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City Announces New \$100,000 Down Payment Housing Program for Sworn Police and Fire; Public Safety Report Highlights 1% Decrease in Overall Crime

Bloomington, Ind.— At the 7th Annual Public Safety Report meeting today, Mayor John Hamilton announced a new \$100,000 no-interest down payment assistance program for up to 10 police officers and 10 firefighters as an incentive to live in the city of Bloomington. Commencing immediately, the pilot housing program is the only such program known to exist in the country. After 10 years, participants will realize \$100,000 in home equity.

Attracting and retaining top firefighters and sworn police officers is a concern nationwide. Enabling police officers and firefighters to live where they work allows for better community connections and reduces crucial travel time in the event of an emergency situation. The new pilot program will support individuals in buying homes they may not be able to otherwise afford in Bloomington, enabling them to build wealth and stability over time while integrating 20 first responders into the community for the long run.

The program will be funded with a combination of one-time American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds as well as ongoing annual budgets from the Bloomington Police Department (BPD) and Bloomington Fire Department (BFD). The City is collaborating with local banks and financial institutions to implement the program, which can be combined with any external homebuyer supports.

The housing incentive is part of a larger local effort to attract and retain vital public safety providers. Additional incentives were announced in 2022 (<https://bton.in/~28-s>), including signing bonuses, rental/down payment assistance, and take-home patrol vehicles for police; and rental/down payment assistance for firefighters (<https://bton.in/aG3Kl>).

“Today’s Public Safety Report focused on the outcomes of the work of our public safety providers and the overall high quality of public safety delivery in Bloomington. Both our Fire and Police departments hold the highest national accreditations thanks to ongoing innovation, training, and long-term planning,” said Mayor John Hamilton. “We are extremely pleased to offer this innovative housing incentive and consider it a wise investment in public safety and the future of our community. Making it easier for firefighters and sworn police officers to live here just makes sense. As always, I’m deeply thankful for the dedicated people who put their lives on the line every time they put on their uniforms, and I look forward to more of them living in our community.”

Mayor Hamilton was joined by Police Chief Mike Diekhoff, Community and Family Resources Department Director Beverly Calender-Anderson, and Fire Chief Jason Moore, each of whom delivered service delivery updates from their respective departments.

Bloomington Police Department

Bloomington Police Chief Mike Diekhoff reported a 1% reduction in overall crime in 2022 and cited a decrease in robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and theft. However, violent crime increased by 5.8%, and the number of crimes involving firearms continued to rise here as it does nationally.

Bloomington Police Department (BPD) follows a number of initiatives by the Police Executive Research Foundation (PERF) known to be effective in helping to lower gun crimes, such as enhanced forensic investigation of crime scenes involving firearms, ensuring 'red-flag' filings are expediently processed into the legal system for court action, and evidence-based policing strategies that target offenders who are often responsible for a large percentage of gun crimes.

New in 2022, a social worker position was added and integrated with the Central Dispatch Center. The social worker program began in 2019 and continues to see an increase in referrals and client interactions, a valuable service to our community and an asset to BPD's sworn officers. The program now has four social workers.

BPD continues to prioritize training that is in accordance with the PERF-led ICAT (Integration, Communications, Assessment, and Tactics) model, which melds police use-of-force training with tactics and procedures designed to prevent the escalation of a potentially violent police-resident encounter. In 2022, more than 8,064 hours of in-service training were provided to 88 officers.

BPD achieved full Tier 1 accreditation status for the second time in 2022 through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA). BPD was first awarded full Tier 1 law enforcement accreditation in July 2018. CALEA accreditation is considered the national gold standard in law enforcement accreditation and embodies the precepts of community-oriented policing. Of the approximately 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States, approximately 5% are CALEA accredited.

BPD continues to be a leader in delivering public safety and implementing recommendations and best practices like those from the 21st Century Policing Report (<https://bton.in/n8c2w>), #8Can'tWait (8cantwait.org), Bloomington's resident-led Future of Policing Task Force (<https://bton.in/nnwXo>), and others.

Safe and Civil City

Community and Family Resources Department Director Beverly Calender-Anderson presented details about the City's new pilot \$125,000 Violence Prevention Grants program, which will begin in 2023. The program will help prevent, interrupt, or reduce violence through evidence-based violence-prevention services offered by grassroots organizations, neighborhood associations, and other community-based organizations.

Calender-Anderson also highlighted the Future of Policing Task Force Report, HelpingBloomingtonMonroe (an online tool connecting people to programs and services), Downtown Outreach Grants, and the After Hours Ambassador. The Future of Policing Task Force completed its report with initial recommendations in April of 2022 and is available online at <https://bton.in/d0eqa>.

The Downtown Outreach Grants program awarded \$250,000 in 2022 to support projects that will improve the human condition of Bloomington residents who are unhoused or at risk of homelessness. Recipients included Beacon, Inc., Centerstone, Bloomington Homeless Coalition, Hotels for Homeless, Middle Way House, Monroe County Humane Association, New Hope for Families, Sojourn House, and Wheeler Mission.

Bloomington Fire Department

Bloomington Fire Chief Jason Moore reported an increase in service calls of 5.9% in 2022 for a total of 5,883. During 2022, Bloomington Fire Department (BFD) saw an overall increase in response times due to many factors, including major construction activities, simultaneous calls for service, calls outside of 1.5 miles of a station, and moving apparatus due to the 2021 flood. While response times increased, BFD saw no negative impact on the level of service delivered.

In 2022, BFD launched the new Mobile Integrated Healthcare program with two new community care coordinator positions, the only such program south of Indianapolis. The new program focuses on providing healthcare services directly to patients on location, continuity of care, and reducing non-emergency calls to 911. In 2023, two more community care coordinator positions will be added.

BFD is the largest and only fully-paid fire service provider in Monroe County and, as such, has earned an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 1/1X, placing the department in the top 0.5% of rated departments in the U.S. and the top 0.2% of rated departments in Indiana.

The Bloomington Fire Department serves the community with more than 114 employees, located among five stations and responding to over 5,800 emergencies annually. Training is an essential component of BFD, which saw 43,477 hours in 2022.

Mayor Hamilton also announced compensation enhancements for certain BFD union employees. The current union contract adopted by members in 2020 and continues through 2024 includes a 2% cost of living adjustment in 2023. In an effort to align compensation with the 5% cost of living adjustment civil city and AFSCME employees received in 2023, BFD union members will receive additional bonus compensation this year to match the 5%. The Administration plans to seek a similar level increase for 2024.

The annual Public Safety Report was first introduced to the community by Mayor Hamilton in 2017 as part of a City-wide effort to establish greater transparency and accountability. Since 2017, Bloomington has become Indiana's only city with a nationally accredited police department (CALEA) and a nationally top-rated fire department (ISO 1/1x).

Today's full presentation is available online at <https://bton.in/bDLTT>.