



BLOOMINGTON BRIEFING

AUGUST 2026



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BIG IDEAS
AND BRIGHT
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TAKE YOUR BIKE TO TRETBAUGH PARK, 3261 W. 90TH ST., TO ENJOY BLOOMINGTON'S FIRST BIKE SKILLS COURSE.



MAYOR’S MEMO

CULTIVATING A SUSTAINABLE FOREST ALONG NINE MILE CREEK

By Mayor Tim Busse

The Nine Mile Creek corridor is without question one of Bloomington’s most treasured natural areas. Parts of the corridor are facing challenges like erosion, invasive species, habitat degradation and a lack of native plant regeneration. While many areas appear healthy and wooded, decades of fast-growing, invasive plants pressure have changed the ecological condition of the landscape. The restoration project is designed to improve the long-term health of the ecosystem, protect natural resources and ensure future generations can continue to enjoy this special place.

The most visible part of the project is tree removal. While it may seem surprising or even counter-intuitive, selective tree removal is an important restoration tool.

The work is targeted to reduce invasive plants to allow the native plants space and time to grow. This will improve native plant diversity and restore historic habitats such as oak savanna—one of Minnesota’s rarest ecosystems. Large portions of the corridor will remain wooded, and many areas will continue to provide shade. In addition, approximately 150 to 200 new trees will be planted near the Moir and Harrison park areas, along with thousands of plants to enhance and beautify the landscape.

This restoration effort is based on established ecological science and was developed by natural resource experts, City staff and consultants with input from the community.

For more about the project, see page 8 or visit bloomingtonforward.org/9mile.



SLOW DOWN FOR A SAFER TOWN AND GET A SIGN FOR SUPPORT

Residential Bloomington streets follow a 25 miles per hour speed limit, unless otherwise posted. Want to help spread the word? Pick up a free yard sign at the Information Desk in Civic Plaza at 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road. Place signs only on your own property and not within 10 feet of curbs or intersections or in parks or public areas. Learn more at blm.mn/go25.

CELEBRATE CHAMPIONS FOR JUSTICE

The Bloomington Human Rights Commission is seeking nominations for the Omar Bonderud Human Rights Award. If someone in our community is courageously breaking down barriers in housing, education, employment or other human rights areas, now is the time to lift them up. Their impact matters. Their work deserves recognition. Submit nominations by September 18. For more information, call 952-563-8733 or visit blm.mn/bonderud.

BLOOMINGTONMN.GOV



BRIEFING

Volume 33, Number 08

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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.



BIG IDEAS AND BRIGHT FUTURES CAME ALIVE AT THE IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS SUMMIT

The Immigrant Entrepreneurs Summit in June brought nearly 300 business owners, community partners and leaders together for a day of learning, networking and inspiration. City of Bloomington staff attended the regional event to support local entrepreneurs and strengthen connections with the residents who help drive our community’s economic success. Council Member Shawn Nelson welcomed attendees and emphasized the City’s dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive business environment. The summit highlighted the creativity, resilience and leadership that immigrant entrepreneurs bring to Bloomington and the entire region. To learn more about this event, check out the video at blm.mn/ies-vid.

STRENGTHENING THE SYSTEM BENEATH OUR FEET

In May, Bloomington was awarded \$4 million in state bonding appropriation from the State of Minnesota to support the North Central Sanitary Sewer Project, a major win for residents and the city’s long-term growth. This investment will expand sewer capacity in north central Bloomington and serve the rapidly growing Penn American District, where ongoing housing and mixed-use redevelopment continue to increase demand for reliable modern services. The project includes construction of 13,330 feet of 24-inch diameter sanitary sewer pipe. Work will extend from American Boulevard and Morgan Avenue to Syndicate Avenue and West 92nd Street and will include a crossing beneath I-35W just south of the I-35W and I-494 interchange. The upgraded system will support higher density redevelopment consistent with the City’s comprehensive plan and regional goals. Design work began in 2025. Construction will continue throughout 2026 and 2027. For more, visit blm.mn/construction.

UNDERSTANDING LAWN AND STREET CORNER SIGNS

Signs that pop up on lawns and at street corners, often referred to as bandit signs that advertise services, jobs or purchasing houses for example, are typically not allowed under Bloomington’s City Code. If you see one, please remove it. Here’s what you need to know.

