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2024

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# transition report

Mayor Kerry Thomson



CITY OF  
BLOOMINGTON

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Dear Bloomington residents and businesses,

Bloomington has a bright future, and I am honored to serve in this leadership role to make certain we are taking our city to the next levels of success. Bloomington is a vibrant community where people from around the corner and across the globe come together to create a place we are proud to call home. Our city mirrors the heart and soul of its neighborhoods and champions our local culture.

The people of Bloomington deserve a government that reflects **our values**. We deserve an honest, transparent, innovative, efficient, effective and yes, fun government that respects our taxpayer dollars as much as our families and our way of life.

I am thrilled to share with you a mid-year report detailing the progress we have made together since I took office. Our journey over the past six and a half months has been marked by exciting achievements, meaningful discoveries, and a relentless commitment to building a brighter future for everyone—**together**.

Transparency and openness are at the heart of my administration. We are throwing back the curtains of government, inviting people in, and ensuring that our operations are more inclusive. My administration is working to demystify government for our residents. This commitment to openness will continue to be at the core of my strategy throughout the next three and a half years.

As we look to the future, I am filled with optimism and excitement. The insights we have gleaned and the first steps we have carried out in such a short time demonstrate the commitment and spirit of our community. Thank you for your enduring enthusiasm and active contributions in making Bloomington a great place to live, work, and play.

**With warm regards and great anticipation for what lies ahead,**



Mayor Kerry Thomson



# highlights and discoveries

Over the past six months, our administration has made significant strides towards our vision.

From the start, we recognized the need to rebuild trust and ensure that every decision made reflects the best interests of our residents, our partners, and our shared future. So we put together a dedicated and dynamic team of individuals with diverse expertise. In doing so, we laid the foundation for a government that's dedicated, responsive, and responsible to send a strong message that our community can trust us.

Also central to our strategy is a commitment to intentional and informed decision-making anchored in accountability and fiscal responsibility. During our transition and the discovery period, I identified several critical issues that required immediate attention and that the public deserves to know. We have already taken action on many and have pinpointed specific areas where we must intensify our efforts to improve management, process, and outcomes.

The purpose of this report is to provide transparency by showcasing our findings and our strategic efforts. We've not only tackled immediate challenges, but also established the groundwork for long-term stability and sustainable growth. Our goal is to foster prosperity in Bloomington while making sure our residents have a voice in planning for the future.

## team building and operations

What we do internally translates outward. We have to listen to and learn from the people who know the most about the work of the City: its employees. It's employees who bring to life the future vision of our city, who connect with constituents every day, and who do the necessary work from the ground up.

Upon assuming office, we held **24 listening sessions with staff, including multiple on-site visits with the Bloomington Police Department (BPD), Bloomington Fire Department (BFD), and Utilities**. We also received 233 feedback forms from City staff. This means 30% of employees took the time to tell us their thoughts anonymously in addition to the nearly 600 people attending in person sessions. These forms came from 15 different departments, and about one-third of the staff from each department responded. In person and in the form, we asked employees to share what's working well, what needs improvement, and what innovative ideas they have to improve City operations and outcomes.



The feedback from listening sessions and forms provided information to shape our next steps across the City and within each department. Across the City, there were four major findings:

**1 City employees are dedicated professionals who want to serve and be successful.** An overwhelming majority (**76% of responses**) highlighted strong teams, a positive departmental culture, and collaboration, as well as meaningful work, as their top three points of pride. City employees are mission-driven team players who take pride in their work. They are proud to serve our community, eager to support their colleagues, diligent when it comes to doing the right work well, and respectful of budgets and taxpayer dollars.

**2 City-wide, inadequate compensation is a critical issue that impacts morale, retention, and effectiveness.** Sadly, this dedication to the important work of building Bloomington has not been reflected in City personnel policies and practices. The top three challenges cited were salary, understaffing, and employee retention, accounting for 51% of responses, while all other areas received 11% or less. Veteran employees noted that 5-10 years ago, City salaries were fair or competitive, but now they lag behind those offered by the County.

