



**Bloomington Commission on Sustainability
Annual Sustainability Assessment
March 22, 2017**

This report is the Annual Sustainability Assessment prepared by the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS) to the Common Council, Mayor, and the public in accordance with the Bloomington, Indiana Code of Ordinances for Boards, Commissions, and Councils.¹ The duties of BCOS related to this report are specified in Powers and Duties under Section 2.12.100.

“(C) To determine, in cooperation with other city boards and commissions, Bloomington's current and future sustainability status by developing and monitoring a set of sustainability indicators;

(D) To provide, in cooperation with other city boards and commissions, an annual "sustainability assessment" based on said indicators. The assessment shall be included in an annual report and provided to the common council, mayor and the public;”

Sustainability Outcomes for the City

Environmental Metrics

BCOS selected three environmental sustainability categories as a sample of metrics tracked by the city. These are energy usage, water usage, and waste disposal (estimated) over an eight-year period (2008 to 2016). The data presented comes from each utility provider, which defines Bloomington service areas differently.

Energy usage includes data for both natural gas and electricity. Natural gas data, provided by Vectren, represents the total for customers with Bloomington city zip codes (Figure 1). Duke Energy provided electricity consumption data

(Figure 2) representing the Bloomington District, which is defined by the utility company to include Bloomington and Ellettsville. Since 2008, the Bloomington District has consumed 11,971,073,380 kWh of electricity. The residential sector accounted for 35.8 percent of the total while the commercial sector accounted for 27.84 percent, the government sector for 23.28 percent, and the industrial sector for 12.48 percent. The trend lines (Figure 3) for all sectors show a steady decrease over the past eight years. In 2015, usage in each sector dropped below their respective levels in 2008; the total decrease resulted in approximately 170,000,000 kWh less consumed in 2015 than 2008.