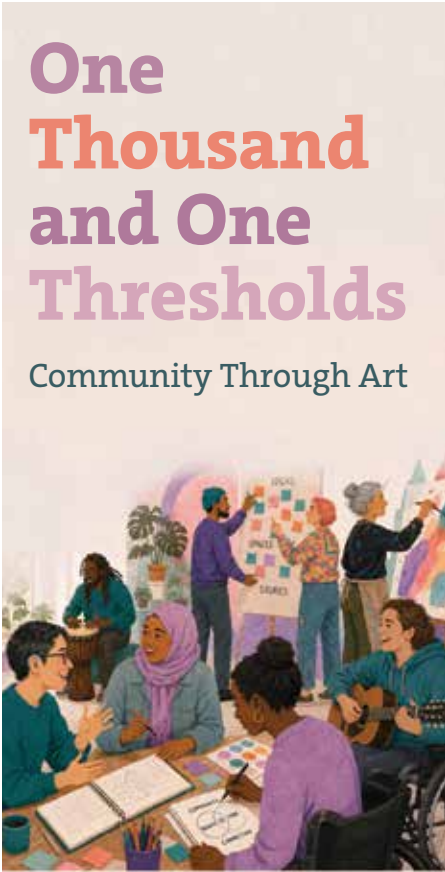
- Allowed:** On-site commercial signs require a City permit and must adhere to specific size and placement guidelines.
 - Never allowed:** Placing signs on someone else’s property; within 15 feet of a curb or intersection; on poles, traffic signs, trees or other natural features; and in parks or public areas.
 - Okay with permission:** Contractor signs during active work; garage sale signs (maximum of four signs, up to seven days per year); other non-sales signs; real estate open house signs (while on-site); and election signs (46 days before elections to 10 days after) are permitted with the property owner’s consent.
- For more information, refer to City Code 21.304.13(c) at blm.mn/code or contact Environmental Health at 952-563-8934 or envhealth@BloomingtonMN.gov.



Signs like the one above advertising purchasing houses are considered bandit signs and are not typically allowed under City Code.

SAVE THE DATE: SHAPE THE NEXT 20 YEARS OF BLOOMINGTON’S ECONOMY

Bloomington’s business community is stronger when we plan, learn and grow together. This fall, you’re invited to the 2026 Bloomington Business Forum on Wednesday, October 7, 8-10 a.m., at Bloomington Civic Plaza, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road. This year’s theme, Building a Resilient Economy: Investing in Bloomington Businesses, highlights how the City, residents and businesses continue working together to support a thriving local economy. Attendees will hear from GreaterMSP about regional economic trends, explore new procurement opportunities and offer input that will guide the City’s next 20 years of economic development planning. The forum will also showcase the resilient and responsive spirit of our city as demonstrated through initiatives like the Small Business Assistance Grant and Hatch Bloomington business pitch competition. Join us for meaningful conversations, valuable insights and a shared vision for a stronger Bloomington. Reserve your spot and register today at blm.mn/businessforum.



ART, CONNECTION AND CREATIVITY CONVERGE AT THE THRESHOLD

Bloomington residents are invited to join One Thousand and One Thresholds: Community Through Art Workshop, a multidisciplinary workshop series. The series runs Tuesdays, September 22-October 27, 6-8:15 p.m., at The Works Museum, 9740 Grand Ave. S. Led by Bloomington artist Rupa Shenoy Thadhani, this workshop brings together adult artists of all backgrounds and experience levels. Writers, dancers, musicians, visual artists, performers and creative thinkers are encouraged to participate in an environment focused on exploration, experimentation and community connection. Sessions will emphasize process, collaboration and discovery across artistic disciplines. Registration is \$185 for Bloomington residents and \$200 for nonresidents. Scholarship applications are available and must be submitted by August 22. For more details, visit blm.mn/communitythroughart. **HOOPS AND HARMONY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD** A basketball hoop can turn any driveway into a neighborhood gathering spot, but before you set up for the next big game, make sure your hoop is in the right place. The City manages public right-of-way areas, including streets, boulevards, sidewalks and other spaces used by the community. To help keep these areas safe and accessible, City Code prohibits both portable and permanent basketball hoops and poles within the public right-of-way. Basketball poles, backboards and related equipment located in the public right-of-way can present a safety problem and are considered a public nuisance under City Code. Property owners with hoops in these areas should remove them. Before installing a hoop, be sure it meets required setback standards and is located on private property. Questions about placement? Contact Bloomington Engineering at 952-563-4870. [BLOOMINGTONMN.GOV](https://BloomingtonMN.gov)



CUT ENERGY COSTS
WITH A FREE HOME
ENERGY SQUAD® VISIT
BEFORE AUGUST 31

Bloomington residents may take advantage of free Home Energy Squad® visit for an in-home energy assessment designed to help reduce energy waste and lower utility bills.

