!



### BUSINESS REBATES FOR ENERGY UPGRADES

The City, in partnership with the Center for Energy and Environment (CEE), offers rebates for businesses making energy-efficiency improvements. Rebates can cover 20% of project costs up to \$5,000 for HVAC projects. Refrigeration and lighting projects are capped at \$2,500. City rebates can be combined with other utility incentives. City permits and inspections are required.

How it works:

- Schedule a free energy assessment with CEE's One-Stop Efficiency Shop.
- Receive a report with recommendations, estimated savings and rebate opportunities.
- A consultant will guide you through the project.
- CEE handles all rebate paperwork.
- Projects must be completed by October 30.
- Rebates are first come, first served.

Take advantage of this opportunity to save energy and reduce costs. Learn more at [mncee.org/business](http://mncee.org/business).

### TREE REMOVAL TODAY, A THRIVING CREEK TOMORROW

As part of the Nine Mile Creek Corridor Renewal Project, tree removal will take place late winter through early spring to prepare the area for upcoming infrastructure and park improvements. About 80 or 90 individual trees and five acres of land clearing are planned. All work will be completed by April 15 to comply with environmental regulations that protect the endangered long-eared bat.

The removals will provide access and space for construction tied to key project elements, including ADA-compliant trail access from Moir Park, 10320 Morgan Ave. S., parking lot improvements and Veterans Memorial at Harrison Park at 1701 W. 100th St., creek re-meandering, bridge replacements and trail enhancements. This work also supports long-term streambank improvements and safer, more accessible recreation.

Native grasses and flowers will be planted as part of the project to reduce erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. Some trees will be reused for streambank stabilization and erosion repair. Trails are expected to remain open during this phase, though visitors should be alert to crews and equipment.

For more information, visit [bloomingtonforward.org/9mile](http://bloomingtonforward.org/9mile).



## EARTH ACTION HERO: CARING FOR A 1970 BUILDING WITH SMARTER ENERGY CHOICES

When leaders at the Church of St. Edward looked at their building's future, they saw an opportunity to care for both their space and the environment. Built in 1970, the church was still using its original steam boiler which was costly to operate and increasingly inefficient.

The church replaced the oversized steam system with two smaller boilers that operate more efficiently. An aging rooftop HVAC unit was also replaced, delivering more consistent heating and cooling and reducing energy costs.

The upgrades coincided with the Archdiocese's capital campaign, giving the parish confidence to move forward using reserve funds. Support from the City's energy-efficient nonprofit rebate program, coordinated through EnerChange, helped offset costs.

Combined with new insulation, the project is expected to save about \$1,200 each heating season and cut more than 15 tons of carbon dioxide, which is the annual equivalent of taking three cars off the road. For the congregation, the project reflects stewardship in action.

"It's about taking care of something entrusted to us as a church and using our resources prudently," church leaders shared. "By investing in efficiency today, St. Edward is building a more sustainable future for generations to come."

### BUILD THE URBAN CANOPY BUY AND PLANT A TREE THIS ARBOR DAY

You can help build Bloomington's urban canopy by ordering a tree for your yard through the City's annual Arbor Day tree sale. Bloomington residents can pre-purchase affordable bare-root trees that will be delivered during the first week of May.

Now in its 18th year, this program helps the City maintain its Tree City USA designation and has added more than 3,000 trees to Bloomington's urban forest. Residents may purchase a maximum of five trees per household. To place a tree order, visit [blm.mn/treesale](http://blm.mn/treesale), mail in the order form below or call 952-563-8760. Find more information on the trees and how to plant them at [blm.mn/forestry](http://blm.mn/forestry).



#### ARBOR DAY TREE SALE ORDER FORM

Bloomington residents only. Trees are bare-root and approximately one inch in diameter. Spruces are in five-gallon pots. Trees cost \$50 each. They are viable at the time of sale. No refunds will be issued. *All trees on this form are native to Minnesota.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email (needed to arrange deliveries) \_\_\_\_\_

Fill in number of each tree type desired. First come, first served. Maximum five trees total per household, \$50 each. Check must accompany order.

