



City Council Study Meeting AGENDA

**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL STUDY MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026
BLOOMINGTON FIRE STATION 3
2301 86TH ST E
BLOOMINGTON, MN 55425
4:00 PM**

Mayor: Tim Busse

Councilmembers: Danielle Robertson Victor Rivas
Lona Dallessandro Jenna Carter
Shawn Nelson Dwayne Lowman

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**
- 3. ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS**

3.1 City Council Strategic Planning and Visioning

- 4. ADJOURNMENT**

BloomingtonMN.gov: A yearly meeting schedule, agendas, and the official minutes once approved are available. If you require a reasonable accommodation, please call 952-563-8733 (MN Relay 711) as soon as possible, but no later than 9:00 a.m. one business day before the meeting day.

Our mission is to cultivate an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be.



Request for Council Action

Originator City Council	Item 3.1 City Council Strategic Planning and Visioning
Agenda Section ORGANIZATIONAL BUSINESS	Date April 20, 2026

Requested Action:

Discuss issues of importance and strategic significance. No action will be taken at the meeting.

Item created by: Priyanka Rai, City Council

Item presented by: Zach Walker, City Manager

Description:

The City Council will hold a Special Study Meeting for strategic planning and visioning for 2026-2027.

Attachments:

[Council Retreat 04-20-26.pdf](#)

[BTT Celebrating Progress 042026.pdf](#)

Council Retreat

Monday, April 20, 2026

Agenda

- **4:00 – 4:45 PM** **Welcome and Framing the Session**
- **4:45 – 5:30 PM** **Council Reflection on Current Dynamics**
- **5:30 – 6:00 PM** **Break and Dinner**
- **6:00 – 6:30 PM** **Current Strategic Plan: Group Reflection on What Has Worked**
- **6:30 – 7:30 PM** **Strategic Focus for 2026-2027**
- **7:30 – 8 :00 PM** **Connecting Strategy, Data, and Budgeting**
- **8:00 – 8:45 PM** **Strategic Priorities Fund Discussion**
- **8:50 – 9:00 PM** **Key Takeaways and Next Steps**

Welcome and Framing the Session



Guiding Principles – Our Organization Will:

- Maintain a long-term perspective to sustain our investments
- Communicate with clarity and purpose to the organization
- Sustain connection and meaningful community engagement
- Foster cross-service team and departmental collaboration
- Use innovation and effectiveness for continuous improvement
- Use data, performance metrics, and storytelling to guide our decisions



The Executive Management Team

- Addresses differences directly and constructively, building a culture of trust and accountability.
- Coordinates across service teams and departments to deliver visible, meaningful solutions that serve the community.
- Advances innovative ideas that drive more efficient service delivery and comprehensive, citywide outcomes.



The Executive Management Team (cont'd)

- Anticipates political dynamics, navigates challenges, and executes communication strategies.
- Builds and sustains strategic partnerships with community stakeholder to benefit residents.



High-Level Themes for the Next Two Years

- Back to basics - enhancing core service delivery
- Finish what we started - full workplans and CIP
- Effective, innovative, and responsible use of the public dollar
- Reassess landscape through the lens of the next community-based strategic plan



Organizational Key Priorities

Core
Services

Housing

Fiscal Policy
and Position

Government
Effectiveness

Sustainability

Community
Engagement

Core Services



Housing

Support the development and preservation of attainable housing for residents and the local workforce:

- Strengthening partnerships
- Streamlining processes
- Leveraging innovative tools and strategies



Housing (cont'd)

- Accelerate the production of diverse housing types
- Grow and preserve affordable housing at multiple income levels
- Expand access to programs and investments



Protect the City's Strong Fiscal Position

- Pursue innovative funding strategies
- Identify cost savings and efficiencies to mitigate short and long-term liabilities
- Support economic development partners
- Deliver exceptional core services
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility
- Maintain a strong financial position and creditworthiness



Government Effectiveness

- Enhance City services
 - Develop meaningful key performance indicators and benchmarking tools
 - Evaluate collaboration across city departments, other public agencies, and non-governmental partners
 - Use technology, priority-based budgeting, and long-term financial modeling



Sustainability

- Promote sustainable infrastructure
 - Develop, adopt and begin implementation of a comprehensive Climate Action Plan
 - Complete and operationalize an Urban Forest Master Plan
 - Integrate sustainable design standards into City construction and maintenance projects



Community Relations and Engagement



Let's Talk
BLOOMINGTON



**Council
Minute**
With Mayor Tim Busse

Summary of Near-Term Organizational Focus

- Deliver what we've started.
- Improve how we serve.
- Stay financially strong.
- Be disciplined on taxes.
- Align budget with strategy.