During the visit, energy experts evaluate your home and identify simple, practical ways to improve energy efficiency. The service is completely free through the end of August, and appointments are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Residents can schedule a visit at mncee.org/hes. Learn more about sustainability efforts in Bloomington at blm.mn/sustainability.

The last day to book a free visit is August 31, so call 651-328-6220 to sign up soon!



PROTECT OUR WATERS
BY KEEPING STORM
DRAINS CLEAR

Illicit discharges include anything other than clean rainwater entering the storm sewer system. Common culprits include dumped car wash water, used motor oil, paint, pet waste and grass clippings. To protect our waterways, wash your car at a carwash or on your lawn, and sweep grass and leaves back onto your lawn instead of hosing them into the street, which helps prevent algae blooms.

If you spot someone illegally dumping chemicals or notice foul odors or unusual colors coming from a storm drain, report it immediately at blm.mn/water-and-you, 952-563-4870 or engineering@BloomingtonMN.gov. Together, let's ensure that only clean water flows through our storm drains.

[BLOOMINGTONMN.GOV](https://BloomingtonMN.gov)



EARTH ACTION HERO: THE NINE MILE CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT

The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is making a powerful and lasting impact on Bloomington by protecting and restoring the community's vital water resources. Serving Bloomington and five neighboring cities, the district partners with residents, local governments and community organizations to improve water quality, restore habitat, reduce flooding and safeguard natural areas for generations to come.

A recent example of this commitment is the district's \$1 million investment from its Capital Improvement Fund to support the Nine Mile Creek Corridor Renewal Project. This effort will stabilize eroding streambanks, restore native habitat, reconnect the creek to its floodplain and expand public access to natural spaces.

"What inspires our staff and board of managers is the opportunity to make a lasting difference in the health of our waters and the quality of life in our communities," NMCWD President Larry Olson said. "We see firsthand how clean lakes, healthy streams, restored wetlands and effective flood management benefit residents, businesses, wildlife and future generations."

For Bloomington residents, the benefits of the district investment will be felt for years to come and strengthen the connection between people and the natural spaces that make this community special. Learn more about the Nine Mile Creek Corridor Renewal Project at bloomingtonforward.org/9mile and on page 8. Learn about more the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District at ninemilecreek.org.



GROWING AN URBAN FOREST FOR TOMORROW

Bloomington's urban forest got a boost thanks to recent tree planting efforts at Civic Plaza. This spring, Park Maintenance crews planted nine new trees representing three species that have traditionally been found farther south and east of Minnesota. As the region experiences warmer and wetter conditions, these trees are now proving to be a good fit for local landscapes.

The new additions include chinkapin oak, black gum and northern pecan trees. Beyond adding beautiful fall color, the species were selected to increase the diversity of the tree canopy in the city.

A diverse urban forest is more resilient to pests, diseases and changing weather conditions. By introducing a wider variety of trees, Bloomington is helping ensure that its community canopy remains healthy and thriving for generations to come.

The project reflects the ongoing work of Bloomington's Park Maintenance team to strengthen and protect the city's urban forest while planning for future environmental conditions.

REBELS GYMNASTICS MAKES A GREEN TWIST TO REDUCE TRASH BY 75%

Rebels Gymnastics in Bloomington has taken a remarkable leap toward sustainability, reducing trash waste by an impressive 75%. Partnering with Waste Wise, the local business embraced eco-consciousness by applying for the Hennepin County Bin and Bag grant, aimed at enhancing recycling efforts and initiating organics recycling.

By using color-coded and clearly labeled bins, Rebels Gymnastics has engaged its community in meaningful waste reduction practices. This success story highlights not only the commitment of one business to the environment but also serves as a beacon of inspiration for others.

By choosing to invest time in no-cost resources, businesses can achieve significant success in waste reduction initiatives. Rebels Gymnastics earns a perfect 10 by showing that, with the right support, any business can contribute positively to the environment. To learn more about how your business can save money, go to blm.mn/wastewise.



Waste Wise Sustainability Specialist Lauren Gaffron and Executive Director of Rebels Gymnastics Jaime Tsurusaki.



