CITY OF

Bloomington

Organizational Assessment – Office of the Mayor

Report / April 2021

The **Novak** Consulting Group

A PART OF

RAFTELIS

April 23, 2021

Honorable Mayor John Hamilton
City of Bloomington
410 N. Morton Street
Bloomington, IN 47404

Dear Mayor Hamilton:

We are pleased to provide this review of the City of Bloomington's Office of the Mayor. The effectiveness of a Mayor's Office helps shape the impact of all City operations. It is commendable that you have commissioned this review to build on the Office's strong foundation and ensure that you have the right structures in place for continued success in addressing the community's needs.

This organizational assessment was undertaken to evaluate operations and identify opportunities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness within the City of Bloomington Office of the Mayor. This report summarizes our analysis of resources, structure, staff perceptions, and other City data to develop recommendations on structure, strategic prioritization, communications and public engagement, and innovation.

The Office of the Mayor is fortunate to be staffed with employees who care deeply about the community and are passionate about meeting the Mayor's, City Council's, and community's expectations. This administration has pursued a high level of important projects in recent years, including the Public Safety Local Income Tax, annexation, the Trades District, Convention Center expansion, Switchyard Park, Hospital Redevelopment, Regional Academic Health Center, bicentennial bonds, and more, all while simultaneously addressing important national, cultural, and public health issues. There is much good work being done by the Office of the Mayor, and the recommendations in this report are intended to build on these efforts.

We are confident that the recommendations in this report will provide a useful framework to address your current and future needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to continue to work with the City of Bloomington.

Sincerely,

Michelle Ferguson
Vice President - Organizational Assessment

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Executive Summary

The City of Bloomington is home to over 80,000 people and is the commercial and cultural center of Monroe County. The City is also home to Indiana University, a world-class public university that serves a student population of over 48,000 people. The City government is responsible for providing a full suite of municipal services to this community.

Like many municipalities in Indiana, the City is organized under a strong-mayor form of government whereby the Mayor serves as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), responsible for overseeing municipal service delivery. The Mayor is supported in this role by City department directors and professional staff in the Office of the Mayor (OOTM).

The OOTM is staffed with passionate, dedicated staff committed to supporting the Mayor's strategic vision for the community. However, there is a need to increase executive management capacity to enhance program management and further advance the City's strategic goals. As the CEO leading the OOTM and the City at large, the Mayor drives external community, stakeholder, and political engagement in the City of Bloomington and provides direct leadership and oversight of the work of City departments. The Mayor is supported in these responsibilities by a Deputy Mayor who provides daily oversight of the OOTM and supports operating departments in providing daily service delivery to the public.

The City government, under the leadership of the current Mayor, has set an ambitious agenda. The Mayor has established a series of strategic focus areas that build upon the City's strong foundation of talent to enhance municipal service levels, elevate transparency, and drive progress on major policy initiatives that transform local government in Bloomington. The City has embarked upon dozens of large-scale and complex projects and initiatives to achieve those transformational goals. This has translated into a significant increase in workload for the City's executive management team, managers, supervisors, and front-line staff.

Over the past three years, the City has engaged in a widespread organizational evaluation process to determine how best to align City government within this new paradigm. In that vein, the City contracted with The Novak Consulting Group, a part of Raftelis, to assess the OOTM and recommend structural adjustments to ensure that the OOTM is properly equipped to support these organizational goals. This assessment yielded several recommendations centered around structure, staff capacity, strategic prioritization, communications, and engagement.

These policy and program goals must be championed and supported at the highest level of City government; however, the OOTM is understaffed at the Deputy Mayor level. The Deputy Mayor position, as currently structured, manages 18 direct reports, which significantly exceeds benchmark norms for supervisory spans of control. Though the incumbent Deputy Mayor performs adeptly in this function, the structure does not provide sufficient executive leadership capacity to effectively support the Mayor and City staff in this dynamic environment. The City should add another Deputy Mayor position to address this span of control issue and provide greater capacity within the OOTM for special projects that advance the City's priorities. This position can effectively serve as a Chief of Staff and provide capacity for the other Deputy Mayor to focus on operations.

The ambitious work plan laid out by the Mayor is widely supported at the department level and among the governing body. However, these complex initiatives must also be balanced with the considerable requirements of daily municipal service delivery. There is an opportunity to further formalize the internal work planning process through an administrative strategic plan. This process can be used to help City departments prioritize new programs and initiatives against the demands of daily service delivery and current resource constraints.

As the work of the organization becomes more complex and the City engages in new programs and initiatives, the importance of communication, collaboration, and public engagement is vital. Within the OOTM, these functions can be enhanced by clarifying the process for reviewing departmental and City-wide communications and establishing additional mechanisms to consistently communicate updates on City initiatives to the City Council. In addition, the City should engage in a process to develop a strategic communications plan to provide overarching goals, mechanisms, and branding to ensure consistent messaging and effective communication to the Bloomington community and City Council.

There are also opportunities to strengthen the City's innovation and process improvement program by focusing efforts on capacity development within the departments. This will help the City generate new capacity for priority initiatives. It will also multiply the impact of the Director of Innovation's work and generate a cadre of process improvement experts within the City who also maintain direct subject matter expertise in municipal service delivery.

This report is reflective of the current administration's level of work and the unique nature of having many large-scale projects occurring simultaneously. Should this level of activity change, the recommendations in this report may require reconsideration.

The following table summarizes the recommendations included in this report.

Table 1: List of Report Recommendations

Number	Recommendation
1	Add a Deputy Mayor position responsible for internal OOTM administration, public outreach, communications, and special projects.
2	Develop an administrative strategic plan.
3	Establish a formal project evaluation process within the OOTM.
4	Expand and enhance the City Council briefing process.
5	Define clear lines of decision-making authority regarding public engagement and communications efforts.
6	Contract for the development of a strategic communications plan.
7	Refocus the City's innovation program to develop process improvement capacity within each City department.

Introduction

Background and Methodology

In December 2020, the City of Bloomington engaged the project team to conduct a staffing and operations assessment of the Office of the Mayor. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the OOTM's staffing, operations, resources, and organizational structure to identify opportunities for efficiency and effectiveness.

To accomplish these tasks, the consulting team conducted interviews with staff and officials, including kick-off meetings with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, interviews with all members of the City Council, and interviews with more than 20 City staff, including department directors. Interviews were conducted by phone or video due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the project team reviewed and analyzed documents and materials provided by City staff, such as revenue and expenditure data, project plans, and programmatic data.

Finally, the project team reviewed the structure and operations of Mayors' Offices in benchmark cities. Benchmarks were chosen because they are communities in Indiana and have a population between approximately 50,000 and 250,000. Specific benchmarks are listed in the table below.

Table 2: Benchmark Cities in Indiana

City	Population[1]
City of Bloomington	*85,755*
City of Fishers	95,310
City of Fort Wayne	270,402
City of South Bend	102,026
City of Lawrence	49,462

Along with data analysis, best practices research, and benchmarking conducted as part of this assessment, this information informed the recommendations included in this report.

About the Office of the Mayor

The OOTM provides support services to the City's elected Mayor and the executive leadership team. The Office supports the City's mission in cooperation with City Council and works to ensure high-quality municipal services for the Bloomington community.

The Mayor serves as the Chief Executive of the City of Bloomington. The OOTM is responsible for the leadership of the City, as well as for the City's communications and public engagement efforts. The OOTM is staffed with nine Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions, as summarized in the figure below.