Council Reflection on Current Dynamics

Break

Current Strategic Plan

Group Reflection on What has Worked

Strategic Focus for 2026-2027

Connecting Strategy, Data, and Budgeting

What's Going Well

- Bloomington residents are generally satisfied:
 - 89% rate Bloomington as an excellent/good place to live
 - 84% rate the quality of life as excellent or good
 - 9 in 10 feel safe in their neighborhoods
 - Value of the services received for taxes paid increased by 7%

What's Going Well (cont'd)

- Total crime declined 10% between 2024 and 2025
- Police Department is fully staffed
- \$155M Bloomington Forward projects completed or underway.
- Median home values rose 2.9% between 2025 and 2026
- Nearly 800 housing units added (271 affordable units)
- Tourism continues to drive significant economic activity
- One of 36 cities out of more than 19,500 nationally with three triple-A bond ratings
- Multiple awards for workplace culture, financial reporting, communications, and planning

Economic Pressures

- Four-year average levy increase: 8.32%
 - Previous 15-year average increase: 3.64%
 - 2026 Levy was a 6.96% increase, below average and the lowest since 2022
- Federal policies increasing consumer costs
- Minnesota FY 2028-29 Budget Biennium: \$3.4B deficit
- Unpredictability in federal grants and intergovernmental revenues
- Economic hardship caused by Operation Metro Surge
- Healthcare turmoil
- Shifting Bloomington demographics

The 2027 Budget Mission

- Sustain and enhance the excellent quality of life that makes Bloomington an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be.
- Develop a budget that is sensitive to the economic stress and shifting demographics that define our community.

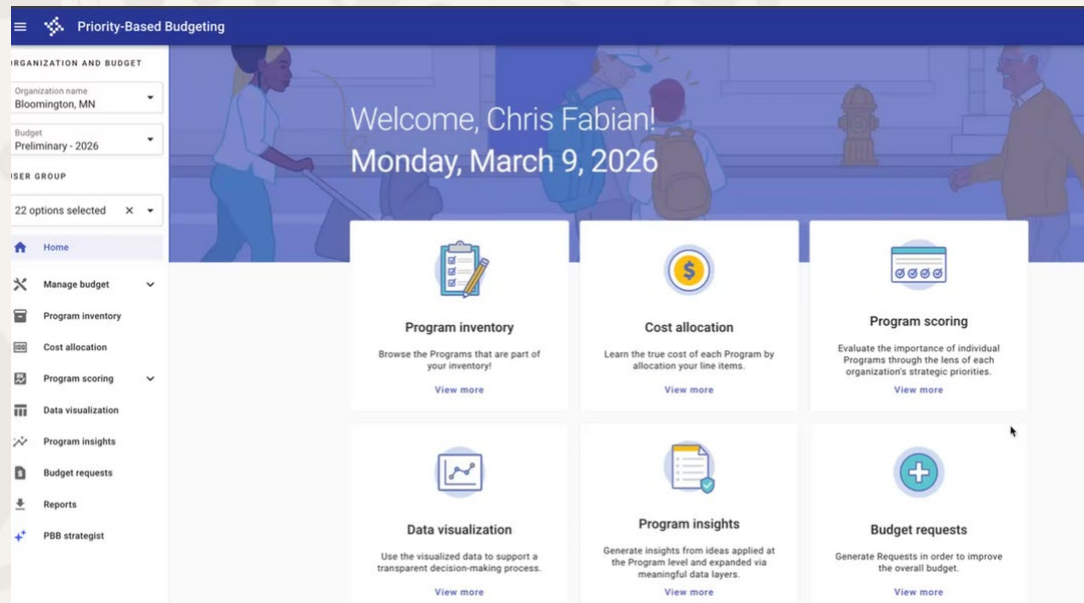
Budget Objectives

- Complete transition to adoption of a two-year budget
- Understand and implement City Council priorities
- Use the tools and concepts of Priority Based Budgeting and Performance Measurement

