

## **PRESS RELEASE**

August 20, 2021

### **Four City Council Members release 2022 budget priorities, focused on equity and sustainability**

**Bloomington, Ind.** - Council Members Matt Flaherty, Isabel Piedmont-Smith, Kate Rosenbarger, and Stephen Volan have released recommendations for the City of Bloomington's 2022 annual budget and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) appropriations (PDF attached). Their priorities lie mainly in three categories:

- Sustainability - Implementation of the city's Climate Action Plan, incentives for city employees to commute to work without using single-occupancy vehicles, and a study for a city-wide composting pilot program
- Transportation - Implementation of the high-priority bicycle network as described in the city's Transportation Plan, corridor studies of Atwater Ave./3rd St. and College Ave./Walnut St., public discussion of Kirkwood Avenue as a shared street, increased investment in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on par with motor vehicle infrastructure, and a pilot program to clear snow off high-traffic sidewalks
- Housing - Development of a comprehensive strategic housing plan, guidance for homeowner development of Accessory Dwelling Units, and continued support for the 2021 Heading Home Plan to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-repeating

In addition, the four council members support paid family leave for city employees, technology improvements in city council chambers, a feasibility study for the creation of a Department of Public Safety, and 24/7 accessible public restrooms downtown. In addition to ARPA funds, some of the above priorities could be funded, according to the group, by gradual reductions in subsidies for parking and sanitation services.

The four Council Members agree with the Mayor's stated focus on racial equity, a sustainable economy, and climate action. "We look forward to further collaborating with the Mayor's administration to incorporate our recommendations into the 2022 budget," said Piedmont-Smith, "We have also reached out to Council colleagues who share our interests in one or more items on our list and will continue to collaborate with them on common goals."

The funding priorities are guided and supported by the City's adopted goals and plans, with a focus on equity and sustainability. "Our city is lucky to have high-quality plans such as our Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Plan, and the Climate Action Plan," said Rosenbarger. "However, we are not on track to meet most targets. These budget items help us re-focus and allocate funding to priorities Bloomington residents have already determined to be the most important."

"The annual budget is one of the most important policy documents the City has," Flaherty said. "We believe strongly that the city council should have a role in helping shape its priorities through meaningful collaboration with the Mayor's administration."

The 2022 budget will be voted on by council members in October. Volan looks forward to a budget that is guided by the City's goals. "As council members, we are elected to do what is best for residents of Bloomington. We will not be able to support the 2022 budget unless it meaningfully reflects progress toward our City's publicly-adopted priorities."

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**To: Mayor John Hamilton**  
**From: Councilmembers Flaherty, Piedmont-Smith, Rosenbarger, Volan**  
**Date: July 1, 2021**  
**Subject: City of Bloomington 2022 Budget and ARPA Priorities**

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The following recommendations represent our policy priorities for the City of Bloomington's 2022 Annual Budget and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) appropriations. They are guided and supported by the City's adopted goals and plans, with a focus on equity and sustainability. We look forward to collaborating with the Mayoral administration to incorporate these recommendations into the 2022 budget, and we plan to reach out to Council colleagues who share our interests in one or more items in this document.

This document begins with recommendations specific to the 2022 Annual Budget, followed by ARPA priorities, and concludes with a number of questions. As councilmembers are not in as good of a position as City staff to know where funds may be cut and reinvested in the following priorities, we would like to meet with Mayor Hamilton and relevant members of his administration in coming weeks to discuss how best to fund these priorities. Note that some of the items from the 2022 annual budget recommendations could possibly be funded through ARPA, or items from the ARPA priorities via the annual budget, depending on how the ARPA rules are interpreted.

## **2022 ANNUAL BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Not necessarily in order of importance.*

**(1) Develop a detailed housing strategy plan to guide the City's efforts to meet community housing needs.** (Departments: Housing & Neighborhood Development, Planning & Transportation)

- The City's **Comprehensive Plan** calls for the development of a detailed housing strategy plan (p. 64). The strategy plan should be informed by the 2020 Bloomington Housing Study, community input, housing and planning experts, and guidance from other relevant City plans.