Respondents repeatedly noted issues also identified in the Crowe study: inadequate starting pay with no consideration for experience, education, or other typical criteria for placement within a pay range, no strategy or policy for longevity pay, insufficient increases in compensation for promotions and increased workloads, and the absence of merit raises. While the City offers excellent benefits, these alone do not compensate for the other issues. Many employees indicated, both in person and in forms, that they could not fully take advantage of City benefits such as generous paid time off and high-quality training opportunities due to departments being short-staffed.

**3 Interdepartmental collaboration, communication, and processes need improvement.** The extensive scope and variety of the City's operations makes standardizing processes, software tools, reporting, and so on challenging, especially on a budget. However, there is clear consensus on key issues, and employees made suggestions for improvement in numerous areas.

**4 There are innovative ideas and visions in every department.** Employees recommended common-sense, easy tweaks to improve their work, and they also shared big dreams for what the City could accomplish together.

In response to this feedback, we have outlined the following action steps and are already making progress:

- **Cultivate employee strengths.** We are creating a culture that listens to employees, takes their concerns seriously, and empowers them to serve at their highest capacity.
- **Increase communication.** This cultural shift starts with communication. At every level, administration and departments must do more to communicate vision and plans to employees, increase transparency and access to resources, listen, and engage with good ideas.
- **Implement the Crowe study.** This critical project, already underway, is about much more than raising salaries. Here's what the implementation involves:

#### ***Creating Job Families and Classifications***

- **Purpose:** Ensure equity across similar jobs and illustrate clear career paths and opportunities.
- **Impact:** Employees understand how their roles compare with others and see potential growth paths within the organization.

#### ***Updating Pay Ranges***

- **Purpose:** Align salaries with market rates, establish criteria for starting pay, reward taking on more responsibility, and set predictable salary advancements at 1, 3, 5, and 10 years.
- **Impact:** This helps guarantee fair compensation and provides a structured path for salary increases, making pay more transparent and equitable.

#### ***Revising Job Scoring and Descriptions***

- **Purpose:** Update the job scoring rubric, create a new position evaluation process, and revise job descriptions for accuracy and equity.
- **Impact:** Ensures that all job roles are accurately described and fairly evaluated, promoting fairness in hiring and promotions.

#### ***Long-Term Budgeting Strategy***

- **Purpose:** Ensure equity across similar jobs and illustrate clear career paths and opportunities.
- **Impact:** This helps the City manage its budget while implementing changes to employee pay and benefits.

City Council has already approved the new pay ranges, we have updated the job scoring rubric, and the 2025 budget will begin implementing the new ranges, with an emphasis on correcting inequities for the most employees possible. Through competitive compensation, **we aim to reduce turnover and improve job satisfaction, making the City an employer of choice.**

Other operational focuses and findings include a need to:

- **Re-evaluate all benefits for usage, value, sustainability, and equity.** Over time, the City has created 21 unique benefits to encourage wellness, homeownership, environmental sustainability, and more. However, administering and tracking each benefit is complex, leading to several issues:



**Awareness.** Employees are often unaware that certain benefits exist or how to access them.



**Management.** Human Resources and individual departments spend excessive hours managing these benefits.



**Cost-benefit analysis.** The cost-benefit analysis of some benefits may not justify their continuation. In some cases, policies either did not exist or were very unclear.

**We are evaluating every benefit to determine which ones provide the greatest value for taxpayer dollars and discontinuing those that do not make sense.** For example, we have already canceled the \$100,000 home down payment program for public safety officers. This decision was made after finding that the program would cost \$3 million to benefit only 20 people, had not improved employee attraction or retention as expected, had no plan for equitable expansion, and was not supported by public safety unions. Again, the City's benefits system is overly complicated, leading to frequent errors and high administrative costs. In 2023 alone, delays in terminating health insurance for 45 former employees cost the City \$269,936.89.