Figure 1

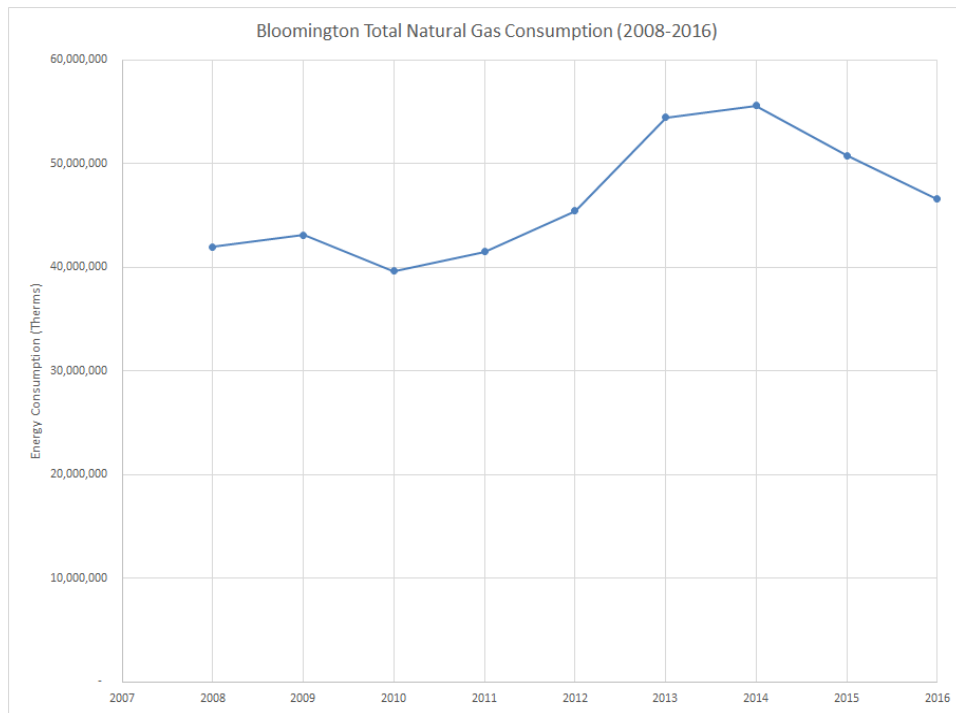


Figure 2

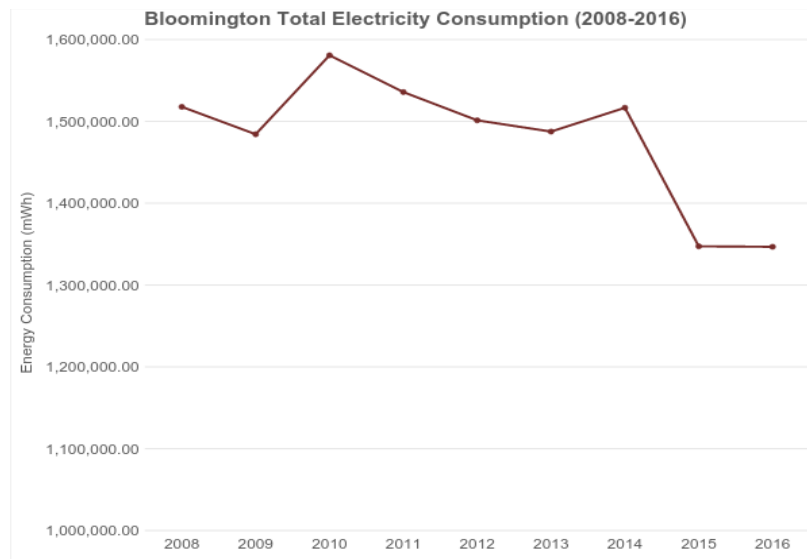
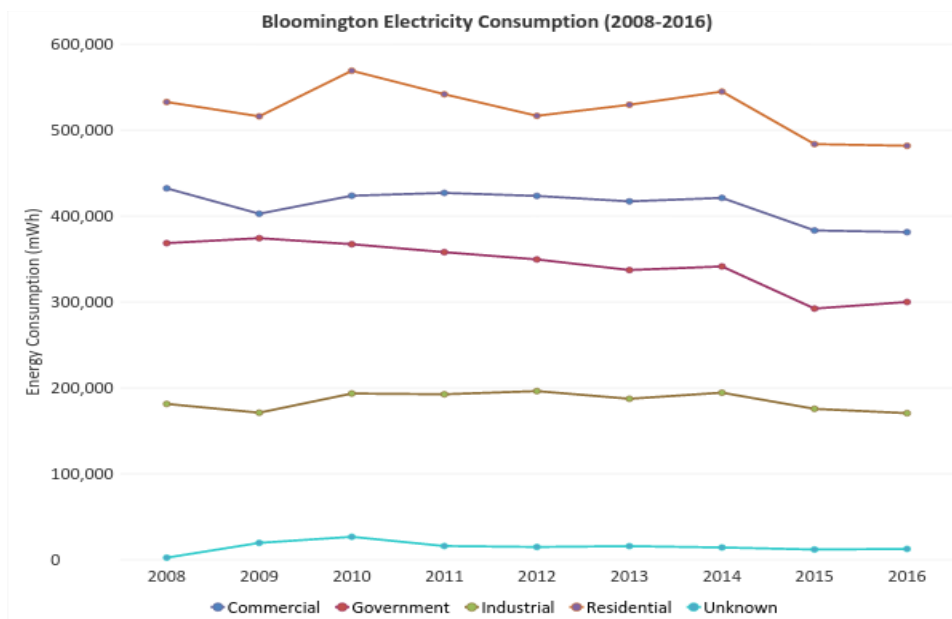