Northwood red maple   
  Black Hills spruce   
  American linden   
  Honeylocust  
 River birch   
  Serviceberry   
  Snowdrift crab apple   
  Prairie Fire crab apple

Total trees  X \$50 ea. =  Total cost

Trees will be delivered to the address listed on the order form in the first week of May. Send a check and this form to Bloomington Park Maintenance, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431-3027.



# CURBSIDE CLEANUP COMING IN APRIL

Curbside Cleanup is offered every other year, occurring only in even-numbered years, which means it's happening in 2026. The program allows residents to dispose of certain large or hard-to-manage items that are not accepted through regular trash pickup.

On their assigned Saturday, participants may place a limited quantity of appliances and bulky trash at the curb for collection. More details about which items are accepted, and which are not are listed below.

**NEW IN 2026: BUNDLED BRUSH NO LONGER ACCEPTED.**

For questions about Curbside Cleanup, visit [blm.mn/curbside](http://blm.mn/curbside) or call 952-563-8777.

To learn how to dispose of items not accepted at the curb, visit the Green Disposal Guide on Hennepin County at [blm.mn/green-dispose](http://blm.mn/green-dispose) or call 612-348-3777.

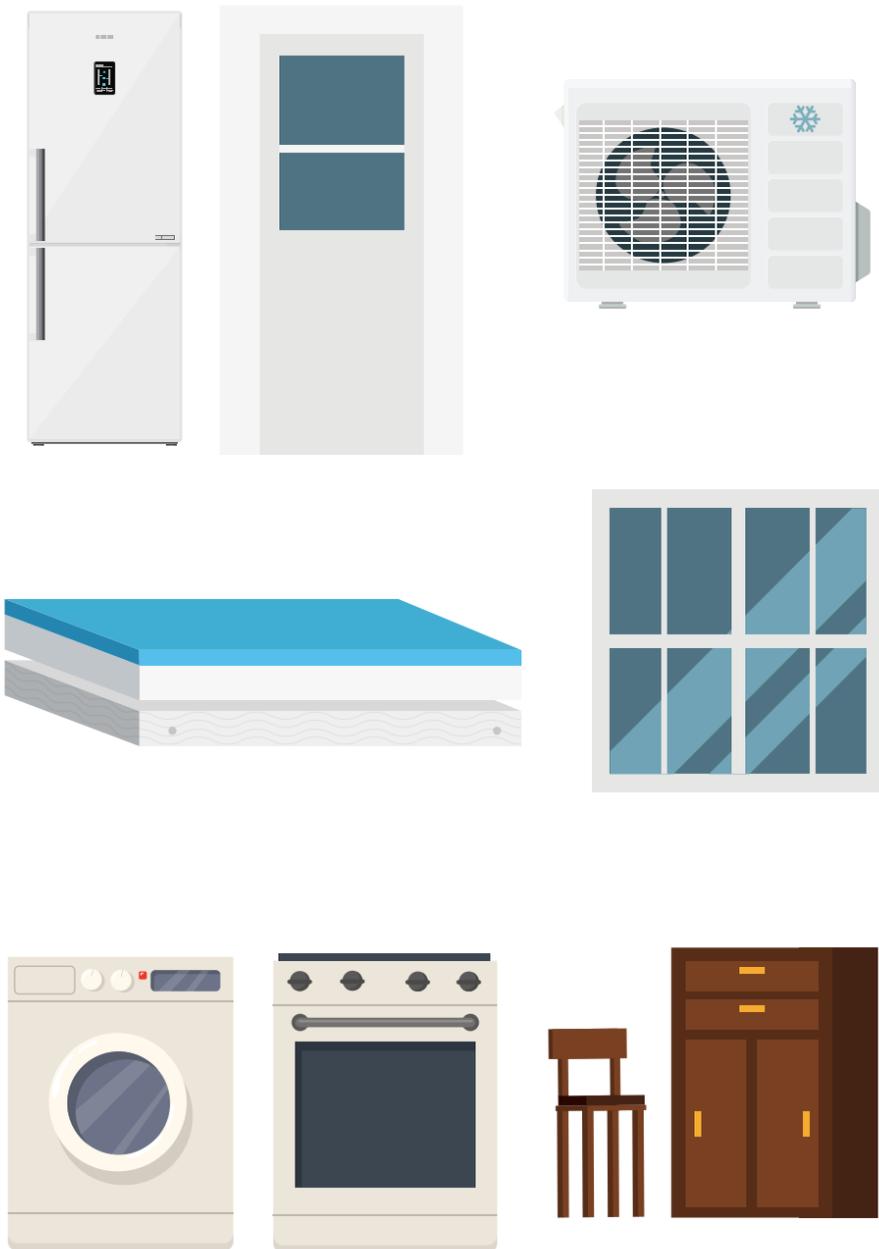


## 2026 CURBSIDE CLEANUP SCHEDULE

- East of Portland (Monday hauling district) April 4
- Penn to Portland (Tuesday hauling district) April 11
- France to Penn (Wednesday hauling district) April 18
- Normandale to France (Thursday hauling district) April 25
- West of Normandale (Friday hauling district) May 2

## WHAT IS ACCEPTED AT THE CURB

## WHAT IS NOT ACCEPTED AT THE CURB



**NEW IN 2026 - BUNDLED BRUSH**

**NEW! in 2026 - No bundled brush.**

- No tires.**
- No batteries.**
- No tubs, sinks or toilets.**
- No extra heavy or bulky items:** Pianos, organs, etc.
- No electronic items:** Cell phones, computers, stereos, printers or TVs.
- No hazardous waste:** Fluorescent tubes, motor oil, paint, propane, solvents or other household chemicals. Take these items to the South Hennepin Recycling and Problem Waste Drop-Off Center, 1400 W. 96th St.
- None of the following building items:** Contractor materials, bricks, concrete, railroad ties, shingles (asbestos) or treated wood.