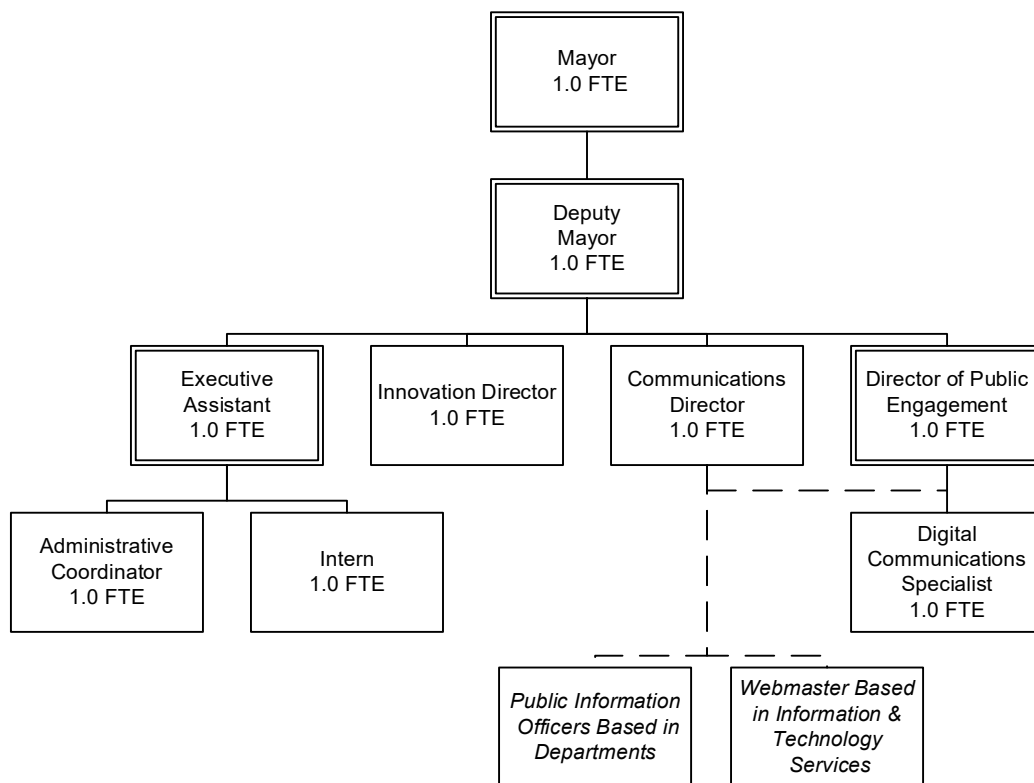[1] Source: United States Census 2019 Population Estimates Program.

Figure 1: Office of the Mayor Organizational Structure, FY2021

The Mayor is responsible for executive leadership of the City, alongside the elected City Council, which serves as the Legislative Branch of the City government. The Mayor is responsible for appointing all of the City's Department Directors and for overseeing City operations. As of the Mayor's FY2021 proposed budget, major initiatives of the Office include the following:

1. **Public Safety and Justice**: Review public safety procedures and provide support to issues surrounding downtown livability, homelessness, and substance use disorders.
2. **Affordable/Workforce Housing**: Develop and implement an affordable housing strategy supported by the Housing Development Fund, HOME funds, tax abatements, and property acquisition.
3. **Economic Development**: Redevelop the hospital site, consider expanding the Convention Center, activate the planned Trades District in the Bloomington Technology Park, and implement recommendations from the Wage Growth Task Force.
4. **Climate Change/Sustainability**: Invest in sustainable practices, implement multimodal transportation options, enhance transit services, invest in green infrastructure, and continue the expansion of alternative and renewable energy services. Research food security issues and consider waste-to-energy conversion.
5. **Transparency/Community Engagement**: Communicate with and engage the public and increase the use of data. Use the Community Survey results to implement improvements in service delivery.
6. **Asset Management and Investment**: Provide the necessary funding to Departments to repair and replace City-owned assets.
7. **Pandemic Response**: Coordinate the continuity of City services during the pandemic and plan for the future.

The Deputy Mayor is appointed by the Mayor and is responsible for serving as Executive Officer in the Mayor's absence. The Deputy Mayor supervises four positions within the Office of the Mayor, as well as all appointed department directors. Within the Office, the Deputy Mayor's direct reports include the Director of Public Engagement, Innovation Director, Communications Director, and the Executive Assistant.

The OOTM is responsible for four key program areas: Policy and Administration, Communications, Public Engagement, and Innovation. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor oversee the Policy and Administration area, which focuses on recommending and setting policy, leading City operations, and developing and implementing the City's operating and capital budgets.

The Communications program area, overseen by the Communication Director, focuses on transmitting information about City services and initiatives to the Bloomington community through press releases, social media, and other communication tools.

The Public Engagement program area, overseen by the Director of Public Engagement and supported by a Digital Communications Specialist, focuses on enhancing engagement with the community by improving transparency and customer services and addressing stakeholders' ideas and questions. The Director of Public Engagement and the Communications Director also have a dotted-line reporting relationship to other communications positions in the City and coordinate with these positions on shared strategies. Specific positions include the Public Information Officers in nine City departments and the Webmaster in the Information & Technology Services Department.

Finally, the Innovation program area, overseen by the Innovation Director, focuses on preparing the City for the future. The Director oversees process improvement exercises for the City, manages performance dashboards, and implements other initiatives surrounding innovation, creativity, and process improvement.

CORE SERVICES MATRIX

The following table provides an overview of core services provided in the OOTM; it is not meant to be all-inclusive.

Table 3: Office of the Mayor Core Services

Department Function/Division	Activities
Policy and Administration	- Oversee City operations and provide policy direction - Work with the Finance Department to prepare the annual City budget - Represent the City at public meetings and other events - Supervise City Department Directors along with other positions in the Office of the Mayor - Meet regularly with Department Directors, key staff, and City Council - Meet with County colleagues at least quarterly - Implement the City's approved annual Capital Plan
Communications	- Write speeches, press releases, proclamations, and editorials - Monitor City-affiliated social media - Teach a Social Media 101 class for City staff - Manage City-wide social media management software and collect social media analytics
Public Engagement	- Conduct community surveys - Regularly interact with community partners - Work with a lobbying firm to advocate for legislative priorities - Manage Board and Commission appointments
Innovation	- Train City staff in process mapping and other innovation and project management skills - Manage internally and externally facing performance dashboards - Lead departments in process improvement exercises - Engage City staff and residents to work together to address big challenges facing the City
Customer Service	- Answer phones and provide office reception for the OOTM - Respond to public inquiries and requests - Maintain OnBoard (boards and commissions database) for the OOTM - Prepare correspondence, proclamations, and other administrative communications - Support special projects

STAFFING

The Office has 8.0 permanent FTEs as of the Mayor's FY2021 proposed budget, as shown below. This does not include an additional two to four non-permanent, part-time intern positions that work in the Office at any time.

The history of staffing in the Office over the past six years is shown below. As can be seen, the City has invested additional resources in the Public Engagement, Innovation, and Administrative Support areas over that time, including the creation of an Innovation Director position in FY2017, the creation of a Director of Public Engagement position in FY2018, and the creation of a Digital Communication Specialist position in 2019.