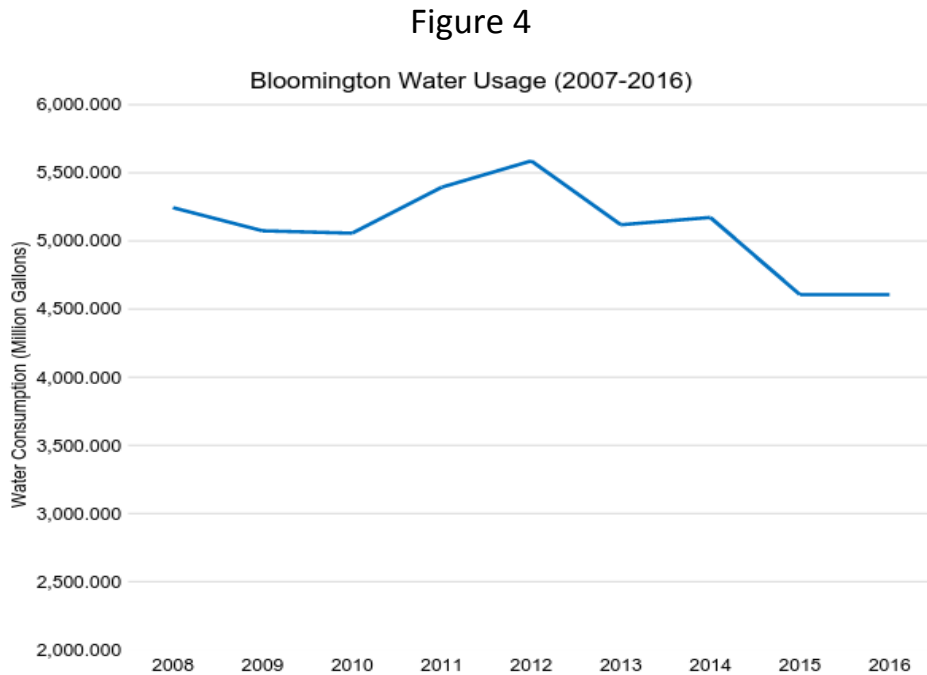
Figure 3



In 2015 and 2016, the city enrolled in the Georgetown University Energy Prize, a national contest including 50 participating cities.² During the contest period from July 2013 to June 2017, communities are challenged to work with government and utilities to establish and implement plans to reduce per capita energy consumption from local gas and electric utilities. The City of Bloomington has

invested in extensive community outreach, which included involving local school programs and community service projects, to educate citizens about energy consumption.