- No organic materials:** Food waste, grass clippings, leaves, logs, sod or stumps.
- No loose cardboard:** Extra cardboard that can't fit in your recycling cart can be bundled and placed next to your recycling cart for pick-up.
- No recyclable materials:** Boxboard, cans, newspapers or plastic bottles.
- No small appliances like radios, clocks, coffee makers, or hair dryers.**
- No small metal items.** Take smaller items to the South Hennepin Recycling and Problem Waste Drop-Off Center, 1400 W. 96th St.
- No small items that can fit in a small garbage cart.** These items should be disposed of throughout the year in the regular garbage that is processed at a waste-to-energy facility instead of landfilled during Curbside Cleanup. This includes:
  - Clothing, textiles, linens, bedding or pillows.
  - Broken toys.
  - Books and other entertainment.
  - Other home and garden décor that can fit in a large garbage cart.

**Appliances: Limit of two.** Water heaters and softeners, microwaves, washers, dryers, stoves, air conditioners, dehumidifiers, freezers, dishwashers, trash compactors, garbage disposals, water coolers, refrigerators (remove door or tie securely shut). Do not set out until the morning of your pickup date.

**Unusable furniture: Limit of two items.** Tie down or disassemble hide-a-way sofa beds so they cannot open when handled.

**Mattresses or box springs: Limit of two items.**

**Household building materials: Pile size is limited to what fits in one level, standard-size pickup truck bed.** Includes building materials such as flooring, drywall, sheetrock, siding and untreated lumber. Lumber must be stacked and no longer than five feet.

**Other bulky items: Limit of four "other" items.** This includes any other bulky item not listed in categories above or to the right that cannot fit in a small garbage cart, including:

- Doors, windows, screens, cabinets.
- Large metal items like bikes, grills, lawn mowers, snow blowers, swing sets, treadmills; drain all fluids and remove tires.
- Carpet and pads: Roll and securely tie with twine. Keep under five feet in length and one foot in diameter.
- Garden furniture and décor that cannot fit in a small garbage cart.
- Home décor items like mirrors, lamps.
- Children's items like toys, sporting goods, car seats, strollers and furniture that cannot fit in a small garbage cart.



