

City of Bloomington, Indiana Common Council

Deliberation Session Agenda

Wednesday, September 9, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.
Council Chambers (Room 115), City Hall
401 N. Morton Street, Bloomington, IN 47404

The meeting may also be accessed [remotely via Zoom](#).¹

- 1. City Council Roll Call and Welcome**
- 2. Opening Presentation** (Councilmembers Piedmont-Smith and Stosberg)
- 3. Community Agreements and Process Overview** (Wyatt Lawson, CJAM)
- 4. Facilitated Group Discussions** (50 minutes)
- 5. Reports from Each Group**
- 6. Completion of Survey**
- 7. Final Public Feedback from Individuals**
- 8. Closing Remarks** (Councilmember Zulich)
- 9. Adjournment**

*Members of the public may speak on matters of community concern not listed on the agenda at one of the two public comment opportunities. Individuals may speak at one of these periods, but not both. Speakers are allowed up to three minutes.

Bloomington City Council meetings can be watched on the following websites:

- [Community Action Television Services \(CATS\)](#)²
- [City's YouTube Channel](#)³

[Materials for this meeting](#)⁴ are available on Council's website.

The City is committed to providing equal access to information. If you encounter difficulties accessing material in this packet, please contact the Bloomington Common Council Office at council@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3409 and provide your name, contact information, and a link to or description of the document or web page with which you are having problems.

¹<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/87089287108?pwd=xcpPEZNBqWgHMgML2HEOaFPE6wtHGlq.1> Meeting ID: 870 8928 7108 Passcode: 165752

² <https://catstv.net/>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/@citybloomington>

⁴ <https://bloomington.in.gov/council/meetings/2026>

MEMORANDUM

To: City Council Members

Date: Sept. 4, 2026

From: Council Member Piedmont-Smith

Subj: Public Safety Deliberation Session #1

Last December, we held an internal deliberation session (in public) about outcomes we wanted to budget for in 2026 and how they followed from the various publicly vetted and Council-adopted plans of the City of Bloomington. Several Council Members indicated that public safety was an important priority to fund, but we had only one vague outcome related to public safety in our Comprehensive Plan: "Public safety is enhanced." A few Council Members noted that we really needed a more detailed public safety plan.

Early in 2026, I spoke with Mayor Thomson about how to prioritize programs and funding for public safety and suggested the City Council could hold a deliberation session on the topic to get the community engaged in identifying what public safety is and how it should be funded by the City. The mayor agreed that this seemed like a good first step.

In late July, I met with Wyatt Lawson, the Director of the Community Justice and Mediation Center (CJAM) and discussed how CJAM could partner with the City Council to facilitate two deliberation sessions (Sept. 9 and Oct. 21) on the topic of public safety. Soon after that, Council Members Stosberg and Zulich agreed to join us in organizing the sessions. Then I met with Mayor Thomson and Deputy Mayor Knapp to discuss how the topic could be framed and how the sessions might be best organized so that the administration could gain insights toward a possible public safety plan or at least a clearer direction for programs, services, and other funding that would move the community toward improved public safety.

The first deliberation session on Sept. 9 will seek input from a wide variety of residents on their own experiences and ideas related to public safety. Each break-out group will be comprised of a CJAM facilitator, a City Council co-facilitator, a CJAM notetaker, and 4-8 members of the public. Because three Council Members cannot attend the session in person, I have asked Mayor Thomson to serve as co-facilitator for one group and Clerk Bolden (or one of her deputies) to serve as co-facilitator for another group. Thus we will plan to have 8 groups total. One will be in Spanish - facilitated on the city side by CM Asare.

The elected official who serves as co-facilitator will be the one who will report out to the full audience after the small group conversations.

Since we have three CMs who plan to attend the meeting remotely, we will endeavor to use Zoom tools available to us to have one or more online discussions with remote participants. The CMs attending remotely can facilitate those discussions and report out to the full group like the CMs that are in person.

As you see, completion of a survey is on the agenda. We made this part of the meeting to ensure that attendees actually complete it, either online via QR code or on paper.

After the first session has concluded, CJAM will compile the notes and prepare a report summarizing the main themes that emerged among the participants and the feedback from the survey. That report will form the basis of planning the second deliberation session, where we will focus more on defining public safety for our community and identifying what the City can do to improve public safety here.