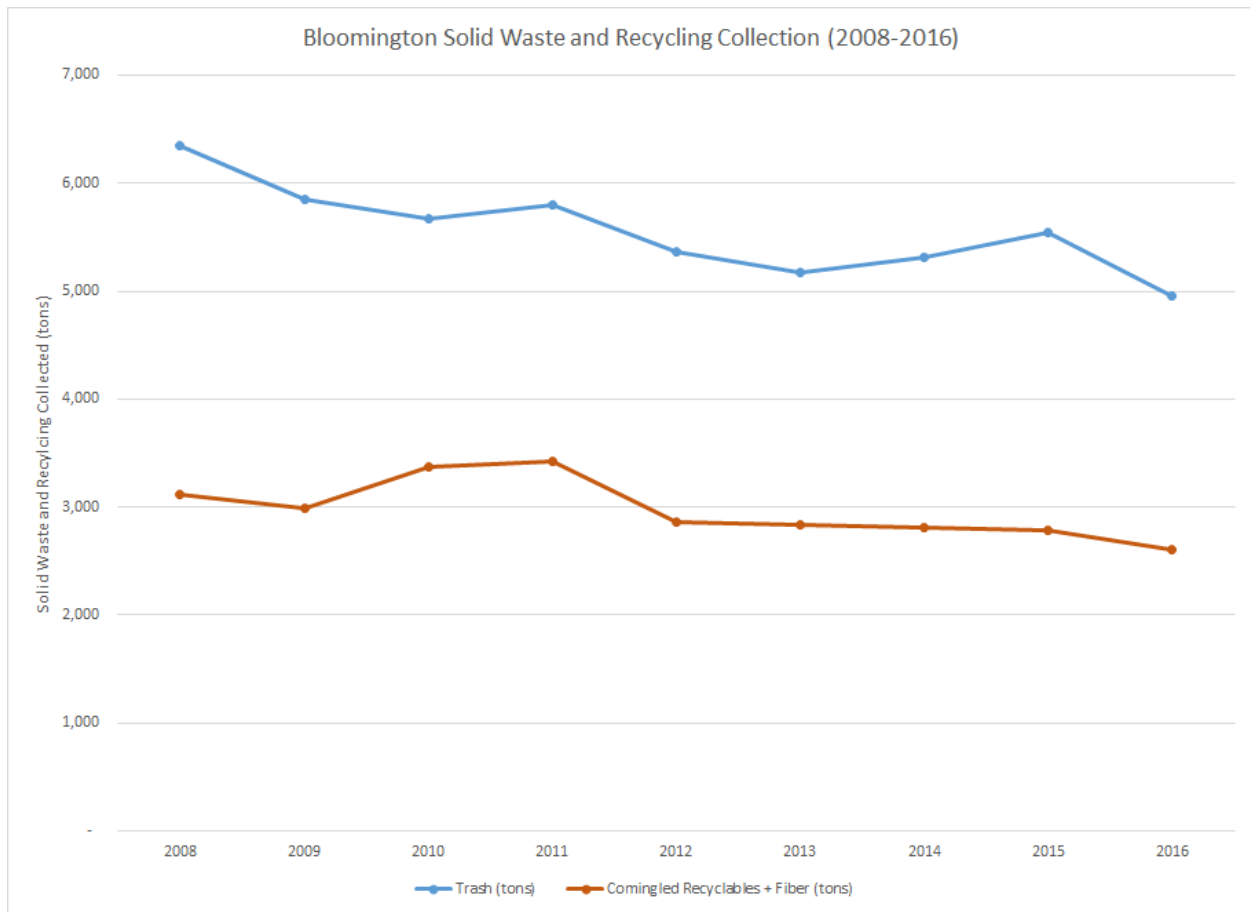
Water usage data (Figure 4) provided by the City of Bloomington Utilities represent amounts for the city and service areas outside the city. From 2008-2016, consumption totaled 45,860 million gallons (MG) of water, with an average of 5,096 MG per year. Since 2008, the city has reduced its consumption from 2008 levels of 5,244 MG to 4,605 MG in 2016.



The City of Bloomington Sanitation Department, Indiana University, and private businesses provide waste collection. The private waste collectors that serve Bloomington do not currently collect data at the municipal level. As a result, the data presented (Figure 5) is only from the City of Bloomington Sanitation Department's solid waste and recycling collection program. In 2008, the department reported collecting 6,353 tons of trash and 3,114 tons of recyclable waste. Measured tonnage of recyclable waste included co-mingled recyclable materials (plastic, glass, etc.) and fiber (paper and cardboard). From 2008 to 2016, Bloomington has seen a decrease in trash collected from 6,353 tons in 2008 to 4,956 tons in 2016. During the same time period, collection of recycled materials fluctuated from 3,114 tons in 2008, up to 3,422 tons in 2011, and then down to

2,611 tons in 2016.