Table 4: Office of the Mayor Staffing (Permanent FTEs) by Program Area, FY 2016-2021

Activity	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	Percent Change
Policy and Administration	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	0%
Communications	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0%
Public Engagement	0.00	0.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	N/A
Innovation	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	N/A
Administrative Support	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	100%
Total	**4.00**	**6.00**	**7.00**	**8.00**	**8.00**	**8.00**	**100%**

BUDGET

The adopted budget for the OOTM totals approximately $1 million in FY2021. This represents a decrease of nearly $1 million, or 48%, compared to actual expenditures in FY2017, as illustrated in the following chart. This is primarily the result of an investment of $1.2 million in two Community Redevelopment Economic Districts (CRED) in 2017 that was subsequently reduced and eliminated by FY2021. In addition, the Mayor adjusted OOTM and City budget practices to reallocate line items associated with OOTM functions and projects but housed in various departmental budgets. The goal of this reallocation was to reflect the Mayor's Office budget more transparently.

Table 5: Office of the Mayor Expenses – FY2017 through FY2021

Expense Category	FY2017 Actual	FY2018 Actual	FY2019 Actual	FY2020 Budget	FY2021 Budget	Percent Change FY2017-FY2021
Personnel Services	$620,890	$654,181	$805,936	$873,772	$872,031	40%
Supplies	$5,984	$3,905	$15,412	$4,038	$3,463	-42%
Other Services	$1,287,439	$371,090	$130,532	$89,451	$120,251	-91%
Total	**$1,914,313**	**$1,029,176**	**$951,880**	**$967,261**	**$995,745**	**-48%**

Analysis and Recommendations

The OOTM is responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the City, defining and advancing progress on the City's strategic initiatives, and serving as a conduit between the public and City Council's expectations and daily work of its government.

This assessment indicates that Office of the Mayor staff are highly respected across the organization and by City Council. They are regarded as talented, experienced, accessible, and committed to serving the Bloomington community. This represents a strong foundation of excellence and serves as a framework for continuous improvement.

The analysis and recommendations detailed below identify specific and actionable adjustments that can be leveraged to strengthen service delivery under four topic areas: 1) Staffing and Organization Structure; 2) Strategic Planning and Prioritization; 3) Communications and Public Engagement, and 4) Innovation and Process Improvement.

Staffing and Organization Structure

Recommendation 1: Add a Deputy Mayor position responsible for internal OOTM administration, public outreach, communications, and special projects.

The City of Bloomington is organized under a strong mayor form of government. Under this governance structure, the Mayor serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the City and is responsible for appointing all senior-level department directors and overseeing the work of the City. The Mayor is actively involved in setting strategic direction and coordinating performance across the organization. The Mayor spends considerable time in regular working group and bi-weekly meetings with department directors to discuss strategic longer-term goals and performance. This level of consistent focus on both organizational performance and strategic leadership reflects best practices in municipal management and offers a strong foundation upon which to build.

In addition to these duties, the Mayor also serves an important external-facing role and is responsible for engaging with the public, the Bloomington City Council, and community stakeholders to drive the strategic direction of the City and set the agenda for new projects and initiatives. Each of these broad categories of work – providing strategic direction, setting performance expectations, and providing community leadership – requires a significant dedication of time and resources. To assist the Mayor, the OOTM is staffed with a Deputy Mayor who provides day-to-day oversight and support for the OOTM and the City's departments, under the direction and on behalf of the Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor, in effect, serves as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the City, responsible for overseeing operational and administrative departments City-wide as well as internal operations of the OOTM; this role is performed in partnership with the Mayor as CEO. The Deputy Mayor currently oversees 18 direct reports, including 14 department directors and four direct reports within the OOTM. In addition, the Deputy Mayor provides indirect oversight to the Transit Authority and the Housing Authority, which are partner organizations with their own boards and autonomy but which connect closely with the community.

Multiple factors influence the optimal span of control within an organization. Organizations with spans of control ranging between 1:5 and 1:10 supervisor to subordinate ratios are typically more able to engage in consistent and sound management practices and are best equipped to responsively manage dynamic work environments. Higher spans of control exceeding a 1:10 supervisor to subordinate ratio, such as that employed in Bloomington, can be

effective in organizations that engage in consistent, repetitive tasks. Higher spans of control can result in cost savings but can also limit the amount of managerial attention.

The City of Bloomington is a progressive and highly educated community and is best described as "high touch." Residents, business leaders, and community partners expect a high level of engagement from their City government. In addition, daily service delivery expectations are high. The City also exists in an independent media market, which increases public communications and engagement workload requirements across all departments. The complexity of this managerial environment requires flexibility, responsiveness, and a varied skill set from the City's department leadership team and the Deputy Mayor.

The City has been fortunate that its tenured Deputy Mayor is well-skilled to manage in this environment. The project team's interviews with City Council, the Mayor, OOTM staff, and department directors indicate a widespread appreciation for the Deputy Mayor's work and his ability to manage an exceptional workload and remain accessible. However, regardless of how effective the current Deputy Mayor is in that role, the position still maintains a direct span of control of 1:18, which is uncommonly high, as well as indirect oversight and management responsibilities for other OOTM staff. This has strained managerial capacity in some important areas.

One of the common themes that developed in conversations with department directors and the City Council was a desire for more proactive communication related to the development and execution of new administrative and policy initiatives. There is also a strong desire from the City Council for greater collaboration from the Mayor's Office around community engagement initiatives and budgetary planning. This type of communication and collaboration requires a significant commitment of time and focus, especially from the Deputy Mayor position.

The Mayor has also identified an important strategic goal for the organization to enhance organizational performance measurement and data transparency to the community. To that end, the City has worked to execute a performance measurement reporting system (Trello) and public-facing dashboards. Further, the City has invested resources in developing an innovation program that is intended to translate performance measurement and process improvement into tangible service enhancements. However, the day-to-day demands associated with overseeing service delivery in 18 departments, as well as the OOTM staff, have limited the ability to provide sufficient focus in these important initiatives.

The effort to be more transparent is also reflected in a broad strategic goal to foster greater community engagement. The OOTM has developed subject matter expertise in public engagement and communications, but there remains a need to craft and execute a broader public engagement strategy and process and institutionalize that process within the City's organization. The analysis and recommendations detailed below outline specific actions that can be taken to build that strategy, but these service area enhancements cannot be reasonably executed under the current managerial structure. These factors indicate a need to generate additional executive-level managerial capacity within the OOTM.

To determine the appropriate structure, the project team completed peer benchmarking research for like-size, strong mayor communities in the state of Indiana. A summary of that research for the cities of Fishers, Fort Wayne, South Bend, and Lawrence is included in Appendix A. The research indicates a wide variety of organizational structure models, none of which provided a scalable and appropriate framework for the City of Bloomington. Instead, it is important to focus on Bloomington's specific and unique characteristics, including its strategic focus areas, organization and distribution of City departments, existing spans of control, and external demands placed on City government. Given these considerations, there is a clear need to add at least one more Deputy Mayor to the OOTM. Adding a second Deputy Mayor to the OOTM would reduce the span of control for each Deputy Mayor to a

reasonable level and provide additional capacity to organize and lead the broader initiatives that require extensive collaboration with the City's department directors, the Mayor, City Council, and the public.

Having established the need for additional personnel, it is then necessary to evaluate how best to organize the work of the OOTM and the City under two Deputy Mayor positions. Several factors influence this decision. First and most important, the organization structure must reflect the strategic goals and priorities of the Mayor as CEO. Second, the organization of responsibilities and the grouping of departmental assignments should connect logical areas of overlap in the daily delivery of service. Considering this, the structure of the OOTM must ensure sufficient focus on operating departments, public engagement/communication, and transparency, as well as special project management and execution.

