



**City of Bloomington
Office of the Common Council**

To: Mayor Kerry Thomson
From: Common Council
Date: June 18, 2024
Subj: Priorities for the 2025 City of Bloomington Budget

As you know, we have been discussing priorities for city spending in 2025 with a new effort to frame such priorities in the context of overall goals for our community. We have agreed on several general objectives, listed below in alphabetical order by category. We also list funding priorities to attain the objective(s) in each category.

We recognize that many of these ideas will take more than one year to implement. We are sending this memorandum to facilitate collaboration and help achieve alignment on your budget proposal when you bring it forward in the coming months. We hope this will be part of ongoing conversations about the budget as we work together for a better Bloomington.

We also recognize that there may be multiple ways to meet an objective, and we encourage deliberation on which actions or approaches—including those not listed here—might effectively achieve the stated objectives.

CLIMATE ACTION and ENVIRONMENT

Objective: To implement the city's Climate Action Plan and take other actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change impacts.

Priorities:

1. Implement programs as outlined in the CAP at similar funding levels as 2024.
2. Maintain support for the Project 46 regional climate collaborative.
3. Collaborate with other government entities and non-profit organizations to protect and improve the water quality in Lake Monroe.

HOUSING

Objective: To increase safe housing options for all city residents, especially those in low-income households.

Priorities:

1. Identify and increase structural and financial support for housing for households earning 60-120% of AMI, which has been identified as a gap in housing affordability.
2. Develop concrete plans for more affordable housing in Hopewell and other developing neighborhoods using land trusts, cooperative housing, and other innovative strategies.
3. Explore and implement new ways to support the Bloomington Housing Authority.

PERSONNEL

Objectives:

- To improve employee morale, hiring outcomes, employee retention, and thus better achieve city priorities and goals
- To increase equity in pay among city employees

Priorities:

1. Finalize assessment and begin implementation of supported recommendations from the 2023 Classification and Compensation Study (Crowe LLP) with a focus on equity; employee retention; and rewarding competency, proficiency, and professional development. Augment the Crowe study as needed to fill gaps (e.g., race and gender pay equity assessment).
2. Benchmark (with other second-class cities) the salaries for city elected officials to help inform potential changes in the 2025 budget.
3. Conduct a salary study for city elected officials, comparing salaries with other second class cities in Indiana.
4. Increase the salary of the City Clerk and the City Council Attorney/Administrator to align with the salaries of other department heads, which all fall within a narrow band.
5. Explore strategies to implement a whole-of-government approach to equity in city operations, budgeting, policy development, and employment practices, including through the potential development of a cabinet-level Chief Equity Officer position.
6. Reconsider staffing structure to explore cost savings in this budget category.

PLANNING and ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Objectives:

- To support local businesses, especially those providing local food, per our Comprehensive Plan (Goals 3.8 and 4.2) and Climate Action Plan (Goals FA-1 and FA-3)
- To encourage mixed use and nodal development per our Comprehensive Plan (Urban Village Centers, pg. 88) and Climate Action Plan (Actions TL-1-B4 and TL-1-B6)

Priorities:

1. Identify and implement strategies, including new partnerships and the potential use of incentives, to develop grocery stores and/or other healthy food options in local food deserts.
2. Fund a plan (either in-house or through a consultant) for the development of additional neighborhood commercial nodes (like Hillside & Henderson), which would guide any infrastructure improvements and/or zoning changes and outline strategies to catalyze development.

POVERTY and HOMELESSNESS

Objective: To reduce homelessness and its causes while simultaneously addressing immediate needs of unhoused people in our community.

Priorities:

1. Fund one or more safe temporary housing options other than overnight shelters, such as safe parking area(s), designated camping area(s), or Single-Room Occupancy building(s), including any associated staffing needs.
2. Increase Jack Hopkins Social Service funding and explore integrating the funding application processes for the JHSSF with the CDBG process.
3. Expand the city's partnership with Centerstone for supportive employment.
4. Develop strategic, collaborative programs with county government and social service agencies to address mental health and substance use disorder challenges.
5. Continue support for the Heading Home program.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Objective: To improve the safety of community members and address disparities or inequities in existing public safety outcomes through a public safety system that includes social services, physical and mental health provision, emergency dispatch, the fire department, and the police department.

Priorities:

1. Identify and fund strategies to address hiring and retention challenges with police, fire, and Central Dispatch. This may include increasing salaries through established collective bargaining processes with the relevant unions.
2. Fund a study regarding the creation of a Department of Community Safety and Resilience, consistent with the recommendation of the Community Advisory on Public Safety (CAPS) commission.

TRANSPORTATION

Objectives:

- To improve the safety of current transportation options available to all users of the public right-of-way in line with the (forthcoming) Safe Streets for All Action Plan.
- To expand and improve safe transportation options that fulfill the city's sustainability and equity goals, prioritizing walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized modes consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Plan, and Climate Action Plan.

Priorities:

1. Fund the development of a Sidewalk Master Plan to enable holistic and systematic improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and safety in areas according to highest need (including lighting, accessibility features, and equity considerations).
2. Increase funding for sidewalks, both new infrastructure and maintenance, starting with the highest priority investments identified by staff in support of the Council Sidewalk Committee and/or sidewalk projects identified in the Safe Streets for All Action Plan prior to completion of the Sidewalk Master Plan.
3. Work with Bloomington Transit on a potential downtown circulator bus, expanded late-night service (including on campus, with IU Campus Bus), and free tickets for unhoused people in need of transportation.

4. Ensure adequate funding for sustainable maintenance of existing streets, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, multiuse paths, and trails while prioritizing safety of facility users.
5. Fund the next stage of implementation for improvement projects outlined in the Transportation Plan: engineering designs for the College Ave / Walnut St. corridor improvements (Project CS-1); conceptual and engineering designs for the Kirkwood Ave shared street conversion (Project SS-1); and conceptual designs for the E Third St. / Atwater Ave. corridor study (Project CS-2).
6. Implement safety improvements where most needed to fulfill Vision Zero and Safe Streets for All goals.
7. Continue to improve management of e-scooters supplied by rental companies, especially e-scooter storage issues that negatively impact accessibility, through a holistic approach including enforcement of existing rules; paid for with increased fees and/or fines for e-scooter rental companies.

The Council considered this letter at its June 18, 2024 Regular Session. It was approved by a vote of ____ Ayes, ____ Nays, and ____ Abstentions.

Respectfully,

City of Bloomington Common Council

Isabel Piedmont-Smith, President
Bloomington Common Council