**(2) Facilitate development of Accessory Dwelling Units in the community utilizing best practices from leading cities.** (Departments: Planning & Transportation, Housing & Neighborhood Development)

- Given the relatively slow uptake of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in Bloomington over the last several years — and given the broad support for this housing type in the community — the City should take steps to facilitate the

development of ADUs. This could include a dedicated website and other resources to simplify for residents the process of financing, designing, securing permits for, and building an ADU. The City could employ local architects to design plans for ADUs in a variety of sizes, types, and styles that meet UDO requirements, which residents could either utilize for free or for a reduced cost and which could be pre-approved to reduce the time and administrative burden of the process. ADUs are specifically called out as a preferred residential option in the [Comprehensive Plan](#).

**(3) Finance, create and approve the implementation plan for a 2023 city-wide composting pilot program.** (Department: Public Works, Economic Development)

- The [Climate Action Plan](#) calls for a “Food Scraps Bag” pilot program to test food scraps composting collection across restaurant, commercial and residential customer bases. Cost-savings will come from the diversion of solid waste from the landfill. The pilot is planned to begin in 2023, and advance planning will be required. This plan should also focus on the possibilities for integrating best practices from other cities that offer city-wide composting, specifically focusing on commercial establishments and all household types including multi-family housing.

**(4) Make significant progress on Phase 1 goals of the City’s Climate Action Plan with a focus on activating the private sector** (Departments: Economic and Sustainable Development, Planning & Transportation)

- Examples from the [Climate Action Plan](#) include:
  - Action EB1-B-2: Expand the Solarize Bloomington program beyond residential home owners to include commercial and industrial properties
  - Action G1-A-1: Complete a land conversion opportunity study to analyze public and private property that could be converted to greenspace to serve as a carbon sink and support stormwater remediation
  - Action FA1-B-1: Conduct a detailed food security assessment and establish detailed strategies to increase food security in identified problem areas

**(5) Conduct detailed corridor studies for the 3rd Street / Atwater Street and College Avenue / Walnut Street pairs.** (Departments: Planning & Transportation, Engineering)

- The City’s [Transportation Plan](#), adopted in 2019, “recommends immediate corridor studies of the major E-W and N-S corridors through the center of Bloomington” (p. 61). As noted in the plan, these studies will rely on in-depth community engagement to identify the best ways to improve multimodal travel in

Bloomington in order to help meet adopted community goals (in the [Comprehensive Plan](#), [Sustainability Plan](#), and [Climate Action Plan](#)) and enhance the vitality of downtown Bloomington.

**(6) Pursue a charrette to redesign Kirkwood Avenue as a shared street, as defined in the Transportation Plan.** (Departments: Planning & Transportation, Engineering, Economic & Sustainable Development)

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City worked with Kirkwood Avenue businesses to open the street to dining and non-automobile use in strategic locations. This pilot helped demonstrate the many community and economic benefits to utilizing Kirkwood Avenue as an innovative and flexible public space, in line with the shared street concept outlined in the City's [Transportation Plan](#). As the community works to identify the best approach to maintain and enhance these benefits, it is the ideal time to implement the Transportation Plan's design charrette recommendation, charting a clear path forward for Kirkwood Avenue.

**(7) Allocate funds for the city's High-Priority Bicycle Network, aiming to meet targeted timeframes.** (Departments: Planning & Transportation, Engineering)

- The City's [Transportation Plan](#) states that “[t]he City should allocate funds in the annual budget cycle or create a bond package in order to implement the projects identified in the High-Priority Bicycle Network to build the network within the targeted timeframe” (p. 62). Relevant projects are identified in Figure 21 and Table 7 of the Plan, with the full implementation timeframe broken into Phase 1 (1-3 year) and Phase 2 (4-6 year) projects. According to the Plan, these projects represent the backbone of the City's multimodal transportation system and are anticipated to achieve the greatest positive impact. Fully implementing the network is crucial to achieving the City's long-standing [goal of achieving Platinum status](#) with the League of American Bicyclists (see Resolutions 10-10 and 11-15) as well as the goals of the City's [Climate Action Plan](#). (Related: see Questions below.)