- **Improve HR processes for hiring, onboarding, training, and developing talent.** High-quality onboarding of new hires can improve retention rates by over 80%, according to some studies. Our superb new Human Resources leadership has already revamped the onboarding process, developed pilot training for new supervisors, and outlined next steps for ensuring that the City retains highly qualified, well-trained employees.
- **Streamline contracting and purchasing processes and recordkeeping, and train on those regularly.** The City has already moved from paper to digital records in many areas, but the processes remain clunky and inconsistent, relying on email attachments, scanned PDFs instead of electronic forms, and so on. As one example, during Human Resources onboarding, employees have handwritten social security numbers on multiple paper documents. These outdated tools and practices are inefficient and error prone, and can be resolved with modern technologies. We will streamline and modernize core internal processes and **continue to enhance efficiency so that city operations run smoothly.**
- **Provide regular, standardized onboarding and training on essential tools.** The City runs on powerful enterprise softwares for accounting, project management, data collection, and many other functions. When employees have regular training on not just the tools, but also the methodology and desired outcomes, the City will run much more efficiently.
- **Improve the budget process and find ways to create operating, maintenance, and capital budgets and strategies.** We have engaged Reedy Financial to make certain that in our work together with the City Council, we aren't just passing an annual budget but also planning for our future. We will emerge with long-term budgeting strategies and schedules for capital projects and replacing aging facilities, vehicles, and equipment, so that our city's infrastructure will **support growth and provide essential services to all residents.** A budget that reflects city priorities with an outcome-based approach is a necessity.



## restoring accountability and delivering transparency

The Thomson administration entered office with **a commitment to restoring credibility, accountability, and improving public trust.** In addition to bringing strong leadership to each department, here are the key initiatives we've undertaken to enhance transparency and accessibility and work to demystify government:

### ***Public Access and Openness***

- **Comprehensive Review of Procedures:** We conducted a thorough review of our processes for responding to public records requests. We have identified room for significant improvements in our procedures and customer service to guarantee we manage these requests quickly and openly. This helps everyone know what's going on and builds trust in our actions. We released the Crowe study and established a new philosophy that information will be shared proactively, by default. We are building relationships with the media so they can simply ask for information instead of filing formal requests. We will continue to look for ways to streamline public records requests.
- **Making Information Accessible:** We identified ways to make City documents and services more accessible to the public. This includes simplifying the process by reducing bureaucratic hurdles, but also by pushing more information out and making it easier to find. We will add dropdown navigation to City's website in the coming months, and are developing a more comprehensive communications strategy and deeper website overhaul. In addition, ITS has gathered stakeholder input on Onboard, the City's system for managing boards and commissions, and is in the process of implementing improvements.



## ***Traveling Town Halls with Mayor Kerry Thomson and Council Members***

- **Bringing Government Closer:** Hosted every other month by district, Traveling Town Halls bring government closer to our people. These events provide a platform for open dialogue, allowing residents to engage directly with their local government officials, ask questions, express concerns, and learn more about City projects and services.

## ***Traveling Office Hours with Mayor Kerry Thomson***

- **Personal and Private Interaction:** Similar to Traveling Town Halls, office hours are held every other month by district. These sessions offer a more informal setting for residents to interact with Mayor Thomson. Residents can ask questions, receive updates on local initiatives, and discuss concerns in a more personal manner.

We will continue to create and implement innovative ways to make your government more accessible and **ensure that diverse community voices are included in our governance process.** We are committed to finding inclusive approaches that guarantee decisions reflect the needs and perspectives of all residents, fostering a sense of belonging and trust in our government.

To continue our commitment to increased transparency and public engagement, we will rebuild the City website and create a dashboard that will make it easier for residents to access information and get involved in city projects.



