



## Maple Heights Naturescape Management Plan

Developed 2023 by:  
Gillian Field, Urban Greenspace Outreach Coordinator  
Bloomington Parks & Recreation  
P.O. Box 848  
Bloomington, IN 47402  
Office: 812.349.3497  
[gillian.field@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:gillian.field@bloomington.in.gov)

### **1. About the Naturescape**

Prairie greenspace at the southeast border of Maple Heights Neighborhood less than one acre in size, and is located at West 13th Street, near the intersection of South Rogers and the railroad tracks. Close in proximity to Crestmont Park, the B-Line Trail, Miller-Showers Park, Griffy Lake, and Lower Cascades Park, this greenspace, small in comparison, functions as an important wildlife corridor connector, is a spring haven for migrating birds, and creates homes for pollinators, small animals, invertebrates, native wildflowers, shrubs and low stature trees.

Visit the Maple Heights Historic District and Naturescape online at <https://bton.in/NPTMk>.

### **2. Human History of the Area**

We recognize that the city of Bloomington sits on Native land. The city as well as city administrative buildings are on the traditional homelands of the Miami, Delaware, Potawatomi, and Shawnee people and we acknowledge they are past, present, and future caretakers of this land.

We also acknowledge that much of the economic progress and development in Indiana and specifically Bloomington resulted from the unpaid labor and forced servitude of people of color, specifically enslaved African labor.

We acknowledge that this land remains home to and a site of gathering and healing for many indigenous and other people of color and commit to the work necessary to create and promote a more equitable and just Bloomington.

We move forward knowing and acknowledging our rich, complicated, and sometimes painful past so that we can learn from it and create a true land of opportunity.

Neighborhood agreement signed in 2005 to take care of the greenspace (part of a grant).

[Adopt-a-Greenspace \(Bloomington Parks and Recreation\)](#) team formed April 2022  
Adopt-a-Greenspace team evolved April 2023 (Thomas Doark, Terry Usery)

### Maple Heights Conservation District

The following information is taken from:

[Report of Proposed Local Designation Maple Heights Conservation District Staff Report Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission](#)

[Maple Heights Conservation District Design Guidelines, City of Bloomington Historic Preservation Commission, 2019](#)

### A Brief History of Maple Heights Neighborhood

The Maple Heights Conservation District boundaries were proposed in 2018, and the Maple Heights Historic District was officially designated by Bloomington's Common Council in January 2019. Members of the Maple Heights neighborhood sought this designation primarily as means of protection for the historic and architecturally significant residential structures in the area.

The Maple Heights neighborhood is located a half mile north of City Hall, formerly the Showers Brothers Furniture Factory complex in downtown Bloomington. This neighborhood developed from a need for housing for workers in several factories in the downtown Bloomington area during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

James N. Blair, a prominent Covenanter (a 17th-century Scottish religious and political movement that supported a Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the primacy of its leaders in religious affairs), purchased the land that lay roughly in modern boundaries of North Madison Street, North Monroe Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and 17<sup>th</sup> Street, in 1825. The Blair Family Farm encompassed approximately 160 acres.

James' son John J. Blair inherited the farm following James' death in 1849 and shortly after constructed the Blair farmhouse on the property. John and his wife Hannah were reportedly active in the Underground Railroad, feeding and sheltering enslaved people as they traveled from the south toward Canada in search of freedom.

John J. Blair passed away in 1908 and left the farm to his eldest son, James. That generation's James sold off portions of the property until his death in 1939; those plots of land were subdivided into plots for prospective homeowners. The first plats were developed under the names Maple Heights 1st Addition and Maple Heights 2nd Addition, both in 1889. With the exception of the Blair farmhouse (the house now known as the "Blair House"), which was built around 1860, construction dates of houses within the Maple Heights Neighborhood closely follow the creation of the platted additions, with the earliest of the houses being constructed between 1895 and 1915.



Parks and Recreation map showing the Maple Heights Naturescape, outlined in blue.

### **3. Site Assessment**

Mature prairie dock and big bluestem grass reveal the original intention of a tall prairie planting. However, woody and herbaceous invasive species, right-of-way maintenance under power transmission lines and along the railroad tracks, a storm drain cutout, and compacted soil have all negatively impacted the quality of the greenspace. Regardless, many native plants have survived. Restoring this site will benefit native wildlife, including insects, birds, and small animals. Beneath the surface, site restoration will benefit soil biota (the micro-organisms (bacteria, fungi, and algae), soil animals (protozoa, nematodes, mites, springtails, spiders, insects, and earthworms) and plants living all or part of their lives in or on the soil). An actively maintained site will support neighborhood goals and serve as a community-wide educational platform.