CONNECT WITH PUBLIC HEALTH’S PEER BREASTFEEDING PROGRAM

Did you know the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breast/chestfeeding until your baby is six months old? You can then introduce complimentary solid foods while continuing to give human milk until two years or beyond, provided it is a good fit for you and your baby.

“Breastfeeding isn’t easy,” WIC Peer Breastfeeding Counselor Nataly Gomez said. “But you’re not alone. We’re here to support you and build your confidence.”

Breast/chestfeeding and giving human milk increases bonding between you and your baby, lowers your risk for postpartum depression, certain cancers, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and much more.

Multilingual peer breastfeeding counselors are available to participants of the Women, Infants and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program, known as the WIC program. Learn more at blm.mn/wic.

FROM NUMBERS TO NOZZLES: MEET FIREFIGHTER LIZ ERICKSON

Firefighter Liz Erickson brings dedication, teamwork and heart to the Bloomington Fire Department. Since joining the team in 2019, Liz has served on the front lines and recently stepped into a new role on the Wellness and Safety Committee, supporting both her crew and the community.

A graduate of the University of North Dakota with a degree in history, Liz holds full firefighting certifications along with EMT and CPR credentials. Outside the station, she has built a 23-year career as a mortgage loan underwriter.

Liz became a firefighter to give back to Bloomington and help neighbors in times of need. She credits her strong work ethic, team mindset and passion for service as keys to her success. Her biggest supporters are her husband, Mike, and their children, Gino and Mellie.

Off duty, Liz enjoys running, reading and traveling with her family.

Liz’s Fire Safety Tip: Change the batteries in your smoke detectors every six months to keep your home and loved ones safe.



NAME:
LIZ ERICKSON
STATION:
FIRE STATION 1

POLICE DRONES OFFER A NEW VIEW FOR PUBLIC SAFETY

Bloomington is exploring how drone technology could strengthen emergency response following a successful two-week Drone as First Responder pilot program conducted in late May.

The program tested how remotely operated drones can respond to certain emergency calls ahead of police or fire personnel, providing information that helps first responders assess situations and make informed decisions before arriving on scene.

During the pilot, drones responded to 396 calls, including welfare checks, structure fires, assaults in progress, stolen vehicle reports, K9 tracks and high-risk traffic stops. The drones arrived before first responders 47% of the time and helped locate 52 individuals and 35 vehicles. No crashes, malfunctions or property damage occurred during the trial.

Analysis shows a fully implemented program could potentially respond to 89% of urgent calls, such as crimes in progress or life-threatening situations, within two minutes. Bloomington is also evaluating how drones could support traffic engineering, infrastructure inspections and public works projects.

Any future program would comply with federal and state, privacy and transparency regulations and there would be community engagement regarding key priorities. No decisions about permanent implementation have been made.



Bloomington Police demonstrate drone equipment at the Police Open House.



Red Lobster staff, *shown above*, stood out twice, earning the Full-Service Restaurant Award and the prestigious Overall Food Safety Award for 2025.

23RD ANNUAL FOOD SAFETY AWARD WINNERS ARE SERVING UP EXCELLENCE

Bloomington recently recognized the leaders who go above and beyond to keep our community safe and healthy. At the 28th Annual Diamond Service Awards in May, the mayor presented the City’s 2025 Food Safety Awards, honoring exceptional performance across Bloomington’s food service and hospitality industries.

This year’s recipients span a wide-range of businesses: Lunds & Byerlys, Capital One Café, Bruegger’s Bagels–Southtown and DoubleTree by Hilton Bloomington–Minneapolis South. Red Lobster earned both the Full-Service Restaurant Award and the Overall Food Safety Award for 2025.

City-licensed food establishments earn nominations through standout 2025 inspection results. From there, nominees bring their passion and expertise to an in-depth interview, where they’re scored on enthusiasm, knowledge and proven food safety practices.

The City’s Advisory Board of Health reviews the top performers and gives the final stamp of approval. Congratulations to all the winners this year!

GET READY FOR SCHOOL WITH ROUTINE VACCINES

As you prepare to send your children back to school, routine vaccinations are a great tool to keep kids healthy, in school and ready to learn.

Bloomington Public Health can help you and your family get immunized, even if you don’t have insurance, have partial insurance or don’t have a primary care clinic. Learn more at blm.mn/ph or by calling 952-563-8900.

