

# Bloomington Citywide **CREATIVE PLACEMAKING PLAN**

Connecting People and Places: Culture and Creativity Across Bloomington







**Plan adopted by The City of Bloomington  
City Council on March 3, 2025.**

Cover Page: *We Mural* Sunset Block Party  
Photo Credit: Teeko Yang

Insert: Artist Engagement at Bloomington PRIDE  
Photo Credit: James Orione



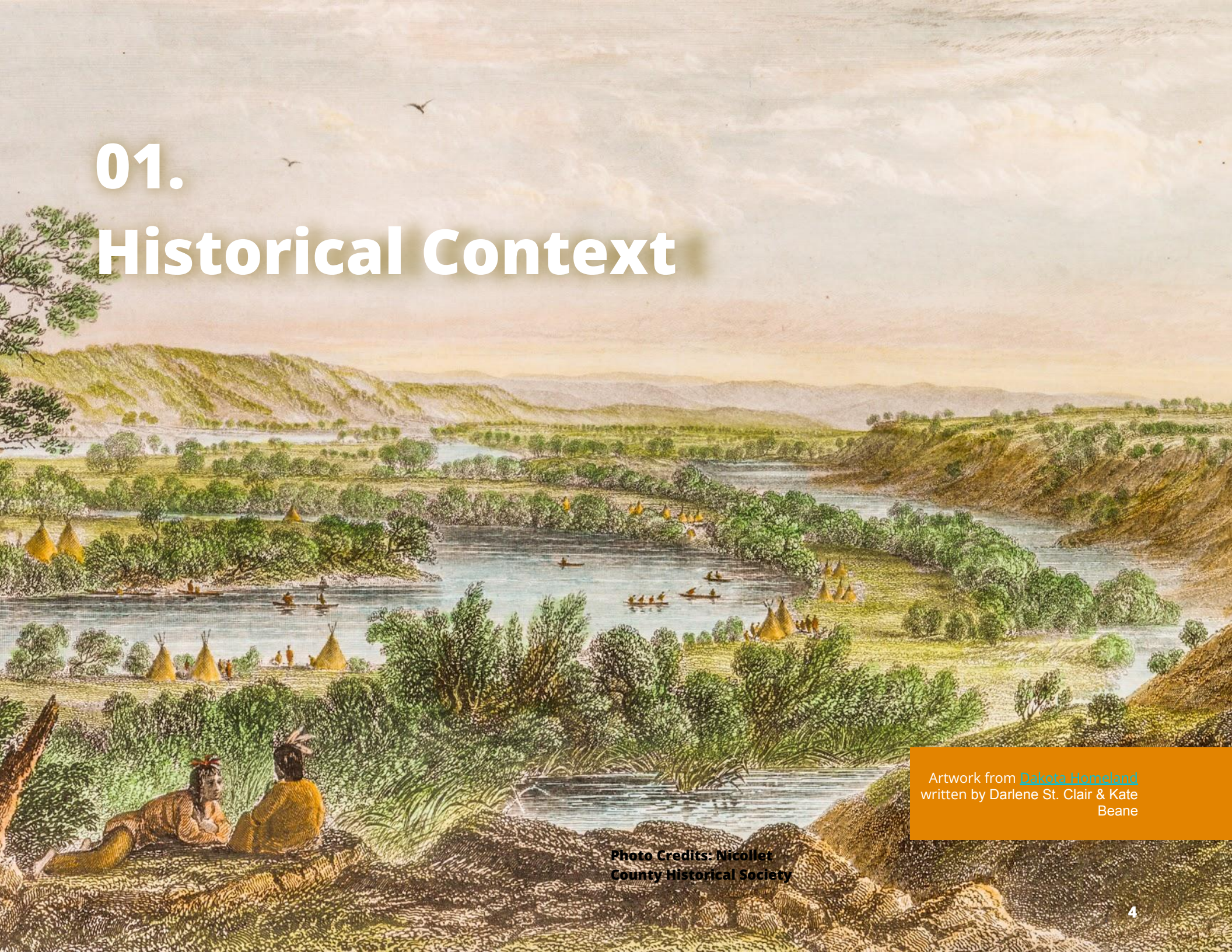
# Table of Contents

<b>1. Historical Context</b> ..... P. 4	<b>8. Artist-Led Engagement Activities: Shaping Bloomington's Creative Placemaking Plan</b> ..... P. 26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledgment of Dakota Land</li><li>• Formation of the Land and Its Early People</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Activities and outcomes of artist-led engagement</li><li>• Lessons learned and community insights</li></ul>
<b>2. Letter from Mayor Tim Busse</b> ..... P. 6	
<b>3. Introduction and Acknowledgments</b> ..... P. 8	<b>9. Major Goal Areas for Creative Placemaking in Bloomington</b> ..... P. 30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acknowledgments of contributors, partners, and participants</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal 1: Support Culture Bearers and Artists</li><li>• Goal 2: Practice Equity</li><li>• Goal 3: Foster Relationships and Build Connections</li><li>• Goal 4: Enhance Belonging and Engagement</li><li>• Goal 5: Build Placemaking Capacity</li></ul>
<b>4. Executive Summary</b> ..... P. 10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vision, mission, and core values</li><li>• Highlights from the community engagement process</li><li>• Key goals and outcomes</li></ul>	
<b>5. History of Creative Placemaking &amp; the South Loop</b> ..... P. 14	<b>10. Office of Creative Placemaking Funding Recommendations</b> ..... P. 46
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key milestones and achievements since 2016</li><li>• Partnerships and awards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public art ordinance and staff capacity</li><li>• Zoning code updates and design guidelines</li><li>• Grant revenue and tax stream exploration</li></ul>
<b>6. Mission, Vision, and Values</b> ..... P. 20	<b>11. Budget Estimates</b> ..... P. 48
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alignment with Forward 2040 Comprehensive Plan and Bloomington Tomorrow. Together. Strategic Plan</li><li>• Guiding principles for creative placemaking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approximate costs aligned for activity ideas.</li></ul>
<b>7. The Evolution of Creative Placemaking</b> ..... P. 24	<b>12. Appendices, Tools, and Case Studies</b> ..... P. 52
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expanding creative placemaking to citywide implementation</li><li>• Four pillars of creative placemaking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tools for implementation</li><li>• Case studies and examples</li><li>• References and supporting documents</li></ul>



01.

# Historical Context



Artwork from [Bakota Homeland](#)  
written by Darlene St. Clair & Kate  
Beane

Photo Credits: Nicollet  
County Historical Society



# Historical Context

*This plan recognizes and acknowledges that these efforts are on the traditional land of the Dakota people, past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.*

## Formation of the Land and Its Early People

Adapted from: *Lines on the Land: How Dakota Homeland Became Private Property: A History of the South Loop District to 1900*, by Peter DeCarlo, and prepared for The City of Bloomington Creative Placemaking Commissioners, August 2021.

Between 100,000 to 10,000 years ago, the landscape of Minnesota—its lakes, ridges, rivers, and open spaces, were formed by glaciers. The contemporary Minnesota River that flows along the southern edge of what is now known as Bloomington, is tiny compared to the glacial river that left a broad valley in its wake. Bloomington sits on the bank of this ancient river that has drawn people for thousands of years.

The first people in Minnesota, whom archaeologists call “Paleo Indians”, may have seen the last glaciers retreat. They likely entered the region about 12,000 years ago and lived in a world filled with megafauna such as mammoths, mastodons, musk-ox, and giant beaver. Reindeer, bison, bears, moose, wolves, coyotes, deer, and elk lived in the area as well. The earliest evidence of human habitation dates conservatively from 8,000 years ago. Subsistence and survival ruled their lives but trade networks connected them to the rest of the continent.

Between 3000 and 500 BCE the climate and vegetation began to stabilize, similar to conditions in the 1600s. Native people began practicing more sophisticated crafts.

Using copper, they created tools, harpoons, awls, adzes, and spears. People began planting crops and harvesting wild rice; pottery was developed. Native Americans started burying their dead, of all ages, in burial mounds around 200 BCE. A burial mound from this period contained conch-shell from the coast of Florida—an example of the trade that occurred at the time.

Around 900 to 1100 BCE Native American society in Bloomington changed. As food sources became plentiful and corn harvests reliable, the population increased. People began living in larger groups and at this time archeologists argue the first tribes emerged. Some contend this is when the ancestral Dakota came into existence whose connection to the land called Minnesota is indisputable.

The center of Dakota homeland is Mni Sota Makoce (Minnesota), “the land where the waters reflect the clouds.” Many Dakota believe that they and the Oyate originated at the confluence of the Mni Sota Wakpa (Minnesota) and Haha Wakpa (Mississippi) rivers. The mouth of Mni Sota Wakpa is called Bdote Mni Sota, and the district around it is generally called Bdote. At the heart of Bdote is Wita Tan̄ka (Pike Island), which some believe is the center of Dakota creation. Bdote was a nexus in their spiritual, cultural, and social life. The existence of Old Shakopee Road, originally a trail connecting Dakota villages to the prairie and bluffs above Bdote, is evidence of that connection.