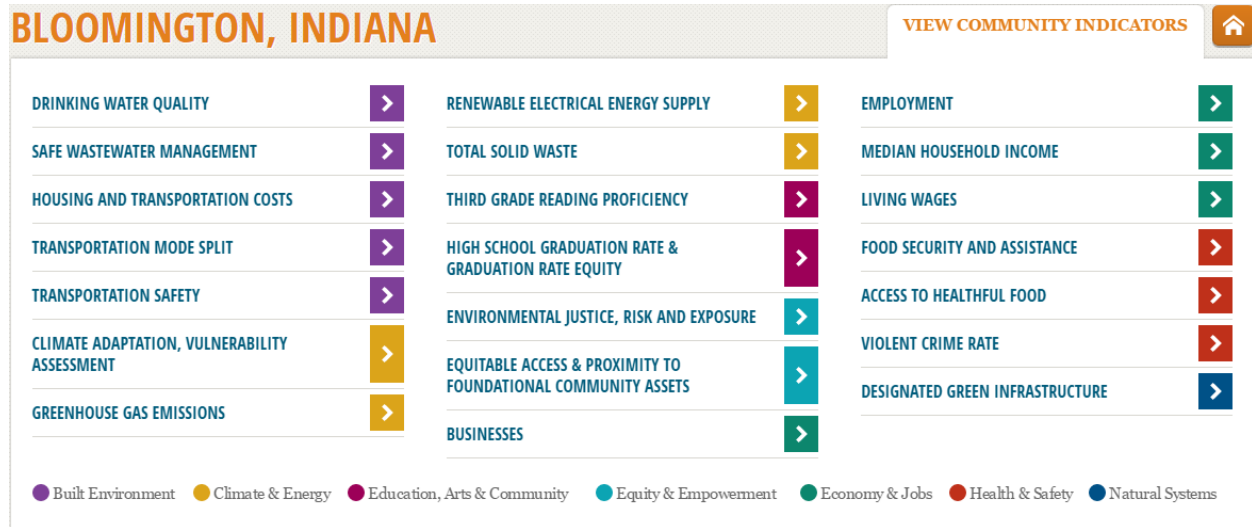
Figure 5



Leading STAR Community Indicators Project

In 2016, the City of Bloomington participated for the first time in the Leading STAR Indicators program using 2015 data.³ This framework and certification program was developed for local governments to evaluate local sustainability, which includes economic, environmental, and social performance measures. The project provides a platform for communities reporting to share and compare data between participating communities. Figure 6 presents a list of the 21 STAR sustainability topics created to track each community's progress towards becoming a sustainable city. Bloomington has reported on 18 of the 21 indicators with plans to report on more in the future. The full report may be accessed from the STAR Communities website.⁴

Figure 6



BCOS Initiatives

BCOS held work meetings at the end of 2016 to renew our commitment to our charge given by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington (Ordinance 05-15, passed and adopted on May 4, 2005; 2.12.100 Bloomington, Indiana, Code of Ordinances) and to develop a strategic plan, goals, and priorities. The key priorities for 2017 are to establish BCOS strategic plan and goals, participate in the review and comment of the City of Bloomington 2040 Comprehensive Plan,⁵ contribute to the City’s Environmental Sustainability Plan, and to support the Solarize Bloomington Initiative.⁶

In an effort to strengthen our own identity, BCOS is preparing its strategic plan with specific goals and timelines. In this vein, we are researching several new opportunities such as food justice and security policy development, promotion and policy for non-market economy growth, securing funds and partnerships for sustainability recognition awards, and deep reflection on Bloomington’s current level and quality of resiliency and strategic development for a stronger supportive resiliency plan.

A subset of BCOS Commissioners has been meeting with other citizens to review and provide written comment on chapters of the City of Bloomington 2040 Comprehensive Plan using the lenses of sustainability and resiliency. BCOS has voted and approved the submission of written comments on the chapters of Land Use (submitted 11/1/2016), Community Services (submitted 12/8/17), and

Culture & Identity (12/8/17). BCOS will continue to stay connected to the process of review and comment as additional chapter calls are issued.