## BLOOMINGTON ICE GARDEN RECEIVES MCA CHOICE AWARD

In January, the Bloomington Ice Garden (BIG) remodel was recognized as one of Minnesota's most outstanding construction projects, earning the 2025 MCA Choice Award from the Minnesota Construction Association (MCA).

Presented annually, the MCA Choice Award recognizes projects that demonstrate exceptional leadership, innovation, collaboration, and craftsmanship. Winners are selected by a panel of MCA members who identify the most challenging and deserving projects completed by member companies.

The BIG remodel stood out for its strong leadership, creative use of materials, and thoughtful integration of modern construction techniques within a beloved community facility. The City recognizes RJM Construction, serving as construction manager, and JLG Architects, the project's architecture firm, for their expertise and collaboration throughout the project.

The remodel reflects a commitment to safety, quality, and design excellence while enhancing a space that serves athletes, families, and residents year-round. Previous MCA Choice Award winners include Target Field Station, the Pillsbury Hall Renovation, and the Schoenecker Center at the University of St. Thomas.

This marks the second time the City of Bloomington has received an MCA Award. In 2024, the City earned MCA Project of the Year honors for Fire Station 4.

## ENROLL IN SUMMER PROGRAMS

Bloomington Parks and Recreation offers a variety of summer programs for children and families. Options include day camps, outdoor recreation programs and specialty camps focused on art, sports and nature.

Programs include Camp Kota and Kota Kids at Bush Lake Beach, Summer Adventure Playgrounds, Parks Power Camp, Dakota Language Camp and more!

Programs are open to residents and nonresidents on a first-come, first-served basis. If a program is full, signing up for the waitlist is free and you will be contacted via email when spots become available.

Learn more and register at [blm.mn/youth-programs](http://blm.mn/youth-programs).

[BLOOMINGTONMN.GOV](http://BLOOMINGTONMN.GOV)



## ENJOY THE ANNUAL SPRING ICE SHOW

The annual spring ice show returns to Bloomington Ice Garden on Friday, March 13, 7 p.m., and Saturday, March 14, 1 p.m. The show features registered Skate School participants and Figure Skating Club of Bloomington members.

This year's show features a Skating with the Stars theme and includes spotlights, costumes, choreography and music. Skaters of all levels take part, making it a fun event for friends, family and community members to enjoy. The show will also feature performances by the Bloomington Butterflies.

A dress rehearsal will be held Thursday, March 12, 6 p.m., and is open to the public. Tickets for the dress rehearsal are \$6.

Tickets are available in advance online at [blm.mn/big-tickets](http://blm.mn/big-tickets) or in person the day of the show at Bloomington Ice Garden. Ticket sales are nonrefundable.

For more information, visit [blm.mn/big](http://blm.mn/big).

## US NATIONAL CHAMPIONS REAGAN MOSS AND JAKUB GALBAVY

Bloomington-based figure skaters Reagan Moss, *right*, and Jakub Galbavy, *left*, recently earned a national title, marking their second junior national championship this season. Their back-to-back wins in the junior pairs category are a first in U.S. Figure Skating history.

The pair has been skating together for nearly three years and trains at the Bloomington Ice Garden, 3600 W. 98th St. Both skaters credit trust and teamwork as key to their success.

"Our personalities clicked right away," Moss said. "We can really trust each other to do all these hard things we're trying to do to succeed." Galbavy added, "We always want to be there for the other person. That's the beauty of doing pairs."

Moss and Galbavy say the Bloomington Ice Garden has played an important role in their development.

"The facility is great. Everything we need is here," Moss said. Galbavy noted the support they receive from staff and the community.

Following their national success, the team was selected to represent the United States at the Junior World Championships in Estonia in late February and early March. As they continue to compete, both skaters say they remain focused on steady progress, strong training and enjoying the sport. To see a video about the pair, visit [blm.mn/skaters](http://blm.mn/skaters).