# 02. Letter from Mayor

Flower tasting artist engagement  
activity by Erin Lavelle  
Photo credit: James Orione



# Letter from Mayor Tim Busse

Dear Residents of Bloomington,

I want to respectfully recognize and acknowledge that we are on the traditional land of the Dakota people, past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

Bloomington City Council has supported Creative Placemaking initiatives since 2015 when the South Loop Creative Placemaking Plan was adopted, resulting in establishing a Creative Placemaking Commission, hiring a Creative Placemaking Director, and identified ongoing funding.

As your Mayor, I am proud to support the Creative Placemaking Citywide Plan — a visionary plan that integrates arts, culture, and design to strengthen and connect our community. This plan reflects Bloomington’s commitment to building vibrant spaces where creativity and collaboration thrive, fostering connections that go beyond art to advance shared social, physical, and economic goals.

The *Bloomington.Tomorrow.Together. Strategic Plan* (2022-2027), guided by hundreds of voices from the community and approved by City Council, helps guide the City as it works to fulfill the mission to cultivate an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be. This Plan supports the community-led identified strategic outcome of “A Connected, Welcoming Community,” which

includes expanding the creative placemaking program across the City as a strategic initiative.

At its heart, this plan seeks to ensure equitable inclusion and representation of Bloomington’s diverse populations across public spaces and cultural activities. It aims to foster meaningful relationships among residents, organizations, visitors, and workers through thoughtfully designed and activated public spaces, shared creative experiences, and accessible ways to move across our community. By doing so, we enhance our collective sense of belonging and engagement.

The plan also recognizes the invaluable contributions of Bloomington’s artists and culture bearers, empowering them to thrive and enrich our city’s cultural and economic vibrancy. Moreover, it sets the foundation for expanding creative placemaking efforts citywide by growing capacity, resources, expertise, and partnerships.

Together, let’s embrace this exciting step forward for our city. I invite all of you to join us in bringing this vision to life.

Sincerely,



Tim Busse



# 03. Introduction and Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the hundreds of artists, culture bearers, and community members who contributed their time, talent, and vision to the creative placemaking efforts that shaped and enriched Bloomington since 2016. Your creativity, dedication, and deep connection to culture transformed our shared spaces into places of beauty, joy, and connection. Together, we've built a vibrant and inclusive community where everyone feels a sense of belonging and pride.

This plan would not have been possible without the collective efforts of many individuals and organizations who generously offered their expertise, creativity, and insights. From artists and engagement partners to city staff and commissioners, your contributions laid the foundation for a brighter, more connected future for Bloomington. We honor and celebrate the invaluable role each of you has played in this journey.

Artist market at  
Bloomington Street Arts Festival  
(inside The Arts Creative)  
Photo credit: Mike Ross Visuals



# Introduction and Acknowledgements

## Creative Placemaking Commissioners (Past and Current)

Jessica Anderson (current)  
David Arbit  
Leah Battin  
Phil Burke  
Douglas Bruce (current)  
Mark Fabel (current)  
Julie Gustafson (current)  
Heather Harden  
Beth McCoy (current)  
Sherri Mullery  
Yariet Montes  
MaryAnne London  
Mark Adkins  
Paul Coate (current)  
Jacqui Rosenbush (current)  
Jamie (Schumacher) Kalakaru-Mava (current)  
Logan Sauer  
Liz Sheets  
Thao Pham (current)  
Molly Rink  
Erik Pearson

## Creative Placemaking Staff

Alejandra Pelinka, Director of Creative Placemaking  
Kathryn Murray, Creative Placemaking Specialist

## Engagement Activity Spaces and Partners

Bloomington Central Station Park  
Bloomington Civic Plaza  
Bloomington Farmers Market  
Countryside Center  
Creekside Community Center  
Hyland Hills  
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
Normandale Hills Elementary  
Oxboro Library  
Penn Lake Library  
Richardson Nature Center  
The Works Museum

## Discover Phase Interviews

Faith Jackson, City of Bloomington, Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer  
Emily Larson, City of Bloomington, Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator  
Holly Masek, City of Bloomington, Port Authority Administrator  
Mayor Tim Busse  
Rena Clark, City of Bloomington, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation  
Nick Johnson, City of Bloomington, Planning Manager  
Sara Tan, Bloomington Symphony Orchestra  
Jamie (Schumacher) Kalakaru-Mava, CP Commissioner Vice Chair, Bloomington resident and Artist  
Jacqui Rosenbush, CP Commissioner Chair and Artist  
Kelli Foster Warder, Artistry Executive Director

## Advisory Committee Members

Charlotte Crabtree, Associate Librarian, Hennepin County Library - Oxboro  
Kelli Foster Warder, Artistry Executive Director  
Oscar Hernandez Ledesma, Community Assets Manager, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
Emily Larson, Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, City of Bloomington  
Priscilla Roberts, Bloomington resident and Bloomington Learn to Lead alumni  
Jamie (Schumacher) Kalakaru-Mava, Bloomington resident, artist, and LISC Twin Cities' Program Officer for Creative Placemaking, Creative Placemaking Commissioner, Vice Chair  
Jesse Golfis, Bloomington resident and artist

## Plan Review and Contributions - City Staff

David Benson, Parks and Recreation Project & Facility Supervisor  
Kim Berggren, Community Development Director  
Ian Brekke, Center for the Arts Manager  
Leah Hughes, Parks and Recreation Deputy Director  
Julie Long, City Engineer  
Holly Masek, Port Authority Administrator  
Nick Johnson, Planning Manager

## Engagement Artists

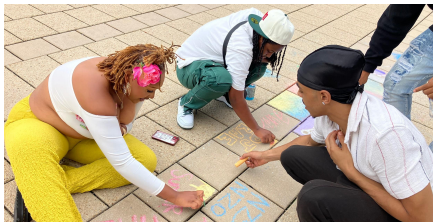
Erin Lavelle  
Adrian Lowe  
Katie Ross  
Rupa Shenoy-Thadhani

## Planning Team

The City worked with Forecast Public Art as our consultant to develop this Plan, and to coordinate engagement activities throughout the summer.

Theresa Sweetland, Executive Director, Forecast Public Art  
Ebony Dumas, Director of Planning + Engagement, Forecast Public Art  
Jen Krava, Director of Research, Grants + Learning, Forecast Public Art  
Hawona Sullivan Janzen, Engagement Specialist, Forecast Public Art  
Satoko Muratake, Director, TEN x TEN  
Maura Rockcastle, Principal, TEN x TEN  
Tom Borrup, Creative Community Builders

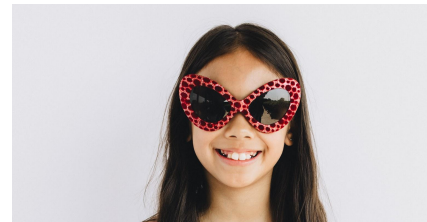
**Thank you to everyone who has played a role in this shared vision for a thriving Bloomington!**



Chalk activity at On the One Music Festival



Detail of coffee filter flowers from artist engagement at The Works by Adrian Lowe



Bloomington Street Arts Festival. Photo credit Mike Ross



Temporary murals by Rock Martinez



# 04. Executive Summary



T-shirt coloring contest  
at The Arts Creative during  
Bloomington Street Arts Festival.  
Photo credit: Mike Ross Visuals



# Executive Summary

The Bloomington Citywide Creative Placemaking Plan charts a bold and inclusive vision to enhance the city's vibrancy, connectivity, and sense of belonging through arts, culture, and design. Building on the success of the South Loop Creative Placemaking Plan, this plan serves as a framework to guide the work of the Office of Creative Placemaking and Creative Placemaking Commission. It uses creativity as a tool to bring people together, celebrate diversity, and create exceptional public spaces that reflect the richness of Bloomington's communities.

## Our Vision

Bloomington is a city where everyone feels welcomed, connected, and inspired. This plan recognizes the power of arts and culture to shape our neighborhoods, foster connections, and amplify the voices of all residents—particularly those historically underrepresented. Through creative placemaking, we aim to ensure Bloomington remains a vibrant place to live, work, and visit, while setting a national standard for innovation, equity, and creativity.

## The Power of Community Engagement

This plan was shaped with the voices of Bloomington residents and the creativity of four Bloomington-based artists, who together organized 20 events and engaged over 4,000 residents as part of the planning process. These artists facilitated conversations, workshops, and participatory projects to ensure diverse perspectives and ideas were at the heart of the plan.

Additionally, a survey of over 240 residents revealed a strong sense of welcome and belonging in the city, with 90% of respondents reporting they feel welcomed and 82% expressing a sense of belonging. Residents also shared their inspirations for participating in cultural activities, identifying music, visual art, festivals, and food as the most meaningful ways to connect. This robust community engagement process prioritized diverse input and helped identify the barriers, needs, and aspirations of Bloomington residents.