BCOS supports several efforts involving The City of Bloomington Department of Economic & Sustainable Development. BCOS will participate in developing a comprehensive Environmental Sustainability Plan through a designated BCOS representative. In addition, the commission supports the Solarize Bloomington Initiative, which is collaboration between the City of Bloomington, the Solar Indiana Renewable Energy Network (SIREN)⁷, and BCOS. This group-buying arrangement allows citizens to purchase solar energy installations at reduced prices. Other projects include RentRocket⁸ and Hoosier to Hoosier.⁹

We look forward to expanding our partnerships and working towards a more sustainable, compassionate, and resilient Bloomington.

Questions for City Council: How Can BCOS Help to Enhance City Policymaking

This report is intended as a general update on BCOS activities and available sustainability data, but we are also sincerely interested in learning how our efforts can be optimized to support city policymakers on the City Council and in the administration. Constituted as an advisory body, some core functions of BCOS are to conduct research and to draft policy briefings that can facilitate policymakers' efforts in developing laws, plans, and programs that adequately account for the dynamic interdependence among ecological, economic, and social equity variables.

This systems-level policy thinking requires a view of both "the forest" and "the trees," which is an integrative mandate that gives the BCOS a unique role, in the constellation of statutorily authorized citizens' advisory commissions. In our work, as in yours, we must always consider many, overlapping issue-areas and we must always be mindful of the tradeoffs inherent among competing policy options. Nevertheless, the weight of actual policymaking authority rests in your hands; hence, we are here to help lighten the load.

As such, we are eager to learn what kinds of information (data) and what formats of presentation (reports) would contribute *substantively* to your work. With only so many hours in the day, we want to spend our time crafting

deliverables that are immediately applicable and squarely relevant. It is with these considerations in mind that we put forth two, primary questions:

First: What sustainability-oriented metrics would the City Council like to see reported in the future? Or, rather: what information might we collect to help you craft robust and data-driven policy?

Second: What kind of substantive support can BCOS provide to City Council, regarding upcoming initiatives? Or, rather: what policy decisions on the 2017 legislative calendar could benefit from the multi-dimensional perspective of sustainability?

Such simple questions do not likely have simple answers, so BCOS has no expectation for a quickly issued, itemized list. In fact, it may be more productive to plan more regular and consistent communication, such that we may assist you as opportunities arise. Further, there may be times when our work will require your help in providing information that is difficult for us to access. Some examples are gaps in the set of sustainability metrics we have presented, above. Collaboration can help us help you!

We are grateful for the opportunity to work with you to serve the Bloomington community, in this uniquely grassroots and deeply democratic institution of the City Commission system. Together, we can continue to strengthen our community's democratic culture and, by so doing, to enhance our community's capacity to convivially, collaboratively, and collectively choose how we share our lives and livelihoods in this place we call our home.

¹ Statutory Authority: BMC 2.12.100

(https://bloomington.in.gov/code/level2/TIT2ADPE_CH2.12BOCOCO.html#TIT2ADPE_CH2.12BOCOCO_2.12.100BLCOSU)

² Georgetown University Energy Prize (<https://guep.org/about-the-prize/>)

³ Leading STAR Community Indicators (<http://www.starcommunities.org/star-updates/leading-star-communities-indicator-project-workshop/>)

⁴ Star Communities (<https://reporting.starcommunities.org/communities/57-indiana-bloomington>)

⁵ City of Bloomington 2040 Comprehensive Plan (<https://bloomington.in.gov/cmp>)

⁶ Solarize Bloomington Campaign

(https://bloomington.in.gov/documents/viewDocument.php?document_id=9841)

⁷ Solar Indiana Renewable Energy Network (SIREN) (<https://www.sirensolar.org>)

⁸ RentRocket (www.RentRocket.org)

⁹ Hoosier to Hoosier (<http://www.indiana.edu/~sustain/programs/hoosier-to-hoosier/index.php>)

Contributing BCOS Commissioners:

Coleman Burnett, Member

Ryan Conway, Member

Ethan Horvath, Member

Jana McGee, Co-Chair

Teddie Phillipson-Mower

Gwendolen White, Co-Chair