## WE MEAN BUSINESS: ZE'S DINER

Moody Arafa recently opened a Ze's Diner location in Bloomington. Arafa has worked in the restaurant industry for more than 30 years. In 2009, he and his wife purchased Cahill Diner in Inver Grove Heights, a turning point that led them to develop their own diner concept inspired by 1950s design and traditional comfort food.

Ze's Diner later expanded to Eagan and other south metro communities. Arafa said Bloomington became a priority after hearing consistent interest from customers.

"I'm always following my customer leads. They always come and say to me, 'We need a location in Bloomington,'" he said. Once space became available, he decided to bring the concept to the city, continuing his focus on quality food and a welcoming environment.



## MEET FIREFIGHTER ERIC SKINNER, WHOSE PASSION FOR SERVICE RUNS DEEP

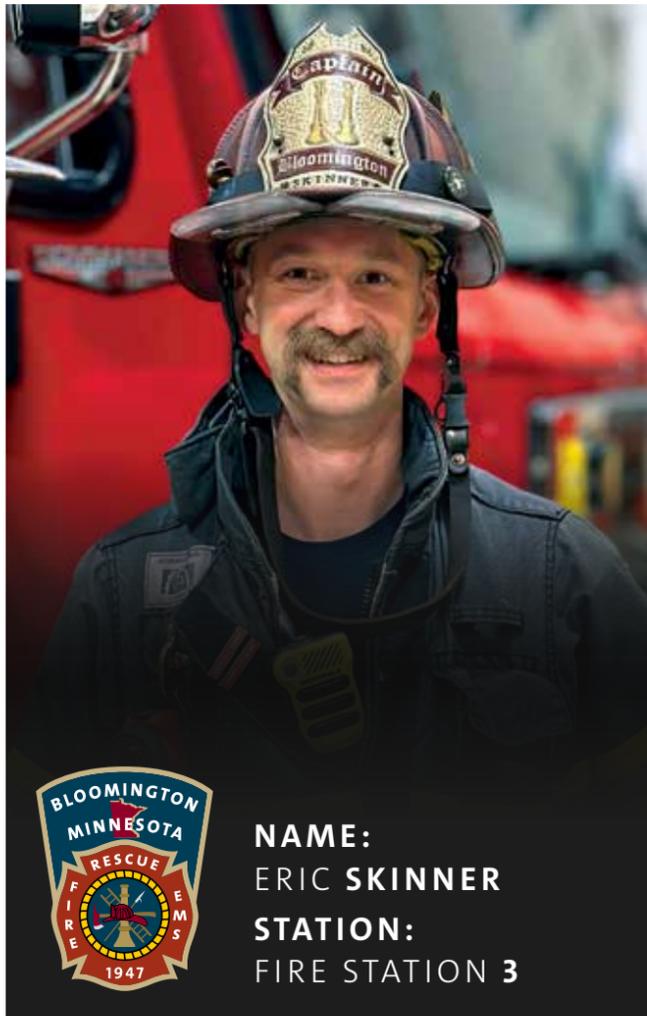
A fourth-generation firefighter, Eric Skinner has spent more than 16 years in the fire service, joining the Bloomington Fire Department nearly three years ago. He has served as both a firefighter paramedic and captain, bringing extensive experience to every call.

Skinner holds an associate’s degree in fire science and is a nationally registered paramedic, hazardous materials technician, live fire instructor in charge and a qualified instructor with the Minnesota Board of Fire Training and Education. He is also credentialed faculty in fire science with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Before working in Bloomington, Skinner served with Chaska, Hopkins, Hennepin EMS and Edina, while teaching at Hennepin Technical College’s fire program for 13 years.

“I can’t imagine doing anything else,” Skinner said, who credits his wife, Kelley, an ER nurse, for her guidance, patience and support, noting, “Her knowledge and encouragement have been my rock through every challenge.”

Eric’s fire safety tip: Visit the Bloomington Fire Department website at [blm.mn/bfd](http://blm.mn/bfd) and read more about ways to keep your home and family protected from fire.