Hometown Poetry sign, "A Dance Unnoticed" poem by Filsan Cise



Ice sculpture by Minnesota ICE, during Luminary Hike



Bloomington Kaleidoscope, detail, by Alexander Tylevich



# Goals

## Plan Goals

Creative placemaking connects people to their city and to each other by making shared spaces more inviting, histories more visible, and futures more inclusive. This plan establishes five goals to move the community forward:

1. **Empower artists and culture bearers** in Bloomington to thrive and contribute to the city's creative, cultural, and economic vibrancy.
2. **Ensure equitable inclusion and representation** of Bloomington's diverse populations across social and aesthetic environments, public spaces, and cultural activities.
3. **Foster constructive and joyful relationships** among and between residents, organizations, and with workers and visitors in Bloomington.
4. **Strengthen community members' sense of belonging** and foster inclusive engagement through placemaking and other creative and cultural activities.
5. **Expand creative placemaking efforts citywide** by growing resources, expertise, and partnerships.



Latino Nature Fest, Photo credit: Tomas Leal, Leal Studios



# Approach and Action

## Community-Centered Approach

This plan is the result of a comprehensive, community-centered engagement process. Beyond the events led by local artists, Bloomington residents contributed their dreams and ideas through surveys, festivals, and direct outreach. Residents expressed their desires for more inclusive cultural celebrations, innovative public spaces, and creative opportunities. The findings revealed the need for greater diversity in cultural programming, equitable access to creative spaces, and expanded opportunities to build connections through arts and culture. These insights directly informed the plan's recommendations and priorities.

## Call to Action

For Bloomington to achieve these ambitious goals, we need the support of residents, businesses, and policymakers. Public art and creative programs require investment, and this plan outlines sustainable funding strategies, including exploring new revenue streams and public-private partnerships. Together, we can ensure arts and culture remain central to Bloomington's identity and future success.

Whether you're an artist, a resident, a business owner, or simply someone who loves this city, there's a place for you in Bloomington's creative journey. This is your invitation to join us in building a city where creativity connects us all.



Seasons of Becoming mural by GoodSpace Murals, design session at Valley View Middle School.



Artbox design by Daniel Natural, Ocean Blue Tattoo



#lovebloomington detail from artist engagement activity by Rupa Shenoy-Thadani



# 05. History of Creative Placemaking Commission & South Loop



Flower tasting artist engagement activity by Erin Lavelle at Richardson Nature Center  
Photo provided by: Erin Lavelle



# History of the Creative Placemaking Commission and South Loop

## Bloomington Creative Placemaking Achievements since formation in 2016

Over the past decade, Bloomington's Creative Placemaking South Loop District Plan has helped to transform the South Loop District into a vibrant hub of artistic and cultural activity. The Plan was adopted by Bloomington City Council and the Artistry Board of Directors in 2015. Plan initiatives began in 2016 with the hiring of a Creative Placemaking Director and the establishment of the Creative Placemaking Commission. Since then, with the support of City Council and staff, numerous artists and culture bearers, and organizations, it has delivered numerous impactful projects and events that have engaged the community, celebrated diverse voices, and fostered a sense of place.

Bloomington's Creative Placemaking Commission develops strategies and approves work plans for creative placemaking initiatives. It promotes these activities to various stakeholders, including residents, visitors, and developers, and establishes decision-making criteria for project selection and resource allocation. The Commission fosters relationships with project hosts, partner organizations, and artists, reviews placemaking proposals, and submits annual work plans and progress reports to the City Council. The Commission consists of 9 volunteers with varying backgrounds and perspectives. Over the years 21 Commissioners have served as dedicated, passionate, and engaged members.

Key achievements include large-scale public art installations such as *The Goldfinch* by Donald Lipski and *Bloomington Kaleidoscope* by Alexander Tylevich, as well as interactive projects like the *Old Cedar Bridge Augmented Reality Tour* by

Adam Davis-McGee and Nancy Musinguzi. Community events like *Illuminate South Loop*, the *WE Mural Sunset Block Party*, and the *Latino Nature Fest* have drawn thousands of attendees and garnered widespread media attention. The program also provided opportunities for emerging artists through workshops like "Making it Public," free artist workbooks, and hands-on creative activities like mural painting and sculpture creation.

Projects such as the *Seasons of Becoming Mural* and the *WE Mural* brought together local BIPOC artists and community members in collaborative processes that highlight Bloomington's commitment to equity and representation. Additionally, citywide initiatives, including the *Hometown Poetry* program, city-sponsored festivals, and utility box art installations, have extended creative placemaking efforts beyond the South Loop, strengthening the City's identity as a connected, welcoming community.

Bloomington's achievements have not gone unnoticed, earning recognition as one of the most arts-vibrant large communities in the nation. The success of the Creative Placemaking South Loop Plan has set the stage for expanding creative placemaking citywide, aligning with the City's strategic vision outlined in *Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together*. By leveraging creativity and art as tools for social, cultural, and economic vitality, this new citywide plan aims to further advance Bloomington as a dynamic and inclusive place to live, work, and play.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Pop-up artworks and community garden

16

11

Permanent sculptures installed

Events, performances, activities, festivals, and celebrations

70

4

Permanent Murals completed



Creative Sparks sculpture, *Blooming Ribbon* by Kao Lee Thao



WE Mural Sunset Block Party  
Photo credit: Nicole Neri



WE Mural artists



WE Mural: *Kapemni (mirroring)*, detail, by Marlena Myles.

4

Participatory community design workshops

Art banners hung

3

150 + artists

Artists and art groups hired for projects

3

Assessments and reports

Utility boxes covered or painted

19



# 2016 - 2024

47,269 views

47,269 **views** of augmented reality tour at Old Cedar Avenue Bridge (total views 2019-2024)

5

**Businesses** involved in façade improvements

14

**Poetry** commissioned and stamped in sidewalks

4

**Poetry** commissioned and made into creative poetry signs



Mural, untitled, by Pablo Kalaka and Daniela Bianchini



*The Goldfinch*, by Donald Lipski



*WE Mural* Sunset Block Party. Photo credit: Jaide Grey Eagle



*WE Mural* Sunset Block Party. Photo credit: Jaide Grey Eagle



Live music at Bloomington Street Arts Festival. Photo credit: Mike Ross

8

In-person **group tours**

5

Privately commissioned **artworks** in South Loop

4

Artists professional development **workshops** and **handbooks**

48

South Loop Audio Tour in the Otocast App now has 48 **locations**. Location views have more than doubled since 2021.



# Partnerships

## Some partnerships include:

- American Planning Association Minnesota
- Americans for the Arts
- Artistry
- Bloomington Minnesota Travel and Tourism
- Bloomington Chamber of Commerce
- City of Bloomington departments and divisions including:
  - Community Development
  - Community Outreach and Engagement Division
  - Communications
  - Fire
  - Legal
  - Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
  - Parks and Recreation
  - Police
  - Public Health
  - Public Works
- Bloomington Okodakiciye Dakota Advisory Committee
- Forecast Public Art
- Indigenous Roots
- Mall of America
- McGough
- Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- National Forum for Black Public Administrators
- Northern Lights.mn
- Oxboro Library
- Reflections Condominium Social Committee
- Together Bloomington
- Ukrainian Student Association
- Xcel Energy



Creative Sparks, *Street Seat*  
by Greg Mueller



# Selected Awards and Recognition

- *Creative Placemaking in the South Loop District Plan* awarded [“Planning in Context” award in 2016 by American Planning Association](#), Minnesota.
- *Parking Ramp Project* by Aniccha Arts named [“top dance scene” of 2018 by Star Tribune](#).
- Wright’s Lake Park Mural, *“Seasons of Becoming,”* by GoodSpace Murals voted one of five finalists for best public art in CityPages Best of Issue. The mural was also recognized as an outstanding public art project created in 2018 through the [Americans for the Arts](#) Public Art Network Year in Review program.
- The *Seasons of Becoming* mural was also selected as [one of 25 projects by CODA magazine's](#) issue focused on Placemaking with Intention.
- The [WE Mural](#), curated by Ua Si Creative was selected as one of 25 projects to be featured in CODAmagazine issue on Creating Community.
- Bloomington ranked as #36 place to live in [USA by Livability](#), South Loop walking tour and public art mentioned in rationale.
- Wakpa Triennial Art Festival named [#5 of 10 Best New Festivals](#) in USA TODAY.
- Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington metropolitan area ranked 5th on the list (up from 8th in 2020) of the most arts-vibrant large communities in the U.S., as per the [2024 Arts Vibrancy Index](#).

\*Detailed listing of Office of Creative Placemaking activities included in the appendix of this document

**BLOOMINGTON EARNS TOP 5 SPOT FOR ARTS VIBRANCY IN GREATER MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL AREA**

By Ariel Kozlov Published on January 07, 2025

Source: City of Bloomington





**BLOOMINGTON RANKS 6 OF 20 MOST ARTS-VIBRANT COMMUNITIES IN THE NATION**

Bloomington, along with its neighbors St. Paul and Minneapolis, has consistently appeared on the SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, Arts Vibrancy Index since rankings began in 2015. This year, the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington area is ranked sixth on the annual list of the 20 most arts-vibrant large communities in the nation.

