

**June 12, 2024**

## **Summary of Early Findings: City of Bloomington's City-wide Creative Placemaking Plan**

**Introduction** Forecast Public Art has completed the first phase of the City of Bloomington's City-wide Creative Placemaking Plan, aiming to align with city priorities and recent planning projects. Lead consultant Theresa Sweetland and consultant Tom Borrup reviewed city documents and conducted interviews with key informants. Early findings were shared with Creative Placemaking staff, the Commission, and other project consultants.

**Documents Reviewed** Key documents include historical overviews, capital improvement plans, neighborhood priorities, public art maps, survey results, and strategic plans. Examples are the South Loop Creative Placemaking Plan, Bloomington Data Explorer, and Forward 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Key informants ranged from city officials to artists and community leaders.

**Defining Creative Placemaking** Creative Placemaking has strong support but requires a clearer definition. Traditionally focused on public art and events in the South Loop District, its definition is expanding to include cross-sector partnerships and community development. Consultants suggest adopting the NEA Our Town definition, emphasizing community goals through artistic creation, planning activities, and design processes.

**City Personality Traits** Bloomington is characterized by high self-esteem, transparency, diversity, and optimism. The city values green spaces, has a can-do attitude, and sees itself globally.

### **Key Findings**

1. **Strength of Creative Placemaking Commission**
  - Under strong leadership, the Commission has been recognized for various accomplishments in the South Loop District, such as public art installations, events, and policy changes. Moving forward, the challenge is to expand these efforts citywide.
2. **Alignment with City-Wide Strategic Plan**
  - The Creative Placemaking goals align with the City of Bloomington Strategic Plan 2022-2027, especially in building a connected, welcoming community. The plan should build on existing engagement efforts.
3. **Lens of Equity and Inclusion**
  - The city recognizes diversity as a strength and the importance of equity. Collaboration with the Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging is crucial. Public art should represent BIPOC communities authentically.
4. **Desire for Interconnected Cultural Ecosystem**
  - City leaders aim to support a cultural ecosystem through collaboration between formal and informal arts organizations and community groups.
5. **Importance of Honoring Native History, Culture, and Land**
  - Research on the Indigenous history of the South Loop area is relevant citywide. Practices include honoring Native values, collaborating with Native communities, and incorporating Indigenous history in schools and public spaces.

6. **Potential for Partnerships with Other City Community Building Efforts**
  - The Community Outreach and Engagement Department (COED) offers significant opportunities for collaboration. The Learn to Lead program can help recruit Commission members and promote placemaking work.
7. **Neighborhood Identity**
  - Different areas of the city have unique characteristics. Identity-building requires time and can be supported through design, public art, and community organizing. Parks provide the strongest sense of connection.
8. **Coordination with Parks Master Plan**
  - The Park System Master Plan emphasizes equity, diversity, and placemaking. Opportunities for collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department are abundant.
9. **Asset Mapping**
  - Developing an asset mapping tool is essential for planning and placemaking. Coordination with COED on techniques and data sharing is recommended.
10. **Capital Improvement Plan**
  - Major projects in the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan, such as the Community Health and Wellness Center and the Bloomington Ice Garden renovation, offer potential for collaboration with Creative Placemaking efforts.
11. **Priority Commercial Nodes**
  - Key commercial nodes like South Loop and Normandale Lake provide opportunities for placemaking activities and community engagement.
12. **Alignment with Port Authority Economic Development Plan**
  - Integrating Creative Economy and Workforce language into the Port Authority Plan is crucial. Recommended actions include supporting creative entrepreneurs and preserving affordable workspaces.

**Conclusion:** Bloomington has a fertile environment for creative placemaking. The Creative Placemaking Commission has made significant progress, and city departments align well with these efforts. Moving forward, the community engagement phase will identify further opportunities and challenges, aiming to develop a strategic plan that integrates creative placemaking across the city.

### **WHATS NEXT? Community and Public Engagement Phase**

1. Creative Placemaking Planning Advisory Committee Monthly Meetings start June 20 and continue: June-Dec 2024
2. Artist Pop Ups, June-September 2024. First pop up event, June 15: Junteenth
3. Broad Community Survey on [Let's Talk Bloomington CP page](#), June-September 2024
4. Small Group Asset Mapping Workshops, July-September 2024

### **Artists Selected:**

Adrian Lowe  
Erin Lavelle  
Katie Ross  
Rupa Thadhani