Taking these factors into account and considering the current staffing level and structure within the OOTM, it is appropriate to assign operating and key support departments, such as finance, HR, and IT, under the authority of one Deputy Mayor. This position will focus heavily on overseeing the day-to-day service delivery of the City. The second Deputy Mayor will assume oversight of the OOTM and will also oversee special projects and drive progress on the Mayor's strategic initiatives around communication, performance measurement, and public engagement. This position will also absorb oversight of departments that focus heavily on community and economic development initiatives that require extensive community and stakeholder engagement, such as Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD). This position will have a smaller span of control compared to the Deputy Mayor over operations but will also be tasked with directly managing special projects and advancing the innovation and communications programs within the City. In effect, the second Deputy Mayor position will serve as a Chief of Staff over OOTM operations and special projects.

The two Deputy Mayor positions will work closely together to coordinate special project management, which will inevitably touch multiple departments, and will serve as the Mayor's primary administrative arm. This offers the benefit of generating capacity for the Mayor to provide additional focus on public-facing priorities, community engagement, and City Council relations.

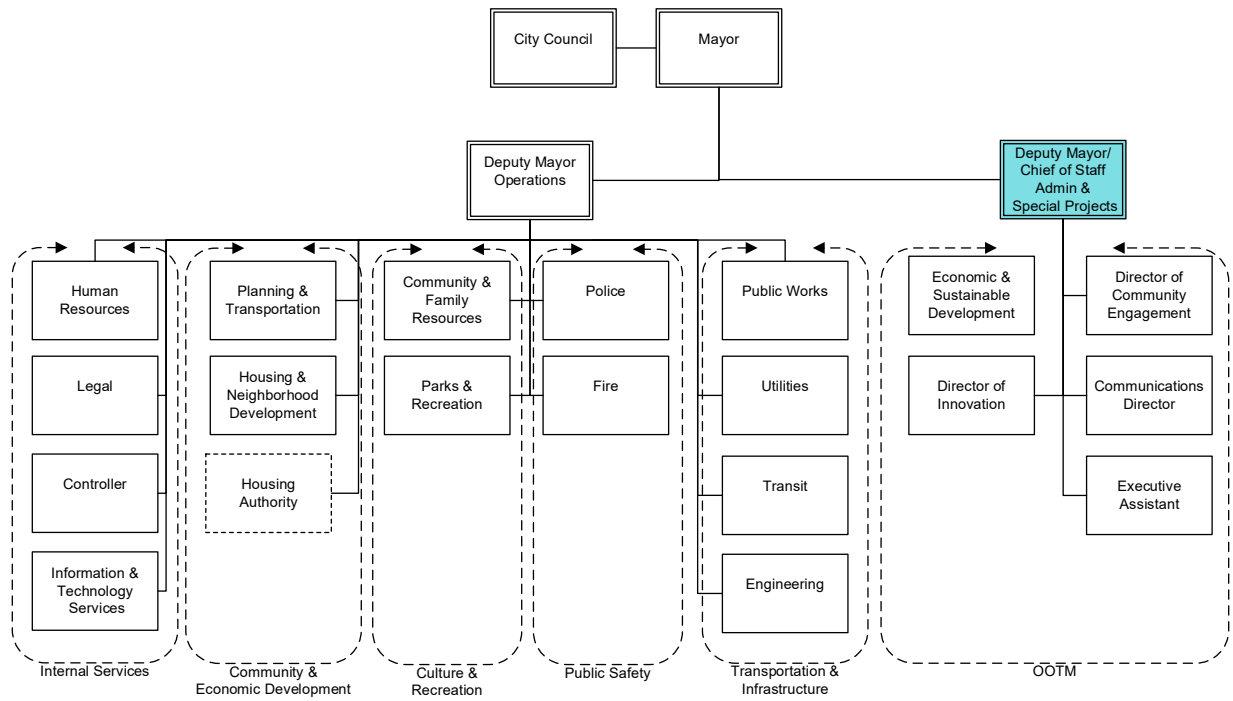The following figure summarizes the recommended organization structure.

Figure 2: Proposed Organization Structure, City of Bloomington

The recommended organization structure detailed above provides focused capacity for strategic priorities while also narrowing the scope of duties for the Deputy Mayor of Operations and associated span of control to 1:14. This proposed span of control, while still relatively high, focuses the position's responsibilities and integrates the core internal service departments, such as ITS and the Controller's Office, under the same oversight structure as the operating departments they support. This approach also offers the most reasonable opportunity to add capacity while controlling new expenses. However, even with this additional capacity, there will be little bandwidth to absorb new duties under the proposed managerial structure. This is an important distinction given that the City is poised to grow considerably.

The City of Bloomington has proposed the annexation of seven urbanized areas just outside the current municipal boundaries. The constitutionality of the proposed annexations was challenged in the courts in 2017; however, in December 2020, the Indiana Supreme Court ruled that the City has the right to attempt to annex these areas through the procedures outlined in state statute, and the City is now moving forward. The process of annexation will not only increase the service area of the City but will result in a complex implementation process that will require an extensive and long-term commitment of time and effort to develop and implement. The current approach calls for annexation to be complete by 2024. Should the annexation proposal come to fruition, a third Deputy Mayor will likely be necessary to help manage the process in advance of 2024 and manage the expanded scope of public services following annexation.

Strategic Planning and Prioritization

Recommendation 2: Develop an administrative strategic plan.
A strategic vision and goals are valuable tools to help guide organizational decision-making and ensure that resources are used as effectively as possible. Without a strategic plan in place, a City risks allocating resources across too many or too few priorities, which could lead to priorities not receiving the appropriate funding or staff time required for success. The City of Bloomington would benefit from an administrative strategic plan to clearly operationalize the Mayor's strategic focus areas.

The Mayor has established six core strategic focus areas and has tasked staff with implementing several initiatives related to these goals. That strategic framework has also been applied as a prioritization filter in the City's budget development process. Those strategic focus areas include the following:[2]

1. **Support and Maintain Public Safety, Civility, and Justice** - Provide fire service and law enforcement and collaborate with agencies to promote justice and civility. Provide ongoing support and direction to issues of downtown livability, homelessness, the opioid crisis, and more.

2. **Affordable Housing** - Implement and refine an affordable housing strategy as part of the Comprehensive Master Planning process, including updates to the Unified Development Ordinance.

3. **Facilitate Economic Development through Enhancing Quality of Place** - Continue to work with small businesses, associations, artists, nonprofits, and entrepreneurs to make Bloomington a great place to establish and grow as an employer. Creating engaging physical spaces, supporting great events and experiences, nurturing sustainable practices, and enhancing a spirit of innovation and vitality are all part of a strong, healthy economic future.

4. **Transparency/Community Engagement** - Communicate with and engage the public about how City government performs, as well as increase use and access to data from City departments. Examples of this transparent community engagement include the Polco public engagement website for collecting public input on current issues facing the City, the biennial Community Survey, ongoing budget goal updates, the 142 data sets on the B-Clear data portal on the City website, the Bloomington Revealed site providing a visual representation of such data and the Mayor's open office hours.

5. **Asset Management and Investment** - Invest in the repair and replacement of existing City-owned assets by providing necessary funding to all City departments responsible for City-owned assets. Invest in new City assets that respond to the needs of the community.

6. **Innovation** - Invest in staff and create a culture of innovation that encourages piloting new ideas that will improve the delivery of services to the community while increasing efficiency to maximize City taxpayer dollars.

