



explore
play
connect

2026–2030

PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN


CITY OF
BLOOMINGTON
PARKS AND RECREATION

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Introduction



Photo: Touch a Truck at the Fair

A Message from the Director

Introduction

Dear City of Bloomington Residents,

Bloomington Parks and Recreation's parks, trails, facilities, and programs are among our community's most cherished assets. They are places where neighbors gather, children explore, and residents of all ages find opportunities for recreation, wellness, and connection with nature.

As our city continues to evolve to face new challenges, it is important that these spaces and programs evolve with us. This master plan represents a comprehensive effort to understand community needs, evaluate existing facilities, and identify opportunities to strengthen Bloomington's parks and recreation system. Developed through extensive research, community engagement, and collaboration, this plan reflects the voices of residents, stakeholders, and partners who care deeply about the role parks play in everyday life.



Tim Street

Director of Parks & Recreation

Throughout the planning process, community members shared their ideas, priorities, and aspirations for Bloomington's parks and recreation services. Their feedback helped identify key themes such as investing in what we have, ensuring financial sustainability, protecting natural resources, and ensuring parks remain welcoming and well-maintained community gathering spaces.

The Master Plan builds on Bloomington's long-standing commitment to creating a healthy, connected, and environmentally resilient community. It outlines strategies to evaluate and improve existing facilities, plan for future investments, and ensure that parks and recreation programs continue to meet the needs of current and future residents. It provides information and a framework for making thoughtful decisions about how we invest in our existing parks and facilities and care for our public spaces in the years ahead.

This Master Plan is not simply a document — it is a shared vision for Bloomington's future. Its success will depend on the continued involvement of residents, community partners, and City leaders who are committed to sustaining and enhancing our parks system.

We invite you to explore the plan, learn about its goals and recommendations, and join us in shaping the next chapter of Bloomington's parks and recreation system.

Board of Park Commissioners

Israel Herrera

Commissioner, Term 1/1/23 – 12/31/26

Kathleen Mills

Commissioner, Term 1/1/24 – 12/31/27

Ellen Rodkey

Commissioner, Term 1/1/25 – 12/31/29

Jim Whitlatch

Commissioner, Term 1/1/25 – 12/31/28

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City of Bloomington Residents

A special thanks to the dedicated residents of the City of Bloomington who contributed their time, energy, and perspectives in efforts to inform this plan, particularly focus group participants and others who participated in public gatherings.

All community feedback received throughout the process has been summarized and included as Supplement A – Engagement Report to the Master Plan.

The Consulting Team



10 YEARS OF
RESEARCH

Answers to Questions for Insights

CivicBrand

WOOLPERT
ARCHITECTURE | ENGINEERING | GEOSPATIAL

Process Summary

Introduction

Bloomington's parks and recreation system is woven into the daily life of the community. Parks are where neighbors gather, children learn to swim, families attend festivals, residents walk and bike, and so much more. These places and programs are not incidental to Bloomington—they are central to the community's quality of life.

The 2026–2030 Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) was developed to ensure that this system remains strong, accessible, and responsibly managed in the years ahead. Over the past year, the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD / Department) undertook a comprehensive planning process that combined infrastructure analysis, financial modeling, and robust community engagement. The result is a practical five-year roadmap grounded in data, community input, and operational reality.



Photo: Community Farmers' Market

What Was Heard

Throughout the planning process, residents, staff, community partners, and elected officials offered candid and constructive input. The message was consistent: Bloomington values its parks.

Community members expressed appreciation for the quality of neighborhood parks, trails, pools, and programming. Overall perceptions remain favorable, and residents consistently emphasized several priorities:

- Maintain and care for the parks and facilities that already exist
- Be transparent and responsible with public resources
- Ensure equitable access across neighborhoods and populations
- Plan thoughtfully before expanding the system

The tone of community feedback was not one of dissatisfaction, but of stewardship. Residents want their parks cared for in ways that are thoughtful, fair, and sustainable.

What Was Learned

Professional facility assessments and operational analysis provided a clearer picture of system conditions and future needs. The 2025 assessment of Bryan Park Pool and Mills Pool identified approximately \$2.4 million in component replacement needs over the next ten years. Most near-term investments relate to mechanical equipment, roofing systems, and exterior components. While facilities remain in fair condition, proactive

reinvestment will be required to maintain long-term functionality. Similarly, review of the Frank Southern Ice Arena identified aging mechanical systems and structural limitations that will require careful long-term planning.

These findings do not suggest that Bloomington's parks system is failing. Rather, they reflect the realities of a mature and heavily used public system that requires ongoing care, disciplined investment, and thoughtful planning.

Financial Context

This Master Plan was developed during the implementation of Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1), which has narrowed revenue flexibility for municipalities. Current projections indicate a Citywide general fund gap under existing conditions, reinforcing the importance of careful prioritization and responsible financial planning.

To address these realities, the planning process incorporated a Financial Sustainability Strategy that examined the cost of delivering services, who benefits from those services, and how investments can be sequenced responsibly over time.

The goal is not simply to manage budgets. It is to align community expectations, service delivery, and financial capacity in ways that remain viable for years to come.

A Strategic Framework

Based on community engagement, infrastructure findings, and financial analysis, the Master Plan establishes four guiding priorities for the next five years.

Together, these priorities create a balanced framework for decision-making:

- **Community Impact** | *Why the work matters*
Ensure parks, programs, and community spaces continue to improve health, connection, and quality of life across Bloomington.
- **Invest in What We Have** | *What we care for*
Protect and maintain existing parks, facilities, trails, and natural assets through proactive reinvestment and disciplined asset management.
- **Financial Sustainability** | *How the system is responsibly funded*
Align services, infrastructure investments, and funding capacity through clear financial strategies and diversified revenue opportunities.
- **A Strong, Connected BPRD Team** | *Who makes it possible*
Support the staff, culture, and organizational systems necessary to deliver high-quality parks and recreation services.

These priorities are mutually reinforcing. Caring for infrastructure protects community value. Financial sustainability enables responsible investment. A strong team ensures the work is delivered effectively.

The 2026–2030 Master Plan provides a clear and practical roadmap for the next five years. It:

- Establishes a phased capital investment framework
- Prioritizes maintenance and risk mitigation
- Aligns services with cost recovery and financial sustainability goals
- Identifies modernization pathways for aging facilities
- Strengthens policy guidance for long-term decision-making
- Defines measurable implementation steps for accountability

The Plan does not promise expansion without capacity. Instead, it focuses on protecting what Bloomington already has while positioning the system to evolve responsibly over time.

Looking Forward

BPRD enters the next five years with strong community support, dedicated staff, and a clear understanding of its infrastructure and fiscal landscape.

By caring for existing assets, investing deliberately, aligning services with resources, and supporting the people who deliver the work, Bloomington can sustain a parks and recreation system that continues to serve residents with integrity, purpose, and long-term resilience.



Photo: Hopewell Commons Park Grand Opening

“Thank you [BPRD] for doing such an outstanding job! Our parks and events stand out compared to other cities of similar size! I'm very proud of the parks here and people who visit are always impressed!”

- needs assessment survey response

BPRD & the Bloomington Community



Photo: Winter Palooza

Department Overview

BPRD & the Bloomington Community

For generations, BPRD has played a central role in shaping public life. The Department manages and activates a diverse system of parks, trails, facilities, natural areas, and recreation services that support health, connection, environmental stewardship, and community vitality.

Bloomington's park and recreation system reflects both the City's character and its commitment to strengthening the community's social fabric. Neighborhood parks provide accessible places for everyday recreation and social gathering. Community parks and sports complexes play host to organized events. Trails and greenways connect while encouraging walking, biking, and outdoor activity.



Photo: Summer Launch Party

Natural areas protect ecological resources and provide for exploration and environmental education. Recreation services and facilities offer spaces and opportunities for fitness, learning, and fun throughout the year. Together, these form a comprehensive system that serves residents across every stage of life.

Behind the scenes is a dedicated team of professionals committed to delivering high-quality public service. Staff across recreation, sports, and golf services, parks operations and maintenance, and administration work together to keep parks safe, welcoming, and well cared for while services remain as responsive as possible to community needs and interests. Partnerships with community organizations, volunteers, and local entities, such as Indiana University, further extend the Department's reach and strengthen its ability to serve Bloomington's diverse population.

BPRD has also earned recognition at the highest levels of the profession for its leadership, innovation, and commitment to excellence. The Department has twice received the *National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management*, one of the most prestigious honors in the field, awarded by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association. Bloomington earned this distinction in 2007 and again in 2018, recognizing the Department's achievements in long-range planning, resource management, programming, and community engagement.



Department Overview

BPRD & the Bloomington Community

In addition, the Department has earned national accreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). This distinguished accreditation is awarded to park and recreation organizations that demonstrate excellence in operations, planning, safety, and service delivery across a comprehensive set of professional standards. BPRD remains among a select group of systems nationwide to have earned this distinction.

In addition to national recognitions, the Department continues to receive honors from the Indiana Park and Recreation Association, including being named Outstanding Agency in 2024 and receiving awards for resource management and planning initiatives. These recognitions reflect a culture of professionalism and a long-standing commitment to delivering exceptional parks and recreation services.

Yet awards alone do not define the Department's success. What distinguishes BPRD is its ability to evolve alongside the community it serves. Trends change, infrastructure ages, and community expectations grow. Remaining relevant requires continuous learning, thoughtful investment, and a willingness to adapt.

BPRD approaches this responsibility with both pride and discipline, protecting the community's existing assets while thoughtfully enhancing facilities and recreational experiences over time. This balance between stewardship and innovation ensures the system remains resilient, responsive, and aligned with the community's values.

Today, BPRD stands as a trusted and respected community institution—one that cares for the places residents value, creates opportunities for connection, and continues to contribute meaningfully to the health and well-being of Bloomington residents.



Photos: BPRD staff

Demographics are the statistical characteristics of human populations, such as age, income, race, ethnicity, education, and others that are used to identify current and future customers or constituents and how likely they are to utilize a service or product.

By studying constituencies through a demographic analysis and lens, BPRD can begin to better understand the local population and examine and identify the composition and characteristics of those who make up the community.

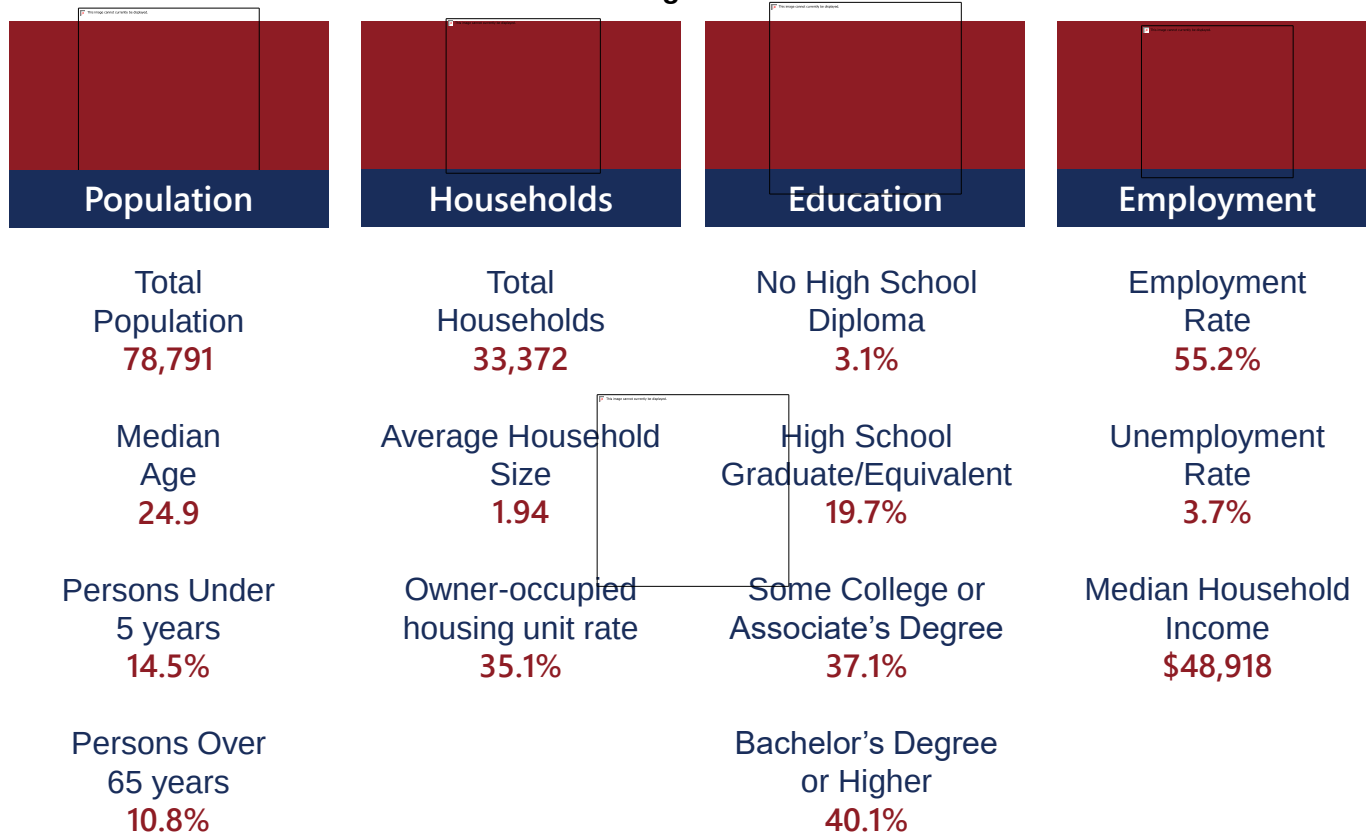
As the Department considers constituent demographics, it will help position the organization to serve community needs best and most appropriately, and if and when possible, respond to desires.