Included in this packet are:

- Overview sheet - This will be handed out to all participants (page 1 in English, page 2 in Spanish)
- Community Safety Concept Map - This was developed by the MacArthur's Foundation's Safety + Justice Challenge and serves as an example of a public safety community visioning exercise
- Facilitation Guide - Prepared by Wyatt Lawson, Director of CJAM. Please read this to be ready for your co-facilitation role.

City Council Deliberation Sessions on Public Safety

Overview of Session 1

Wednesday, September 9, 2026

Purpose

The purpose of the first deliberation session is to better understand how Bloomington residents experience and think about public safety. Rather than focusing on potential solutions or policy recommendations, this session is designed to create space for participants to share their lived experiences. This session is intended to prioritize understanding before problem-solving. At our second session on October 21, we will move toward a definition of public safety, an understanding of what our community already does to address it, and what the City, in particular, can do to make people feel and actually be more safe.

Session Objectives

By the conclusion of this session, you should have had an opportunity to:

- Share what motivated you to participate
- Reflect on your personal experiences related to public safety in Bloomington
- Describe situations, places, or experiences that contribute to feeling safe
- Describe situations, places, or experiences that contribute to feeling less safe
- Explore how different experiences shape different understandings of public safety
- Start to identify common themes that may define public safety in Bloomington

Agenda

1. City Council roll call and welcome
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7. Final public feedback from individuals
8. Closing remarks (Councilmember Zulich)

Group Discussion Questions

1. Introductions: What is your name and what brought you to this conversation about public safety in Bloomington?
2. Tell us about a situation when you have felt safe in Bloomington. What contributed to that feeling?
3. Tell us about a situation when you have felt less safe in Bloomington. What contributed to that feeling?
4. As you listen to the experiences shared here, what seems to contribute to people feeling safe, or make it harder for people to feel safe?
5. Based on the experiences we've discussed, what should the Common Council understand about what public safety means to people in Bloomington?

The report from each group should summarize 2-3 themes that came out of the discussion.

Many thanks to the Community Justice and Mediation Center (CJAM) for their collaboration!

Sesiones de deliberación del Concejo Municipal sobre seguridad pública

Resumen de la Sesión 1

Miércoles, 9 de septiembre de 2026

Propósito

El propósito de la primera sesión de deliberación es comprender mejor cómo los residentes de Bloomington perciben y piensan sobre la seguridad pública. En lugar de centrarse en posibles soluciones o recomendaciones de políticas, esta sesión está diseñada para crear un espacio donde los participantes puedan compartir sus experiencias personales. El objetivo es priorizar la comprensión antes de abordar la búsqueda de soluciones. En nuestra segunda sesión, el 21 de octubre, avanzaremos hacia una definición de seguridad pública, comprenderemos qué se hace ya en nuestra comunidad para abordarla y analizaremos qué puede hacer la Ciudad, en particular, para que las personas se sientan —y estén realmente— más seguras.

Objetivos de la sesión

Al finalizar esta sesión, usted habrá tenido la oportunidad de:

- Compartir qué le motivó a participar
- Reflexionar sobre sus experiencias personales relacionadas con la seguridad pública en Bloomington
- Describir situaciones, lugares o experiencias que contribuyen a sentirse seguro
- Describir situaciones, lugares o experiencias que contribuyen a sentirse menos seguro
- Explorar cómo diferentes experiencias moldean distintas percepciones de la seguridad pública
- Comenzar a identificar temas comunes que puedan definir la seguridad pública en Bloomington

Agenda

1. Pasar lista y bienvenida del Concejo Municipal
2. Presentación inicial (Concejales Piedmont-Smith y Stosberg)
3. Acuerdos comunitarios y resumen del proceso (Wyatt Lawson, CJAM)
4. Debates grupales facilitados (50 minutos)
5. Informes de cada grupo
6. Complimentación de la encuesta
7. Comentarios finales del público
8. Palabras de cierre (Concejal Zulich)

Preguntas para el debate grupal

1. Presentaciones: ¿Cuál es su nombre y qué le trajo a esta conversación sobre la seguridad pública en Bloomington?
2. Cuéntenos sobre alguna situación en la que se haya sentido seguro en Bloomington. ¿Qué contribuyó a esa sensación?
3. Cuéntenos sobre alguna situación en la que se haya sentido menos seguro en Bloomington. ¿Qué contribuyó a esa sensación?
4. Al escuchar las experiencias compartidas aquí, ¿qué parece contribuir a que las personas se sientan seguras o qué dificulta esa sensación de seguridad?
5. Basándose en las experiencias que hemos comentado, ¿qué debería entender el Concejo Municipal sobre lo que significa la seguridad pública para los habitantes de Bloomington?