## reducing red tape

**Our administration is striving to create a City that operates with Minimum Viable Bureaucracy.** This means we are dedicated to streamlining processes, eliminating unnecessary steps, and focusing on efficiency and effectiveness, making government operations more transparent, accessible, and user-friendly for all residents. **Our goal is to be a resource, not a barrier.**

To achieve this, the City is actively working to reevaluate and refine processes. For example, Planning and Transportation and Utilities are actively working with residents and developers to identify where the process of building a home, business, or neighborhood becomes inefficient, confusing, or redundant through:

- **Listening Sessions:** Planning and Transportation has held listening sessions with the Builders Association of South Central Indiana to gather feedback directly from those involved in the building process.
- **Updating Regulations:** Indiana's Title 13 deals with environmental regulations. In updating Title 13 as required by law, the City's Utilities Department (CBU) created a design manual and made significant changes, such as implementing a maintenance bond. This bond ensures that any necessary repairs can be funded without imposing additional costs on the city or taxpayers if the contractor fails to fulfill their obligations.
- **Creating a Customer Service Model:** Shifting towards a customer service-oriented approach while also protecting the city's character and natural resources, and being accountable to taxpayers, is a key part of our strategy.



## creating safe and inclusive communities

Strong partnerships between law enforcement, community stakeholders, and government agencies are crucial for fostering safe and inclusive communities. Addressing homelessness, enhancing public safety, and supporting affordable housing development require a collective effort from community groups, nonprofits, businesses, and citizens. True public safety involves not just law enforcement but the entire community working together to **embrace public safety as a shared responsibility**.

### *Addressing Homelessness*

Homelessness, particularly the increase in street homelessness, deeply impacts our entire city. Each week, we hear heartbreaking stories from people living in crisis, exhausted service providers, residents who fear for their neighbors in camps, business owners whose operations and livelihoods are at risk, and City employees whose jobs have drastically changed due to this crisis. **Our community is compassionate and understands that these trends cannot continue.**

Homelessness is often seen as a problem too complex to solve, but our administration is determined to tackle it through collaboration, human connection, and a data-informed approach. We meet regularly with area housing nonprofits and service providers to **establish a tactical plan and best practices to support the unhoused population effectively**. Bloomington needs and will have a community-based, long-term, sustainable approach to help those suffering from mental health and substance use crises. Our current resources are not adequate to meet needs, and we are actively searching for funding and partnerships.

While we work on long-term solutions, we must also address the immediate impacts of the crisis on our community. Since the start of 2024, **we have cleared four major homeless encampments due to safety concerns**. This difficult, sad work is now always done in communication and collaboration with service providers. When dangers such as fire, crime, and public health make it necessary to close a camp, we follow nonprofit community leaders' recommendations on giving 30 days advance notice, offering storage for belongings, and connecting camp residents with resources. Following the clearance of the first encampment, the City worked with religious leaders and local nonprofits to provide emergency shelters during extreme cold weather. We continue to listen, research, and brainstorm more sustainable solutions that meet the needs of our unhoused population and that honor the needs of our neighborhoods, businesses, and community.

## ***Advancing Development and Affordable Housing***

**Investing in infrastructure projects is our biggest financial commitment. It's our duty to make sure when we use taxpayer dollars, these investments generate meaningful benefits for our community.** We are committed to a vision in which all residents have access to adequate housing while promoting community growth and stability. We are working upstream and with partners to refine and hone City programs, policies, and planning to attract workforce housing development, increase homeownership, and prevent eviction.



### **Correcting Compliance and Streamlining Procedures for Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND):**

Since taking office, we have discovered the need to correct compliance issues and streamline procedures within the Housing and Neighborhood Development department. The loss of consistent, long-time leadership within the department triggered four HUD (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development) audits for HAND within the last 12 months—a highly unusual situation requiring a significant amount of time and attention. During the audit, which reviewed the past performance of several years, many errors were uncovered. These discoveries caused programs to pause while HAND worked diligently, without a full staff, to resolve regulatory compliance. This process has slowed down projects and increased costs. Overhauling these processes to meet federal regulations has been a significant effort but a necessary process to secure the annual funding our community relies upon.

Additionally, before our administration came into office, there were several individually negotiated agreements with building developers that were made before the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) was set up. These projects, which we saw come to fruition in the last year, all have significant problems.

One major issue involves workforce housing. Developers were given incentives to build additional units and increase building heights in exchange for contributing a certain percentage of workforce housing units. Unfortunately, many of these units were in student-centric complexes and targeted area median incomes (AMI) that are too high and do not accurately represent our workforce needs. As a result, these units have not been utilized for the populations they were intended to serve.