The infographics included in Figures 1, 2, and 3 contain data provided by the United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) (2019-2023).

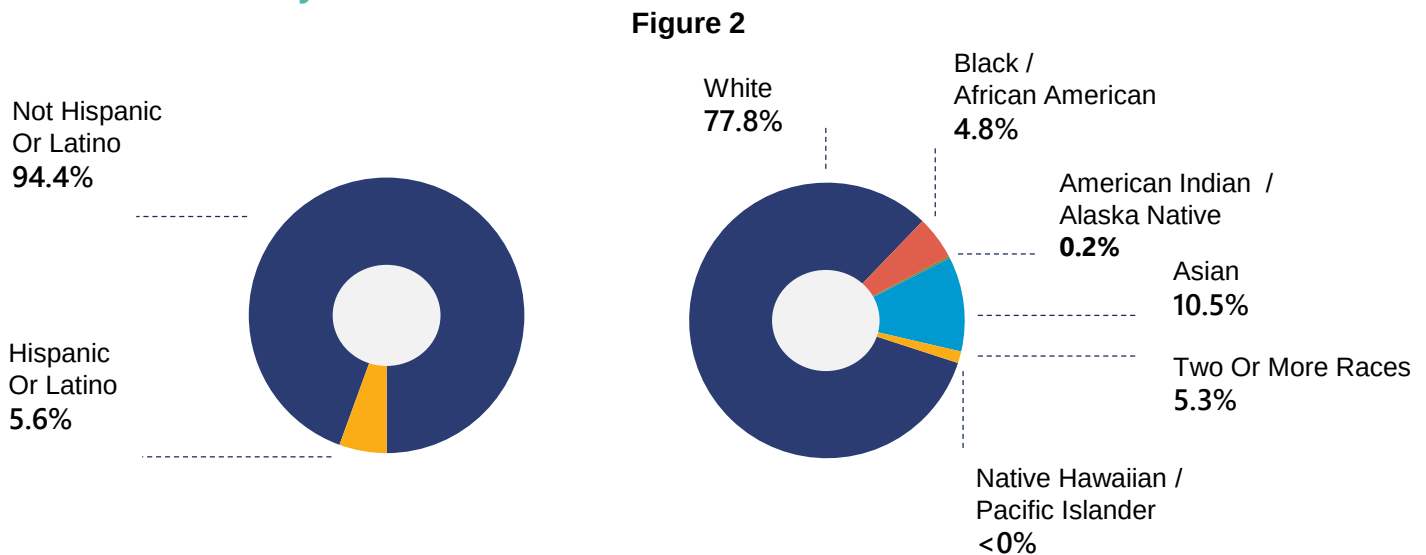
NOTE: The ACS is conducted annually to provide up-to-date information on the social and economic needs of communities.

Key Facts

Figure 1

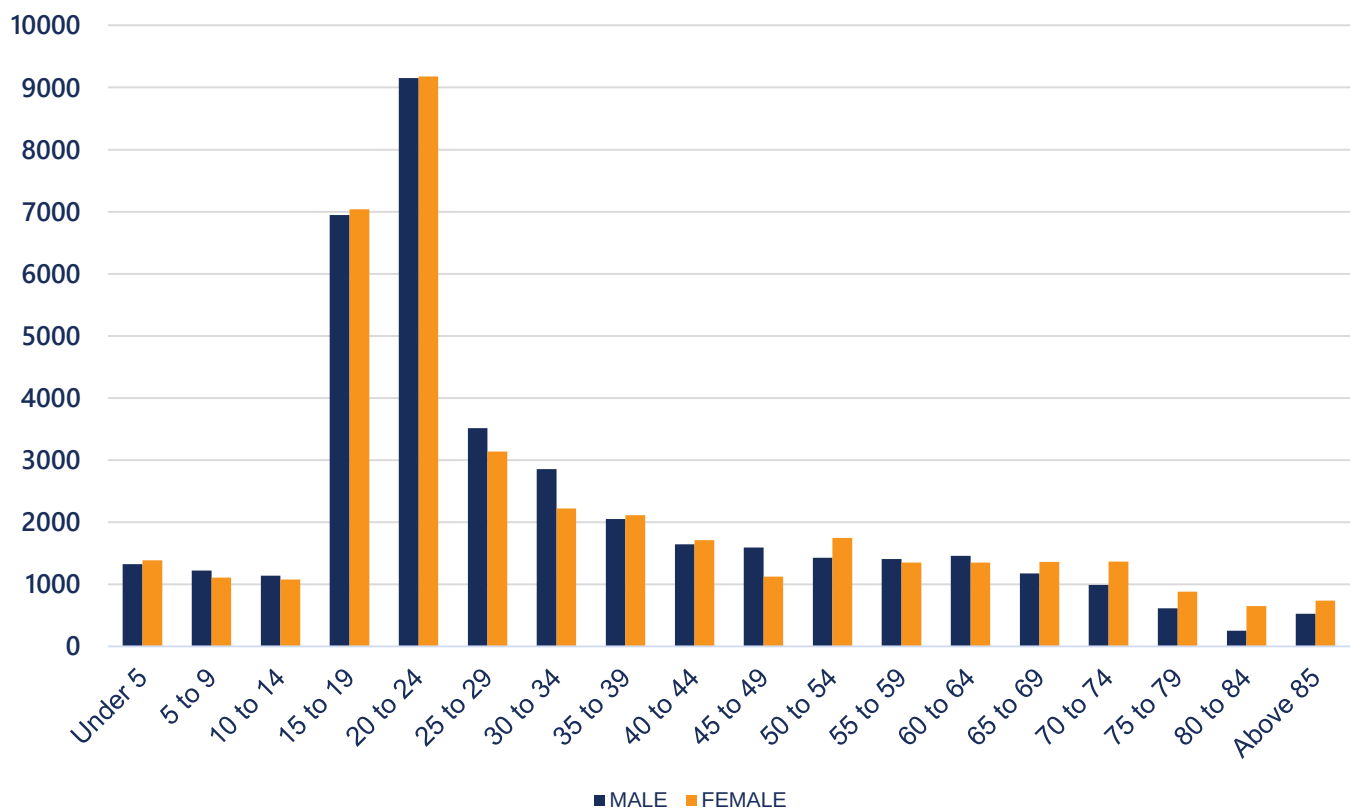


Race & Ethnicity



Age Distribution

Figure 3



Student Population

As of the 2020 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau has adopted measures to improve the accuracy of census data collection in college/university towns. The U.S. Census states that, “College students living in on-campus housing are counted through their university as part of our Group Quarters Operation, which counts all students living in university-owned housing... When responding to the 2020 Census, college students should be counted where they live and sleep most of the time as of April 1, 2020. For most students, that means in their college town, not back home with their parents.”

This means that students attending colleges or universities in Bloomington – most notably the 48,000 attending Indiana University, Bloomington – have been counted at their college address, whether on or off campus.

Although the U.S. Census Bureau has taken steps to improve data accuracy in college and university towns, there will inevitably be some messiness and a need to interpret the data in a somewhat subjective fashion. For instance, when considering students who live off campus, the demographic profile of the community represented in Bloomington’s population, including their household income and age, skews the data presented in this report.



Photo Credit: Indiana University

The Master Plan process incorporated a broad, layered engagement effort to capture perspectives from residents, stakeholders, staff, and policymakers. The goal was to ensure the Plan reflects both community priorities and operational realities.

Engagement efforts included:

- A statistically valid Needs Assessment Survey
- Community workshop and virtual engagement room
- Focus groups representing schools, nonprofit organizations, healthcare providers, environmental groups, and Indiana University
- Staff, Board of Park Commissioners, and City Council representatives
- Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats Analysis sessions
- Online community questionnaires, outreach touch points, and events

Together, these engagement methods provided both quantitative and qualitative insight into how residents, officials, and professional staff view Bloomington's parks and recreation system and what they hope to see in the future.

BPRD continues to enjoy strong public esteem, with 67% favorable ratings reported through the Needs Assessment Survey. Participants across all engagements consistently expressed appreciation for BPRD's role in supporting community well-being and quality of life.

Residents most frequently highlighted the importance of:

- High-quality parks and facilities
- Trails, swimming opportunities, and outdoor recreation
- Youth programming and community events
- Nature access, wellness, and active lifestyles

At the same time, residents also expressed thoughtful expectations for how the system should evolve. Community members emphasized the need to:

- Maintain and care for existing parks and facilities
- Invest resources transparently and responsibly
- Ensure equitable access to parks and programs across neighborhoods
- Stabilize taxes and fees where possible

Overall, the message from the community was balanced and pragmatic. Residents value Bloomington's parks and recreation system and want to see it protected, maintained, and thoughtfully improved over time. Engagement participants recognized that resources are finite and consistently emphasized the importance of responsible investment and long-term stewardship of the community's park and recreation assets.