“The arts have an important role in Bloomington, and have a positive economic, social and cultural impact on the community,” Creative Placemaking Director Alejandra Pelinka said. “Bloomington has many arts and cultural organizations, and artists and culture bearers who contribute to the vibrancy of Bloomington.”

**CREATIVE PLACEMAKING EXPANDING CITYWIDE**

From murals, sculptures and performances to events, temporary art pop-ups and more, the City of Bloomington began its creative placemaking efforts in 2016. Creative placemaking is a process where art plays an intentional, integrated role in place-based community planning and development. It honors the existing assets, history and character of a place, with community engagement as a vital part of the process. Until 2023, Bloomington’s creative placemaking efforts were focused in the South Loop. The efforts are now citywide, as requested by community members in the City’s *Bloomington, Tomorrow, Together* strategic plan. Learn more at [blm.mn/placemaking](#).

**THE LATEST ON BLOOMINGTON. TOMORROW. TOGETHER.**

City staff submit updates on progress in the *Bloomington, Tomorrow, Together* strategic plan to the City Council each quarter. In January, the Council heard about the progress made in the strategic plan in the last quarter of 2023. The second 2024 quarterly report goes to the City Council in April.

You can check out the progress in each priority any time, in detail, on the public Envisio dashboard at [blm.mn/btt](#).



# 06. Missions, Vision, and Values



Intentional weaving, artist  
engagement by Katie Ross  
Photo credit:  
Mike Ross Visuals



# City Plan Alignment

The Citywide Creative Placemaking Plan aligns its work with the City of Bloomington's vision, values, and goals outlined in the *Forward 2040 Comprehensive Plan* and *Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together. Strategic Plan*. The Creative Placemaking Commission and Office collaborates with city departments, public schools, community partners, and artists to build a vibrant, inclusive, and creative Bloomington.

## Vision (Forward 2040 Comprehensive Plan):

Bloomington strives to be a community of choice, offering vibrant neighborhoods, safe spaces, and inclusive opportunities that foster belonging and engagement.

## Values (Forward 2040 Comprehensive Plan):

Bloomington is a city that:

- Is forward-thinking and connected.
- Values inclusive, safe, and welcoming neighborhoods.
- Sustains its natural and cultural assets.
- Fosters a stable and resilient community.



On the One Music Festival at Bloomington Central Station Park

## Mission ( *Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together.* )

Our mission is to cultivate an enduring and remarkable community where people want to be.

## Core Values ( *Bloomington. Tomorrow. Together.* )

- Shared responsibility ensures community well-being.
- Transformation requires courage and risk-taking.
- Diversity strengthens the community.
- Equity benefits everyone.
- Safety and security are essential for resilience and health.



*Kalopsia*, mosaic bench by Daniela Bianchini



# New Mission

## NEW Mission of Bloomington Creative Placemaking:

*"Bloomington Creative Placemaking cultivates a **sense of belonging** in Bloomington by celebrating and reflecting **diverse perspectives**, supporting **local arts and culture**, promoting **exceptional places**, and creating a **vibrant and inclusive community** to live in, work in, and visit."*



Intentional weaving artist engagement activity by Katie Ross at Bloomington PRIDE  
Photo credit: Erin Lavelle



# Guiding Principles

- **Recognition:** Honor Bloomington's history and vision for the future.
- **Identity:** Elevate Bloomington's unique qualities and character.
- **Inclusion:** Reflect diversity or community in all activities.
- **Design:** Prioritize socially oriented design in the built environment while valuing the natural environment.
- **Animation:** Activate spaces to strengthen social ties and the local economy.
- **Involvement:** Empower residents and workers to contribute.
- **Leadership:** Build capacity for and exercise responsive leadership.
- **Investment:** Direct resources to foster the creative sector.
- **Synergy:** Align with goals of community partners.

*Bloomington Creative Placemaking strives to lift up the voices and stories of our community often un/underrepresented. Diversity encompasses the various characteristics that distinguish individuals or groups from one another, such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and abilities, within a group or organization. It emphasizes recognizing, respecting, and valuing these differences to foster an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and can contribute fully.*



Latino Nature Fest at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge  
With Kallpuli Yaocenxtli  
Photo credit: Drew Arrieta





# 07. The Evolution of Creative Placemaking

*WE Mural, Oshun's Existence,*  
detail, by Reggie LeFlore



# Evolution of Creative Placemaking

The evolving scope of Bloomington Creative Placemaking, and the applicability of the practices of creative placemaking to city-wide implementation, challenge the previous parameters and resources of the Office and the Commission. Typically creative placemaking is specific to a limited geographic place with a distinct identity. It was beneficial to the South Loop and rapidly changing real estate uses there. This plan encompasses the entire City of Bloomington, in all its diversity, and should consider future discussions around title and role of Office and Commission.

## Working Definition for Creative Placemaking:

“Creative placemaking integrates arts, culture, and design to strengthen and connect communities. It includes and extends beyond art creation, involving partnerships across sectors, deep community engagement, and contributions from artists and culture bearers to advance local social, physical, and economic goals.”

## Four Pillars of Creative Placemaking

1. **Artistic Creation:** Artist residencies, public art, festivals, and performances that celebrate heritage and foster community connections and community-led activities.
2. **Planning Activities:** Community and cultural planning, creative asset mapping, and engagement led by artists and designers.
3. **Design Processes:** Shaping public spaces, civic buildings, and arts and cultural infrastructure with artist-led community input.
4. **Supporting the Creative Economy:** Nurturing creative entrepreneurs and businesses, arts and cultural organizations and groups, artists and designers.



Rest and Remembrance  
by Rupa Shenoy-Thadhani

Rest & Remembrance artist engagement activity by Rupa Shenoy-Thadhani



08.

# Artist-led Engagement Activities: Shaping Bloomington's Creative Placemaking Plan

*Illuminate South Loop, Score!*  
by Daily tous les jours



# Meet the Creative Placemaking Artist Team

To inform this planning effort, a talented team of local artists—all with deep roots in the city—was selected, trained, and mentored by Forecast Public Art. This Creative Placemaking Artist Team, comprised of Adrian Lowe, Erin Lavelle, Katie Ross, and Rupa Shenoy-Thadhani, conducted extensive engagement activities to gather community input and insights that directly shaped Bloomington's new Creative Placemaking Plan.

“The artists’ practices are unique, but they share a deep curiosity and thoughtfulness about exploring their community,” noted Forecast consultant and mentor Hawona Sullivan Janzen. “Their work reflects the city’s commitment to placing artists and residents at the center of creative placemaking efforts.”

## The Creative Placemaking Artist Team

- Adrian Lowe: A digital designer, muralist, and clothing designer, Adrian brings a multidisciplinary approach to connecting art and community.
- Erin Lavelle: A social practice artist, theatre set designer, and seamstress who creates participatory art experiences.
- Katie Ross: A ceramicist, art teacher, collage artist, and small business owner, Katie excels in fostering hands-on creativity.
- Rupa Shenoy-Thadhani: A poet, muralist, teacher, and social practice artist who focuses on reflective and meaningful community experiences.

Each artist resides in or has family roots in Bloomington, making their work deeply connected to the city’s people and places.



Adrian Lowe (right)



Erin Lavelle (left)



Katie Ross (right)



Rupa Shenoy-Thadhani (right)



# Activities and Engagement Highlights

From July to October 2024, the team conducted 20 artist-led events across Bloomington, engaging over 4,000 residents. These events spanned libraries, parks, community centers, farmers markets, and other public spaces, ensuring broad geographic reach and inclusivity.

## Key Activities Included:

- **Monarch Tagging:** Erin Lavelle partnered with the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to engage participants in environmental stewardship and pollinator education.
- **Blooming Bee Seed Giveaway:** Adrian Lowe distributed seed packets at Juneteenth 2024, connecting participants to nature and sustainability.
- **Sound Baths and Poetry:** Rupa Shenoy-Thadhani hosted reflective events like "Rest & Remembrance" on September 11, offering emotional and meditative experiences.
- **Weaving Workshops:** Katie Ross led hands-on weaving sessions at Normandale Elementary and other locations, fostering mindfulness and collaboration.



*Seasons of Becoming mural by GoodSpace Murals, painting session*

## Impact on the Creative Placemaking Plan

These artist-led events were more than just engaging activities—they were critical to shaping Bloomington's Creative Placemaking Plan by:

- Generating **visibility and awareness** for creative placemaking throughout the city.
- Gathering **valuable community input**, including survey responses and in-person feedback, to inform future strategies and activities.
- Providing **insights into challenges and opportunities**, such as the need for stronger partnerships, more in-person engagement, and creative solutions for suburban lifestyles that often rely on online interactions.

The artists frequently described community members as "curious," "welcoming," and "eager" for engagement, though some were initially "skeptical." These reflections underscored the importance of building trust and creating accessible, meaningful opportunities for participation.