Two-Year Budget Process

- Transitioning to a two-year budget cycle
- Supports longer-term planning
- Aligns with strategic planning and performance measure efforts

Priority Based Budgeting



- Continuing to refine and strengthen our PBB approach
- Updated system interface aligning with Tyler products
- We will be loading in the final approved 2026 Budget numbers for analysis
- Focus on improving data quality, clarity, and usability
- Ongoing enhancements to tools and reporting
- Continued focus on making PBB more useful for decision-making

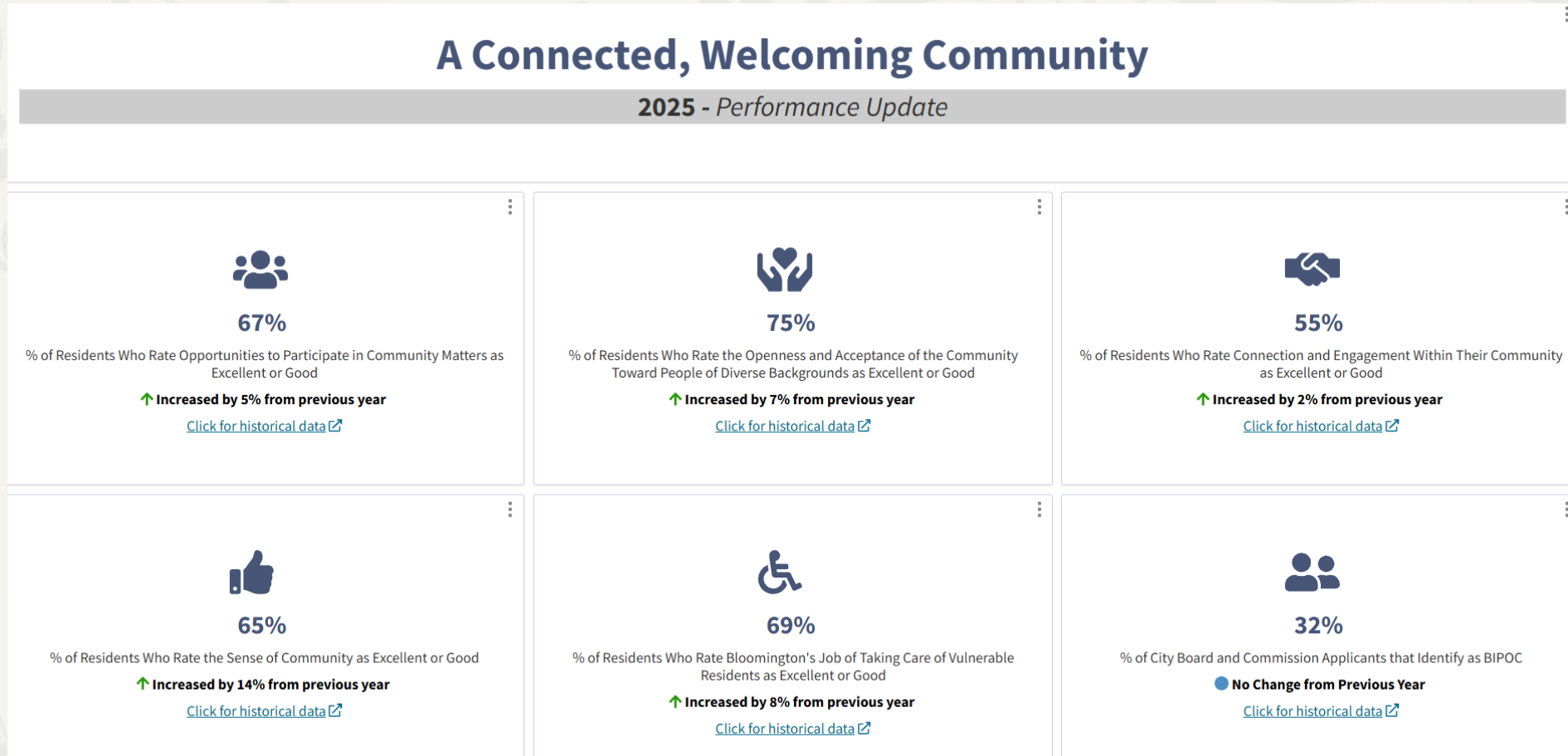
Performance Measurement

Building a City-wide framework:

- Measure what matters
- Data-informed decisions and storytelling
- Strategies and actions to improve or adjust



Performance Dashboards



Strategic Planning

Sets the vision, goals and actions



Performance Measurement

Tracks progress and impact



Priority-based Budgeting

Aligns resources with outcomes and priorities



Strategic Priorities Fund Discussion

Definition & Background

- The Strategic Priorities Fund is a Governmental Capital Project Fund, structured to support one-time, non-recurring investments in capital or strategic initiatives.
- Funding comes from:
 1. Direct property tax levy (when designated)
 2. Transfers from the General Fund from positive budget variances
- Because it is set up as a Capital Fund, projects have historically been brought to City Council individually as budget adjustments on a case-by-case basis, rather than as part of the City's annual operating budget.
- At the end of 2025, the fund had a balance of \$9.5 million. A transfer of \$3 million to the General Fund was included in the 2026 Budget.

Past Strategic Priorities Fund Expenditures

A Connected, Welcoming Community

Parks and arts investments, Placemaking efforts, and projects that strengthen belonging and access

A Healthy Community

Environmental sustainability and climate resilience initiatives, Public Health and food access investments, and public safety facility improvements and equipment

A Community with Equitable Economic Growth

Tax levy stabilization to support affordability, transportation planning, and projects that support long-term economic vitality

Reframing the Strategic Priorities Fund

- Proposed Name: Capital & Debt Management Fund
- Provide funding for long-term capital investment and debt service