Unsure about which vaccines your child needs? See which vaccines are recommended for each age at blm.mn/vaccines.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: BPD COOKOUT RETURNS

Join the Bloomington Police Department for a community cookout on Wednesday, August 19, 5–7:30 p.m., at Bryant Park, 1001 W. 85th St. Enjoy free food, drinks, activities like face painting and raffle prizes while supplies last. Come for the food. Stay for the people. Learn about more BPD-hosted community engagement events online at blm.mn/police.



REEL CONNECTIONS
ACROSS GENERATIONS

Grandparents, bond with your grandchildren at a special fishing event on Monday, August 17, 1–3 p.m., at West Bush Lake Park, 9401 W. Bush Lake Road. Registration is \$10 per adult and \$5 per child.

Participants will enjoy fishing off the docks at Bush Lake with experienced instructors from Fishing for All who provide all equipment needed. Fishing license waivers will be provided for all participants. All fish are catch and release, but participants are encouraged to capture photos and create lasting memories together.

This program is part of the City’s offerings for adults ages 50 plus and is designed as a shared intergenerational experience for grandparents and grandchildren to connect outdoors. For more information and to register, visit blm.mn/adultprograms.



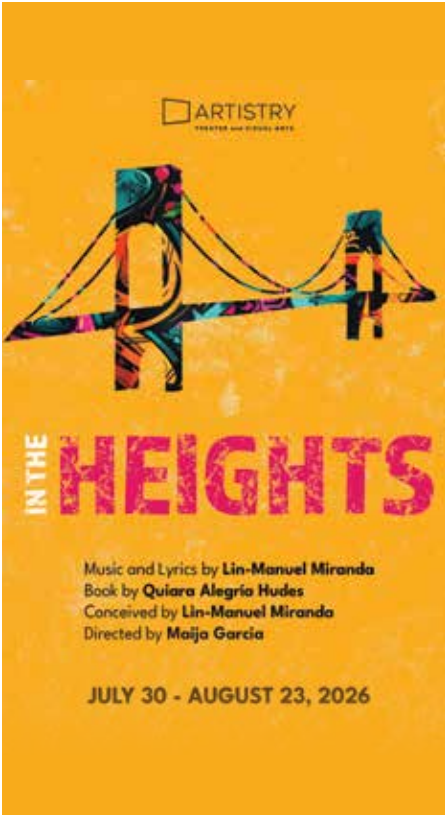
SUMMER MEMORIES MADE AT CAMP KOTA

Another summer of adventure, friendship and lifetime memories has wrapped up at Bush Lake Beach as Camp Kota celebrated one of its most successful seasons in recent years. Nearly 200 campers attended each of the four weeklong sessions in July, marking the program's highest enrollment since 2015.

For generations, Bloomington families have made Camp Kota a cherished summer tradition. This year, campers in kindergarten through seventh grade spent their days swimming, paddleboarding, trying archery, learning outdoor skills, singing camp songs and testing their balance on the key log.

One of the most anticipated experiences was the overnight campout, complete with a family picnic and evening program before campers settled into tents under the stars.

For more than 50 years, Camp Kota has helped create unforgettable summer memories close to home. Camp staff want to thank all the families, participants and volunteers who made this season such a success.



A NEIGHBORHOOD
WORTH SINGING
ABOUT

The Tony Award winning musical “In the Heights,” from the creator of Hamilton, is now on stage and welcoming audiences through August 23 at the Bloomington Center for the Arts, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road.

This vibrant production celebrates family, ambition and the meaning of home through the stories of a close-knit neighborhood at a crossroads. With energetic choreography and a dynamic score, it is a joyful theatrical experience for all ages.

Reserve your seats today at info@artistrymn.org, 952-563-8575 or visit artistrymn.org/intheheights. BLOOMINGTONMN.GOV

STAY ACTIVE ALL YEAR LONG IN BLOOMINGTON

While you’re soaking up the last days of summer, Bloomington Parks and Recreation is gearing up to help you stay moving through fall and winter. The 2026-2027 season is packed with ways to stay active no matter your age or interests.

Try skating lessons, hit the trails, explore naturalist programs or jump into adult sports and leagues. Kids can dive into youth programs, and there are great adaptive recreation opportunities, indoor gym activities, volunteer events and special happenings for the 50+ community. And don’t forget the winter market or the incredible performances waiting at the Bloomington Center for the Arts.

You only live once, so stay active, have fun and make memories. Browse programs and register today at blm.mn/webtrac.