**NAME:**  
ERIC SKINNER  
**STATION:**  
FIRE STATION 3



## GIRL SCOUTS BUILD LITTLE PET LIBRARY

A local Girl Scout troop is making a lasting impact on Bloomington’s pet community through a project focused on care, teamwork and service.

Led by troop leader Jennifer Weideman, the girls have been together since kindergarten and are now in sixth grade. The troop designed and built a Little Pet Library at Bloomington Animal Control, 9920 Logan Ave. S. It offers a place where residents can take or leave pet supplies such as toys, treats and food. All treats and food must be in unopened packaging.

Using money earned through cookie sales and other fundraising, the girls planned the project from start to finish. They created a budget, selected supplies and built, stained and painted the library by hand before working with the City to install it.

“The girls wanted to do something to help the community through animals,” Weideman said. “They wanted to give back in a way that would help both pets and pet owners.”

The Little Pet Library is restocked throughout the year by the troop and community members and remains an ongoing service project for the girls.

## DISCOVER THE POWER OF NUTRITION

Bloomington Public Health supports the goals of Nutrition Month (March) year-round by helping eligible people who are pregnant, have recently been pregnant or have children up to five years of age access nutritious food through the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition program.

BPH served 3,082 WIC participants in 2025. WIC dietitians play a critical role in educating individuals on how food impacts health through their lifespan.

“Our food and beverage choices have the power to help us thrive,” said WIC Dietitian Katie Meaux. “To get the most benefit from your choices, choose healthful foods from all the food groups, alternate your food choices for a variety of nutrients, and avoid fad diets that promote unnecessary restrictions.”

Call the Public Health WIC program 952-563-8993 to learn more or apply.



## PUCKS, PADS AND PRIDE: POLICE VS. FIRE IS BACK!

The rivalry heats up on ice! Bloomington Police and Fire Departments will hit the ice again in their fourth annual hockey showdown on March 8 at the Bloomington Ice Garden, 3600 W. 98th St. The puck drops at 5 p.m., so don’t miss a second of the action.

Last year, Fire scored the win. In 2024, Police won, but in 2023, Fire came out blazing. Who will skate away with bragging rights this time?

This free, family-friendly event is open to everyone. Bring your cheering voice, your family and a nonperishable food item to support the VEAP food pantry. For all the details, visit [blm.mn/2026hockey](http://blm.mn/2026hockey).

## AT YOUR SERVICE: POLICE WELLNESS DIRECTOR AMOS J. OLIVAREZ SR.

Amos J. Olivarez Sr.’s connection to the Bloomington Police Department started before he officially joined the team. He first served on the interview panel for the Chief of Police and later joined the mission, vision and values team, helping shape the department’s guiding principles through a community centered perspective. That early involvement led to his current role as the department’s wellness officer.

In his role, Olivarez focuses on supporting the people behind the badge. He leads wellness efforts that promote physical, mental and emotional health for both sworn officers and civilian staff. Alongside department leadership, he helps weave wellness into the everyday department culture, encourages healthy work-life balance and ensures programs meet staff needs.

For Olivarez, the work hits close to home.

“Everything in my life where I live, where my kids go to school is right here,” he said. “I hope communities rally around their police departments, recognizing the unseen work they do every day.”

Through his dedication, Olivarez helps build a healthier department and a stronger, more connected community.



**NAME:**  
AMOS J. OLIVAREZ SR.  
**TITLE:**  
WELLNESS DIRECTOR

## PARENTS OF YOUNG KIDS FIND BIG SUPPORT AT EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPO

Parents and caregivers are invited to join the fun at the Early Childhood Expo on Saturday, April 11, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., at Bloomington Civic Plaza, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road, with low sensory focus time, 10-11 a.m. This free, family-friendly event brings together trusted early learning resources, health and safety information and community services, all in one welcoming place for families.

For Idil Farah, an eight-year Bloomington resident and mother of nine, the expo made a lasting impact.