**(8) Allocate funds for both pedestrian infrastructure and bicycle infrastructure to be equivalent to funding dedicated to automobile infrastructure, at least equivalent to the City's street maintenance budget.** (Departments: Public Works, Engineering, Planning & Transportation)

- According to the City's [Comprehensive Plan](#) Goal 6.4, the City must “prioritize non-automotive modes: Continue to integrate all modes into the transportation network and to prioritize bicycle, pedestrian, public transit, and other non-automotive modes to make our network equally accessible, safe, and efficient for all users” (p. 75). In order to appropriately prioritize non-automotive

modes of transportation, we must fund them greater than or equal to how we fund automobile infrastructure. The City, in its Paving and Patching budget line item, maintains 237 lane miles of streets with a budget of \$1,869,000. While maintaining infrastructure is different from building new, we would like to see \$1.9 million each to bicycle infrastructure and pedestrian infrastructure annually in order to maintain, improve, and expand our networks (see Goal 6.3 of the Comprehensive Plan, p. 74). Prioritizing funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure aims at reaching goals in our [Comprehensive Plan](#), our [Transportation Plan](#), and our [Climate Action Plan](#).

**(9) Develop and implement a pilot program to clear snow from sidewalks in areas with high pedestrian traffic and in identified problem areas.** (Departments: Public Works, Planning & Transportation)

- Many Bloomington residents rely on sidewalks year-round, including when it snows. This is especially true for many lower-income residents who do not have access to vehicles and who walk and utilize Bloomington Transit for transportation. However, despite tools like uReport and a requirement for property owners to clear snow from sidewalks, many barriers remain. Allocating a portion of the snow removal budget, for instance 20%, to pilot a program to remove snow from sidewalks can help to address the substantial inequities and pedestrian safety challenges posed by our current system. In addition to prioritizing areas with high pedestrian traffic, potential problem areas could include areas with limited pedestrian connectivity (e.g., crossing I-69) or where monolithic sidewalks lead to snow from streets being piled onto sidewalks. Many other cities implement programs of this kind, clearing snow from critical pedestrian infrastructure or even all sidewalks in some cases. This pilot program is supported by the goals of our [Comprehensive Plan](#), [Transportation Plan](#), and [Climate Action Plan](#).

**(10) Develop and implement a parking cash-out program for City employees.** (Departments: Controller, Economic & Sustainable Development, Planning & Transportation)

- Parking cash-out rewards employees who seek to reduce their carbon footprint while better utilizing reserved public parking spaces. The rate for such spaces will be raised to the market rate of public lots and garages, but the employee will receive a raise equal to the new rate; employees who choose to continue driving will see no fiscal impact, but employees who walk, bike, bus or carpool effectively get a modest bump in income. A parking cash-out program will save the City money in capital costs by reducing the demand among employees for structured parking spaces, or will put surface spaces to more valuable public use. Such a

program will also set an example for private employers. Both the City's [Climate Action Plan](#) (Action TL1-A-2) and its [Transportation Demand Management Plan](#) (page 38) call for such a program.

**(11) Implement a paid family leave program for City employees.** (Department: Human Resources)

- The paid family leave program should include full salary for up to 12 weeks for all employees at 75% FTE (30 hours/week) or greater. Paid family leave allows workers to meet their health and family needs without jeopardizing their economic security. Various models exist in many states and cities. Paid family leave allows workers to continue to earn their pay while they take time away from work to: care for a newborn, newly-adopted child or newly-placed foster child; care for a family member with a serious health condition; address family circumstances arising from a military service member's deployment; or address a serious health condition (including pregnancy). By way of example, see the following [summary of state approaches](#) from the National Partnership for Women & Families. This priority is noted in the [Comprehensive Plan](#) under Community Services and Economics, Programs.

**(12) Install timing devices and related technology improvements in City Council chambers.** (Departments: Information Technology)

- Shorter meetings that are equitable and more respectful of everyone's time, especially at the Council level, are only possible when the meetings are timed. For years, the Council Chambers have needed a timer solution that is easily visible from all angles in the room, yet unobtrusive; within line of sight of typical users of the room (i.e., whatever planes are created by human eyeballs looking at other human eyeballs); does not appear arbitrary; and is easily managed by the president or parliamentarian from the dais. Note: This recommendation is only relevant if not *already* completed in 2021, per many Councilmember requests.