### **4. Invasive Plants in the Naturescape**

Garlic mustard (eliminated in 2023)

Asian bush honeysuckle

Yellow sweet clover

Purple clover

Queen's Anne's Lace (remove or not, as you wish)

Red or white mulberry? (Red is native)

Callery pear- remove by cutting; Parks and Recreation staff to herbicide at organized Weed Wrangle

Ornamental sedem- remove

Crown vetch

Sweet autumn clematis

Vinca minor (periwinkle) remove

Black locust (Native but should be removed; Parks and Recreation staff to cut and treat.)

Tree of Heaven (Don't cut this tree, small or large, or it will multiply. Parks and Recreation to control.)

Japanese honeysuckle

Grass in right-of-way near the road, managed by Duke Energy (goal is to out-thug this non-native grass species and replace with native grass. Parks and Recreation to support and manage this process.)

Purple wintercreeper near stairs on the east side. (Pull and remove)

### **5. Native Plants in the Naturescape**

Hackberry

Avens

Poison ivy (Parks and Recreation to control)

Penstemon

Silky rye grass

Virginia creeper vine

Dock

Serviceberry (Near east sign; needs to be pruned by Parks and Recreation's urban forestry team)

New England aster

Canada goldenrod (aggressive native but with late summer pollinator benefits)

Spiderwort

St John's wort (maybe - confirm ID when it flowers)

Black raspberry (on the boundary edge of the greenspace is a good spot for this species)

Elderberry

Grape vine

American gooseberry (maybe - confirm ID with flowers and fruits)

Box Elder (can look like poison ivy)

Golden Alexander

Prairie dock

Big bluestem grass (aggressive native)

Add more native seeds, especially common milkweed. This can be a fall activity with seeds collected from Miller-Showers Park.

## 6. **Erosion**

Not an issue at this time.

## 7. **Maintenance Practices**

Prevention - Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) is always the first priority. We use fewer resources when we identify and control new invasive species as soon as possible.

### Woody Plant Control, Herbaceous Plant Control

- Cut woody invasives. Use manual methods such as digging and pulling.
- Cut woody invasives overhanging from railroad property after bird nesting season.
- Pull non-native vines and other invasive herbaceous plants. Use a soil knife.
- Restoration will include Parks and Recreation mowing one third of greenspace only during one season. This practice mimics natural fire. Mowing one section per season enables insect populations to recover. Mow in February during dormancy season.

- Parks and Recreation to coordinate cut and stump treatment with herbicide. This can take place all year as long as temperature is above freezing.
- Parks and Recreation to control poison ivy vines.
- Parks and Recreation to pick up brush and bags of vines. (Contact Gillian Field; contact information on page 1).

## 8. **Management Goals**

- Create an open prairie with limited trees.
- Pursue connection with neighboring property owner and offer assistance to remove large Asian bush honeysuckle in their yard. Reach out to the adjacent neighbor to make friends to engage in cutting the huge ABH in their backyard.
- Plan neighborhood workdays to involve more landowners and build community.
- Encampments of unhoused people occur under the bridge. Safety is number one. If sharps/syringes are present don't touch them. Contact Gillian Field to collect; contact information on page 1.
- Song sparrows may be nesting in the grasses. Stay on the trails. Keep your dog on the trail.
- Engage The Overlook in invasive species removal, invite volunteers to take on the area. (Contact Gillian for more information about safely and legally volunteering on private property.)
- Apply for [City of Bloomington Housing and Neighborhood Development](#) and [Monroe County Master Gardeners Association](#) grants to support neighborhood efforts at control of invasive species and planting native.
- Any areas of control must be managed and monitored in the face of continued and future invasion.

## 9. **References**

- Parks and Recreation will respond, or act on the monthly reports submitted by Adopt-a-Greenspace volunteers.
- Hardscape maintenance, like trails and erosion will be delegated to city crews. Non safety-related concerns should be reported by Adopt-a-Greenspace volunteers in the monthly report.
- [Use the City of Bloomington's uReport online system](#) to comment or report on issues outside the adopted greenspace area. Use uReport to report on invasive species outside the adopted greenspace that are [specifically addressed in the Bloomington Municipal Code Title 6.](#)
- Use [the free mobile app Pl@ntNet](#) to identify plants that you photograph with a smartphone.
- The free Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab app listens to birds around you and shows suggestions for who's singing.

- [Monroe County Identify and Reduce Invasive Species \(MC-IRIS\) Resources for Landowners](#)
- [“Keeping Invasive Plants at Bay to Prevent ‘Ecological Collapse’”](#) by Sean Chung, *Limestone Post*, Aug. 17, 2021
- [Woodland Invasive Plant Species of Knox County, IN](#), produced by the Knox County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA), March 2019