# Lessons Learned and Moving Forward

Through their work, the Artist Placemakers identified key lessons for future creative placemaking efforts.

- **Building Partnerships:** Success depends on forging strong collaborations with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders.
- **In-Person Engagement:** While suburban lifestyles often prioritize digital interactions, residents crave opportunities for face-to-face connection through shared creative experiences.
- **Fostering Artistic Networks:** The artists were thrilled to discover other creatives in the city and expressed a strong desire for more opportunities to connect and collaborate.

As Bloomington moves forward with its Creative Placemaking Plan Implementation, the input gathered from these events will play a vital role in shaping activities, policies, and strategies that reflect the city's diverse voices and vibrant creativity. This process demonstrates how artist-led engagement can empower communities, build meaningful connections, and inspire lasting change.

By embedding artists into the planning process, Bloomington has set a powerful example of how creative placemaking can not only activate public spaces but also unite a community around a shared vision for the future.



Bloomington Street Arts Festival  
Photo credit: Katie Ross



# 09. Major Goal Areas for Creative Placemaking in Bloomington

**SHOWY  
MILKWEED**  
*asclepias speciosa*



full sun  
blooms June-August  
height 4'

**WILD  
BERGAMOT**  
*monarda fistulosa*



full sun to p  
blooms July-Sep  
height 4'

Eat Like a Bug  
artist engagement activity  
by Erin Lavelle  
Photo credit: Erin Lavelle



# Introduction to Creative Placemaking Goals

The following goals are the result of a collaborative and comprehensive process that brought together diverse perspectives and insights from across Bloomington. These goals were informed by:

- **Community Surveys**, which gathered input from hundreds of residents on their experiences, aspirations, and barriers to engaging in creative and cultural activities.
- **Artist-Led Engagement Activities**, where a team of local artists facilitated 20 events that reached over 4,000 community members, gathering feedback and fostering dialogue about the future of creative placemaking.
- **Discussions with City Staff** across multiple departments, ensuring alignment with Bloomington's broader priorities and initiatives.
- **Conversations with the Arts and Culture Community**, including artists, organizations, and culture bearers who shared their vision and expertise.
- **Review of Existing Plans and Documents**, which provided a foundation for understanding Bloomington's current assets, challenges, and opportunities.

Together, these efforts shaped a set of goals that reflect the values and aspirations of the Bloomington community, emphasizing equity, connection, belonging, and the transformative power of creative placemaking.

## 1. Support Culture Bearers and Artists:

Empower Bloomington's artists and culture bearers to thrive and contribute to the city's creative, cultural, and economic vibrancy.

**2. Practice Equity:** Ensure equitable inclusion and representation of Bloomington's diverse populations across social and aesthetic environments, public spaces, and cultural activities.

## 3. Foster Relationships and Build

**Connections:** Foster constructive and joyful relationships among and between residents, organizations, and with visitors and workers in Bloomington through well-designed and activated public spaces, shared cultural and creative experiences, and activities, and accessible ways to move across the community that strengthen networks of mutual support and improve physical connectivity.

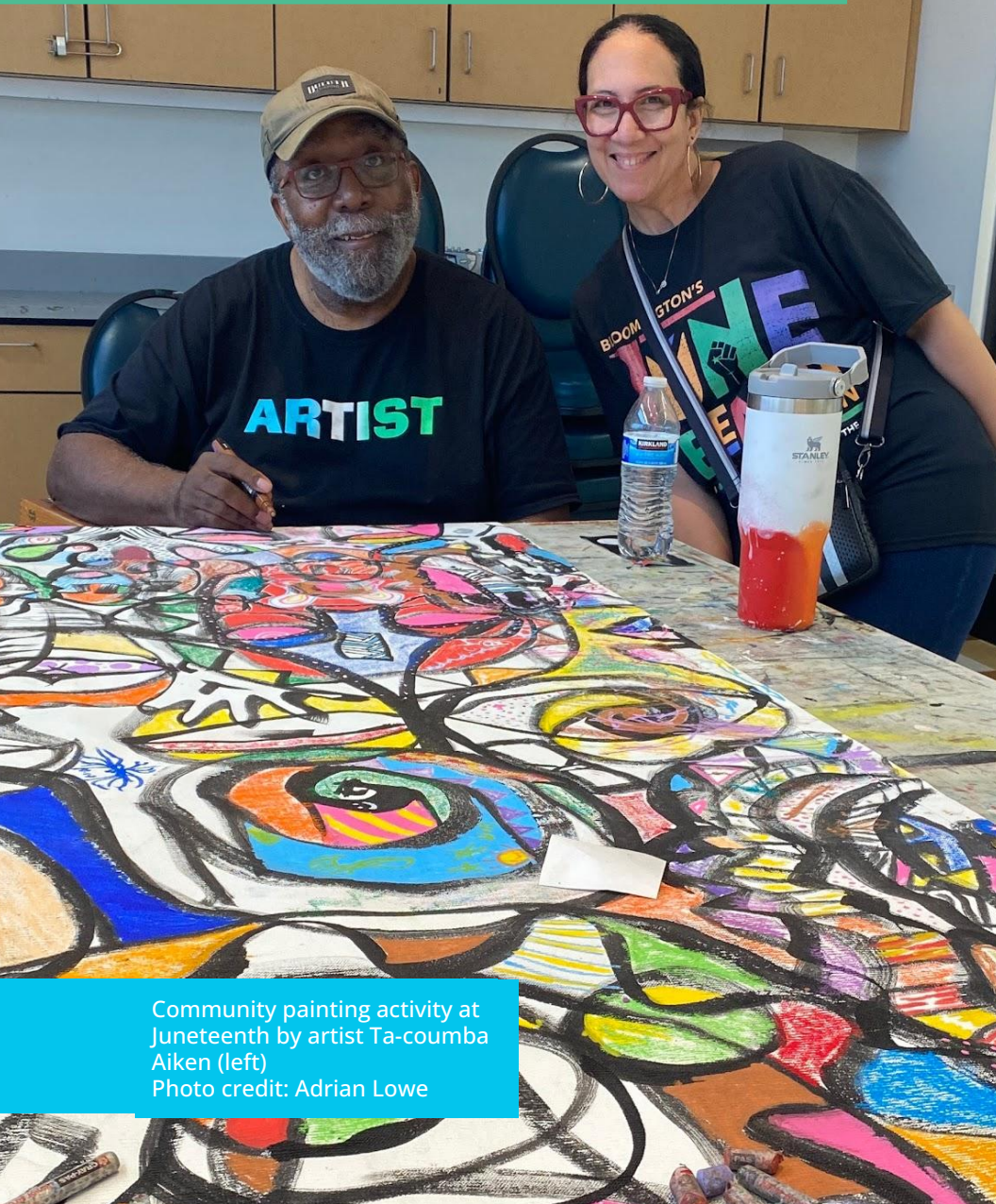
## 4. Enhance Belonging and Engagement:

Strengthen community members' sense of belonging and foster inclusive engagement through placemaking and other creative and cultural activities.

**5. Build Placemaking Capacity:** Expand creative placemaking efforts citywide by growing resources, expertise, and partnerships.



# 1. SUPPORT CULTURE BEARERS & ARTISTS



Community painting activity at Juneteenth by artist Ta-coumba Aiken (left)  
Photo credit: Adrian Lowe

## GOAL:

Empower Bloomington's artists and culture bearers to thrive and contribute to the city's creative, cultural, and economic vibrancy.

## RATIONALE:

Bloomington has a considerable but uncounted number of artists in various disciplines living and/or working in the city. Artists contracted through this planning process expressed the need and desire for connection with other artists for mutual support and possible collaborations. Multiple organizations operate within the Civic Plaza in specific arts disciplines providing havens for some. Artists and culture bearers in more diverse and recently-forming immigrant communities have fewer options to make similar connections. Supporting spaces and activities to connect more artists help build stronger networks enabling the growth and development of the city's creative community. Strategies and activities intentionally align with Port Authority Economic Development Plan strategies centered on fostering community engagement and cultural expression, supporting the investment and activation of spaces that are publicly accessible that stimulate local economic growth, enhancing community engagement, and attracting new businesses.

## STRATEGIES

- Build a network among local artists to foster collaboration and shared learning.
- Prioritize local artists in consideration of funding and project opportunities.
- Support inclusion and expansion of creative enterprises and creative businesses in economic development efforts of the City.
- Strengthen Bloomington's local economy by supporting the growth of creative businesses to position the city as a cultural destination and creative hub.
- Promote artists, culture bearers, and creative entrepreneurs as vital contributors to the quality of life across the city.
- Advocate for supportive infrastructure for the creative and cultural sector.