El informe de cada grupo debe resumir dos o tres temas que surgieron de la discusión.

¡Muchas gracias al Community Justice and Mediation Center (CJAM) por su colaboración!

DEFINING COMMUNITY SAFETY CONCEPT MAP

The Community Safety Concept Map is a tool that communities can use to facilitate conversations around the meaning of safety and to identify local priorities. When viewed holistically, the map describes community safety as a collective responsibility in which all members of the community have a role to play.



The Community Safety Concept Map, which was developed with input from residents of three U.S. counties (Missoula County, Montana, St. Louis County, Missouri, and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina), has 11 unique components that fall into five different broad domains. Each of the components are described below.



Region: Personal Safety and Security

Freedom from Violence and Other Harms

This component of safety includes ideas related to traditional conceptualizations of public safety (e.g., low rates of crime and victimization). It also contains harms that many people of color and other marginalized groups, like LGBTQ+, experience daily, such as discrimination.

- There are low rates of violent crime.
- People are not injured or killed by stray bullets.
- Children are safe from harm both inside and outside of school.
- There are low rates of property crime such as theft, vandalism, or car theft.
- There are low rates of drug use, including public drug use, and drug-related harms (e.g., overdoses).
- People do not stereotype, discriminate against, or harm others based on their race, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics.

Day-to-Day Feelings of Safety

Statements that capture people's perceived ability to move through their daily lives without worrying about harm make up this component of community safety. Many of the statements capture emotions and feelings of security.

- People can travel freely anytime, anywhere, including late at night without being on alert.
- People feel safe and secure in their homes.
- People aren't worried they will be a victim of a crime.
- People are not harassed when walking down the street.



Region: Thriving and Socially Connected Community

Sense of Community

Many people described a safe community in terms of their relationships with others. It is a place where people watch out for one another and provide support and assistance when needed. In addition, people trust one another and work together to address common problems, and neighbors are friendly and welcoming to all.

- Community members trust one another.
- People watch out for each other and provide support and assistance for neighbors in need.
- Neighbors know one another and talk regularly.
- There is a lot of activity, with people out in the community and children playing outside.
- People in the community are welcoming and respectful to all regardless of their identity or personal characteristics, such as age, sexuality, gender, or race.
- Community members work together to solve local problems.

Investments in Infrastructure, Businesses, and Programming for a Thriving Community

This component of safety encompasses thriving businesses and local organizations that are invested in the community. A safe and thriving community also includes well-maintained and developed infrastructure. People also associated this aspect of safety with access to amenities—like restaurants and childcare—and recreational opportunities. Safe communities were described as clean, with little physical disorder, such as overgrown lots and abandoned buildings.

- Business owners are invested in the community and businesses are thriving.
- There are programs youth can participate in outside of school.
- There are grocery stores and people have access to healthy food.
- There are shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues.
- There are public libraries and institutions that support the arts.
- There are well maintained parks and access to outdoor recreational activities.
- Infrastructure, such as roads, sidewalks, lights, and signs are well-maintained.
- There is adequate lighting, including lights on the streets and roads.
- Infrastructure allows for people to walk and bike safely.

- There is reliable and safe public transportation.
- The community is clean and there are no run-down, boarded up, or empty buildings or overgrown lots.

Region: Resources and Services for a Socially and Economically Just Community



Access to Supportive Services

This component includes statements related to access and quality of supportive services and aid for people in need.

- Everyone who needs it has access to comprehensive mental health services and treatment for substance use problems.
- Resources and support are available for all victims of crime and violence regardless of the circumstances in which they were harmed.
- Resources are available to help support vulnerable populations, including people experiencing homelessness.
- Social services agencies are adequately staffed by competent and compassionate people.
- When natural and man-made disasters occur —such as flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires —there is aid for people who have been affected.