The UDO established a uniform policy for incentives, whereas pre-UDO, these were one-off negotiations. For instance, one development agreement included a caveat that the units only needed to be marketed for six months before they could return to market rate. As a result HAND has been pursuing solutions with each developer to carry out the community benefits that were initially intended.

In recent years, new software was implemented to administer the Title 16 Rental Program. An incomplete implementation over the course of several years has yielded frustration for many property partners as processing inefficiencies increased. HAND, along with our IT team, have made a great deal of progress towards finalizing implementation. The fruits of this labor have produced more efficient and timely processing and a Civic Access portal for the public to quickly access information and conduct a variety of business transactions including online payment processing.

Prior to this year, the policies and procedures for the HAND department were a mere 10 pages long. Given the enormous scope of local and federal statutory regulations across multiple programs, such brevity was unacceptable. The lack of comprehensive guidelines not only jeopardized federal compliance but also hindered efficient project execution. To rectify this, **HAND has achieved significant progress, implementing new policies and procedures, checklists, processes, and staff training to ensure full compliance.** The department has expanded its policies and procedures to encompass the detailed requirements of federal regulations, thus providing clear and comprehensive guidelines for all operations. These measures include extensive training programs to equip staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to adhere to these enhanced protocols. HAND has also implemented new software for grant administration making the application processes more efficient for applicants while simultaneously increasing efficiencies and compliance internally.

In addition to these improvements, HAND has provided a portion of construction funding to 5 new homes, rental deposit assistance to 15 households, downpayment and closing cost assistance to 9 homebuyers, foreclosure assistance to 6 households, homebuyer education to 53 individuals, housing counseling to dozens and provided significant funding to many essential non-for-profit organizations. HAND supports numerous social service agencies including homeless care providers and food banks to address food insecurity. This comprehensive approach is key to addressing the long term housing goals of our community and also directly supports community members in need.

**Supporting Significant Housing Projects:** We need and are committed to supporting significant housing projects, including the Hopewell Neighborhood, located at the former IU Health hospital site at 2nd and Rogers Streets. The ongoing construction of Hopewell Commons, a park in the Phase 1 East portion of the project, is set to open this fall. These developments are poised to add a substantial number of new residential units to our City. The Summit District is another key project we support, expected to provide thousands of new residential units, addressing the high demand for housing in Bloomington.

Through HAND funding, we will improve access to affordable housing by supporting the production of new units and the preservation of existing units. Here are some project highlights:

- **Affordable Rental Units:** Supporting development and creation of rental units that will provide approximately 114 truly affordable units.
- **Group Equity Cooperative Housing:** Support for the development of affordable housing using this model will provide 7 units.
- **Veteran Housing:** Funding a complex, which without support would have displaced housing for Veterans at 40 percent Area Median Income (AMI).
- **Osage Place Neighborhood:** Providing Habitat for Humanity of Monroe County with funding for Phase 2, which will provide an additional 39 lots.
- **Bloomington Housing Authority (BHA):** We are supporting a variety of housing projects and initiatives through BHA and Summit Hill Community Development to enhance affordable housing options.



3

**Developing a Comprehensive Housing Plan:** We are not only concentrating on increasing affordable housing options but also on developing housing solutions that are accessible to middle-income residents. The shortage of housing for the middle-income bracket, in addition to affordable options, poses significant challenges, as it can lead to the loss of residents from our community. A housing market that fosters a stark divide in wealth creates an unhealthy environment for economic development and shared prosperity. **It is essential that our planning efforts address the needs of all income levels to build a more inclusive and thriving community for everyone.**

The Housing and Neighborhood Development Department is actively creating a comprehensive City housing plan. The plan is grounded in findings from the 2020 and 2023 housing studies and the HAND consolidated plan, which provide critical data and insights into the housing ecosystem in the city. A new Consolidated Plan is currently being developed with outreach sessions occurring in late August. These outreach sessions will be critical to the plan to gather input in order to address the needs of our residents.