These priorities provide a valuable framework to guide the organization. In addition, interviews with City Council indicate a broad agreement with the Mayor's priorities and general policy focus. The City Council also expressed a desire to engage more heavily in the policy and budget formulation process for the City. The City of Bloomington is organized under the strong mayor form of government. Within that legal structure, the Mayor is ultimately responsible for determining the strategic direction and focus of the City government. The Mayor defines the organization's proposed annual budget, and the City Council has the opportunity to amend that budget within the framework outlined in City Charter. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have worked to expand the frequency and type of interaction with the City Council both during and outside of the budget process and have actively worked to take the City Council's policy direction into consideration.

Though the current strategic prioritization process provides a valuable framework for budgetary planning and discussions, there is an opportunity to expand the process outside of the annual budget process and into a more comprehensive long-term (5 – 10- year) administrative strategic plan. This will help ensure that the Mayor's strategic priorities are reflected at the operational and programmatic level, not just at the special project level. There are

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[2] https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/office-of-the-mayor

multiple approaches that can be applied to support this effort but broadly speaking, it should include a baseline assessment of environmental conditions as well as targeted staff and community engagement processes.

The plan should then be used to guide decision-making about future initiatives and resources to ensure that City initiatives are aligned toward the Mayor's goals. Departments should also use this plan as a basis for developing their own internal work plans, helping ensure that initiatives are aligned at every level of the organization.

Recommendation 3: Establish a formal project evaluation process within the OOTM.

The City of Bloomington is a complex organization responsible for a multitude of public services. However, the work of the City can be broken down into two distinct categories: programs and projects. Programs are the daily, ongoing work of the organization. These are the services provided consistently and represent the greatest commitment of staff time and community resources. For example, patrol is a program managed and administered by the Police Department.

Layered on top of programs are special projects and initiatives deemed a priority by policymakers and/or management. These projects serve to address a specific unmet community need and ultimately enhance the quality of daily service delivery. This might include budgeted projects (new software, for example), strategic plan initiatives (enhancing parks availability), policymaker priorities (overhauling the public website), or responses to significant public concerns or resident requests (ensuring equity and inclusion in public safety).

These special projects and initiatives, especially those tied to broad strategic goals and objectives, are ultimately what drive organizational improvement. As such, it is important for municipalities to maintain capacity for this kind of effort. The Mayor of Bloomington's approach to governance and leadership emphasizes this type of work as a priority, and he has directed his leadership team to drive progress on a series of strategic initiatives and special projects.

At least 19 large-scale, major initiatives are receiving the attention of the City's leadership teams and departmental staff. These initiatives range from major economic development efforts, such as the expansion of the convention center, to infrastructure investments and public engagement and transparency initiatives.[3] Each of these projects requires a substantial commitment of time and energy, not just from the City's executive leadership team but also from City staff at every level of the organization. This results in an inherent tension between the time required to meet daily service delivery requirements and the time required to execute these strategic initiatives. This tension was further exacerbated in 2020 as the City fought to continue delivering quality service during the COVID-19 pandemic while managing the personal impact on City employees who, in many cases, are essential workers and critical to the pandemic response.

City staff have done an exceptional job managing these demands, but the organization is under strain, like most local government organizations across the country right now. As part of this engagement, the project team interviewed each City department director, and those interviews yielded some common themes. Broadly speaking, department directors are aligned with the Mayor's strategic goals and initiatives and appreciate the transformational focus of his leadership. However, there is concern regarding the organization's capacity to effectively execute these strategic initiatives quickly and concurrently while continuing to meet the high service level demands of the public and provide adequate support to City staff.

All of these strategic initiatives are important, but the City has finite capacity and must balance these special projects with other ongoing duties. As such, there is a need to establish a more intentional project development process to

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[3] https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/office-of-the-mayor/projects

prioritize these competing objectives and develop an implementation plan and timeline that reflects resource availability. That must be balanced with an equally important need for department directors to push the boundaries of organizational capacity to advance these initiatives and goals. This will require an intentional effort by the Mayor, Deputy Mayors, and department directors to fully assess the necessary time commitments associated with a new initiative and clarify what other programs or initiatives can be adjusted to create capacity.

Establishing a process to evaluate and prioritize new initiatives against existing workload and staff capacity would be beneficial to improve implementation effectiveness and focus available resources. Ideally, the City would first define its goals through the administrative strategic plan described in Recommendation 2. It would then align the budget and department work plans to accomplish these goals, and new initiatives would be evaluated for implementation within this strategic framework and competing responsibilities. When considering new initiatives, the OOTM should discuss each idea with the operational and subject matter experts in affected departments to assess staff capacity and availability and gauge new priorities against other initiatives before adding projects to the "To Do" list. Part of this review should also include an assessment of funding/resource availability to ensure that, if a department is tasked with a new project, necessary funding is available. In addition, the use of upfront public engagement and outreach should be considered and, if appropriate, integrated into a timeline to move forward. Finally, to enhance accountability, a single employee should be assigned to manage and report on each initiative, particularly for those that involve multiple departments.

Ultimately, the specifics of this project evaluation process must reflect the managerial style and expectations of the Mayor. The Mayor's Office will need to continue to serve an important leadership role to ensure clear priorities for staff and to work with City Council to fund these priorities, and the process and work plan must reflect those priorities. However, formalizing a project evaluation process will ensure that department directors and OOTM executive staff fully vet new initiatives before announcing them or directing staff to undertake them. This will help ensure a more realistic timeline and implementation plan for each initiative while also protecting service level standards associated with daily program delivery to the public.

Communications and Public Engagement

Recommendation 4: Expand and enhance the City Council briefing process.

As part of this engagement, the project team interviewed City Council members to determine what opportunities they see to strengthen the working relationship between the legislative and executive branches of City government. Two primary themes resulted from those conversations. First, there was a desire for more direct involvement in the OOTM's policy development process. Recommendation 2 outlines an approach to address this issue by involving them in the strategic planning process while maintaining the autonomy of the OOTM, as defined by charter.

City Council members also expressed a desire for more intentional communication between the OOTM and City Council. Recommendation 6 calls for the development of a strategic communications plan that will define clear requirements and expectations regarding City communications, including those between the executive branch and the governing body. However, City Council members also expressed a desire for more consistent and targeted communication regarding City programs and initiatives, especially when they will potentially result in questions from the public or news organizations.

Currently, the OOTM and City staff forward all press releases and staff reports to City Council. In addition, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor meet bi-weekly with Council leadership to provide briefings on specific initiatives. Members of the OOTM and the Mayor often attend City Council meetings to provide briefings on issues. However, there is an opportunity to develop a more intentional structure to communicate strategic initiatives. This can be accomplished by expanding and/or enhancing the existing City Council briefing process or by establishing an

additional briefing in which the OOTM can update Council on various activities within the City. This initiative can be led by the Communications Manager with part-time interns used to provide and prepare content.

This will provide a consistent mechanism for communication between the governing bodies, help keep City Council abreast of developments in the City, and provide a catalyst for informal follow-up questions between Council, OOTM staff, and the Mayor.

Recommendation 5: Define clear lines of decision-making authority regarding public engagement and communications efforts.

One of the primary roles and responsibilities of the OOTM is to lead the City's communications and public engagement efforts. To support this responsibility, the OOTM is staffed with three positions that provide communications, public, and social media engagement on behalf of the City. The Communications Director serves as the Chief Public Information Officer (PIO) and is responsible for preparing press releases and outgoing communications, reviewing communications from department staff, preparing speeches for the Mayor, crafting messages for social media, and other miscellaneous communications functions.