Photo: Master Plan Community Pop Up

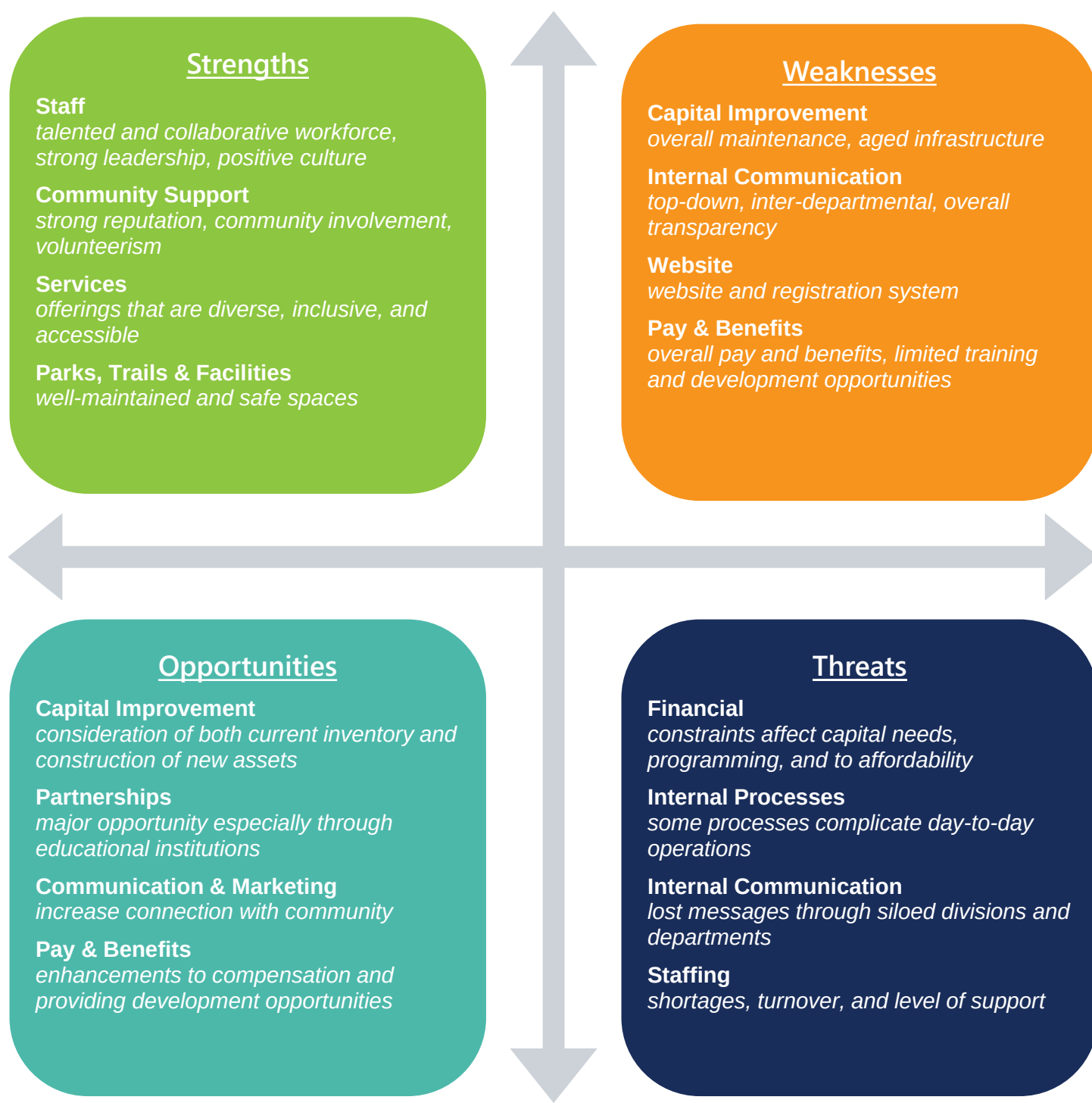
Who We Heard From

Staff	Commission & Council	Community
Planning Session April 2025 Interviews April 2025 Workshop April 2025 <i>Financial Sustainability Strat.</i> Focus Groups June 2025 Workshop June 2025 <i>Financial Sustainability Strat.</i> Interviews October 2025 Workshop October 2025 <i>Service Analysis</i>	Planning Session April 2025 <i>Parks Commission & City Council Reps</i> Board Meeting October 2025 <i>Parks Commission</i>	Focus Groups April and June 2025 <i>80 participants / 6 groups</i> Pop Up Engagements June 2025 <i>12 participants</i> Questionnaire September 2025 <i>1,121 responses</i> Community Workshop October 2025 <i>22 participants</i> Virtual Engagement Room October 2025 <i>18 participants</i> Provider Luncheon October 2025 <i>39 participants / 34 groups</i> Community Survey December 2025 <i>405 responses</i>

Overview



Staff & Commission Important Issues



Community Focus Groups Important Issues

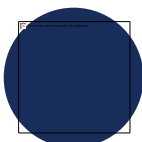
Top Community-Wide Issues in Next 3-5 Years				
1	2	3	4	5
Affordable Housing	Unhoused Population	Financial Considerations	Environmental Considerations	Education
How Can the Department Help Address These Issues?				
1	2	3	4	5
Long-range Planning	Accessibility	Safety	Partnerships	Programs & Services
Barriers to Participation				
1	2	3	4	5
Accessibility	Communication & Marketing	Affordability	Safety	-
How Should the Department Invest Its Resources?				
1	2	3	4	5
Maintain Current Inventory	Essential/Core Programs & Services	Safety	Environmental Considerations	Accessibility

Partnership Opportunities



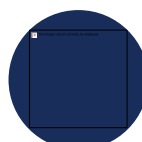
Indiana University

increased student engagement and potential expansion of partnered experiential learning opportunities



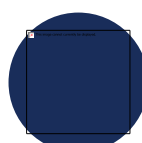
Health & Human Services

local hospitals, rehab facilities, and organizations addressing poverty to increase reach, access and shared facilities/amenities



Inter-departmental

greater relations and collaboration between City departments

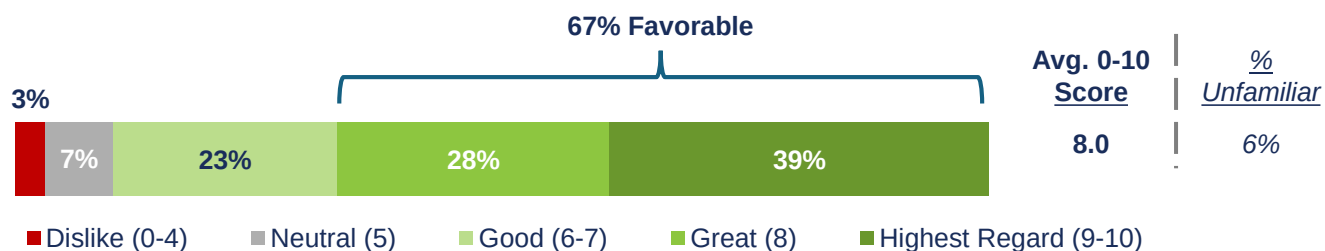


Environmental & Conservation Groups

organizations identified included Indiana State Parks, Sycamore Land Trust, and Sassafras Audubon Society

Community Needs Assessment Survey

Overall Esteem Ratings of Bloomington Parks & Recreation



Do you believe that your household and its interests are properly represented and included in Bloomington Parks & Recreation services?



Parks and Facilities Visited or Used in the Past Year

	Parks	Facilities
1	B-Line Trail 73%	Bryan Park - Pool 24%
2	Switchyard Park 69%	Switchyard Park - Spray Pad 18%
3	Bryan Park 55%	Switchyard Park – Dog Park 17%
4	Griffy Lake Nature Preserve 48%	Twin Lakes Recreation 17%
5	Bloomington Rail Trail 40%	Cascades Golf Course 13%

Community Needs Assessment Survey

Interests in Amenities and Programs

		Indicate if you use or have an interest in the following amenities	Select how well the interest is currently being met.
1	Trails for walking, hiking, biking	75%	89%
2	Open space/natural areas	61%	76%
3	Amenities in parks and along trails	60%	62%
4	Swimming pool/aquatic center	38%	60%
5	Pickleball courts	27%	71%

		Select which types of programs you use or have an interest in.	Select how well the interest is currently being met.
1	Farmers' Market	76%	86%
2	Outdoor concerts	69%	56%
3	Natural resources education	34%	54%
4	Gardening/orchard	34%	48%
5	Adult visual/perform. arts	31%	34%

Support/Opposition Levels of Potential Renovations

	Bryan Park Pool	Mills Pool	Frank Southern Center	Winslow Sports Park	Twin Lakes Rec Center / Sports Park
Support	78%	69%	76%	75%	73%
Oppose	22%	31%	24%	25%	27%

Trends can be a source of inspiration for park and recreation organizations and the professionals who serve their communities. Whether it be an innovation, idea, or something related to pop culture, trends tend to influence human behavior.

Fads vs. Trends

While often used interchangeably, it's important for our profession to distinguish between fads and trends and how to respond to each.



Fads

interests of intense popularity that are short-lived and exist on a surface level



Trends

sustained, long-term shifts in consumer behavior that satisfy a need

The difference between the two is their power of endurance. While both fads and trends are happening in the now and worthy of our attention, park and recreation organizations need to be diligent in how they respond and invest in each.

What's Trending

According to NRPA's annual *Top Trends in Parks and Recreation* article, there are a number of trends that demand public parks and recreation's attention and have the potential to respond to in 2026 and beyond. We've highlighted and expanded upon a few of the most relevant of those for BPRD to consider.

Climate Change

One of the more pernicious effects of climate change is the trapping of extreme heat in urban and some suburban areas. Often, these highly developed areas contain little heat-absorbing natural cover and have high percentages of impervious heat-collecting surfaces, which amplify extreme heat in the daytime and then radiate it in the night hours. The concentration of waste energy, air pollution and loss of tree canopy cover all magnify the negative health impacts as well, which affect vulnerable and low-income populations the most. Parks and green spaces are proving to be among the most effective tools to combat the effects of heat islands, and cities and urban counties are looking to maximize the benefits of their park systems to combat urban heat island effects.

Trends

BPRD & the Bloomington Community

- **What does this mean for BPRD?** This trend is in alignment with the City's 2021 Climate Action Plan. BPRD can continue to advance the Climate Action Plan by prioritizing green infrastructure, reducing energy consumption in the design and operation of parks and facilities, and expanding environmental education in programming.

Addressing the Loneliness Epidemic

Growing rates of loneliness and its effects on individual and societal health is such a paramount issue in today's society that the U.S. Surgeon General published an 82-page advisory in 2023 dissecting the issue from its health outcomes to the benefits of connected communities. Parks and recreation organizations have and will continue to play a vital role in combatting social isolation through the provision of services and physical spaces that provide opportunities for positive social interactions. Allison Colman, NRPA's Director of Programs, urges the parks and recreation organizations to leverage their parks and community spaces to build social and intergenerational connectedness and relationships.

- **What does this mean for BPRD?** Bloomington residents, as indicated in the Community Survey, strongly feel that their households and its interests are sufficiently represented by BPRD offerings (91%). Continuing to invest in equitable communication, marketing, and outreach efforts will best provide residents with opportunities to learn about opportunities to engage with the Department and community.

Adaptive Sports for Active Adults

Seventy-six million Americans were born between 1946 and 1964, representing the Baby Boomer generation. This cohort does not relate to the term "senior", with the park and recreation industry adopting the term "Active Adults", nor wishes to engage in the same types of activity as do their "elders". Today's Active Adults are social-cause oriented, care about vitality and activity, and are fitness and wellness driven to stay healthy and age well. In response, parks and recreation organizations are getting creative in providing fun and adequate services, with adaptive sports – such as short mat bowling and walking soccer – currently trending nationwide. While these two specific examples may prove to be a fad in the long-term, modified traditional individual and team sport activities are more than likely than not to have staying power in our industry as they meet the social, fitness, and wellness needs of Active Adults.



Photo: Community Farmers' Market

Trends

- **What does this mean for BPRD?** To compliment the Silver Sneakers program and to best serve Bloomington's Active Adult aged population, BPRD may consider offering a pilot adaptive sports program at Twin Lakes Recreation Center as part of its "50+ Free Programs."

Arts Programming

Arts programming provided by park and recreation organizations across the country is flourishing, as organizations are working towards bringing both visual and performing arts to their communities. NRPA highlights one of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's (M-NCPPC) community-based arts programs that targets their community's teens and young adults, the Young Artists Apprenticeship program. This innovative and well-supported program pairs together teen participants with professional artists/teachers in a one-on-one mentor/mentee relationship that's guided through a variety of site-specific programs such as murals, sculpture installations, and many others.



Photo: B-Line Trail

- **What does this mean for BPRD?** M-NCPPC provides a model that BPRD could consider implementing for not only public art installation, but also in skill-development settings across various traditional, performing, and/or digital art forms. Doing so would help build community and provide inter-generational recreation opportunities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

NRPA suggests that successful agencies should recognize the impact and staying power of AI, but not to expect AI to completely replace the human workforce. Parks and recreation professionals and agencies can consider implementing manageable tasks and automations that AI is capable of doing in order to build capacity and understanding of the technology. In addition to popular AI technologies (for example: ChatGPT, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot), companies like Rec Technologies are building AI-aided technologies specifically to serve parks and recreation providers to assist with entry-level tasks such as customer service, customer communications, registration, scheduling, and even refunds.

- **What does this mean for BPRD?** To start potential integration of AI into day-to-day operations, BPRD can evaluate administrative tasks across various positions to identify potential tasks that AI is capable of reasonably conducting at a net positive to staff.

“When I hear ‘Bloomington Parks and Recreation,’ I think of its award-winning parks and activities for all ages.”

- community focus group comment

Plan Priority Areas



Photo: Switchyard Park Plaza Spray Pad

Overview of Plan Priority Areas

Plan Priority Areas

The following four Plan Priority Areas form the foundation upon which the Master Plan is built. Together, these priorities ensure that impact, assets, resources, and people are aligned, creating a system that is both high-performing and sustainable over time.