# Activities

- **Artist Surveys:** Conduct assessments every two years to identify needs and opportunities.
- **Creative Economy Impact Study:** Conduct a comprehensive economic impact study of Bloomington's creative industries, identifying key sectors (e.g., design, media, performing arts, craft manufacturing, etc.), employment trends, revenue generation, and economic gaps.
- **Promotion Campaigns:** Showcase Bloomington's creative talent through storytelling and events. Promote Bloomington as an excellent place to live and create to attract more artists and creative workers to the city.
- **Signature Festival:** Explore launching a signature event and/or festival, produced by Office of Creative Placemaking or through a partnership to highlight Bloomington as a Creative City. Research light festivals, music porch fests, and mural festivals as examples of successful signature events.
- **Artist Live/Work Spaces:** Conduct a feasibility study on opportunities for increased and/or improved artist live/work space and housing in Bloomington.
- **Professional Development:** Offer skill-building programs for local artists.
- **Artist Networking Events:** Host or support meetups for artists and culture bearers to share resources, pitch collaborative ideas, and share professional development guidance. Consider partnerships with local arts organizations.
- **Creative Businesses:** Consider a HATCH Grant specifically for Artist-Led Creative Businesses. Collaborate closely with the Port Authority's small business development team to ensure creative entrepreneurs have access to resources and business support.

## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Culture Bearers:** someone who preserves and passes on cultural traditions, knowledge, and practices to others, helping maintain cultural heritage.

## MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Increased local artist participation in city projects.
- Expanded local artist networks and gatherings.
- Enhanced visibility of artists and their work within Bloomington.
- Improved spaces for artists to make a living and a life.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS:

- Artists and arts and cultural organizations, Port Authority local businesses, Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, community centers, Communications Division, Bloomington Center for the Arts, Bloomington Fine Arts Council.

## APPENDICES:

- Survey Draft for Artists Needs Assessment
- Case Studies for National Signature Events
- Artist Live/Work Housing Feasibility Study RFP Draft
- Examples for City-Led Artist Training Programs



## 2. PRACTICE EQUITY



Bloomington Street Arts  
Festival T-shirt coloring contest  
(detail)  
Photo credit: Mike Ross Visuals

### GOAL:

Ensure equitable inclusion and representation of Bloomington's diverse populations across social and aesthetic environments, public spaces, and cultural activities.

### RATIONALE:

As a core value for the City, and given survey findings that call for more diverse inclusion, it is evident that creative placemaking can and must contribute substantially to a more equitable and richly diverse community. This can be achieved through both permanent and temporary art projects, design of public spaces, and thoughtfully planned arts, culture, and community building activities. Diverse and growing communities within the city must be well represented and fully involved in social, civic, and economic activities. Notably, more work needs to be done with Indigenous communities to recognize both heritage and current aspirations of Native people and organizations in the area.

### STRATEGIES:

- Annually review demographic data while making work plans to keep abreast of population trends, including youth and growing presence of older adult population.
- Continually search for youth and underrepresented community groups and individuals to partner with and to participate in activities and leadership of the Office of Creative Placemaking and Creative Placemaking Commission.
- Consider every project and activity an opportunity to broaden and diversify engagement.
- Develop greater understanding of cultural diversity in design, architecture, and aesthetic choices.
- Advocate within the City and with community partners for high standards of inclusion and participation in planning, design, and development of public facilities and programs.

# Activities

- **Equity Framework:** Create a toolkit for embedding equity into all placemaking projects, including guidelines for community engagement, funding, and partnerships.
- **Physical Accessibility:** Develop a mix of artworks in theme, form, and interactivity, ensuring that all activities and commissioned art is physically accessible by people of all abilities.
- **Funding Criteria:** Develop a rubric that emphasizes equity in recommendations, projects supported, artist selected, etc.
- **Diverse Representation:** Increase racial and cultural diversity in the Creative Placemaking Commission and selection panels for grants, art projects, and new funding opportunities.
- **Art Reflecting Diversity:** Commission artworks highlighting Bloomington's cultural histories, prioritizing underserved narratives.
- **Geographic Equity:** Map and prioritize areas for equitable placemaking investments.
- **Language Accessibility:** Develop multilingual, digital, and physical guides to Bloomington's cultural activities.

## MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Publish an equity report every two years assessing strategies and activities.
- Ensure creative placemaking activities mirror Bloomington's demographics.
- Expand diverse representation in commission membership and projects.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS:

Office of Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Community Outreach and Engagement Division, Human Rights Commission, and Public Health, community organizations, Bloomington School District.

## APPENDICES:

- Sample Grant Equity Commitment
- Sample Equity Frameworks and Case Studies
- Example of Equitable Development Plan
- Example Racial Equity in Funding Toolkit
- Example Guidelines for Physical Accessibility in Public Art Commissioning



### 3. FOSTER CONNECTIONS



Monarch tagging artist engagement at Penn Lake Library  
Photo credit: Erin Lavelle

#### GOAL:

Foster constructive and joyful relationships among and between residents, organizations, and with workers and visitors in Bloomington through well-designed and activated public spaces, shared cultural and creative experiences and activities, and accessible ways to move across the community that strengthen networks of mutual support.

#### RATIONALE:

While many residents surveyed indicated they felt welcomed and had a sense of belonging, fewer felt connected to their neighbors and with other members of the community. Artist activities revealed a desire for more interpersonal connections, especially through events in public spaces. Some residents said they need to travel outside Bloomington for meaningful cultural activities and places where they can make social connections. Recent research on the “loneliness epidemic” in the U.S., points to increased need for thoughtfully designed public spaces and activities that foster more social interactions.

#### STRATEGIES:

- Expand on the dimensions of creative placemaking, beyond public art and creative activities, to take a more active role in the design and activation of public spaces, including cultural corridors, parks, trails, public buildings, and streetscapes.
- Build on the design concepts of “havens, hubs, and hang-outs” to foster social interactions.
- In annual work plans, establish and model connectivity through partnerships, multiple entryways for participation, and highlighting the joys of community interactions.