Social and Economic Justice

The statements in this cluster reflect what a community looks like when fairness, equality, and human dignity are upheld for all individuals.

- A quality education is free and accessible to all.
- Affordable, quality housing is available for people of all income levels.
- People do not need to worry about where their next meal will come from
- Everyone has access to quality healthcare and healthcare providers.
- There are good job opportunities, and everyone can earn a living wage.
- There are low rates of income inequality.
- People are financially secure.
- There is clean air to breathe and clean water to drink.

Region: Responsive Government and Public Safety Agencies



Responsive, Ethical, and Transparent Government

This aspect of safety describes a well-functioning government that acts in the community's best interests. Statements also focus on government transparency, information sharing, and communication.

- Elected officials with different viewpoints work together to solve community problems.
- Government agencies are transparent and act in an ethical manner.
- People in power make fair, just, and unbiased decisions.
- The government is responsive to the needs of all and acts in the community's best interest.
- Information about how to access government services and the legal system is easily available.
- There is consistent and open communication from public officials.
- Community members have a voice in decisions that affect the community.
- People can reach out to local officials, and they know they will be respected.

Comprehensive and Effective Emergency Response

Some survey respondents described community safety in terms of well-prepared and effective emergency response systems, including those traditionally associated with public safety (e.g., police, fire department, and emergency medical services). They also discussed first responders who are part of a “re-imagining” of public safety, such as mental health workers and alternate responders.

- First responders—including the police, fire department and emergency medical technicians—arrive quickly when they are called and are well-trained and equipped to handle an emergency.
- People aside from the police, such as mental health workers, are available to respond to emergencies and provide help.
- The local government invests in crime prevention and solutions that do not involve the police.
- People are educated about and prepared to handle natural disasters, including flooding and fires.

Gun Violence Prevention

In addition to low rates of gun violence, some people indicated that they feel safer when efforts are in place to ensure that guns are used responsibly and safely and kept out of the hands of people who could use them to harm themselves or others, such as children and people struggling with mental health issues. However, there was general agreement that gun violence prevention is a highly nuanced concept, and the meaning varies across people and communities.

- Children do not have access to guns without the supervision of a responsible adult.
- Guns are kept out of the hands of people who are not allowed to own them.
- People are educated about owning and operating firearms safely.

Region: Systems for Preventing and Addressing Harm



Fair and Ethical Policing

This component of safety captures various aspects of fair and ethical policing, including freedom from harm at the hands of the police; community preferences regarding the visibility of police; and police and the public working together to make safe communities. Many indicated that this is what ideal policing looks like, but some, particularly people of color, questioned whether this vision would ever be realized in their communities.

- Police treat people in a way that is fair, just, and respectful.
- Law enforcement is trustworthy and acts in the community's best interests.
- People in the community respect and support local law enforcement.
- Police and community members work together to solve problems, prevent crime, and address concerns.
- Police officers know the members of the community.
- Law enforcement visibility and activity are aligned with community needs and preferences.
- People do not fear getting harassed, harmed, or killed by the police.
- No one has to worry about being stopped by law enforcement or federal immigration authorities because of their race, ethnicity, or immigration status.

Accountability for Harm

This aspect of safety includes ideas related to holding individuals, institutions, and businesses accountable for harm. It encompasses fair and consistent courts, and well-trained police and prosecutors who take violent crimes seriously. Some participants pointed out how research and lived experiences show that traditional forms of punishment, such as keeping people in jail while awaiting trial and incarceration, do not enhance community safety and, in fact, can increase offending and make communities less safe. Others argued that if the criminal legal system does not hold people who cause harm accountable, it can compromise community safety, especially if these individuals harm again, or if victims believe they needed to take responsibility for their own safety (e.g., through retaliation). Still, others suggested a potential common ground between these two views—focusing on effective alternatives to incarceration and keeping jails “useful.” Statements regarding government and business accountability emerged in the interviews with stakeholders and were added to provide a more comprehensive conceptualization of accountability that recognizes those in power also cause harm.

- Individuals who commit violent crimes & felonies are held accountable.
- Effective alternatives to incarceration are available when people have caused harm.
- Police and prosecutors take violence, including domestic and sexual violence, seriously and have significant training in how to handle reports and investigations.
- Police enforce laws in accordance with community needs and preferences.
- The courts can be trusted to uphold the law in a fair and just manner, giving out consistent and appropriate penalties for breaking the law.
- Police are held formally accountable for their actions.
- Governments and businesses are held accountable for harm they have caused.