- Provide an alternative funding source for debt service to reduce reliance on tax levy increases
- Build reserves for future capital projects and debt obligations
- Fund through year-end budget savings (positive variance)
- Reduce reliance on property tax levy
- Transition strategic priorities project funding to the operating budget that is approved during the annual budget process
- Contingency General Fund Budget Line item can be used to address emergency needs (currently 2.5%, \$2.9 million per policy)

Key Takeaways and Next Steps



Celebrating Progress

City Council Retreat
April 20, 2026

BLOOMINGTON.
tomorrow.together. ●



BLOOMINGTON.

tomorrow. together.



Our mission is to cultivate an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be.

Strategic Priorities



A connected, welcoming community

1. More connected neighbors
2. More welcomed by city
3. More valued community



A healthy community

1. Improved environment
2. Improved human health
3. Improved safety/security



A community with equitable economic growth

1. More equitably distributed
2. Expanded business diversity
3. More equitable job growth



Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together. Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027

25
initiatives

69%
complete

A Connected, Welcoming Community



The City of Bloomington will prioritize physical and relational connections between residents, the community, and City staff. Our community-led outcomes of Connected Neighbors, Welcomed by the City, and Valued by Community will build authentic relationships that embrace diversity, acknowledge historical injustices, and empower community members.

People can connect with their neighbors	People are welcomed by the city into the community	Residents are valued by the community
★ Park System Master Plan ✗ Neighborhood Identity Model ★ Community Asset Model	✓ Welcome to Bloomington Program ✓ Expand Creative Placemaking Program ★ Inclusive Code Assessment Framework	★ City boards and commissions ✓ Volunteer Management Program ★ Bloomington Stewards Program

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Sense of
Community

65%

% residents who rate the sense of
community as excellent or good

Openness and
Acceptance

75%

% residents who rate the openness
and acceptance of the community
toward people of diverse
backgrounds as excellent or good