Community Impact: the WHY. Ensure the Department continues to create and sustain positive community-wide outcomes through parks, programs, and facilities that respond to existing and emerging community needs and interests.

Invest in What We Have: the WHAT. Ensure existing parks, facilities, and assets are safe, functional, financially sound, and trusted by the community before expanding or assuming new obligations.

Financial Sustainability: the HOW. Ensure the Department can reliably fund its mission over time while adapting to change and making responsible decisions that protect service quality, equity, and workforce stability.

A Strong, Connected BPRD Team: the WHO. Ensure the Department has a stable, connected, and capable workforce with the clarity, trust, and support needed to consistently deliver services, adapt to change, retain staff, and sustain the Department's mission and purpose over time.



Community Impact

Strengthening Health, Connection, and Everyday Community Life in Bloomington

Parks and recreation are among the most visible and widely experienced public services in Bloomington. They shape daily life in ways both large and small—from neighborhood playgrounds and trails to the Farmers' Market, natural areas, arts, and general recreation programs that bring residents together. These spaces and experiences support physical activity, social connection, and environmental stewardship, and a shared sense of place.

Community engagement throughout the Master Plan process confirmed that Bloomington residents value these experiences deeply. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of parks and recreation as places where people gather, stay active, celebrate community traditions, and connect with nature. Residents also expressed a desire for services that remain welcoming, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of a diverse and growing population.

Creating meaningful community impact requires more than simply providing programs and maintaining parks. It requires intentional decisions about who is served, how access is provided, and how success is measured. The Department must continue evolving to ensure that services reach residents across neighborhoods, age groups, abilities, and backgrounds.

This “why” priority focuses on strengthening the ways BPRD improves community well-being. Over the next five years, the Department will work to:

- Expand equitable access to parks, programs, and facilities
- Improve the user experience through modern communications and registration systems
- Use data and evaluation to better understand community needs and program outcomes
- Strengthen connections between parks, arts, events, and civic life
- Promote environmental stewardship and the health of Bloomington's natural resources
- Build public trust by sharing clear stories about the value and impact of parks and recreation

Together, these efforts help ensure that Bloomington's parks and recreation system continues to serve as a powerful community asset supporting healthy lifestyles, fostering belonging, and enriching everyday life across the City.

Advancing Community Impacts

Parks and recreation systems are often described in terms of what they provide—acres of parkland, miles of trails, the number of programs offered, or attendance at community events. While these measures help illustrate the scale of a system, they do not fully capture the breadth of what parks and recreation provides to the community

The true value of parks and recreation is found in the impact these services have on people and communities. A playground is not simply equipment; it is where children gain confidence and independence. A trail is not simply equipment; it is where children gain confidence and



Photo: Girl Scout Cooking Class

independence. A trail is not only a path; it is where neighbors meet, where daily routines become healthy habits, and residents reconnect with nature. A community event is not simply a gathering; it is an opportunity for residents to strengthen relationships and deepen their connection to the place they call home.

For BPRD, making meaningful community impact means looking beyond the number of services offered and focusing instead on the difference those services make in people's lives.

This perspective requires intentional choices. Resources such as staff time, funding, facilities, and land are finite. Not every opportunity can be pursued, and not every program can be expanded indefinitely. The Department's responsibility is to direct its resources toward the experiences, spaces, and services that generate the greatest benefit for the community.

Community impact, therefore, becomes a guiding lens for decision-making. It encourages the Department to consider questions such as:

- Which parks, programs, and experiences contribute most meaningfully to community well-being?
- How can parks and recreation strengthen physical, social, and environmental health?
- Where can services expand access and reach residents who may not traditionally participate?
- What experiences reinforce Bloomington's identity as a vibrant, welcoming, and connected community?

When these questions shape planning and investment decisions, parks and recreation move beyond simply providing activities. It becomes a platform for strengthening community life.

Plan Priority Area A

Plan Priority Areas

These principles emphasize the importance of providing quality services, continuously improving programs and facilities, using resources efficiently, and ensuring that public investments serve the common good. They also encourage organizations to understand community interests and behaviors, while recognizing that some services may be provided more effectively through partnerships or alternative providers.

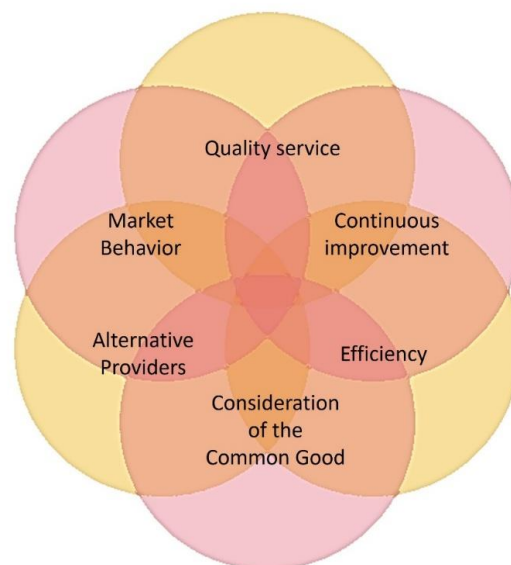
Together, these principles can help BPRD balance several important considerations:

- Delivering high-quality experiences for City residents
- Continuously improving services in response to changing needs
- Using public resources responsibly and efficiently
- Ensuring decisions reflect the broader public good
- Recognizing where partnerships or other providers can complement public services
- Understanding community interests and participation patterns

When applied together, these considerations create a framework for relevant and effective service delivery that prioritizes impact while ensuring parks and recreation systems remain responsive, sustainable, and aligned with community needs.

For Bloomington, this approach is particularly important. BPRD operates within a community known for its natural beauty, vibrant arts and culture, strong civic engagement, and active residents. Bloomington's parks are not simply open spaces; they are places where culture, recreation, nature, and community life intersect.

As Bloomington continues to evolve, the Department must thoughtfully consider how parks and recreation services can continue to support community well-being. Understanding emerging demographic, behavioral, environmental, and recreation trends will be essential to ensuring that the system remains relevant and impactful.



Parks and Recreation Service Design & Delivery Principles

By grounding decisions in both community impact and sound service delivery principles, BPRD can ensure that its investments continue to enrich everyday life, strengthen social connections, support healthy lifestyles, and protect the natural and cultural assets that define the community.

Partnerships and a Parks & Recreation Network

Parks and recreation systems rarely operate alone. Instead, they function as part of a broader network of organizations that collectively contribute to the quality of life within a community. In Bloomington, this network includes institutions such as Indiana University, Monroe County, the Bloomington School District, local nonprofit organizations, private providers, and a variety of community groups that offer recreation, wellness, cultural, and educational opportunities.

Together, these organizations form a community park and recreation ecosystem that helps residents learn, connect, stay active, and experience a sense of belonging. When organizations understand one another's roles and work collaboratively, the result is a stronger and more coordinated system of services that benefits the entire community.

At their best, partnerships are mutually beneficial relationships that enable organizations to align their strengths, expertise, and resources to pursue shared outcomes. Rather than operating in isolation, organizations can coordinate their efforts to ensure services complement one another, gaps are addressed, and community resources are used thoughtfully. In this way, partnerships help create a continuum of recreation and leisure services that expand opportunities for residents across all ages, interests, and abilities.

For BPRD, partnerships are an essential component of advancing community impact. By continuing to collaborate with various institutions and organizations across the community, BPRD can help broaden the reach of recreation services and strengthen the overall network of opportunities available to Bloomington residents. Partnerships can support community impact in several important ways:

➤ **Expanding Opportunities for Residents.**

Partner organizations can bring specialized expertise, audiences, facilities, or program models that complement park and recreation offerings. By working together, BPRD and its partners can provide a broader range of programs, experiences, and services than any single organization could deliver alone.

➤ **Creating a Coordinated Recreation System.**

When service providers understand each other's roles and offerings, the Bloomington community benefits from a more cohesive system of park and recreation opportunities. Coordination helps reduce duplication, clarifies service lanes, and ensures organizations can focus on the areas where they provide the greatest value.

➤ **Leveraging Community Strengths.**

Bloomington is fortunate to have a rich network of institutions and organizations that contribute to recreation, wellness, education, and community life. Partnerships allow BPRD to build upon these strengths by connecting people, places, and programs in ways that amplify collective impact.

Plan Priority Area A

Plan Priority Areas

➤ **Advancing Shared Community Goals.**

Many of the outcomes communities care most about—youth development, health and wellness, environmental stewardship, and social connection—cannot be achieved by any single organization. Partnerships allow organizations to work together toward these broader goals and create lasting benefits for residents.

As part of the master planning process, BPRD began strengthening connections across this recreation ecosystem through a Parks and Recreation Providers Network and Inventory initiative. This effort helped identify the many organizations contributing to the community's park and recreation landscape and highlighted opportunities for greater coordination and collaboration moving forward. Additional information regarding this effort and the Providers inventory is included in *Supplement E: Providers Network & Inventory Report*.



Photos: Parks and Recreation Providers Network Luncheon

Moving forward, BPRD can continue to serve as an important convener and connector within the network. By fostering relationships, sharing information, and exploring opportunities for collaboration, BPRD will help ensure that residents benefit from a well-coordinated system of leisure opportunities.

Plan Priority Area A

Plan Priority Areas

Figure 5 overviews each service provider and the types of services they offer.

Figure 5

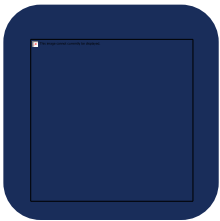
Organization Name Service ProvidersOverview																																		
Service Type																																		
	Bloomington Parks & Recreation	Area 10 Agency on Aging	BJLBA	Bloomington Bike Polo	Bloomington Blades Youth Hockey Association	Bloomington Creative Glass Center	Bloomington Football Club	Bloomington Junior Roller Derby	Bloomington NFL Flag Football	Bloomington Pickleball Club	Bloomington Roller Derby	Bloomington Soccer	B-Town Sports 365	Buskirk-Chumley Theater	CanopyBloomington	Constellation Stage & Screen	Cutters Soccer Club	Gather	Get Out Bloomington	Girls Inc of Monroe County	IU Arts & Humanities Council	IU Recreational Sports	John Robertson	Lake Lemon Conservancy District	Lake Monroe Sailing Association	Little Spring Studio	Lotus Education and Arts Foundation	Monroe County Community School Corporation	Monroe County Public Library	Monroe County Senior League Baseball Association	Sycamore Land Trust	The Chocolate Moose	Visit Bloomington	Western Skateland
Adult Sports	x	x		x		x			x	x	x	x									x	x		x					x				x	
Afterschool	x																					x					x							
Aquatics	x																				x			x	x									
Childcare	x																											x						
Environmental Education	x														x							x	x					x			x			
Facility Rentals	x													x		x					x	x	x					x				x	x	
Fitness	x	x							x	x											x													x
General Interest Activities - Adults	x					x			x	x					x	x			x		x	x		x		x			x					x
General Interest Activities - Older Adults/ Seniors	x	x				x			x							x			x		x	x				x			x					x
General Interest Activities - Youth	x						x			x							x		x		x			x		x			x					x
Outdoor Recreation	x	x	x	x						x		x	x									x	x	x	x						x		x	
Performing Arts	x													x		x					x						x	x					x	x
Special Events	x	x		x		x				x				x		x				x	x	x	x	x			x	x			x	x		x
Visual Arts		x				x										x		x			x					x	x	x					x	
Youth Camps	x						x					x	x				x	x		x			x		x			x						
Youth Sports	x			x	x		x	x	x			x					x			x			x					x		x			x	x

NOTE: Additional information on partnerships and full results from the gathering are provided in Supplement E: Provider Network & Inventory Report.

Community Impact – Implementation Framework

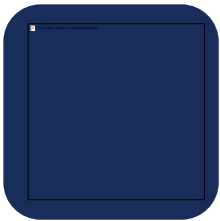
The 27 actions associated with *Priority A: Community Impact*, detailed in the Strategic Plan Worksheet (Supplement F), collectively advance BPRD's ability to deliver meaningful, measurable benefits to the community.

Rather than functioning as isolated tasks, these efforts are designed to produce a set of integrated outcomes that strengthen how residents experience parks and recreation and the role the system plays in daily life.



