

**City of Bloomington
Environmental Commission**

The mission of the Environmental Commission (EC) is to promote the stewardship and preservation of the City's environment and natural resources by seeking out and responding to emerging issues, addressing them with sound long-term policy recommendations, and increasing local environmental awareness and engagement.

DATE: May 23, 2025
TO: Mayor Kerry Thomson
Bloomington Common Council
Director David Hittle, Planning and Transportation
FROM: Chair - Carrie Albright, on behalf of the Environmental Commission
RE: 2024 Annual Report, Bloomington Environmental Commission

MEMBERSHIP:

Active: Carrie Albright (Chair), Matt Caldie (Vice-Chair/Treasurer), Adam Martinez (Secretary), Rachael Johnson (staff liaison, ex-officio), David Parkhurst, Mitchell Owens, Shannon Gayk, Nadia Cain, Kasie Chappell, Adam Fudickar

Transitioned Off/Resigned in 2024: Linda Thompson, Mike Litwin, Megan Murphy, Karena Tankersley, Megan Bankowski, Gabby Robles, Connor Wright

2025 Interns/Fellows: Fiona Kilgore

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024 the Environmental Commission (EC) focused on outreach programs and activities in the community and further improvements to the Habitat Connectivity Plan. We tackled existing projects as well as new (or previously paused) initiatives. Among the top accomplishments were the annual Eco-Heroes Art Contest, increased public engagement and visibility, and new initiatives that have since gained momentum in 2025.

GOALS

During the first meeting of 2024, the Environmental Commission held a “bucket list” meeting, where members discussed environmental initiatives to consider for the coming year. The members discussed the merits of each proposed idea and then voted on the top priorities. These

topics typically become the main focus for the EC throughout the year. Starting in February, the Commission proceeds to produce action items for these goals.

In 2024, the Environmental Commission's top bucket list items were:

Biodiversity Working Group

- Promote Habitat Connectivity Map at local events & gatherings
- Extend focus to pollinators and native plants
- Create, update, and collect additional educational materials

Outreach Programs and Activities

- Continue community efforts (Eco-Heroes, BugFest, Weed Wrangle, etc.)
- Engage with other organizations in the City, community, and the university in overlapping interests
- Support and drive momentum for the City of Bloomington Climate Action Plan
- Increase presence in local media (newspaper, radio, IU campus)

MEMBERSHIP

The EC concluded 2024 with three vacancies, due to resignations for personal reasons, to be filled by both the Bloomington Common Council and Mayor Kerry Thomson. Our current membership is comprised of scientists, educators, university students and faculty, and environmental policy hobbyists.

COMMISSION PROJECTS

Unified Development Ordinance

In the interest of benefiting the community as a whole, the Environmental Commission continued its 2023 work of submitting revision recommendations to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to the city staff, the Common Council, and the Plan Commission. Our membership read the various modules and drafts of the UDO and then held working sessions wherein members proposed, debated, and considered amendments to the documents.

Eco-Heroes Art Contest

Each year, the EC hosts the Eco-Heroes Art Contest, which encourages students and residents to think environmentally through a creative expression. The EC appeals to local K–12 schools (including homeschools) to incorporate environmental education in a fun, artistic way. Adult members of the public are also invited to participate in our 18+ category.

For the 12th annual Eco-Heroes Art Contest, the theme was “Drops to Drains: Eco-Heroes Working with the City on Stormwater Strains!” which received over 30 submissions. The awards ceremony was held at Bloomington’s Earth Day celebration event at Switchyard Park. During the ceremony, Mayor Thomson awarded the winners of the contest with their prizes. Our Commission intern and staff liaison helped gather 20 sponsors for prize bags for the participants.

Environmental Commission Outreach

New and renewed outreach was a priority in 2024. Outreach ideas included a renewed the EC’s use of social media, tabling at IU Bug Fest and Grandview Elementary’s STEM Night, and becoming more visible to the public. In 2024, the Chair and Vice Chair were interviewed by WFHB’s Activate! which led to a feature and evergreen PSA. The Chair was also interviewed by local podcast, The 812.

INTERN PROJECTS

The Environmental Commission hosted Graduate Research Fellow, Alauna Keeley through April of 2024. Alauna contributed to work behind the scenes on events, data analysis, and City projects concerning the environment. On multiple occasions in 2024, Alauna volunteered to take minutes for the EC, submitting both minutes and memos to the City website.

Moving into 2025, the intern will no longer contribute to the Environmental Commission, instead prioritizing projects within the Planning and Transportation Department.

Eco-Heroes Art Contest

Alauna assisted Linda Thompson, our staff liaison, in putting on Eco-Heroes, which included outreach to local schools/teachers for participants, local businesses for prize sponsorships, and arranging logistics for the day of the event. Commissioners attended and represented the EC at tables featuring the winning entries as well as the EC’s usual educational materials.

WORKING GROUPS

ECPC (Environmental Commission Planning Committee)

The Environmental Commission Planning Committee meets as needed to address environmentally relevant petitions that come before the Plan Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals. Along with our staff liaison, Linda Thompson, members of this Committee review the petitions and environmental surroundings of the parcel in question. The ECPC then produces a memo outlining our concerns/wishes for the parcel. In 2024, one memo was sent to

the Plan Commission, and one memo was sent to the City Council. Moving into 2025, the ECPC subcommittee anticipates less involvement in this aspect of our role.

Biodiversity Working Group

The Bloomington Habitat Connectivity Plan, an initiative of the Biodiversity Working Group started in 2020, was determined to be a top priority for 2024. Before the working group could promote and further implement the Habitat Connectivity Plan, the existing database and resources needed to be updated. As time permitted, the subcommittee used 2024 to assess the functionality and changes needed in the Habitat Connectivity Map. Although this continues to be a highly valued deliverable, the 2024 year spent less effort distributing the HCP and more focus on how we might improve it for long-lasting community engagement.

Water Quality Working Group

The Water Quality Working Group was resurrected in late 2023 to assess local storm, drinking, and general water quality. In 2024, this subcommittee gathered to discuss the status of stormwater in Bloomington, active ordinances as updated by the Bloomington Utilities’ MS4 Program Coordinator, and a renewed focus on the EC’s role in supporting implementation and enforcement. Because of IDEM’s report reflecting poor water quality, this subcommittee will prioritize a Clear Creek water monitoring citizen science project over the next 3–5 years.

Guest Presentations

The Commission’s dedication to lifelong learning includes occasional guest appearances or presentations on subjects of interest.

January 2024	Representatives from both Bloomington Commission on Sustainability and the Tree Commission	Interest in collaborating on overlapping areas of interest
February 2024	Representatives of the Summit Development project	Discussion of the environmental impacts of this new development
February 2024	Jacqueline Scanlan Assistant Director, Planning and Transportation	UDO recommendations as provided by the EC
June 2024	Shawn Miya Assistant Director of Sustainability	Bloomington’s Climate Action Plan and Dashboard

Liaison with other Commissions and Committees

To allow the EC to focus on the work of the City as a whole, the membership of the EC attends various other meetings to gather information and, when asked, to provide input.

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| 1. Bloomington Tree Commission | David Parkhurst |
| 2. Environmental Resources Advisory Council | David Parkhurst |
| 4. Bloomington Commission on Sustainability | Matt Caldie |
| 5. Friends of Lake Monroe | David Parkhurst |
| 6. MC-IRIS | Linda Thompson |

Thank you for your continued support of the Environmental Commission and all it does to serve the future of Bloomington. We look forward to our continued work in 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie A. Albright
Chair, Bloomington Environmental Commission