The Director of Community Engagement manages outward-facing public engagement efforts and works with departments to design and manage community forums and other engagement opportunities. The position also works on policy matters and special projects for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

The Digital Communications Specialist reports to the Director of Public Engagement but also works closely with the Communications Director, other OOTM staff, and operating departments. The Digital Communications Specialist is responsible for the City's many social media accounts and online presence and provides general support to the Deputy Mayor, OOTM staff, and departmental communications liaisons.

In addition to these centralized communications and public engagement personnel, each department has assigned individuals or groups of individuals who lead communications efforts on the department's behalf. Larger departments, such as the Police, Fire, and Public Works Department, have designated PIOs, while smaller departments have staff who serve as the points of contact for press releases. These positions serve as the subject matter experts for their given departments. Communications and public engagement personnel provide varying levels of direct support to each department depending on the issue or topic at hand and the capacity of departmental staff.

One of the common themes resulting from this assessment was a perceived lack of clarity regarding the role of the Director of Public Engagement, the role of Communications Director, and the role of departmental communications personnel in the broader communications and public engagement framework. Most, but not all, public communications from departments are reviewed by the Communications Director and/or Director of Public Engagement, but this process is not formally defined and has no clear workflow, resulting in some bottlenecks and redundancies between OOTM and department staff while undertaking their work.

Departments develop the initial draft of proposed public messages, including press releases and social media posts, and route some to the OOTM, where they are then revised and sent back to the department for approval or more edits. Departments have no rules on which communications to forward to the OOTM for review; in some cases, they send everything, and in others, they will only send certain items. Occasionally the revisions of both Directors on a piece may conflict. The lack of a clear review process results in an "edit – revise – edit" loop that is inefficient and can cause delay. Departments also feel that their subject matter expertise is not always respected nor understood by OOTM staff, who may inadvertently change the intended message when making edits.

Because the OOTM does not have sufficient staff to centralize these functions and review all department initiatives and communications through the duration of the process, it is important to clarify how the decentralized model can work most effectively. In this way, both department and OOTM staff clearly understand which communications should be elevated to the OOTM level for review, minimize workflow bottlenecks and ensure clear and effective messaging to the public.

The City should develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the communications and public engagement processes with the goal of clearly defining process expectations for OOTM and departmental staff. The SOP should include clear rules regarding which items require OOTM review, which do not, which positions are involved, what the steps are, and timelines for review at each level. It should also include a tracking or routing mechanism for current items so that departments can see where an item is in the review process. A method to have departments communicate with the OOTM regarding all outgoing public communications -- even those not reviewed by OOTM staff -- should also be discussed so that the OOTM is not surprised by communications going directly to the public from departments.

Recommendation 1 calls for the addition of a second Deputy Mayor responsible for leading public engagement and transparency efforts for the City. One of the first important tasks for this position will be to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the three positions and define clear lines of decision-making authority regarding public engagement and communications efforts. This should reflect the duties of the OOTM regarding the communication of City-wide initiatives while also defining the role of department-level communications personnel in the development and delivery of department-specific communications. This effort can be supported by the development of a strategic communications plan that defines a clear process and measurable goals for strategic communications.

Recommendation 6: Contract for the development of a strategic communications plan.
The City's current communications program is, by necessity, largely decentralized. The Communications Director is theoretically responsible for long-term planning and core tasks, while individual City departments are tasked with creating content for much of their communications and public engagement independently. Recommendation 5 speaks to the existing lack of clarity between the roles and responsibilities of centralized communication staff and departmental communications staff; however, the nature of City government indicates that there are triple advantages to a generally decentralized communication program under broad oversight and direction of the OOTM.

First, a decentralized approach can help ensure that communications to the public occur in a timely manner. If each departmental level communication is required to be vetted and approved by the relatively few communications-focused personnel in the OOTM, the timeliness of communications would be negatively impacted. In fact, interviews with department personnel indicate that the lack of clarity regarding the roles of departments and the OOTM in the communications and public engagement process has resulted in such bottlenecks. Allowing some autonomy and flexibility at the department level can help mitigate this risk.

The second major advantage to a decentralized approach is that department staff, as the subject matter experts in their particular areas of operation, are best equipped to craft an accurate and nuanced message to the public regarding items of interest. Central communications and public engagement staff are experts in the nuance of how best to craft a message to reach and influence the target audience. Departmental staff are experts at defining the substance of that message and articulating who the target audience should be. Each of these perspectives is valuable and important and should be given equal credence.

The primary disadvantage to the decentralized approach is that, without adequate central coordination, there can be a wide array of styles, formats, and messages employed by each department. This can result in an inconsistent

appearance and message and cause confusion among the public. It can also run the risk of leaving important stakeholders, such as the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and City Council, out of the communications loop.

The challenge for the City of Bloomington is to develop a communications and public engagement strategy that presents a unified image and message while also fully reflecting the need to tap into the subject matter expertise of department leaders and staff. Recommendation 5 outlines the need to clearly define internal processes and roles in the public engagement and communication process. However, that process needs to be structured within a broader strategic communications and public engagement framework.

The primary objectives of a strategic communications plan are to increase awareness of the City's policies and programs and generate enhanced engagement of constituents in the governing process. An effective strategic communications plan defines a clear framework for how the City can increase engagement, provide access, establish transparency, and reinforce the credibility of City government. These objectives are directly connected to the Mayor's goals regarding the transparency of government. An effective strategic communication plan typically includes several core elements.

The first step to producing a successful communications plan is to establish a baseline for the communication environment. This process step includes a full examination of communication tools and materials currently used by the City and helps to define how it is communicating with residents and where improvements can be made. Evaluations are based on printed materials, public meeting constructs, and digital communication tools, including social media and the website. This process helps define whether and where there are conflicting voices in the City. For example, in Bloomington, multiple departmental social media accounts are currently used by departments, which can present a disconnected image to the public.

The second important step is to engage with staff, stakeholders, and the governing body. This allows the City to clearly identify how key stakeholders access and use information provided by the City, define communication gaps, and outline what communication sources need to be augmented. These staff and stakeholder conversations also provide important context regarding what type of information staff and stakeholders want to see from the City. This work sets the context for the third important step, which is the development of goals and priorities.

These goals highlight the desired outcome of the City's communication plan. These goals should be few in number, clear, actionable, and measurable. For example, a goal may be that citizens perceive the City as an open, credible, and responsible organization, that accurate, unbiased information is provided to the public in a timely manner, and that communications between the City and the public are two-way and their input is valued.

The next step is to define the target audiences for the City's communications plan. Communications outreach is designed to deliver key messages to a targeted audience, ultimately resulting in greater education of the stakeholders about a program, issue, or initiative. During this stage of the process, the City will assess the communication framework and define who the key audiences are for outreach efforts. This is an important step because different audiences will be best served through different forms of communication. For example, the tools and tactics used to effectively communicate with the business community will be different than those required to communicate with the student population at Indiana University. Regardless of the audience, the core message and strategic priorities should serve as the anchor and provide a structured framework for the various communications elements.

This work will then allow the City to begin developing prioritized communication tactics that will frame the work of OOTM and departmental communication personnel. Ultimately, each strategy and tactic should map back to the strategic communications priorities and objectives, resulting in greater awareness, support, and participation in the City's governance process. The plan should be implemented through multiple communication vehicles, including

press releases, audio/visual media, social media, and in-person/virtual content delivery. Utilizing multiple sources establishes a consistent cadence to communication efforts and will institutionalize the process in the organization and the community.