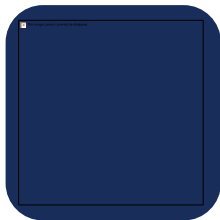
A Seamless and Accessible User Experience

Residents can more easily discover, access, and engage with programs, parks, and facilities through improved registration systems, clearer communication, and more intuitive service delivery. Digital and physical touchpoints work together to reduce barriers and enhance convenience.



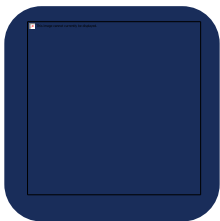
Inclusive Spaces that Serve All Residents

Parks and facilities increasingly reflect principles of universal design and accessibility, ensuring people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds feel welcome. Investments in playgrounds, park improvements, and inclusive infrastructure expand who can participate and how.



Stronger Community Connections and Belonging

Programs, events, and partnerships create more opportunities for people to gather, interact, and build relationships. Parks and recreation continue to serve as essential community hubs—places where social connection, cultural expression, and shared experiences thrive.



Protected and Resilient Natural Systems

Natural resources are preserved and enhanced through intentional management practices that support ecological health, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability. Bloomington's parks and open spaces continue to function as both community assets and environmental stewards.



Clear Demonstration of Community Value and Impact

The Department strengthens its ability to measure, communicate, and demonstrate its impact through performance metrics, storytelling, and transparent reporting. Residents and decision-makers alike should better understand the return on investment in parks and recreation.

“Pay attention to inclusivity and accessibility. You're doing a good job now but keep doing it.”

- community workshop comment



Invest in What We Have

Caring for Bloomington's Parks, Facilities, and Natural Assets

Bloomington's parks and recreation system is mature, well-used, and deeply valued. Many of the parks, facilities, and natural spaces that residents rely on today have served the community for decades. As these assets age, thoughtful reinvestment becomes essential—not to expand the system, but to protect and sustain what already exists.

Residents value Bloomington's parks and want them to be well cared for. Maintaining trails,

facilities, natural areas, and infrastructure is seen as a fundamental responsibility of the Department and a critical component of maintaining public trust.

To better understand the condition of key assets, the Master Plan included infrastructure assessments for Bryan Park and Mills Pools, as well as consideration of the 2024 assessment for Frank Southern Ice Arena. These confirmed that while the overall system functions and serve the community well, many facilities are entering a stage where strategic reinvestment and modernization will be necessary to sustain long-term performance.

These findings reflect the reality faced by many mature park and recreation organizations: maintaining community assets requires ongoing investment, disciplined capital planning, and proactive asset management.

This priority focuses on protecting Bloomington's existing investments while improving performance, reliability, and resilience. Over the next five years, BPRD will work to:

- Strengthen capital planning to align with the City's Capital Improvement Program
- Implement equipment and infrastructure replacement schedules
- Address deferred maintenance and priority facility improvements
- Improve trails, park infrastructure, and public spaces based on condition and usage
- Activate underutilized park areas to increase community benefit from existing assets
- Enhance energy efficiency and sustainability across facilities and operations
- Protect parkland and natural resources and assets through proactive management
- Establish consistent maintenance practices and management plans across the system

By investing in what Bloomington already has, the Department protects decades of public investment while ensuring that parks, facilities, and natural spaces remain safe, functional, and welcoming for the community.

Plan Priority Area B

Plan Priority Areas

Why Reinvestment Matters in a Mature Parks & Recreation System

Bloomington's parks and recreation system reflects decades of community investment. Neighborhood parks, trails, natural areas, and recreation facilities have been built and improved over generations to support the City's quality of life.

As park systems mature, the focus of investment naturally shifts. Rather than expanding the number of facilities, communities increasingly focus on maintaining and strengthening the assets they already have.

Aging infrastructure, evolving recreation trends, and

changing environmental conditions all require thoughtful reinvestment and disciplined asset management. Without proactive lifecycle planning, maintenance needs can accumulate into deferred maintenance challenges that become more costly and disruptive over time.

For BPRD, investing in what already exists means protecting decades of public investment while ensuring the system continues to perform reliably and serve the community well into the future.

The facility assessments included in this Master Plan illustrate how this priority applies to key community assets.



Photo: Frank Southern Ice Arena



Photo: Bryan Park

Plan Priority Area B

Plan Priority Areas

Bryan Park Pool & Mills Pools

Bloomington's outdoor aquatic facilities, Bryan Park Pool and Mills Pool, have served the community for decades and remain cherished summer destinations for residents of all ages. For generations of Bloomington families, these pools have provided opportunities for recreation, social connection, swim lessons, and seasonal relief during Indiana's warm summer months.

As with many community pools built during earlier periods of park development, both facilities are now entering a stage where thoughtful reinvestment is necessary to sustain safe and reliable operations. Aquatic infrastructure is inherently complex and infrastructure-intensive, requiring regular replacement of liners, mechanical systems, filtration equipment, and building components to maintain water quality, safety, and operational efficiency.

To better understand future needs, a detailed condition assessment of both facilities was completed as part of the Master Plan process. The assessment evaluated structural systems, mechanical equipment, building components, and site infrastructure.

NOTE: The complete assessment can be found in Supplement C – Pools Conditions Assessment.



Photos: Bryan Park Pool

Bloomington's outdoor aquatic facilities, Bryan Park Pool and Mills Pool, have served the community for decades and remain cherished summer destinations for residents of all ages. For generations of Bloomington families, these pools have provided opportunities for recreation, social connection, swim lessons, and seasonal relief during Indiana's warm summer months.

Plan Priority Area B

Plan Priority Areas

Overall, the facilities were determined to be in “fair” condition, with no immediate life-safety concerns. However, several key components are approaching the end of their expected service life. Over the next ten years, the assessment identified approximately \$2.4 million in capital repair and replacement needs to restore assets to their original operating condition, primarily related to:

- Pool liners and interior surfaces
- Mechanical and filtration systems
- Roofing and building envelope components
- Deck, site, and exterior infrastructure elements

These findings are typical for aging aquatic facilities and underscore the importance of proactive lifecycle management. Without timely reinvestment, aquatic facilities can experience accelerated deterioration, increased operating costs, and eventual service disruptions.

As Bloomington considers the future of its aquatic system, the City may also benefit from exploring opportunities to modernize, repurpose, or strategically reinvest in existing facilities in ways that maximize community benefit and long-term operational sustainability. In some communities, this type of evaluation has led to facility modernization, redesign of aquatic features, seasonal programming changes, or alternative uses that better align with contemporary recreation patterns.

Any future decisions regarding Bryan Park Pool or Mills Pool should carefully balance community tradition, service expectations, financial sustainability, and long-term infrastructure maintenance. With thoughtful planning and strategic investment, Bloomington can ensure that aquatic recreation continues to play an important role in the community’s park and recreation system for years to come.



Photos: Pool Conditions Assessment

Plan Priority Area B

Plan Priority Areas

Frank Southern Ice Arena

Frank Southern Ice Arena has served Bloomington's skating and hockey community for decades and remains an important recreational asset within the City's system. The facility supports a wide range of programming and attracts approximately 67,000 annual visits, reflecting strong community demand for ice sports and skating opportunities.

At the same time, the facility's infrastructure reflects the age of the building and presents several significant operational and structural challenges.

The most serious concern involves the arena's direct ammonia refrigeration system, which contains



Photo: Frank Southern Ice Arena

approximately 5,000 pounds of ammonia refrigerant. This type of system is now largely obsolete and presents elevated safety and regulatory risks compared to modern refrigeration technologies. Engineering evaluations have indicated that a full release scenario could require a large evacuation zone extending well beyond the facility site.

In addition to refrigeration concerns, several building and infrastructure limitations affect the long-term viability of the facility:

- Low roof height that affects play and spectator visibility
- Exposed mechanical and electrical systems create safety and code compliance issues
- Deteriorating flooring conditions that create tripping hazards
- Limited accessibility accommodations and a lack of dedicated women's locker rooms
- Poor insulation and building systems that reduce energy efficiency

Operationally, the facility's single ice sheet configuration also limits scheduling flexibility and revenue potential. Only one user group can occupy the ice at a time, and seasonal operations restrict the ability to maximize year-round programming and community use.

The ice arena's infrastructure challenges represent more than deferred maintenance; they reflect structural obsolescence. Continued investment in the existing structure yields diminishing returns, while safety, accessibility, and operational risks continue to increase. From an asset management perspective, the facility has reached a point where replacement or comprehensive redevelopment merits serious consideration as part of a long-term, fiscally responsible master planning strategy.

NOTE: A 2024 review of the Frank Southern Ice Arena was previously completed by the consulting firm I.B. Storey.

Invest in What We Have – Implementation Outcomes

The 18 actions associated with *Priority B: Invest in What We Have*, detailed in the Strategic Plan Worksheet (Supplement F), position BPRD to care for, optimize, and sustain its existing system of parks, facilities, and natural assets.

Together, these efforts move beyond individual projects to produce measurable outcomes that strengthen system performance, extend asset life, and ensure long-term community value.



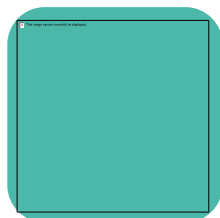
Proactive and Coordinated Asset Management

Capital planning and lifecycle management are aligned across the system, ensuring that investments in parks, facilities, vehicles, and equipment are timely, strategic, and data-informed. Replacement schedules and capital improvements are coordinated to reduce risk and avoid costly reactive decisions.



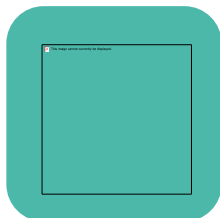
Reduced Deferred Maintenance and Improved System Reliability

Targeted reinvestment in aging infrastructure addresses deferred maintenance and improves overall system condition. Residents experience safer, more reliable, and higher-quality spaces as a result.



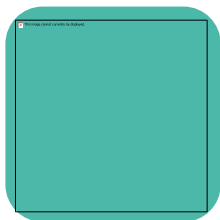
Higher Utilization and Performance of Existing Assets

Underutilized parks and facilities are activated through intentional programming, partnerships, and site enhancements. Existing spaces are maintained and used more effectively to meet evolving community needs and interests.



Consistent and Efficient Operations Across the System

Standardized maintenance practices, asset tracking systems, and preventive maintenance procedures create greater consistency in how parks and facilities are managed and maintained. This leads to improved operational efficiency, better resource allocation, and more predictable performance.



Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure

Investments in energy efficiency, tree canopy, green infrastructure, and climate-responsive practices enhance environmental performance across the system. Parks and facilities are better equipped to withstand changing conditions while contributing to long-term ecological health.

“While it is super cool to add new and exciting things, be sure you can support the assets you already have and any new ones well over the years.”

- virtual engagement room response



Financial Sustainability

Aligning Community Value with Long-Term Fiscal Responsibility

BPRD operates within a fiscal environment that is evolving. Legislative changes enacted through Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1) have narrowed revenue flexibility for municipalities, and current Citywide projections indicate an approximate \$11.2 million general fund gap under existing conditions. These factors reinforce the importance of aligning service levels, infrastructure investments, and long-term funding capacity.

Financial sustainability is not about reducing ambition. It is about ensuring that commitments made today remain achievable tomorrow.

To support this priority, the Master Plan incorporated a comprehensive Financial Sustainability Strategy designed to provide clarity and discipline in decision-making. This work included:

- Cost-of-service analysis
- Beneficiary-of-service evaluation
- Cost recovery goal setting
- Financial scenario modeling
- Policy guidance to support long-term alignment

Together, these tools provide a clearer understanding of how services are funded, who benefits from them, and how investments can be sequenced responsibly.

Over the next five years, the Department will focus on:

- Protecting core assets and essential services
- Phasing capital improvements based on priority and capacity
- Strengthening cost transparency
- Exploring diversified and appropriate revenue opportunities
- Maintaining equitable access across the community

This approach positions Bloomington to manage both community expectations and financial realities with integrity. By aligning services, assets, and funding strategies deliberately, the Department strengthens its ability to deliver high-quality parks and recreation services that are both accessible and financially durable.

Responding to a New Fiscal Environment

Delivering parks and recreation services requires balancing community expectations with the financial capacity of local government. While Bloomington residents consistently express strong support for parks, programs, and natural spaces, the resources required to maintain and improve these services are becoming increasingly constrained.