SUMMER BEATS AT ON THE ONE
MUSIC FESTIVAL

The On The One Music Festival returns to Bloomington Central Station Park, 8100 33rd Ave. S., on Saturday, August 8, 3-9 p.m., bringing a full day of rhythm, community and celebration to the heart of the South Loop. Now in its fifth year, this free, family friendly event promises a vibrant mix of live performances and nonstop energy.

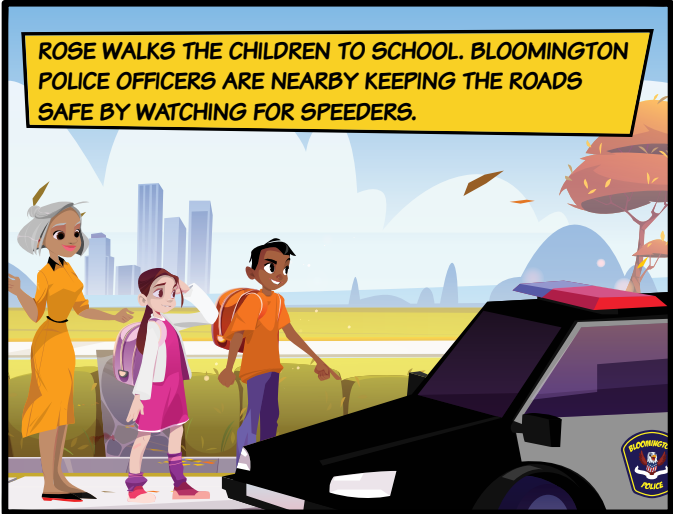
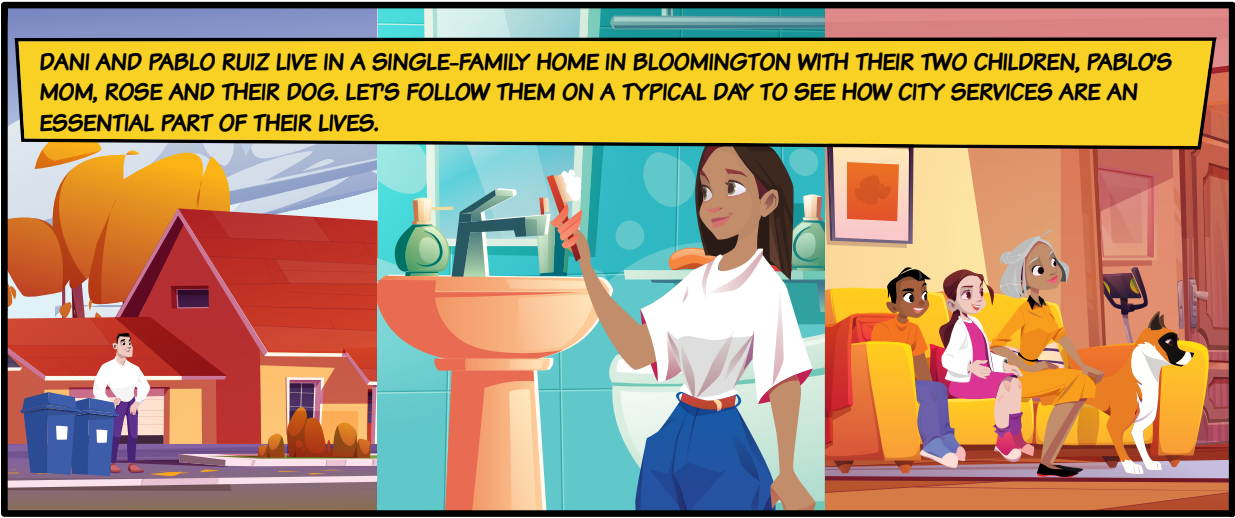
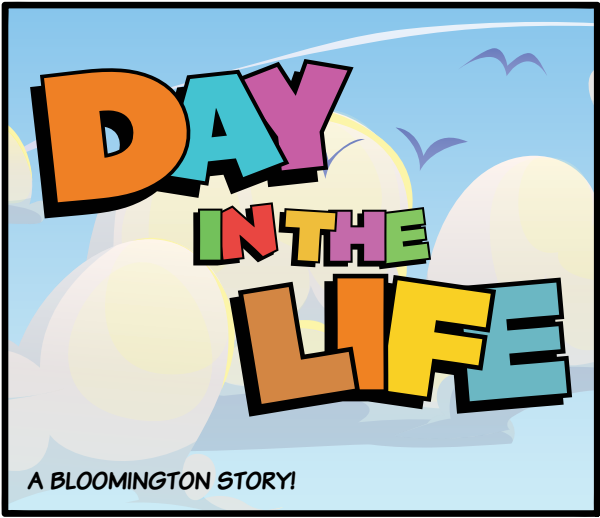
Festivalgoers will experience an exciting range of R&B entertainment, the official DJ program for the Minnesota Timberwolves and Lynx, to keep the festival moving from start to finish.