This research was supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation through the Safety and Justice Challenge Research Consortium (Consortium). Launched in 2019, the Consortium advances criminal justice research, grounded in the efforts and data of Safety and Justice Challenge sites, to expand the field’s collective knowledge of how to safely reduce the overuse and misuse of jails and racial and ethnic disparities through fair and effective pretrial reforms. The Consortium is comprised of research organizations who develop and are granted projects under independent review by a panel of academic, policy, and practice experts, including individuals with lived experience. The Consortium is managed by the CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance.

We are in debt to the residents of Missoula, St. Louis and Mecklenburg Counties who played an integral role in the development of the Community Safety Concept Map. This map reflects their views and perspectives, and it could not have been created without them. We would also like to acknowledge the assistance of our Redefining Community Safety Advisory Board members and our partners at Mecklenburg County Criminal Justice Services, who provided guidance throughout all stages of the project



Community Justice and Mediation Center

Your Role in the Conversation

***Bloomington Common Council
Community Dialogue on Public Safety***

Preparing to Serve as a Table Partner

Listen. Participate. Carry the conversation forward.

Wyatt Lawson, Exective Director



Where Are We in the Process?

The larger process may eventually move through:

UNDERSTAND



DELIBERATE



DECIDE

Session One is about UNDERSTANDING.

We are creating space for people to:

Share experiences → Hear different perspectives → Explore what matters → Deepen understanding

Dialogue Is Different

This Session is NOT:

Debate

Public comment

Problem-solving

Decision-making

**Dialogue asks
something different:**

*What can we understand
more fully by hearing one
another's experiences?*

Who Owns What?



PARTICIPANTS

Own the conversation.

CJAM FACILITATOR

Holds the process.

NOTETAKER

Captures the conversation.

COUNCIL TABLE PARTNER

Listens + Participates + Carries the conversation forward.



Your Position Comes With You

You are one participant.

AND

You are an elected official at the table.

Participants may:

- Look to you
- Defer to you
- Challenge you
- Seek your approval
- Ask you for answers
- Watch your reactions

PARTICIPATE WITH INTENTION

LISTEN

What is this person
trying to help us
understand?

CONSIDER

Does the
conversation need
something from me
right now?

CONTRIBUTE

Can I add curiosity,
experience, or
understanding
without taking
ownership of the
conversation?

Ways to Participate



Get Curious

"Can you tell me more about that?"

"What about that experience felt important to you?"

Check Your Understanding

"Am I understanding you correctly that...?"

Explore What's Underneath

"What experience has led you to feel that way?"

Bring It Back to the Group

"I'm curious how others at the table experience this."

Share When Appropriate

Offer your perspective as one perspective, then make room for others.

When Your Instinct Is to Respond...

DEFEND → Get curious.

EXPLAIN → Ask yourself whether the explanation is needed right now.

SOLVE → Explore the experience underneath the solution.

DEBATE → Understand the difference.

You can always look to your facilitator for support



CARRY THE CONVERSATION FORWARD

Your Second Role

You become the table's **REPORTER**.

Your goal:

Help the larger room hear what happened at your table.

Not what you concluded.

Not what you agreed with.

What happened in the dialogue.

Listen for the Shape of the Conversation

THEMES

What kept surfacing?

EXPERIENCES & CONCERNS

What seemed especially important?

SIMILARITIES

Where did experiences connect?

DIFFERENCES

Where did experiences diverge?

UNDERSTANDING

What does Council need to carry forward?

Prepare Together

During the final few minutes, identify:

1. What are 2–3 important themes?
2. What should Council understand?
3. What important differences should not be lost?
4. What deserves further exploration?

Use your team.

Facilitator + Notetaker + Table Partner + Participants

Preserve Difference

NOT:

“Our table agreed that downtown feels unsafe.”

INSTEAD:

“We heard very different experiences of downtown. Several participants described avoiding downtown because they feel unsafe, while others described feeling comfortable there and expressed concern that perceptions of downtown do not match their experience.”

Difference is part of the finding.

Thank You!