Across the country, local governments are facing rising operating costs, aging infrastructure, and evolving service demands. At the same time, changes in state policy and local revenue structures are reshaping how cities plan for long-term investments and maintain essential community assets.

For BPRD, financial sustainability is not simply about balancing annual budgets. It is about ensuring that the parks, facilities, programs, and natural resources that residents value today remain reliable and accessible in the years ahead.

The financial sustainability strategy tasks developed through this Master Plan provide a structured approach to these decisions. By improving cost transparency, strengthening financial performance monitoring, and better understanding who benefits from different services, BPRD can make more informed decisions about how resources are allocated.

The strategy also emphasizes diversifying revenue opportunities, strengthening financial policies, and exploring strategic partnerships that support long-term system stability. Together, these tools help the Department align service delivery, capital investments, and funding strategies to protect public assets while maintaining equitable access to parks and recreation services.

The fiscal realities shaping this work are influenced in part by recent state legislation that has the propensity to significantly alter the financial landscape for Indiana municipalities.



Photos: Imaginary Zoo by You!

Fiscal Context: SEA 1 (2025) and the New Reality for Local Government

The Master Plan was developed during a period of significant fiscal transition for Indiana local governments. In 2025, the Indiana General Assembly enacted *Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1)*, a comprehensive package of property tax and local government finance reforms that further constrained local revenue growth and borrowing flexibility.

SEA 1 builds upon earlier property tax limitations but introduces additional revenue compression and structural limitations that materially affect cities' ability to fund operations, maintain assets, and invest in capital improvements. While the legislation was framed as taxpayer relief, its practical effect is a tighter fiscal environment for municipal services, particularly those, like parks and recreation, that rely heavily on discretionary funding.

Key elements of SEA 1 include expanded property tax relief, changes to local income tax structures, and new constraints on debt issuance and short-term bonding. Importantly, these changes were not paired with full or permanent state revenue replacement. As a result, cities must absorb the fiscal impacts through a combination of spending reductions, deferred investments, increased reliance on fees and charges, and more deliberate prioritization of services.

For Bloomington, SEA 1 represents more than a policy shift and marks a structural change in how the City must plan, budget, and invest. Long-standing assumptions about revenue stability and capital financing are no longer reliable. Instead, departments must operate within a framework that emphasizes fiscal discipline, cost transparency, and sustainability over expansion.

This context directly shapes the intent and structure of the 2026–2030 Bloomington Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The plan is not simply a vision for future amenities and programs; it is a strategic response to a constrained financial environment that requires difficult trade-offs, clearer prioritization, and alignment between community expectations and available resources.

SEA 1 has significantly altered the City of Bloomington's revenue base and borrowing flexibility. Under the 2026 proposed City budget, the general fund faces an \$11.2 million deficit against \$65.2 million in expenditures. As a result, the Department must re-evaluate how it delivers programs, maintains assets, and advances capital improvements, balancing community expectations against a new era of leaner funding.

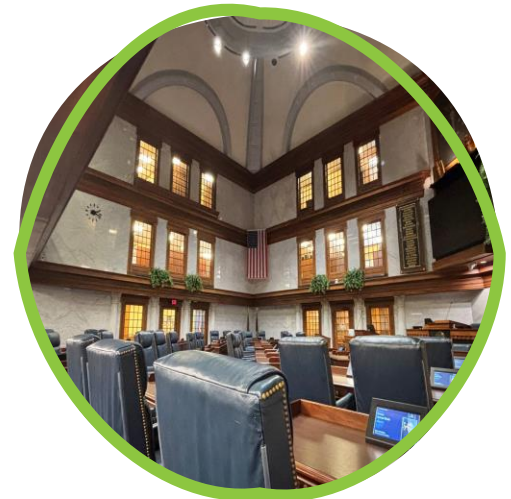


Photo Credit: Indiana General Assembly

Plan Priority Area C

Plan Priority Areas

Over the next five years, the Department will need to prioritize services that serve the common good of the community, defer or scale capital projects, seek alternative revenue streams, and enhance cost recovery, all while preserving equity, inclusion, and long-term sustainability of parks, recreation, and natural assets.

Financial Impacts of SEA 1 on the City and Parks & Recreation Department

Include, but are not limited to the following:

- SEA 1 phases out important local income taxes and restricts short-term bonding capacity for capital projects, closing off traditional mechanisms cities like Bloomington have relied on to fund operations and capital expenditures.
- If enacted, SEA 1 phases out existing LIT for 2027 and restructures the way in which it may be reintroduced. Previously, LITs were a county-wise proposition and could be approved by a majority of the various governing bodies (e.g., a combination of City Council, County Council, and Ellettsville town council), and the revenues would be split among those bodies proportionally.
- As of 2026, the City of Bloomington projects a general fund deficit of \$11.2 million (\$54.0 M revenue vs. \$65.2 M expenditures).
- Capital projects, including maintenance, facility upgrades, pool repairs, and ice arena upkeep, may face reduced funding availability. Assessments have already identified \$4–5 million in needed pool repairs.
- The Department has roughly \$260K million to address capital needs for building repairs and equipment replacement in 2026, a modest ask relative to total needs.
- Some funding sources (e.g., for park security at certain sites) rely on one-time or expiring external funds (for example, American Rescue Plan contract of \$400K).



Photo: Performing Arts Series

The financial implications of SEA 1 remain blurred, representing a watershed moment for BPRD. The Department may no longer assume stable local tax revenue or easy access to capital project financing. The 2026–2030 Master Plan, therefore, embeds fiscal realism by prioritizing maintenance and financial resiliency, while striving to preserve equity, access, and quality in spite of SEA 1.

Taxpayer Support of Bloomington Parks and Recreation

In a constrained fiscal environment shaped by SEA 1 and broader revenue limitations, understanding how taxpayer dollars support parks and recreation is important. While parks and recreation play a visible and valued role in community quality of life, they represent a relatively small share of overall public funding.

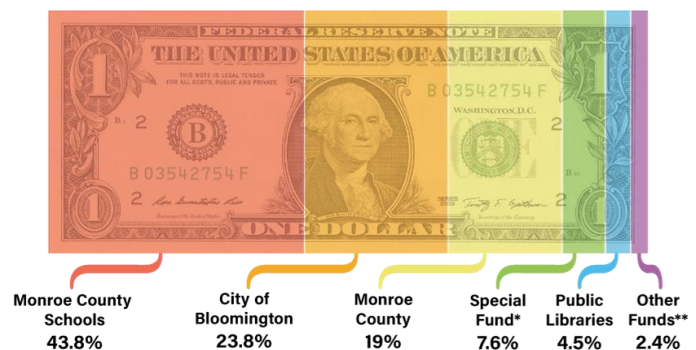
Where Property Tax Dollars Go

In 2024, the City of Bloomington received 23.8% of every property tax dollar paid. The majority of property tax revenue supports schools and county services, while less than one-quarter is allocated to the City (as shown in Figure 6).

This distribution reflects the broader structure of local government finance in Indiana, where cities must deliver services within a limited and shared revenue framework.

(Data source: Indiana Department of Local Government Finance)

Figure 6



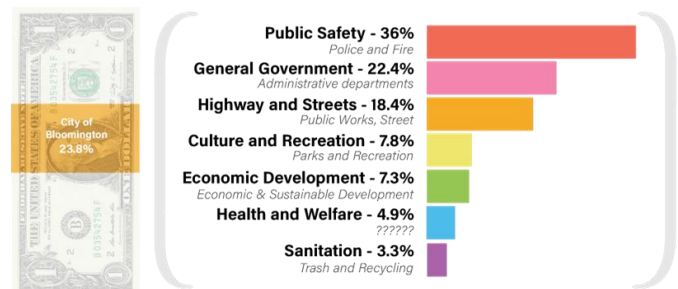
How the City Allocates Its Resources

The City's portion of funding supports a wide range of essential services, including public safety, infrastructure, general government, and community services.

Within this context, parks and recreation receive approximately 7.8% of the City's total budget (as shown in Figure 7). This allocation reflects both the value of parks and recreation and the reality that it must compete with other core services for limited public resources.

(Based on the City's 2024 General Fund budget, including revenues beyond property taxes.)

Figure 7



Plan Priority Area C

Plan Priority Areas

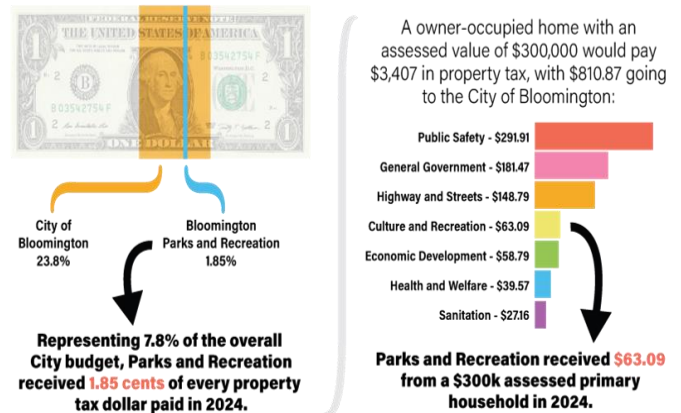
What This Means at the Household Level

When translated to the individual taxpayer, the level of investment becomes more tangible:

- BPRD receives approximately 1.85 cents of every property tax dollar paid.
- For a median home assessed at \$300,000, this equates to about \$63 annually.

This investment, as shown in Figure 8, supports the operation, maintenance, and programming of parks, trails, facilities, and natural areas across the system.

Figure 8



As the City faces increasing fiscal constraints, maintaining this system and aligning it with community expectations will require clear priorities, disciplined financial practices, and thoughtful decisions about service levels, investments, and long-term sustainability.



Photos: Switchyard Park (left), Basketball Future Stars (right)

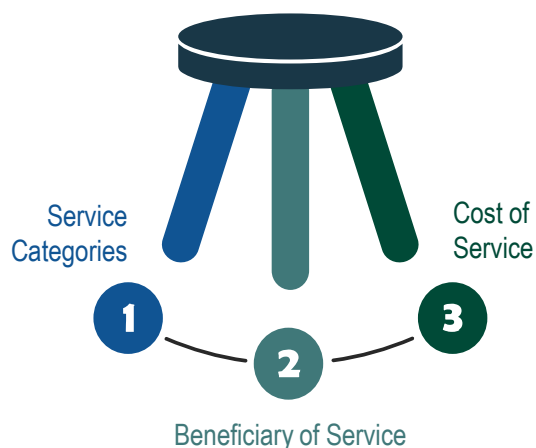
Financial Sustainability Framework

The Financial Sustainability Three-legged Stool illustration builds on the philosophy of 110%'s Parks and Reconomics© - how parks and recreation organizations manage their finite financial resources.

The Department embraced this philosophy and the exercise of creating Community Investment Strategies by following these principal steps (as illustrated in the Figure 9).

NOTE: Full results can be found in Supplement D: Financial Sustainability Strategy.

Figure 9
Tax Use/Revenue Enhancement Philosophy



Service Categories

The development of categories that include services that are alike in "purpose" is important when it comes to justifiable and equitable allocation of subsidy, cost recovery levels, and assignment of budget and general ledger lines to account for a category's fiscal performance. Service categorization can diminish special interests and social values that drive arbitrary investment and revenue decisions.

The following list are the BPRD's Service Categories, as developed by staff:

- **Beginner/Introductory Level Activities** Classes, clinics, workshops, and other led and/or instructed activities in which the primary intent is to introduce participants to a skill at a learn-to level.
- **Community Events** Events planned to be appealing and accessible to a majority of/or the entire community, regardless of age, ability/skill, and/or family composition.
- **Competitive Level Activities** Leagues and team play are designed to be competitive in nature, where scoring is kept, and no instruction is provided.
- **Drop-in Activities** Self-directed structured activities which do not require registration or instruction but do include supervision or oversight by staff and/or volunteers.
- **Enrichment Activities** Classes, clinics, workshops, and other led and/or instructed activities designed to enhance socialization and life-skills development with a focus on education and life-long learning.
- **Equity & Enrichment** Services that focus on addressing community inequities, providing for improved access to leisure opportunities, and connection to community resources. These services may be provided in response to climate/global emergencies.