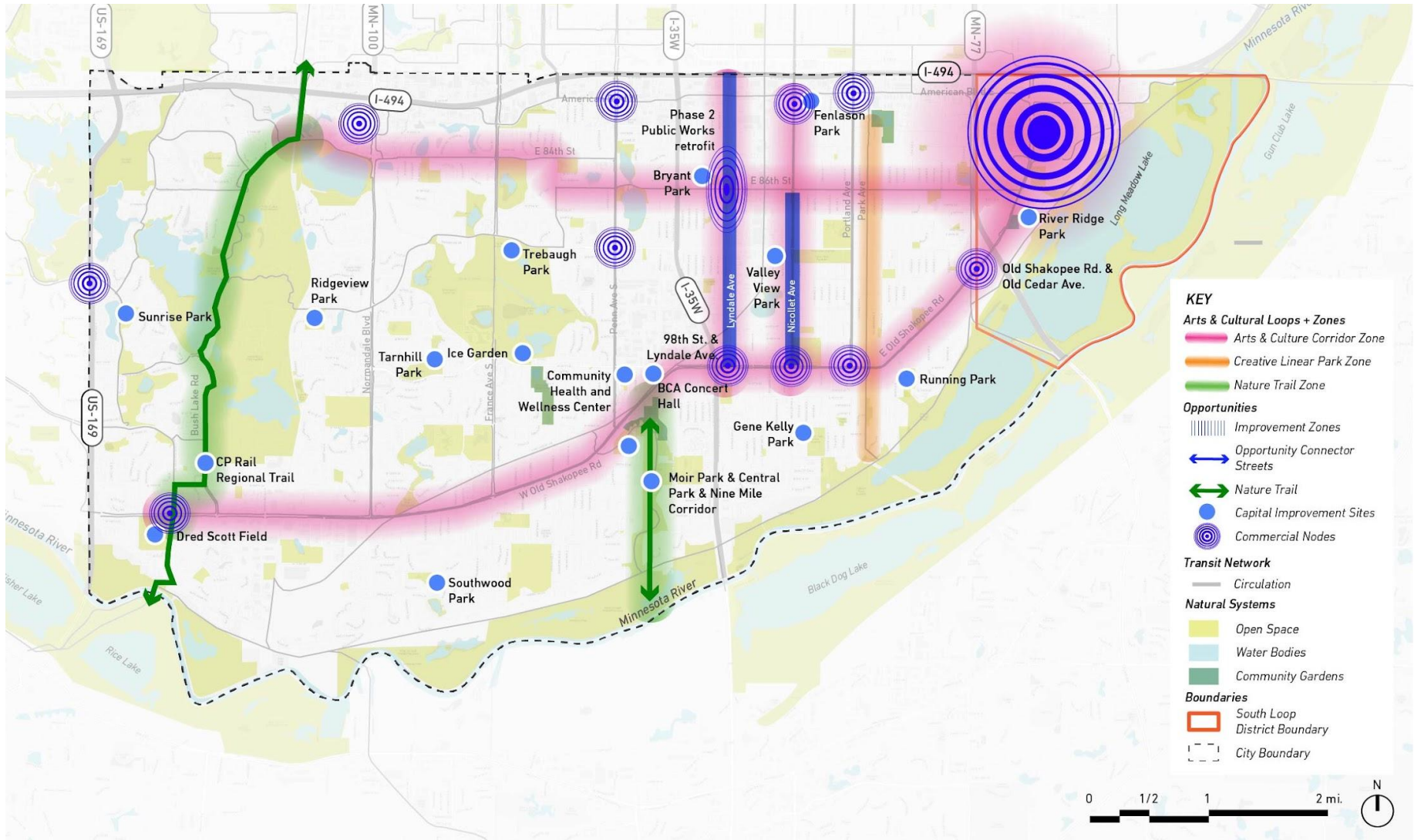
# Activities

- **Barriers to Social Connection:** Identify “social connection barriers” and bring together a coalition (including residents, youth, seniors, members from government, philanthropy, healthcare, and local community development organizations) to better understand why they are barriers and fund and develop pilot interventions.
- **Social Design Standards:** Advocate for socially connected design and the concepts of havens, hubs, and hangouts to encourage interactions.
- **Connectivity Strategies:** Continue partnering on initiatives related to the Bloomington Active Transportation Plan, Site and Façade Improvement Program, and Toolkit for Aging Commercial Nodes.
- **Health Improvement:** Launch a grant program that focuses on the partnership of artists and centers of community to support projects that bring communities together/ improve health indicators, with guidance by Public Health priorities.
- **Digital Mapping:** Expand the City’s online resource highlighting creative assets city-wide. Consider partnering with the Welcome to Bloomington passport program, where there is a prize for residents who visit a certain number of creative assets.
- **Connection Opportunities:** Nurture connective tissue threading already existing activities with other ways to engage. Examples include: a published calendar or events board enabling placemaking activities added at events such as farmers markets, festivals, school events, Artistry shows, etc.
- **Creative Trails, Corridors, and Parks:** Explore and implement cultural and creative-focused links that build threads across the city connecting public spaces and commercial nodes using creative overlays for nature trails, gardens, cultural corridors, pocket parks, and linear parks. This Plan identifies opportunities for creative-focused connections and calls for the city to develop a Cultural Corridor Framework to identify strategies, locations, guiding principles, and opportunities for future investment.



# Creative Trails, Corridors, and Parks

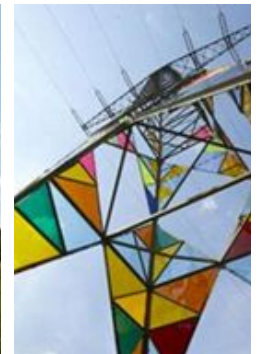
The map shows potential arts and cultural Connector zones in relation to key public spaces, corridor improvements, and cultural places identified.



# Creative Trails, Corridors, and Parks: Arts and Cultural Zone Types

## NATURE TRAILS

Build upon the existing nature trail systems at Hyland Lake Reserve along East Bush Lake Road and Central Park along Nine Mile Creek to help connect Old Shakopee Road in the south, South Loop District in the east, and East 86<sup>th</sup> Street in the north. The north/south trails provide a connective tissue to natural areas, parks, and the Mississippi River Nature Trails are pedestrian-oriented experiences that connect people with nature and offer a unique infrastructure for nature-focused creative placemaking opportunities.



## CULTURAL CORRIDORS

Build upon existing streets and improvement zones to create city-wide connective threads and loops to host creative placemaking initiatives and strategies. Old Shakopee Road is a historic trail and circulation route that provides an east/west connector along the southern edge of Bloomington. It connects numerous commercial nodes and capital improvement sites. East 86<sup>th</sup> Street and East 84<sup>th</sup> Street provide easy and direct vehicular access east/west across the northern edge of Bloomington. Both streets intersect in the South Loop District. Cultural Corridors are urban connective threads that celebrate, leverage, and connect the stories, arts, and culture of Bloomington's neighborhoods.

## LINEAR PARK

Build upon the existing power line utility easement that runs north/south along Park Avenue S. from the Mississippi River to American Boulevard East. Running at least 15 contiguous blocks at approximately 100'-150' wide, this existing open space provides an opportunity for a robust linear park experience that connects several neighborhoods together and to the larger city-wide cultural corridor and nature trail loops connectors. This wide linear park space typology offers places to gather, host events and festivals, farmer's markets, and would support artist engagement across multiple scales and types of activities.



# Measuring Success and Key Partnerships

## MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Survey every two years of residents and workers in the city that repeats questions pertaining to welcoming, connections, and belonging.
- Review City construction and renovation projects to assess if they incorporated social design standards that align with “havens, hubs, and hang-outs” criteria.
- Assess whether social infrastructure works as desired. For havens, are community members creating closer bonds and feeling a greater sense of belonging? For hubs, is there socioeconomic mixing? For hangouts, are more people spending time in public spaces and lingering?
- Explore incorporating the proposed Arts and Cultural Connectors map into the City’s 2050 Comp plan.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS:

Port Authority, Public Health, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Community Outreach and Engagement, Community Development Department and Planning Division, OREIB, Community nonprofits, Bloomington School District.



*Seasons of Becoming, GoodSpace Murals artists posing at ribbon cutting*



# Appendices and Definitions

## APPENDICES:

- Havens, Hubs and Hangouts Framework Document
- Grant Program Criteria and Case Study Examples
- Community-Driven Grant Program Case Study
- Cultural Trails and Corridors Case Studies
- Sample Culture Space Handbook

## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Havens:** Places for people to gather around a shared identity and build bonds in a communal space.

**Hubs:** Places that intentionally encourage [“Socioeconomic Mixing”](#) which happens when people interact with others from different backgrounds.

**Hangouts:** Places that support causal interactions, where people can just be.

\*Definitions from Article: [Can strong social infrastructure cure the loneliness epidemic?](#)



Malamanya performing at Creative Happy Hour



## 4. ENHANCE BELONGING AND ENGAGEMENT



Bloomington Street Arts Festival  
Photo credit: Mike Ross

### GOAL:

Strengthen community members' sense of belonging and foster inclusive engagement through placemaking and other creative and cultural activities.

### RATIONALE:

Survey data highlights a strong foundation of belonging, with potential for growth through strategic cultural initiatives and engagement opportunities. The City has placed priority on civic engagement and creative placemaking and cultural work, and demonstrated unique capacities to advance this goal.

### STRATEGIES:

- Identify key centers of community across the city working with the Neighborhood Identity Model, and others, to prioritize where artist-led activities can best contribute to a sense of welcoming and where permanent and temporary public art works and events can make meaningful differences.
- Partner with and build on the efforts of COED, Welcome to Bloomington program, Office of Equity, Inclusion and Belonging and other organizations across the city that foster engagement.

# Activities

- **Artist Residencies:** Create a program focused on hiring artists to work with city departments to develop projects or initiatives based on the theme of belonging that also address community challenges.
- **Placemaking Ambassadors:** Train community leaders to champion arts-driven solutions in neighborhoods and centers of community across the city.
- **Small Grants Program:** Fund ambassador-driven initiatives to enhance belonging.
- **Welcome to Bloomington Art Kits:** Develop creative kits with information on Bloomington's cultural opportunities, along with DIY art projects that connect new residents to the city's identity. Incorporate into gift bags for new residents, distributed by OREIB.
- **Artist-Led Engagement:** Encourage hiring artists for community engagement opportunities across city departments. Develop a guide for how artists can work on engagement efforts in the city.

## MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Reference the City's National Community Survey every two years together with COED using (at minimum) the same questions about belonging, connections, and feeling welcomed (See Goal 2).
- Demographic reach of all engagement activities exhibit greater diversity.
- Track the number of contracts City procurement processes that request or require artist-led community engagement.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS:

Community Outreach and Engagement Division (COED), Public Health, Parks and Recreation, Office of Racial Equity and Belonging (OREIB), community organizations, and alignment with Park System Master Plan, Bloomington Forward projects, and "Start With Hi!," "Welcome to Bloomington," and "Adopt A Park" programs.

## APPENDICES:

- Artist in Residence Program Tools and Resources
- Artist in Residence Readiness Assessment Tool
- Artist in Residence Program Sample Artist Job Description
- Ambassador Program Draft Roles and Expectations
- Small Grants Program Guidelines and Case Studies



## 5. BUILD CREATIVE PLACEMAKING CAPACITY



Bloomington Street Arts Festival  
Photo credit: Mike Ross

### **GOAL:**

Expand creative placemaking efforts citywide by growing resources, expertise, and partnerships.

### **RATIONALE:**

Expanding the scope of the Creative Placemaking Commission and the Office of Creative Placemaking to address the needs of the entire city requires both strategic choices as well as growing human, financial, and organizational capacity for the Office of Creative Placemaking. This includes greater sophistication in the dimensions of creative placemaking. Dedicated funding for the South Loop requires a continued focus there while the Office of Creative Placemaking expands initiatives across the City. This strategic expansion should have a focus on centers of community and other opportunities related to major city investments and development goals.

### **STRATEGIES:**

- Focus efforts on partnership development, grantmaking, commissioning projects, and skills-building in the artist community rather than event production.
- Seek policy changes that build resources and create more opportunities across the city for art in public places, for improving social design, and for expanding engagement of the cultural sector in civic affairs.
- Continue and expand participation in professional development for the Office of Creative Placemaking staff and Commission members to devise strategies and activities responsive to changing conditions and demands. Broaden awareness and best practices of creative placemaking with other City staff and departments.