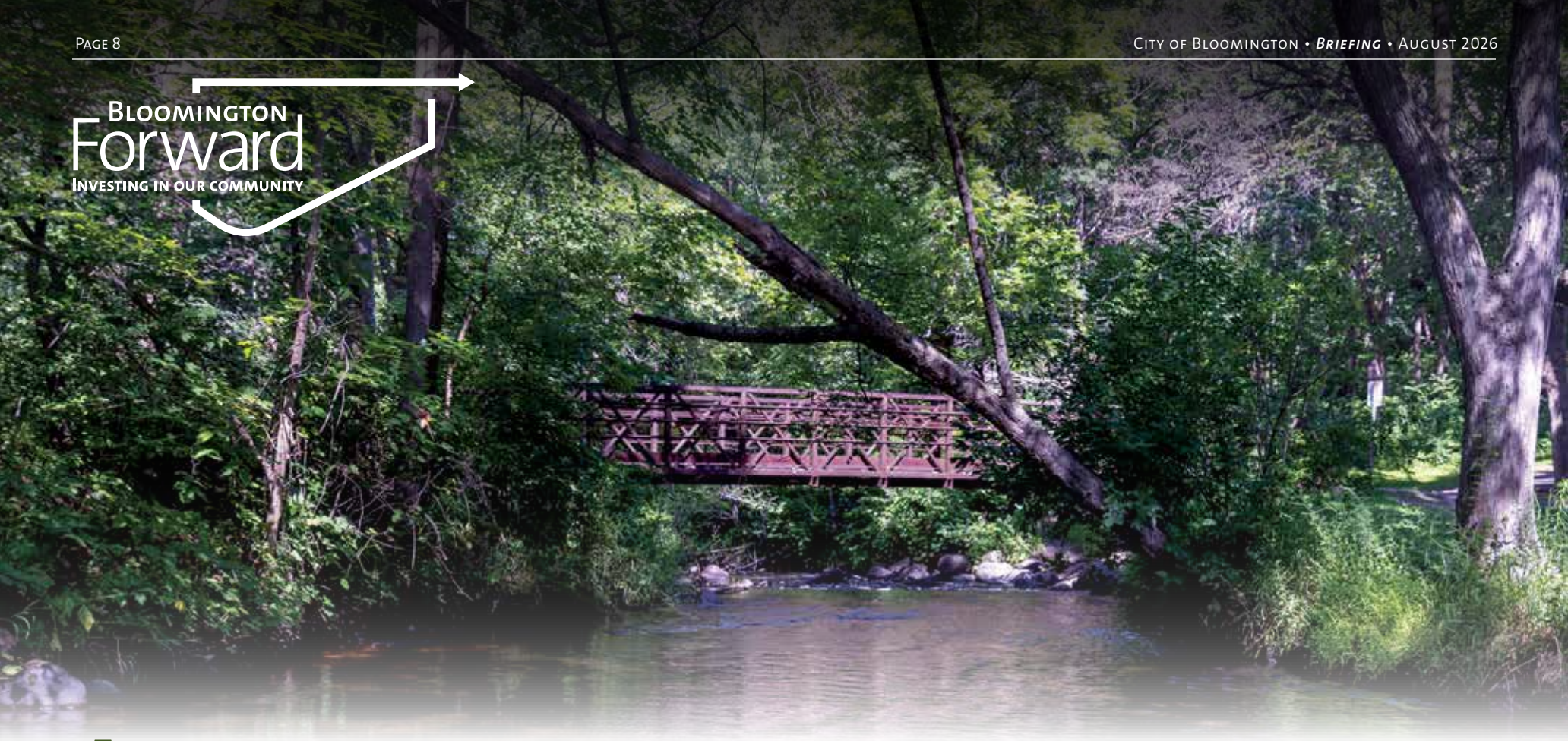
Learn more including details on seating, parking and food vendors at blm.mn/ontheone26.



THE CITY BUDGET AND YOU

City services are a part of your day in ways you may not recognize. See how the family below interacts with City services in a day — a civics lesson that’s fun for the whole family! **Share your priorities for the 2027–2028 budget** with City staff and council members at a public comment opportunity on Monday, August 17, 6:30 p.m., in the Council Chambers at Civic Plaza, 1800 W. Old Shakopee Road.