**(13) Finance and conduct a feasibility study for the creation of a Department of Public Safety** (Departments: Office of the Mayor, Community and Family Resources, Bloomington Police Department, Bloomington Fire Department)

- A Department of Public Safety would include the Police and Fire Departments and some portion of the Community and Family Resources Department's current portfolio, with the goal of implementing a broader, more holistic model of public safety that ensures the safety and security of all residents (housed and unhoused). Such a department could implement programs and innovative approaches to public safety, which could in turn reduce stresses on BPD officers

and narrow the scope of work officers are tasked with. Additionally, a Department of Public Safety could better coordinate work among social service providers, health service providers, members of the public, and all aspects of the justice system. This request aims to improve public safety and civility for all, in line with a core vision statement goal of the [Comprehensive Plan](#).

## **AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDING PRIORITIES**

**(A) Provide residential rental payment assistance to help residents who face eviction and homelessness.** (Department: Housing & Neighborhood Development)

- Renters facing eviction and homelessness imminently due to the pandemic are by definition a more marginal economic echelon of the city than others. In addition to any federal or state rental assistance, the city should prioritize keeping as many people in their homes as possible, especially those facing a high risk of eviction and homelessness.

**(B) Allocate \$7.5 million to develop and seed a community land trust not-for-profit organization, and consider additional strategic land donations to the organization.** (Department: Housing & Neighborhood Development)

- The development of a community land trust (CLT) will help the City provide home-ownership opportunities at prices lower than the market is typically able to provide. Many peer cities — including Madison, WI; State College, PA; and Ithaca, NY — have CLTs that provide meaningful examples for Bloomington to develop an inclusive and equitable model. The redevelopment of the IU Health hospital site; the potential for housing on (or above) land designated for the convention center expansion; and housing on (or above) City-owned surface parking lots provide prime opportunities for land donations to the trust. These opportunities, combined with the availability of ARPA funds to aid in pandemic recovery, make now the ideal time for the City to support the creation of a CLT.

**(C) Provide public restrooms that are accessible year-round, including in winter; staff and maintain these as necessary.** (Department: Public Works, Parks & Recreation)

- Year-round access to public restrooms is crucial to maintaining public health and human dignity for all Bloomington residents.

**(D) Work with Monroe County and township governments, as well as other funders, to fund the highest-priority recommendations of the Housing Insecurity Working Group** (Departments: Community and Family Resources)

- The HIWG’s final report is not yet complete, but the most urgent investment will be to add at least two new staff members, and to invest time and expertise to establish a new non-profit sub-structure under the United Way.

***(E) Provide funds for essential building repairs, pandemic-era ventilation upgrades, and equipment replacement at the John Waldron Arts Center***

(Departments: Economic & Sustainable Development, Public Works)

- The Waldron Arts Center Task Force concluded that \$177,685 is required as a minimum to be able to operate the Waldron in the short term, but this did not take into account the fact that Ivy Tech removed its lighting and sound equipment, which is essential for most performances. In addition, the estimated \$60,000 in ventilation upgrades were not included in the above figure, but these are important for public health due to the ongoing pandemic and also because Actors Equity performers will not perform in a space that does not meet COVID-safe ventilation standards.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Has the City conducted race and gender pay equity studies for City employees in recent years? If so, can those results be shared? If not, we recommend conducting these studies in 2022 in order to help ensure the City is a fair and equitable workplace.
2. To what extent does the City currently subsidize structured parking? In other words, on an annual basis, what are the typical (i.e., non-pandemic) revenues, as well as the typical operations, maintenance, and debt service costs?
3. Does the City expect to be able to fully implement the Transportation Plan’s High Priority Bicycle Network within the specified six-year time frame? If not, what is the expected time frame? If so, please provide a list of each project in the network with: the expected implementation year, estimated project cost, and funding source.
4. Do revenues from City trash & recycling service cover the costs (operations, maintenance, and capital costs including equipment replacement)? If not, how much is the average annual subsidy since the new sanitation system came online? Also, if not, where does the subsidy come from (i.e., funding source)?