- **Intermediate/Advanced Level Activities** Classes, clinics, workshops, and other led and/or instructed activities in which the primary intent is to advance or master a skill.
- **Open Access Activities** Self-directed activity in parks and park areas that does not include supervision or oversight by staff and/or volunteers.
- **Private/Semi-Private Activities** Specialized classes, clinics, workshops, and other led and/or instructed activities offered in a private setting and designed to meet the unique interests and/or skill sets of individuals and small groups.
- **Sales** Private or semi-private activities and instruction.
- **Specialized Business Services** Highly specialized amenities which offer expert instruction and/or experiences in unique environments, setting them apart from other departmental services. Specialized Business Services are aligned with those offered in the private sector and cater to specific market segments.
- **Special Events** Events designed for a target market, market niche, and/or specific interest.
- **Rentals – Equipment** Equipment rentals to facilitate use and access to recreation services such as skating, golf, and lake activities.
- **Rentals – Facilities** Space and facility reservations for exclusive use by an individual or group.

Beneficiary of Service

Beneficiary of Service evaluates each service category based on who benefits, and therefore, who should pay (and to what degree).

- **Common Good Services** or cause and purpose driven services intend to impact social, economic, and environmental issues and needs and align with the fundamental purpose and mission of the department. Typically, there are no like services provided by the non-profit/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) or private sectors.
- **Exclusive Benefit Services** or specialized services, intend to serve personal interests. Typically, there is competition with the non-profit/ Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and private sectors which offer like services.

Service Categories were then listed in order from those perceived to be Common Good Services to those seen as providing a more Exclusive Benefit, as shown in Figure 10.

Community/
Common Good Benefit

Individual/
Exclusive Benefit

Figure 10

	Rank	Service Category
Common Good (essential, high value, intended to impact social and environmental issues & needs)  Exclusive (discretionary, individualized services, specialized interests w/limited social/environmental impact)	1	Open Access Activities
	2	Community Events
	3	Drop-in Activities
	4	Beginner/Introductory Level Activities
	5	Equity Activities
	6	Enrichment Activities
	7	Special Events
	8	Intermediate/Advanced Level Activities
	9	Competitive Level Activities
	10	Rentals – Equipment
	11	Private/Semi-Private Activities
	12	Rentals – Facilities
	13	Specialized Business Services
	14	Sales

Cost of Service Analysis

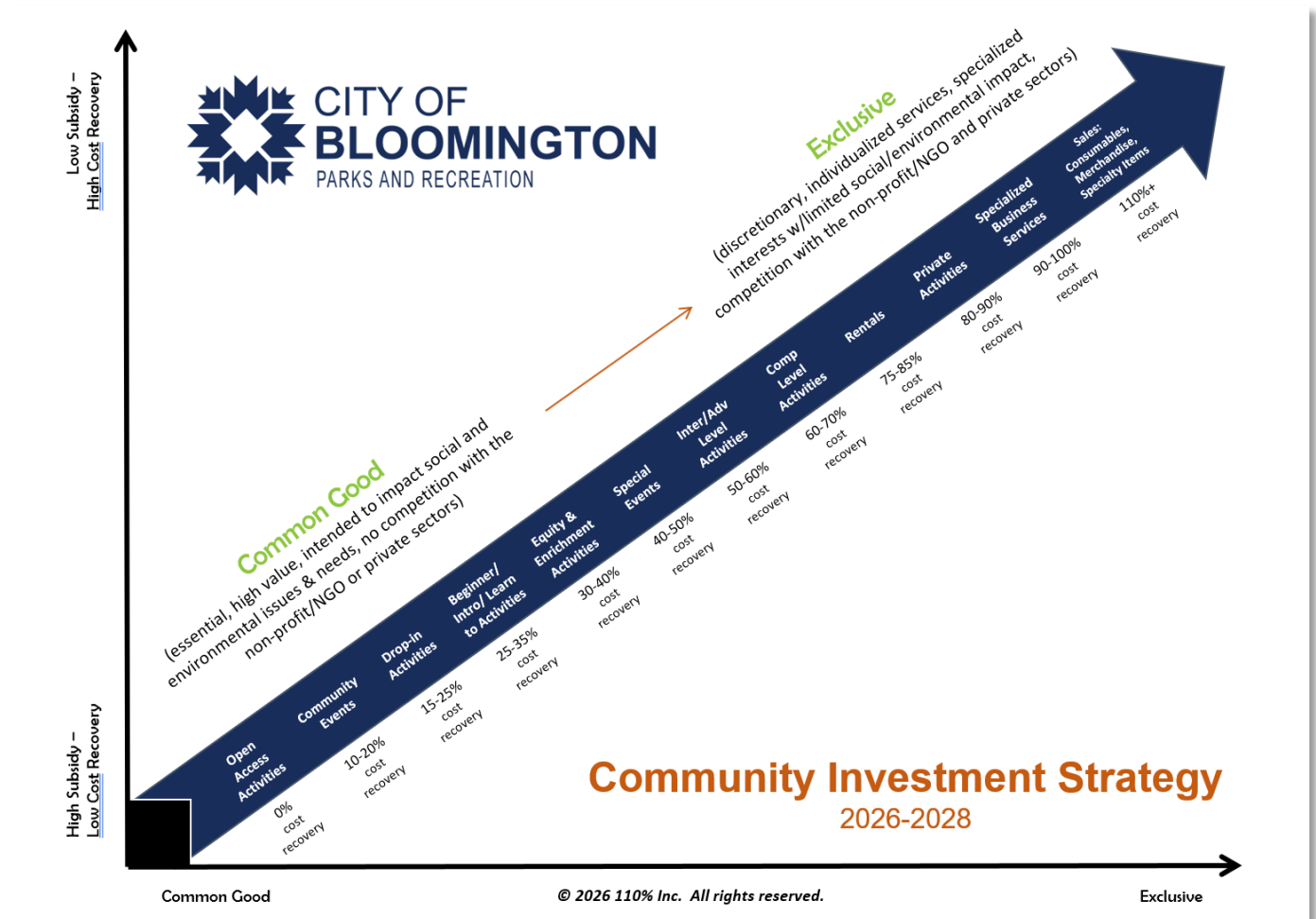
Completion of an operational cost-of-service analysis allowed the Department to understand its cost-of-service of doing business, ultimately revealing each service's cost recovery and subsidy investment level. Operational revenues, direct costs, and indirect costs that the Department provided were captured and attributed to all services as part of this work, yielding several insights to inform the design and development of the Department's Community Investment Strategies.

Community Investment Strategy

Bloomington Parks & Recreation's Community Investment Strategies present the degree to which financial resources will be spent, and expenses will be recovered and managed. These strategies shift from those that might suggest all services should be provided at no or low cost to everyone to an equitable philosophy in which subsidy allocation decisions are based on "beneficiary of service". In this conceptualization, each type of service has specific characteristics that provide a rationale for who should pay (e.g., taxpayers, the individual, or both) and to what extent. Ultimately, this aligns subsidy allocation, cost-recovery goals, and expectations with a service's beneficiary.

Two Community Investment Strategies were developed as part of the master plan process. Below, in Figure 11, is the strategy for all Department service categories.

Figure 11

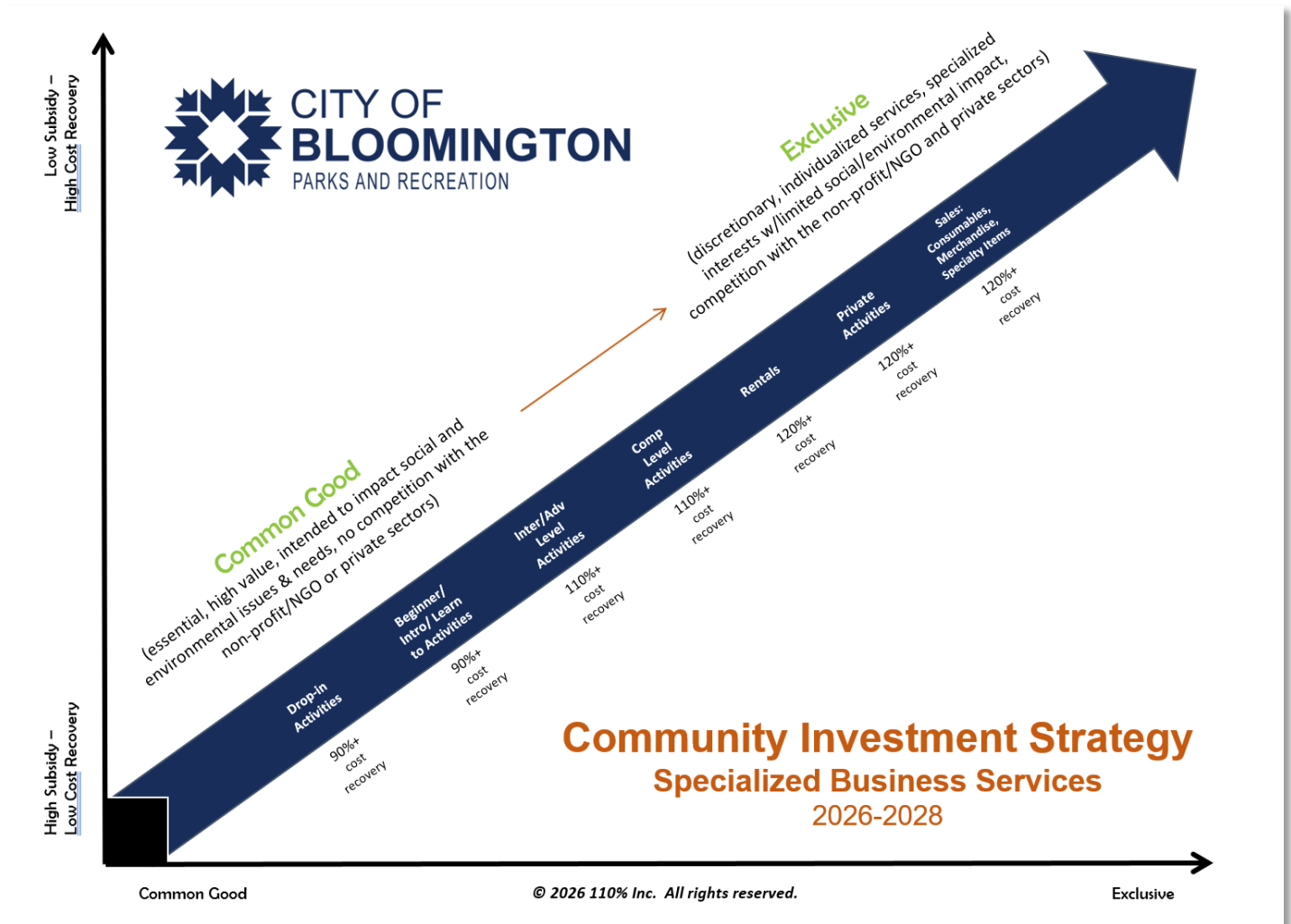


Plan Priority Area C

The alternative Community Investment Strategy (Figure 12) was designed specifically for services within the Specialized Services Category (Cascades Golf Course, Rose Hill and White Oak Cemeteries Burial Services, Twin Lakes Recreation Center).

Each of the Community Investment Strategies includes service categories and cost-recovery goals and serves as a graphic representation of the Department's tax use and revenue enhancement philosophy.

Figure 12



Financial Sustainability – Implementation Outcomes

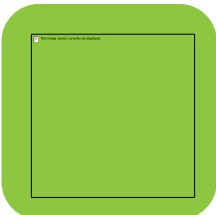
The 19 actions associated with *Priority C: Financial Sustainability*, detailed in the Strategic Plan Worksheet (Supplement F), strengthen BPRD's ability to align community expectations with long-term fiscal responsibility.

Together, these efforts establish a disciplined, transparent, and resilient financial approach, ensuring that services, investments, and resources are aligned with current needs and interests, as well as future capacity.



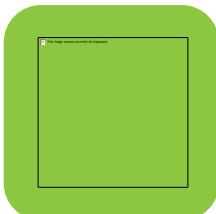
Clear Understanding of the Cost and Value of Services

The Department advances cost-of-service practices and pricing strategies that clearly define how programs, facilities, and services are funded. Decision-makers and the community gain greater transparency into the relationship between cost, subsidy, and public benefit.