“As a parent of young children, the expo made it easy to connect with people who genuinely care about supporting families it can feel challenging to find the right resources,” Farah said.

Farah, who purchased a home here last year, attended to meet other parents and learn about resources. One highlight was the infant CPR classes.

“That knowledge gives parents real confidence and peace of mind,” she said. She also valued inclusive programming.

“Classes for Somali parents with interpreters showed that Bloomington truly wants every family to feel supported,” Farah said.

For all the details, visit [blm.mn/expo2026](http://blm.mn/expo2026).



## NOTABLE NEIGHBOR: DEAN HOLT, RESIDENT OF BLOOMINGTON, WHOVILLE AND OZ

When Whoville bursts to life on the Children’s Theatre Company stage, longtime Bloomington resident Dean Holt is never far from the magic. Now more than 30 years into his CTC career, Dean directed Dr. Seuss’s *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* for the second time in the 2025-2026 season, and he’s also scampering across the stage as Old Max, the dog, for the fifth year running.

Dean joined CTC as a young apprentice, expecting a one-year adventure. Instead, it became a lifelong artistic home. It’s where he met his wife, Stacy, and where their sons, Henry and Emmet, spent childhood afternoons exploring rehearsal halls and backstage corners. Shifting into directing feels like a natural evolution for Dean.

“Each season brings new ideas, new cast members and new discoveries,” he said.

For him, the show’s staying power is simple. “It’s a story of togetherness and community,” Holt said. “Bloomington and the Twin Cities offer that too — a vibrant, growing arts community we’re very lucky to have.”

Catch Holt next as the Scarecrow in CTC’s *The Wizard of Oz*, April 21-June 14. Visit [childrenstheatre.org](http://childrenstheatre.org) for more information.



## BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY THROUGH HOUSING

The Bloomington Housing and Redevelopment Authority works to create a stable and inclusive community through safe and reliable housing choices. By filling housing gaps, supporting new development and keeping neighborhoods strong, the HRA ensures everyone in Bloomington has access to safe and affordable housing.

Its programs and services are designed to assist renters, homeowners and those looking to buy a home.

Learn more about the HRA’s resources and how they help the community by visiting [blm.mn/hraresources](http://blm.mn/hraresources). For questions, email [hra@BloomingtonMN.gov](mailto:hra@BloomingtonMN.gov) or call 952-563-8937.

### CREATING PATHWAYS TO HOMEOWNERSHIP

The HRA offers programs that help residents navigate challenges to homeownership and prepare for buying a home:

- **Rental Homes for Future Homebuyers:** Eligible households can rent an HRA-owned home and set aside savings for a future down payment. Learn more at [blm.mn/rentalhomes](http://blm.mn/rentalhomes).
- **Homebuyer Mortgage Assistance:** Provides down payment assistance and required homebuyer education for income-eligible households.
- **Educational Opportunities:** Monthly workshops help renters prepare for homeownership. The workshops are offered in English, Somali and Spanish.

### PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR HOMEOWNERS

The HRA offers programs to help homeowners manage costs, make repairs and remain in their homes:

- **Energy Assistance:** Federally funded grants help income-eligible households pay for heating, water and furnace repairs. Learn more at [blm.mn/energyassistance](http://blm.mn/energyassistance).
- **Home Improvement Loans:** Loans of up to \$50,000 help homeowners make needed repairs and upgrades and are repaid when the home is sold or transferred. Learn more at [blm.mn/loans](http://blm.mn/loans).
- **H.O.M.E. Program:** Residents age 60 and older can receive help with lawn care, snow removal and small household repairs. Learn more at [seniorcommunity.org](http://seniorcommunity.org) or call 952-746-4046.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Through its programs and community partnerships, the HRA continues to shape Bloomington’s housing landscape. From creating new paths to homeownership to preserving the homes and neighborhoods that define the city, the HRA is committed to making Bloomington a place where everyone can find a home.

To learn more about available programs or the HRA’s work, visit [blm.mn/hra](http://blm.mn/hra).