



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information, please contact:

Holly McLauchlin, Communications Manager, Utilities

mclauchh@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3940

Andrew Krebbs, Communications Director, Office of the Mayor

andrew.krebbs@bloomington.in.gov or 812-349-3406

City Considers Relocating Utilities to the Winston Thomas Site

Bloomington, Ind.—During its August 1 meeting, City of Bloomington Utilities (CBU) staff recommended to the Utilities Service Board Property and Planning subcommittee the potential relocation of the CBU Service Center to the former Winston Thomas Wastewater Treatment Plant site. After reviewing the Winston Thomas Site master plan (<https://bton.in/VNvzu>), including its proposal to relocate the service center, the subcommittee asked CBU staff to proceed with a preliminary financial analysis in anticipation of a possible project design study.

The Winston Thomas site offers many benefits as CBU envisions its operations for future generations. As the community continues to grow in population and activity, more residents and facilities will need access to water, wastewater, and stormwater services resulting in an increase in infrastructure. CBU has outgrown its current service center and storage facilities.

Bloomington Utilities Director Vic Kelson said, "CBU has been housed at the Miller Drive facility for over 50 years, and we've outgrown it. We need to prepare for the next 50 years of change, and the Winston Thomas site is an excellent location for us."

In addition to a new and updated Service Center at the Winston Thomas location, the site would provide a centralized location for all administrative and maintenance staff offices, appropriate storage for vehicles, equipment, records, and a secure space for construction materials, which allows CBU to have supplies on hand for projects and repairs.

If the Service Center relocates, 600 E Miller Dr could be available to the City for other departments including the Department of Public Works (DPW) to streamline operations. DPW's street and fleet divisions are already located at the Miller Drive campus.

There are many factors to consider before relocation can occur. CBU will next work with the City Controller's office to do a financial analysis of the project cost and possible funding mechanisms and to begin the process of identifying a design contractor. The project design would include a detailed financial assessment based upon the facility design and environmental factors to be considered.

PCBs were found at the former wastewater plant site in the 1970s, and the facility was eventually administered under the Superfund law. Remediation of the site is complete, and the U.S. EPA has informed CBU management that there are no restrictions for redevelopment.

City of Bloomington Utilities has a long history at the Winston Thomas site. The city built a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) there in 1935 and it was renamed in honor of Reverend Winston Thomas after his untimely death in 1969. Rev. Thomas worked for the City for 21 years and was slated to be the first superintendent at the new Blucher Poole WWTP.

In 1975, PCBs were found throughout the property in wastewater from local factories. When the Dillman Road WWTP opened in 1983, Winston Thomas was shuttered as a

wastewater plant. Areas of the property that were not part of the PCB superfund site have been developed into the Bloomington Animal Shelter, training facilities for Bloomington Fire and Police Departments, and more.

“Moving Utilities to the Winston Thomas site affords the City several important opportunities,” said Mayor John Hamilton. “First, we have the opportunity to streamline by centralizing City of Bloomington Utilities, which is good for Bloomington residents. Second, we get to reclaim a piece of our City’s story by once again honoring city employee Winston Thomas. Finally, this is an environmental success story and revitalizing this cleaned up area affords us the opportunity to capitalize on the work of the EPA and take care of it for future generations.”

A master plan for the site was completed in August 2020 with preliminary information and a general plan for a new Service Center. The master plan report is available online in the packet for the 8/1/2022 Utilities Service Board Property and Planning Subcommittee Meeting at bloomington.in.gov/boards/utilities-service/meetings/2022.