This process will not only create a clear and consistent image and approach with the public but will also serve to provide important context as the City distinguishes the specific roles and responsibilities of departmental communications personnel and OOTM communications and public engagement staff. Accountability surrounding the execution of the communication plan is a fundamental requirement. Identifying a Communications Lead, Communications "Points-of-Contact" throughout the organization, and documenting roles and responsibilities of these parties in the communications process is critical. The process will also help the City prioritize where to focus communication efforts based on the potential reach of individual tactics.

Innovation & Continuous Improvement

Recommendation 7: Refocus the City's innovation program to develop process improvement capacity within each City department.

One of the Mayor's strategic goals is to invest in staff and create a culture of innovation. In support of this goal, the City's Innovation Task Force recommended establishing a full-time Innovation Director position in FY2017 to develop and lead the City's innovation program.

According to the Director, the three goals of the City's innovation work are as follows:

1. Improve internal processes and the City's understanding of how customers perceive services
2. Prepare the organization for the future and to think about what is coming
3. Create a culture of innovation so employees have a framework and vocabulary for continuous improvement

In addition, the City has placed specific emphasis on the development of technology-focused tools to support program innovation. Within the broad goal of innovation and continuous improvement, there is flexibility regarding the projects and focus areas of the innovation program. However, the program work plan is typically constituted from three sources. In some cases, the Mayor or Deputy Mayor will define a program or focus area that is of particular interest to them. This can be tied to a strategic priority or a response to an issue raised by staff, City Council, or the public. Similarly, departments will sometimes request the support of the Innovation Director to help with internal departmental process improvement efforts. And lastly, the Innovation Director will proactively seek opportunities within the organization and "pitch" potential projects to departments.

This approach to defining innovation focus areas, while flexible, creates some challenges within the organization. The City is staffed with only one innovation-focused position. Based on the current program and work planning model, this position is largely focused on individual project execution and support of the Mayor's data transparency initiatives. Because of this limited staff capacity, the scope and reach of these projects are constrained, and the Innovation Director must rely on departmental staff to help define and prioritize programs and staff the projects. However, it has been a challenge to create the organizational buy-in necessary to generate this capacity.

The Innovation Director possesses extensive knowledge and expertise in the areas of process improvement and innovation. This is a valuable skill set that can be leveraged to great effect within the City. However, the methodology and vocabulary of process improvement best practices are foreign to most City employees. Similarly, the Innovation Director position does not possess a broad background in municipal programming and management and, as such, needs the proactive support of City staff to help identify and prioritize areas of focus and fully assess the practical implications of innovation. This gap in vocabulary and expertise has impeded the implementation of process

improvement and innovation programs. Given these factors, it is appropriate to refocus the efforts of the Innovation Director to develop organizational capacity rather than manage individual process improvement projects.

This can be accomplished by developing and administering a City-wide Process Improvement Team (PIT) staffed with representatives from each City department. The Innovation Director will be responsible for leading the PIT. The Director's first task will be to develop a training and development program designed to build a cohort of staff with process improvement expertise within the City. As part of that effort, staff will be tasked with completing small-scale process improvement initiatives relevant to their areas of subject matter expertise as a means to practice and refine new skills. Once the initial training program is developed, the Innovation Director will facilitate a process of engaging with each department director and their assigned PIT representative to identify a series of potential focus areas in their department. These focus areas would then be prioritized using the strategic plan framework and ultimately vetted with the Mayor and appropriate Deputy Mayor to prioritize. Once approved, the Innovation Director and PIT will develop an appropriate implementation strategy, funding plan, and communications strategy to facilitate implementation.

Similar programs have been effectively implemented in other communities. For example, in 2016, the City of Charleston, South Carolina, created a Director of Process Improvement and Innovation position and trained a cohort of staff to serve on a process improvement team. Since its formation, this team has led the implementation of dozens of process improvement initiatives and studies resulting in innovative organizational change. Department directors in the City could drive the program by first participating in training, then serving as coaches, encouraging their staff to get trained and to identify and participate in department improvement projects. The City could integrate innovation-specific goals for the departments into director performance evaluations or annual budget goals, and the OOTM can review progress made on a regular basis.

Implementing such an approach in Bloomington will offer several advantages. It will help develop a culture of innovation by building a consistent skill set and awareness across departments. It also bridges the gap between process improvement/innovation expertise and departmental subject matter expertise. It will help frame the Innovation Director as a resource but also provide due consideration and deference to department directors and program staff who are experts in the nuance of service delivery. It also provides a repeatable framework for prioritization and resource allocation discussions and can inform decision-making regarding investments in technology, equipment, and staff.

Conclusion

This organizational assessment was undertaken to assess operations and identify opportunities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness within the City of Bloomington's Office of the Mayor. The recommendations in this report were developed to build upon the Office's high service level and community-focused approach to the management of City-wide operations.

The recommendations within this report call for one additional staff position, a second Deputy Mayor. This report also recommends the City contract for a comprehensive Communications Strategic Plan and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Directors of Communication and Public Engagement, as well as the role of the Innovation Director.

Using this report as a guide, the OOTM will be able to continue to improve operations and services and to streamline internal processes for the benefit of the Bloomington community. Prioritization of these recommendations and thoughtful, planned implementation are needed to ensure resources are expended prudently.

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APPENDIX A: Summary of Benchmark Data

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Appendix A: Summary of Benchmark Data

In the City of Fishers, Indiana (population 95,310), oversight of the City's 16 Departments is split between the Mayor and one Deputy Mayor. The Mayor directly supervises eight operating departments, and the Deputy Mayor oversees eight departments, which include all internal support services plus the community development functions of planning and zoning and permitting and inspections.
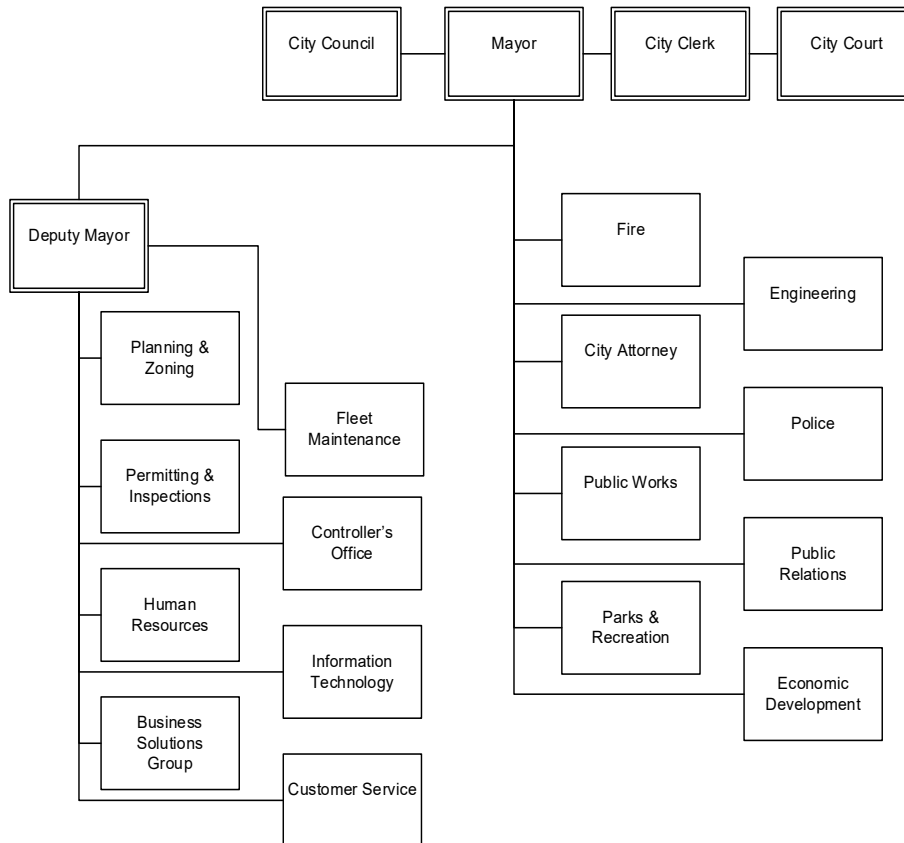
Figure 3: City Organization Structure, City of Fishers