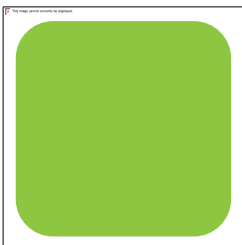
More Diverse and Reliable Revenue Streams

Funding is strengthened through a broader mix of revenue sources, including sponsorships, partnerships, and alternative funding strategies. This reduces reliance on any single source and increases the system's overall financial resilience.



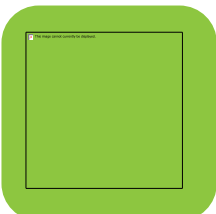
Consistent and Transparent Financial Decision-Making

Adopted financial, partnership, and asset policies provide clear guidance for how resources are allocated, how investments are prioritized, and how decisions around acquisition, development, and divestment are made. This creates consistency and reduces ambiguity over time.



Capital Investments Aligned with Long-Term Capacity

Capital planning, asset reinvestment, and financing strategies are coordinated to ensure that infrastructure investments are both needed and sustainable. Decisions reflect not only what can be built, but what can be maintained and operated over time.



Improved Financial Performance and Operational Efficiency

The Department strengthens its ability to monitor performance through financial metrics, procurement practices, and ongoing cost analysis. Resources are used more efficiently, and decisions are increasingly data-informed and results-driven.

“Collaboration with the community is important, particularly given the economic outlook.”

- community focus group response



A Strong, Connected BPRD Team

Supporting the People Who Deliver Bloomington's Parks and Recreation Services

BPRD's ability to deliver meaningful community impact depends on the people who plan programs, maintain parks, care for natural areas, and welcome residents into facilities every day. Behind every trail repair, community event, recreation program, and park improvement is a team of professionals whose work sustains the system.

As the Department continues to evolve, supporting staff capacity and strengthening organizational alignment will remain essential. A strong internal culture allows the Department to respond to community needs, manage complex facilities and programs, and implement long-term priorities with consistency and care. Ensuring that the Department's internal components (e.g., policies, procedures, expectations, workplace culture) are clear and supportive is critical to maintaining both service quality and employee well-being.

This priority focuses on strengthening the internal foundations that support BPRD's work. Over the next five years, the Department will focus on:

- Strengthening communication, collaboration, and alignment across divisions
- Ensuring policies and procedures support efficiency and intentionality
- Investing in professional development, training, and certification opportunities
- Supporting staff well-being and maintaining strong morale across the organization
- Creating consistent expectations for staff development, advancement, and internships
- Recognizing and celebrating the contributions of employees at all levels
- Gathering feedback to better understand staff experiences and opportunities for improvement

A strong and connected team allows the BPRD to continue to deliver high-quality services while adapting to changing community needs and expectations. By investing in staff capacity, strengthening workplace culture, and aligning organizational practices with the Department's mission, the City ensures that its parks and recreation system remains resilient and able to serve the community well into the future.

Plan Priority Area D

Plan Priority Areas

The People Behind BPRD

Bloomington's parks and recreation system is sustained not only by parks, facilities, and programs, but by the people who operate, maintain, and improve them every day. From maintaining trails and athletic fields to coordinating community events and recreation programs, staff members are responsible for translating the City's vision for parks and recreation into real experiences for residents.

As community expectations evolve and the parks system continues to mature, the work of delivering these services becomes increasingly complex.

Maintaining facilities, responding to operational

challenges, coordinating partnerships, and delivering programs across a wide range of services requires strong internal communication, clear expectations, and well-supported staff.

Across the country, parks and recreation agencies are also navigating broader workforce challenges. Recruitment and retention pressures, increased service expectations, and the need for specialized expertise have made it essential for departments to invest intentionally in their people. Professional development, workplace culture, and internal communication are no longer secondary considerations—they are critical components of delivering reliable public services.

For BPRD, strengthening the internal foundation of the organization means ensuring that staff members have the tools, clarity, and support necessary to perform their work effectively. Clear policies and procedures, consistent communication across divisions, and opportunities for professional growth help create an environment where employees can succeed and where the Department can operate with greater coordination and accountability.

A strong organizational culture also contributes directly to service quality. When staff members feel valued, supported, and connected to the Department's mission, they are better positioned to deliver programs, maintain facilities, and respond to community needs with professionalism and care.

This priority recognizes that investing in staff capacity is ultimately an investment in the long-term performance of Bloomington's parks and recreation system. By strengthening internal communication, supporting employee development, clarifying expectations, and creating opportunities for recognition and feedback, the Department can build a resilient and connected team capable of sustaining high-quality services for the community.



Photo: Community Open House

BPRD's Heartbeat

Parks and recreation systems are often defined by what people see—parks, trails, facilities, and programs. But what sustains those experiences over time is far less visible. It is the staff behind the scenes who serve as the heartbeat of the system. The coordination required to maintain assets, deliver programs, manage resources, respond to community needs, and adapt to changing conditions depends on people working within clear, aligned, and functional organizational systems. Without that alignment, even well-funded and well-designed systems begin to break down. Facilities fall behind on maintenance. Programs become inconsistent. Communication gaps create inefficiencies. Staff capacity is stretched, and performance becomes uneven. Over time, these challenges impact not only internal operations but also the community's experience and trust in the system.

Each of the plan's priorities depends on the strength of BPRD's internal foundation.

- **Community Impact** is delivered through staff who design programs, engage residents, and create meaningful experiences
- **Invest in What We Have** relies on staff who maintain, operate, and care for assets every day
- **Financial Sustainability** requires staff who make informed decisions, manage resources responsibly, and implement policy with discipline

In this way, organizational capacity is what makes the work possible.

A strong organization is not defined by culture alone. It is defined by clear expectations, consistent systems, effective communication, ongoing professional development, and accountability supported by recognition. These elements create an environment where staff can perform at a high level, both individually and collectively.



Photo: Switchyard Park Tactile Map Unveiling

Investing in staff capacity, alignment, and support is a direct investment in service quality, system reliability, and long-term sustainability. When staff are equipped with the right tools, clarity, and support:

- Services are delivered more consistently
- Assets are better maintained
- Resources are used more effectively
- The Bloomington community experiences a higher level of quality and care

This priority ensures that BPRD is not only planning for the future but building the organizational strength required to deliver it with consistency over time.

Plan Priority Area D

Plan Priority Areas

A Strong, Connected BPRD Team - Implementation Outcomes

The 11 actions associated with *Priority D: A Strong, Connected BPRD Team*, detailed in the Strategic Plan Worksheet (Supplement F), strengthen the foundation that makes all other priorities possible—the people, systems, and culture that deliver Bloomington’s parks and recreation services.

Together, these efforts create a more aligned, supported, and high-performing organization, and one where staff have the clarity, tools, and environment needed to do their best work.



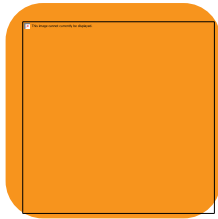
Aligned and Effective Communication Across the Organization

Information flows consistently across divisions, improving coordination, reducing silos, and strengthening alignment between day-to-day operations and Department-wide priorities. Staff are better informed, connected, and able to work toward shared goals.



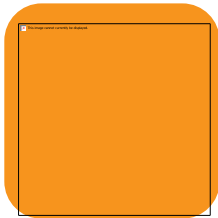
Clear Expectations and Streamlined Systems

Policies, procedures, and administrative practices are updated and clarified to reflect current operational needs. Staff experiences greater consistency and confidence in how work gets done, supported by systems that reduce unnecessary complexity.



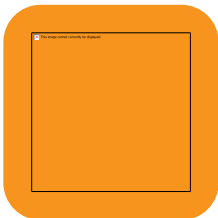
A Skilled and Continuously Developing Workforce

Intentional investments in training, certifications, and professional development pathways support staff growth and build internal capacity. Employees are better equipped to meet evolving service demands and advance within the organization.



A Culture that Supports Employee Well-Being and Engagement

Practices that prioritize employee feedback, recognition, and workplace experience contribute to improved morale and retention. Staff feel supported, valued, and connected to BPRD’s mission and each other.



A Strong Sense of Identity, Purpose, and Pride in the Organization

The Department’s mission and purpose are clearly defined and consistently reinforced. Staff contributions are recognized and celebrated, strengthening organizational identity and fostering a shared sense of ownership in the work.

**“You’re (BPRD) are the best thing about
Bloomington!”**

- questionnaire response

Implementation



Photo: Griffy Lake

Overview of Strategic Plan

Implementation

The Strategic Plan is the actionable part of the overall Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The resulting Strategic Plan, included as Supplement F: Strategic Plan Worksheet, includes the 75 recommended actions aligned with each of the plan's priorities and is designed as a management tool for ease of use and as a method of simplifying recommendations.

The Strategic Plan is essential for the implementation of the Master Plan for several key reasons, some of which include:

Clarity of Goals and Objectives:

It outlines specific actions that will be taken within a defined timeframe. This clarity helps ensure that everyone involved understands what needs to be done and why.



Photo: Community Farmers' Market

Resource Allocation:

It helps in allocating resources effectively. By identifying the actions, timelines, and responsibilities, the Strategic Plan allows BPRD to allocate resources such as budget, human resources, and other resources in a targeted and efficient manner.

Accountability And Responsibility:

It assigns clear responsibilities to individuals or teams for each action item. This accountability ensures that actions are completed on time and to the expected standards.

Monitoring And Evaluation

It provides a basis for monitoring progress and evaluating the plan's progress and success. Regular reviews allow adjustments if circumstances change or certain actions are not achieving the desired outcomes.

Continuous Improvement:

It promotes a culture of continuous improvement. Through regular updates and revisions informed by feedback and evolving circumstances, BPRD can adapt and evolve to meet new challenges and opportunities.

Overview of Strategic Plan

Implementation

The Strategic Plan's recommended actionable steps result from the master planning effort that staff are encouraged to execute to impact and improve Department operations and service to the community.

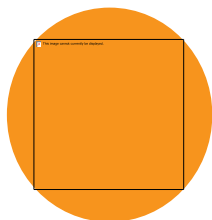
The following pages in this section detail the Department's Organizational Priority Goals and Associated Actions. Figure 13 below serves as an example of how these goals and actions are structured and defined in the BPRD Master Plan.

Figure 13

Priority Goal	Recommended Action	Action Details	Prioritization	Resource Requirement	Staff Lead	Timeline
broad based statements of intent; an aim or desired result	method of performing the acts that will influence the goals and lead to desired result(s)	the finer details and context explaining each associated action	<u>High</u> necessary for the organization to thrive <u>Medium</u> organization should address but not pressing <u>Low</u> a desire; satisfies an interest	<u>High</u> significant staff, financial, and other resources <u>Medium</u> moderate staff, financial, and other resources <u>Low</u> lessor staff, financial, and other resources	assigns a clear individual(s) or a team responsible	<u>Short-term</u> 0-2 years <u>Mid-term</u> 3-5 years <u>Long-term</u> 6-15+ years

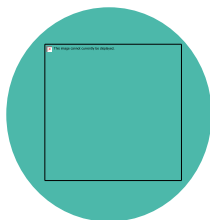
Helpful Tips

Implementation



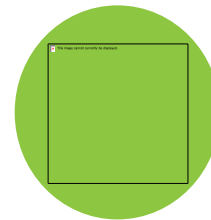
Maintain Awareness

Maintaining awareness of the Department's commitment to the Strategic Plan amongst all staff is critical to success – and this must go beyond an occasional speech, an annual meeting, or sending the occasional email. After spending months crafting the Master Plan and its priorities and recommended actions, it is important that the same commitment, drive, and passion that carried through plan development is continued into implementation, execution, and monitoring progress.



Generate and Keep Momentum

It is essential to reinforce action when it is taken. Regular, consistent review of effort is needed to provide feedback, take corrective action, hold staff accountable, and keep BPRD on course.



Monitoring and Keeping Score

Monitoring the implementation of the plan is important for several reasons. First, it helps ensure that work is progressing, and the Department is assessing whether it is accomplishing desired outcomes. Second, monitoring provides the opportunity to communicate progress, both internally and externally. Third, it identifies where problems and opportunities lie and what has changed allowing for corrective actions including adjustment or setting a new course. Most importantly, monitoring demonstrates a commitment to the plan and translating the planning effort into tangible reality rather than it become an occasional academic exercise.

“Thank you for all that you do to provide places to explore, play, and connect here in Bloomington! It's truly appreciated and is a good use of our tax dollars.”

- community survey response