Taking Care of
Vulnerable Residents

69%

% residents who rate Bloomington's
job of taking care of vulnerable
residents as excellent or good

Quality of Parks
& Rec Opportunities

89%

% residents who rate the overall
quality of Parks & Recreation
opportunities as excellent or good

Parks System Master Plan



Opportunities to Participate

67%

% residents who rate opportunities to participate in community matters as excellent or good

Availability of Paths and Walking Trails

88%

% residents who rate the availability of paths and walking trails as excellent or good

Quality of Parks

88%

% residents who rate the quality of parks as excellent or good

Volunteer Management



City Volunteers

759

From 2024 to 2025, total City volunteers increased by 200 due to improved data collection and investment in a volunteer coordinator.

City Volunteer Representation

19%

% City volunteers that identify as a person of color

Board and Commission Representation

32%

% City board and commission applicants that identify as a person of color



A Healthy Community

The City of Bloomington will prioritize health in the environment, health in people, and health in the community as a whole. Our community-led strategic outcomes of Healthy Environment, Healthy Humans, and Safety/Security will encourage collaboration, will promote innovation, and will reduce barriers to living a safe, healthy lifestyle.

Environmental Health

- ★ Energy Action Plan
- ★ Solid Waste Reduction Strategies
- ★ Natural Resource Management Plan
- ★ Storm Water Pollution Reduction Plan

Human Health

- ✗ Food Access Plan
- ★ Mental Health Pop up Program
- ★ Mobile Health Hub

Safety and Security

- ★ Traffic Injury Reduction Plan
- ✓ Mental Health Crisis and Overdoses



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Urban Forestry Master Plan



Tree Canopy

35%

Bloomington's tree canopy is 35%,
varying across the city.

Tree Canopy Change

+5%

City-wide tree cover grew by 390
acres over 10 years.

Storm-Water Pollution Reduction Program



Duckweed Harvest

Utilizing floating aquatic plants for nutrient management and pond maintenance

Jaques Finlay, Ben Janke, Poornima Natarajan, Dan Larkin, Jack Distel



Background

Because duckweed rapidly absorbs nutrients from the water column, Studies show duckweed biomass is 0.2% phosphorus, harvesting offers a rare opportunity for true nutrient export—a management feat typically only achieved through dredging. The City of Bloomington trialed strategies for duckweed harvest to determine if it was a feasible activity. These trials demonstrate a cost-effective, scalable method to physically remove phosphorus and restore favorable pond states.

Harvest Trials

The Bloomington trials evaluated two active removal strategies to determine operational feasibility. Both methods utilized floating booms to concentrate the biomass into a thick mat near the shore.

- **Siphon-Pump Method** - attempted to pull a water-and-plant slurry through a trash pump and into a mesh separator on shore. The separator worked great; however, the high density of the corralled duckweed frequently clogged the pump.
- **Extraction Method** – Once corralled, the material was lifted directly from the water surface. In this case, we used a vacuum truck – not recommended but it worked as proof of concept.

These experiments demonstrated that while mechanical siphoning requires further engineering, manual or mechanical extraction is relatively easy, scalable maintenance solution.



Results

The siphon approach was abandoned due to issues with the pump. All full pond trials were completed using the extraction method. Three ponds were fully harvested in 2022.



The harvests were able to clear a 1-acre pond in about five hours, from set up to take down, to complete each pond.

A key success was the "touch it once" rule, ensuring efficiency by moving duckweed directly from the water into a disposal receptacle.

The use of 100-foot floating booms was a standout lesson; they were highly effective at concentrating duckweed. A small boat was used to maneuver the booms which prevented people from tromping through the pond.

We learned that collection points must be at least one foot deep to prevent the mass from hitting bottom and to allow the booms to function without rolling over the material. Our vac truck hose could not extend that far and forced us to "rake" the duckweed into the suction end.

Passive vs Active removal

Passive removal functions as a "set up and leave it" system, utilizing infrastructure, like continuous surface skimmers or pumps to capture small amounts of biomass throughout the growing season.

Active removal is an event-based harvest utilizing a crew who use equipment to go in, get the duckweed, and get out. The City only experimented with active removals.