In the City of Fort Wayne (population 270,402), the Mayor supervises nine departments, and the one Deputy Mayor supervises two departments.
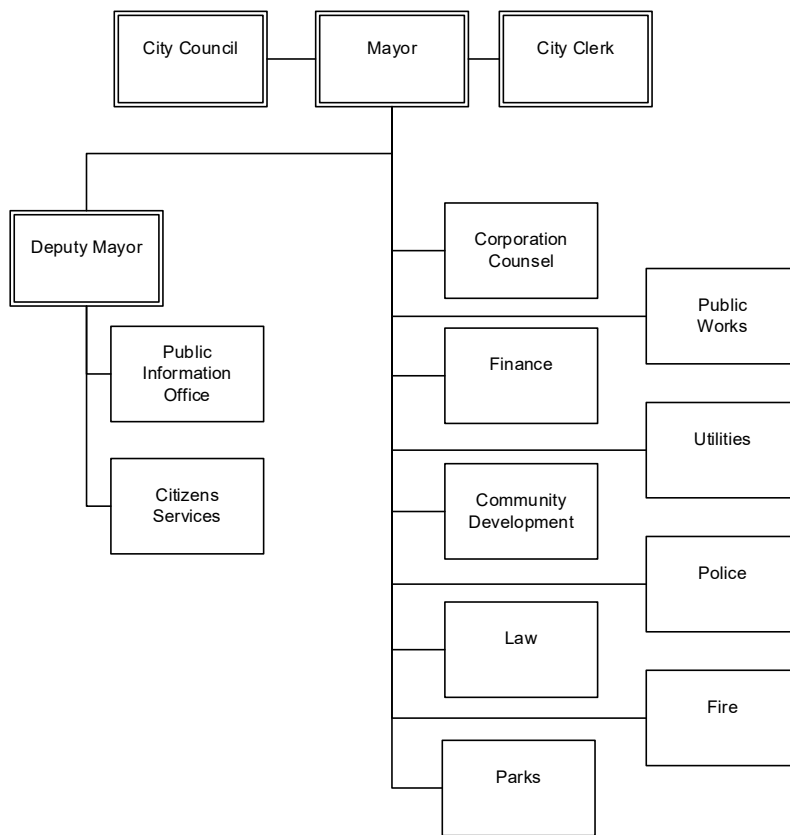

Figure 4: City Organization Structure, City of Fort Wayne

In the City of South Bend (population 102,026), the Mayor directly supervises all 11 City departments, as shown in the figure below. There is no Deputy Mayor position in the City.
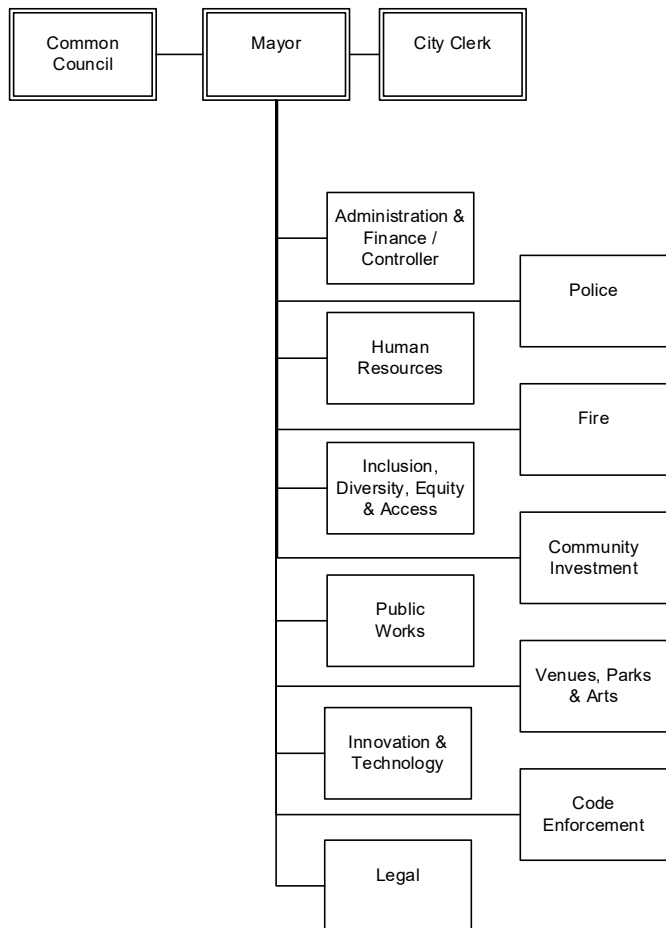

Figure 5: City Organization Structure, City of South Bend

In both Fishers and Fort Wayne, supervision of departments is split between the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. In South Bend, the Mayor appears to directly oversee all departments, but detailed information for this review was limited, and additional staff reporting to the Mayor may provide some assistance. In all three examples, the largest span of control was 11 direct reports, as compared with 18 direct and two indirect reports for Bloomington's Deputy Mayor.

In the City of Lawrence (population 49,462), the Mayor directly supervises all nine City departments, as shown in the figure below. A Controller/Deputy Mayor position oversees Finance and Human Resources.
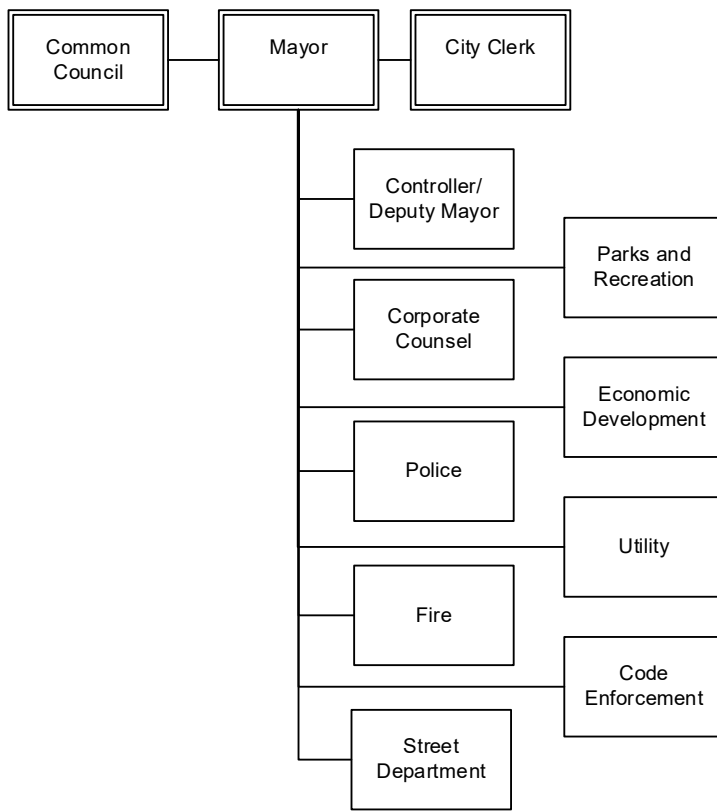

Figure 6: City Organization Structure, City of Lawrence