# Activities

- **Office of Creative Placemaking Staffing:** Expand the Office of Creative Placemaking staff to add a Communications and Events Manager. This position should start as a .5 FTE position in year 1, and will have responsibility for developing and carrying out programming and promotional efforts related to creative placemaking events and initiatives across the city related to creative placemaking projects and initiatives across the city.
- **Branding and Communications:** Create a communications/branding plan for Office of Creative Placemaking. Hire a local artist and/or work with Communications Division to develop a brand after finalizing the name of the Office. Discuss if Office of Creative Placemaking is the right terminology moving forward.
- **Awareness Building:** Develop more public awareness of the City's mural ordinance, and advocate for additional policy changes that could increase vibrancy of the built environment.
- **Sustainable Funding:** Explore new revenue streams, including public-private partnerships and policy-driven revenues.
- **Grant-Making Scope:** Consider grants management and collaborative opportunities for arts and cultural activities across the city. If Office of Creative Placemaking is tasked with management, this may require adding staff capacity to manage the grant program, including developing grant priorities, funding and regranting opportunities, forming and training grant panelists, facilitating grant jury selections, providing support and administering payments to grantees.
- **Evaluation and Reflection:** Allocate at least 5% of the annual budget for evaluation and assessment to measure the effectiveness of placemaking work. This could be done internally or by hiring an outside evaluation consultant. Reflect on projects and events with artists, participants, and Commissioners to better understand how goals were met, the impact, and how to improve.

## MEASURING SUCCESS:

- Office of Creative Placemaking is able to manage at least two new projects in all quadrants of Bloomington within first three years
- Resources for Office of Creative Placemaking grow proportionately to accommodate the geographic parameters of the city.
- Office of Creative Placemaking is regularly consulted for design considerations on City development and construction projects.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS:

Port Authority, Parks and Recreation Department, Planning Department, Community Outreach and Engagement Division (COED), Communications Division, local nonprofits.

## APPENDICES:

- Draft Job Description for Comms Manager Position
- Listing of Funding Opportunities Locally and Nationally



# 10. Office of Creative Placemaking Funding Recommendations

The success and sustainability of Bloomington's creative placemaking initiatives depend on establishing strong funding mechanisms, clear guidelines, and supportive policies. This section outlines recommendations that will enable the Office of Creative Placemaking to expand its impact, grow its capacity, and ensure equitable access to creative and cultural opportunities across the city.

These recommendations include adopting policies such as a Percent for Art ordinance, updating zoning codes to encourage private investment in public art, and pursuing diverse revenue streams, including grants and potential new tax revenues. Together, these measures are designed to secure sustainable funding, align public and private efforts, and strengthen the infrastructure needed to make creative placemaking a vital and lasting component of Bloomington's growth and vibrancy.

*Seasons of Becoming*  
mural by GoodSpace Murals,  
ribbon cutting

# Office of Creative Placemaking Funding Recommendations and Policy Considerations

- 1. Consider New Public Art Ordinance:**

Consider a Percent for Art Ordinance for Public Art related to capital improvement projects. If adopted, add one staff person to oversee public art commissioning. Should Office of Creative Placemaking become a grant manager, one staff member would coordinate both the grants and related Percent for Art public art commissioning as the Public Art Specialist.
- 2. Update Zoning Codes/ Design Guidelines:**

Advocate for Landscaping and Design guidelines for private development to accept public art in lieu of meeting certain design requirements. Additionally, allow the options for private development to pay an “in lieu” fee rather than installing public art, or to do a combination of installing public art and paying an “in lieu” fee. This fee would be placed into a general creative placemaking fund administered by the Office and to be used at their discretion.
- 3. Pursue New Grant Revenue:**

Identify public and private funding sources outside the City to support specific projects working in partnership with (and not in competition with) local nonprofits. National funding opportunities such as the NEA’s Our Town grant require a partnership between a municipality and a nonprofit in order to be eligible. Hold a series of meetings with local nonprofits to understand their goals for the year, and see if there is any overlap in their work with the Office of Creative Placemaking goals. Utilize

collaborative opportunities to find funding. Discuss the need for an increase in staffing/time capacity/roles needed to be considered for this to be implemented.

- 4. Explore New Revenue Streams:**

Explore possibilities for new revenue streams, fees, and funds and/or expanding percentages of existing streams available to the Office of Creative Placemaking (to be used at their discretion, which could fund grant programs, creative hubs, or other projects outside of the South Loop).
- 5. Expand Staff in Proportion to Activity**

To build a robust and sustainable program, capacity and staffing must be considered to match the scope of the full plan. Current staff includes one Creative Placemaking Director and one Creative Placemaking Specialist. Potential future roles could include a Communication and Events Manager and a Public Art Specialist and/or Grants Manager. Also consider alternate ways to support Creative Placemaking capacity in partnership with other city departments and division.

## APPENDICES:

- Sample Percent for Art Ordinance Language
- Specific Language for Landscaping and Design Guidelines Update
- Case Studies for Public Art Funding Mechanisms Locally and Nationally
- Sample “Quick Reference Guide” for developers and City design review staff to understand the new ordinance



# 11. BUDGET ESTIMATES



Creative Happy Hour,  
Bloomington Central Station Park

# City-Wide Program Cost Estimates

With current resources, Office of Creative Placemaking can allocate specific resources to activities that are aligned with annual goals and capacity.

## 1. Support Culture Bearers and Artists

**Annual Budget Allocation:** \$190,000

### Activities and Allocations:

1. **Promotion Campaigns:** \$15,000  
Showcase Bloomington's creative talent through storytelling and events.
2. **Signature Festival:** \$40,000  
Launch a smaller-scale signature event, such as a music porch fest or mural festival, in partnership with local organizations.
3. **Artist Live/Work Spaces Feasibility Study:** \$10,000  
Study opportunities for creating and improving artist housing in Bloomington.
4. **Professional Development Programs:** \$20,000  
Offer targeted skill-building workshops for local artists.
5. **Artist Networking Events:** \$5,000  
Host meetups to foster collaboration and resource sharing.
6. **Creative Business Support (HATCH Grant):** \$100,000  
Provide funding for a brick and mortar artist-led creative business in collaboration with the Port Authority.

## 2. Practice Equity

**Annual Budget Allocation:** \$80,000

### Activities and Allocations:

1. **Equity Framework Toolkit:** \$15,000  
Develop guidelines for embedding equity into placemaking projects.
2. **Physical Accessibility:** \$10,000  
Ensure commissioned art and events are physically accessible to all.
3. **Funding Criteria for Equity:** \$10,000  
Develop a rubric emphasizing equity in funding and project selection.
4. **Art Reflecting Diversity:** \$40,000  
Fund small-scale commissioned works that highlight underrepresented cultural histories.
5. **Language Accessibility:** \$5,000  
Develop multilingual resources for Bloomington's cultural activities.



### 3. Foster Relationships and Build Connections

Annual Budget Allocation: \$80,000

#### Activities and Allocations:

1. **Address Social Connection Barriers:** \$10,000  
Fund 2 x \$5,000 pilot projects in areas identified as social connection deserts.
2. **Financial Resources for Community Projects:** \$30,000  
Launch grants supporting artist-led community connection initiatives.
3. **Creative Trails and Corridors:** \$35,000  
Fund cultural trail study for public spaces like trails and parks.
4. **Digital Mapping and Passport Program:** \$5,000  
Expand online resources to incentivize exploration of creative assets in Bloomington.

### 4. Enhance Belonging and Engagement

Annual Budget Allocation: \$80,000

#### Activities and Allocations:

1. **Artist Residency:** \$35,000  
Develop a smaller-scale artist-led residency program focusing on belonging within city department.
2. **Placemaking Ambassadors:** \$20,000  
Train leaders to champion arts-driven solutions in neighborhoods.
3. **Small Grants Program:** \$20,000  
Fund ambassador-driven initiatives to enhance belonging.
4. **Welcome to Bloomington Art Kits:** \$5,000  
Provide new residents with art kits showcasing Bloomington's cultural opportunities.

## 5. Build Creative Placemaking Capacity

**Annual Budget Allocation:** \$70,000

### Activities and Allocations:

1. **OCP Staffing Expansion:** \$35,000  
Hire a part-time Communications and Events Manager to oversee citywide placemaking efforts.
2. **Branding and Communications Plan:** \$10,000  
Develop a new brand and communications strategy for OCP.
3. **Policy Awareness:** \$5,000  
Raise awareness of mural ordinances and advocate for policy changes supporting placemaking.
4. **Evaluation and Assessment:** \$20,000  
Allocate resources to measure the effectiveness of creative placemaking work.

**Total Annual Budget: \$500,000**

This allocation maintains alignment with the goals and activities while scaling to a realistic \$500K annual project budget, and reflects the total amount of all listed activity ideas.



Creative Happy Hour, Bloomington Central Station Park