Note, the siphon-pump method was designed based on a passive system. Its issue of clogging would not likely occur in a passive scenario; the proportion of water to duckweed would be much higher.

Passive can achieve continuous, low-maintenance nutrient export. But, the device must be able to last in the field without constantly requiring maintenance. If successful, passive removal could provide a strategy for continuous phosphorus removal, making constant duckweed growth an advantageous tool for maintaining pond functionality.

Cost-Benefit and the Future

The Bloomington Trials:
Staff cost: 4 staff x \$60/hr x 5 hours = \$1,200
Vac-truck cost: \$750/hr x 5 hours = \$3,750
Total cost per 1,000lbs of duckweed: \$5,000 (rounded)
Cost per pound of phosphorus removed: \$2,500

Conveyor Belt Scenario:
Staff cost: 3 staff x \$60/hr x 3 hours = \$540
Conveyor cost: \$100/hr x 3 hours = \$300
Total cost per 1,000 lbs duckweed: \$900 (rounded)
Cost per pound of phosphorus removed: \$420

While initial trials using a vac-truck were expensive, they proved the concept's mechanical viability. Transitioning to optimized equipment, like conveyor belts, can significantly reduce costs.



The piles of duckweed post harvest. Due to the water that the vac-truck sucked up in addition to the duckweed, it was difficult to calculate total weight removed. We estimate that it was at least 1,000 pounds of wet mass per pond. It was likely more.



Quality of Drinking Water

92%

% residents who rate the quality of drinking water as excellent or good

Quality of Water Resources

86%

% residents who rate the quality of water resources as excellent or good



Water Resources Center

Brain Health Services



“I want to shout it from the rooftops about how great this program is! My [child] has mental health issues, and we lost our health insurance. The program staff came weekly and was helpful. Because of Chief Hodges and this program, I was able to regain momentum and stability.”



Brain Health Service
Therapy Sessions

810

The Embedded Social Work
program in the Police Department
completed 810 therapy sessions,
serving 129 individuals.

Repeat Mental
Health Crisis Calls

↓ 27%

% reduction of repeat mental
health crisis calls

A Community with Equitable Economic Growth



The City of Bloomington will prioritize economic policies, programs, and projects that focus on creating new economic opportunities. Importantly, these efforts will coincide with reducing historical economic gaps within the community. The BTT has set Strategic Outcomes of an Equitable Landscape, of Diverse Ownership, and of Equitable Jobs for our resident workers.

Economic growth is more equitably distributed

- ✓ Business Location Service
- ✓ Commercial Nodes Toolkit
- ✓ Site and Facade Improvement Program

Expand Diversity in Business Ownership

- ✗ Small Business Center
- ✓ Business Retention Program

Equitable Job Growth

- ★ Comprehensive Workforce Bloomington Framework
- ★ Equitable Wage Strategy

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Place to Work

81%

% residents who rate Bloomington as a place to work as excellent or good

Employment Opportunities

66%

% residents who rate employment opportunities as excellent or good

Affordable Housing

46%

% residents who rate the availability of affordable quality housing as excellent or good

Site and Facade Improvement Program



Bloomington Business Forum



This event was extremely well organized. My personal goal for this event was to meet with small business owners and hear about their experiences in government contracting. I was able to make some wonderful and meaningful connections.



Business
Friendly

85%

% of attendees agree that
Bloomington feels business friendly

Growth
Ready

77%

% of attendees agree that
Bloomington feels growth ready

Bloom in Bloomington



The experience of Bloom in Bloomington was invaluable in my professional development and highlighted my potential while expanding my horizons. Through BIB, I was able to explore career paths that were previously unfamiliar to me, gaining a clearer understanding of my professional goals and aspirations. The experience helped me identify areas for growth while also recognizing and building on my strengths. As a result, I was able to translate this development into a full-time position with the City I grew up in and continue to value deeply. It is gratifying to know that I am cultivating an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be!



Bloom in
Bloomington Interns

50

29 individuals completed the program in 2025, resulting in over 50 internships completed since the program launched in 2023.

What's next?