A PATH TO A SUSTAINABLE, HEALTHY FOREST

The Nine Mile Creek corridor is one of Bloomington's most treasured natural spaces. Its forests, wetlands and trails provide a home for wildlife and give people a place to enjoy nature year-round. A project to restore the corridor will make sure this landscape stays healthy for generations to come. Thanks to funding from Bloomington's voter-approved local sales tax, the City is restoring parts of the Nine Mile Creek corridor and improving Moir and Harrison parks. The restoration work will improve forest health, support native plants and animals and help the ecosystem adapt to future challenges.

CARING FOR THE CITY’S NATURAL SPACES

Bloomington is home to more than 9,000 acres of parks, open space and natural areas. These spaces don't stay healthy on their own. They require regular care, long-term planning and thoughtful management.

For decades, the City has worked to protect these natural resources. Today, that work continues with the help of experienced staff, environmental experts and community partners.

The project is led by Bloomington Parks and Recreation with support from SEH, an environmental consulting firm with extensive experience in ecological restoration and natural resource management. The City is also working with the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District and local residents who have dedicated years caring for Bloomington's natural areas.

WHY ARE SOME TREES BEING REMOVED?

One of the biggest changes residents will notice is the removal of some trees. At first, the area may look bare. As Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Dave Hanson puts it, "This is what restoration looks like. It looks worse before it looks better, but it will look better and it will be healthier."

Tree removal varies significantly across the project area. Some restoration areas will see more intensive management, while large portions of the corridor will experience little or no tree removal.

Many of the trees being removed are invasive or fast-growing species that have crowded the forest over time. Over the years, they’ve created a thick canopy that blocks sunlight from reaching the ground and does not allow much breeze to travel through.

Without enough sunlight, native grasses, wildflowers and young oak trees can't grow. As a result, the forest has become less diverse and less resilient over time.

Removing selected invasive or fast-growing trees and understory gives native plants the light and space they need to thrive again. The native plants that will be able to grow after restoration will provide habitat and food for pollinators and other native species.

TREES WILL ALSO BE PLANTED

There will also be 150-200 trees planted around the Moir and Harrison Park area along with many plants to beautify the landscape.

LOOKING AHEAD

Forest restoration takes time. The landscape may look different today than it did a year ago, but every tree removed and every native plant added is part of a long-term plan for a healthier, more sustainable forest. The work happening in the Nine Mile Creek corridor is an investment in cleaner water, healthier wildlife habitat and natural spaces that future generations can enjoy. With careful planning, scientific expertise and community support, Bloomington is helping ensure this treasured landscape continues to thrive for decades to come.

RESTORING A RARE ECOSYSTEM

The goal of the project is to restore parts of the corridor to an oak savanna. An oak savanna is a landscape with large, widely spaced oak trees, native grasses and wildflowers. Before European settlement, oak savannas were common across Minnesota. Today, they are one of the state's rarest ecosystems.

Unlike a dense forest, an oak savanna depends on sunlight reaching the ground. That sunlight allows hundreds of native plant species to grow, creating habitat for birds, pollinators and other wildlife. It also allows for higher quality shade for park goers and walkers with more breeze.

"We don't want it to be an oaks-only type of habitat, but an oak-majority type of habitat," Deric Deuschle, SEH aquatic ecologist, said. "The things we're doing are deliberate. We've done this work in other places. We aren't doing anything experimental or new."

Restoring this habitat helps create a healthier ecosystem that will benefit both people and wildlife for years to come.

BUILT ON SCIENCE AND COMMUNITY

This project brings together many people and organizations with a shared goal of protecting Bloomington's natural spaces.

The City selected SEH through a competitive request for proposals, choosing the team based on its qualifications and experience with projects like this. That process helped ensure Bloomington found the right expertise while making responsible use of public funds.

The restoration effort is also supported by the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District and local volunteers, including Heidi and Dan Niziolek, *pictured above*, whose nonprofit Bloomington Neighbors Nurturing Nature has helped restore natural areas throughout Bloomington.

"Our work is focused on making our green spaces natural again and healthy for all of us," Dan said.

"If you've ever had a surgery or a renovation on your house, you know on that first day you question all your life choices, but it does get better. It gets better quickly," Heidi said. "A couple years down the line, when you look back, you realize it was a good thing to do."