4

**Forming Strategic Partnerships:** We have formed partnerships with state and county governments, Indiana University, and various public and private entities to develop sufficient housing stock. Although these collaborations have been beneficial, they have not yet been fully systematic.

Focusing on expanding affordable housing options and enhancing housing policies is crucial for creating and maintaining a more inclusive and thriving community. Making certain that current residents in affordable housing can maintain their homes is pivotal for the success of our housing strategy.





## ***Strengthening Community Safety***

Ensuring safety is one of the prime directives of a city. When residents feel safe, they are more likely to engage in community activities, support local businesses, and participate in civic life. Effective community safety strategies not only protect residents from immediate harm but also foster a sense of security that allows for economic growth, social cohesion, and improved quality of life.

Upon taking office, we discovered significant challenges facing our fire and police departments: historically low staffing levels, high turnover, very low pay, and a lack of communication and respect from City leadership. This situation had left many of our dedicated public safety officers feeling demoralized.

For example, a 20-year firefighter was making \$30,000 less in take-home pay than less experienced firefighters elsewhere. Our police and fire departments, known for their superb training, had become prime targets for poaching by other departments.

As the mental health, substance abuse, and street homelessness crises have grown, our public safety officers have been asked to do much more for much less pay than surrounding jurisdictions. Our police force is currently understaffed, and while the fire department is finally fully staffed, it remains vulnerable due to low pay.

Our dispatch center, responsible for handling emergency calls, has seen **a dramatic increase in call volume** from 55,000 annual calls in 2019 to 125,000 calls per year now. Currently, the dispatch center has as many empty seats as filled ones, forcing employees to work mandatory overtime and giving them only one weekend off every five weeks.

To address these challenges, we are committed to:

1

**Enhancing Communication and Supporting First Responders:** We have opened direct communication channels with rank-and-file police officers, firefighters, EMTs, and prosecutors to better understand their perspectives. This approach ensures that those on the front lines are heard and their insights are integrated into our public safety strategies. Leadership, union reps, and officers report a new sense of hope.

2

**Providing Modern Tools:** Most police departments in our area already allow take-home vehicles and issue tasers to their officers. These take-home vehicles are essential for modern law enforcement as they help shorten response times to incidents, bolster recruitment efforts, and extend the lifetime of the vehicles. These tasers provide officers with a non-lethal option to respond to dangerous situations effectively. **Unfortunately, our City was the last in the region to adopt these critical measures.** We have now empowered our police department to offer take-home vehicles and equip officers with tasers. We continue to listen to their recommendations for progressive policies and tools to solve crimes and protect both officers and the public.

3

**Funding Adequate Staffing:** We are currently in regular negotiations with the fire union to determine how we can retain our excellent officers. Additionally, we plan to reopen the police contract to make swift progress on addressing this critical issue. Retaining experienced officers is essential for maintaining high standards of public safety and protecting the well-being of our community. By securing fair and competitive compensation, we can keep our dedicated public safety personnel and continue providing the exemplary services our residents deserve.

4

**Planning for Facilities:** Current facilities for fire logistics and training are outdated. **The initial cost estimates for the new logistics and training facility were significantly lower than the actual costs.** The bond included a "very conservative" estimate of \$2.5 million, and the 2024 budget included \$1 million. However, the actual estimate received in 2023 was \$9.6 million, and even a scaled-back project in 2024 is expected to cost \$6.5 million.

Our police also need a new home. The original bond was not going to cover all the fire projects and the proposed Showers West project, and the fire projects were underway or urgent, whereas the police need is less urgent. We elected to fully fund the most urgent projects and take the opportunity to re-evaluate what the best, most fiscally responsible home is for improved public safety outcomes, efficient police operations, and effective collaboration with service providers, the City, and the community.



## establishing proper process and corrective action for financial and audit challenges

The City of Bloomington maintains a strong fiscal position with a reasonable debt load and adequate cash reserves. However, the Controller's Office has been under continual audit by the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) since 2019 due to previous unresponsiveness. The audit for 2021 was only completed in December 2023. Despite challenges, we have re-established relationships with the SBOA.

While the City's assets are robust, a significant portion of funds was held in a commercial, interest-earning checking account with no fraud protection and outdated signatories. Multiple dormant accounts needed closure. These issues have now been corrected. In addressing these and other concerns, we learned that staff were not provided with critical logins necessary for optimal federal and state compliance, which affected operational efficiency.

Our administration initiated an immediate internal review of policies and procedures and discovered that while most policies were effective, they were often circumvented by previous management. **We have implemented corrective measures to address these findings and all issues have been rectified.** The 2022 audit should be released within a couple of weeks, with the 2023 audit expected to be completed by late November 2024.

## enhancing infrastructure

Public Works is the guardian of the infrastructure that we rely on every day—and that infrastructure must be safe, maintained, and accessible. In doing so, we not only create a sense of community pride, but also attract new enterprises and support existing ones. Whether clearing snow, filling potholes, or managing waste, the commitment of Public Works guarantees that Bloomington runs smoothly, which, in turn, builds trust and confidence in our city’s resilience and capability.

But unfortunately, our Public Works department operates out of very old facilities, which significantly hampers our ability to deliver the high level of service our residents deserve. These old buildings and equipment not only make operations less efficient but also affect our dedicated Public Works employees. These professionals operate heavy equipment in all sorts of weather, year-round, ensuring our city remains functional and safe. They fill potholes under the scorching summer sun to make sure our drives are smooth and safe and are out in the bitter cold of winter, clearing snow from our roads before most of us are even awake. Their dedication to serve our city is steadfast, yet they are constrained to work in conditions that do not reflect the importance of their work.

Modernization is crucial to streamline processes, optimize capacity, and improve team morale. An additional \$3 million annually is needed just to maintain current road conditions as they are. Without a capital plan, our facilities and vehicles are in decline, which further exacerbates the challenges faced by our Public Works team. For three decades, we have not kept up with the necessary grade for our streets, leading to a backlog of maintenance and repair needs.



Similarly, investment in new parks has not been matched by maintenance planning or funding, leading to budget deficits and escalating security costs. For example, the City spends \$300K annually on private security due to the street crisis and police understaffing. Additionally, it costs \$100-\$150K each year to maintain the beautiful new Switchyard Park, but this expenditure lacks a proper maintenance plan.

The Monroe Water plant, built in 1965, has aging infrastructure and is \$10 million behind in repairs. Funds from previous rate cases were not set aside as planned, delaying necessary projects. To tackle this, we've brought in Wessler Engineering to dive deep into what needs to be done. Their analysis focuses on three key areas:

1

**Asset Management Plan:** This will map out all physical assets at the Monroe Water Treatment Plant, creating an updatable database. It'll help us prioritize which parts need fixing or replacing first, making sure we handle the most critical needs right away.

2

**Capital Improvements Plan:** Using the asset management data and staff expertise, this plan will outline a schedule and cost estimates for major projects to upgrade our drinking water system. This will give us a clear path forward and help secure the necessary funding.

3

**Taste and Odor Evaluation:** This part of the study will explore options to address and fix any taste and odor issues, ensuring our water is not only safe but also pleasant to drink.

Modernizing the Monroe Plant is about more than just keeping things running—it's about guaranteeing the reliability of our water supply for years to come.

**With a clear vision and dedicated efforts, this administration will take care to ensure that new capital projects have a full plan for sustainability.** By prioritizing sustainability and strategic investment, we can build a Bloomington that is well-prepared for the challenges of the future and capable of providing the highest quality of life for its residents.



# next steps and looking ahead

As I reflect on our recent accomplishments and challenges, our vision for the future of Bloomington becomes even clearer: a community where transparency is paramount, government processes are streamlined, and everyone is invited to participate in shaping our future while embracing the potential for innovation and joy in every aspect of our city. Our next steps are designed to address discoveries and build upon our achievements, creating a more inclusive, transparent, and thriving government and community.

**While we have a lot of work to do, we have an inspiring vision of our future.** We're laying the foundation of people, processes, policies, and plans that will allow us to take fast, effective action and to get beyond problem-solving toward dream-building.



# meet the team

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