

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

MEETING PACKET

McCloskey Conference Room — City Hall
Tuesday, May 13, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

Or virtually at:

<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/84327085962?pwd=naI8LVmKZSoInPUHbXuw3h7oqMyi5g.1>

Meeting ID: 843 2708 5962

Passcode: 034238

CONTENTS

- 1. Agenda**
- 2. Chair Report**
- 3. 2025 Priorities: From Strategy to Implementation**
- 4. 2024 Annual Report Draft Comment Matrix**
- 5. 2024 Annual Report Draft v2 (with tracked changes)**
- 6. 2024 Annual Report Draft v2 (without tracked changes)**



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

NOTICE AND AGENDA

Tuesday, May 13, 2025, 6:00 p.m.
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<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/84327085962?pwd=na18LVmKZSoiPUHbXuw3h7oqMyi5g.1>

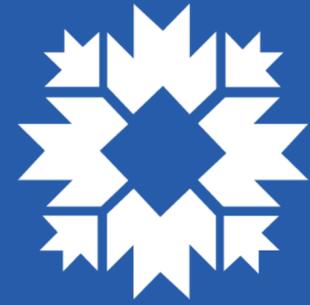
Meeting ID: 843 2708 5962 | Passcode: 034238

Note: Agenda item times are approximate and subject to change

- 1. Call to Order** **6:00 pm**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Approval of Agenda**
- 4. Approval of Minutes: March 11, 2025**
Approval of Minutes: April 8, 2025
- 5. Public Comment** **6:05 pm (10m)**
up to 3 minutes per person
- 6. Reports from Commissioners** **6:15 pm (25m)**
 - A. Chair (Justin Vasel) 6:15 pm (10m)
 - B. Waste Management Working Group (Matt Austin) 6:25 pm (5m)
 - C. Ad-Hoc Committee: Sustainability Assessment Report (Tara Dunderdale) 6:30 pm (5m)
 - D. Council Ex-Officio (Dave Rollo) 6:35 pm (5m)
- 7. Discussion of Topics Not the Subject of Resolutions** **6:40 pm (20m)**
 - A. 2025 Priorities: From Strategy to Implementation (Justin Vasel)
- 8. Resolutions for Second Reading and Discussion** **N/A**
- 9. Resolutions for First Reading and Discussion** **7:00 pm (10m)**
 - A. BCOS Annual Report Draft (Justin Vasel) 7:00 pm (10m)
- 10. Report from Staff Liaison (Shawn Miya)** **7:10 pm (10m)**
- 11. Member Announcements** **7:20 pm (5m)**
- 12. New Business** **7:25 pm (5m)**
- 13. Adjournment** **7:30 pm**

Next Regular Meeting: June 10, 2025 at 6 pm

As a quorum of the Commission or its committees may be present, this gathering constitutes a meeting under the Indiana Open Door Law (I.C. § 5-14-1.5). For that reason, this statement provides notice that this meeting will occur and is open for the public to attend, observe, and record what transpires.



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

Chair Report

May 13, 2025

Justin Vasel

BCOS Meetings

Recent and Upcoming

- Unapproved Minutes
 - February 2025
 - March 2025
- Next Work Session: May 2025
- Next Regular Meeting: June 2025

BCOS Organization Chart

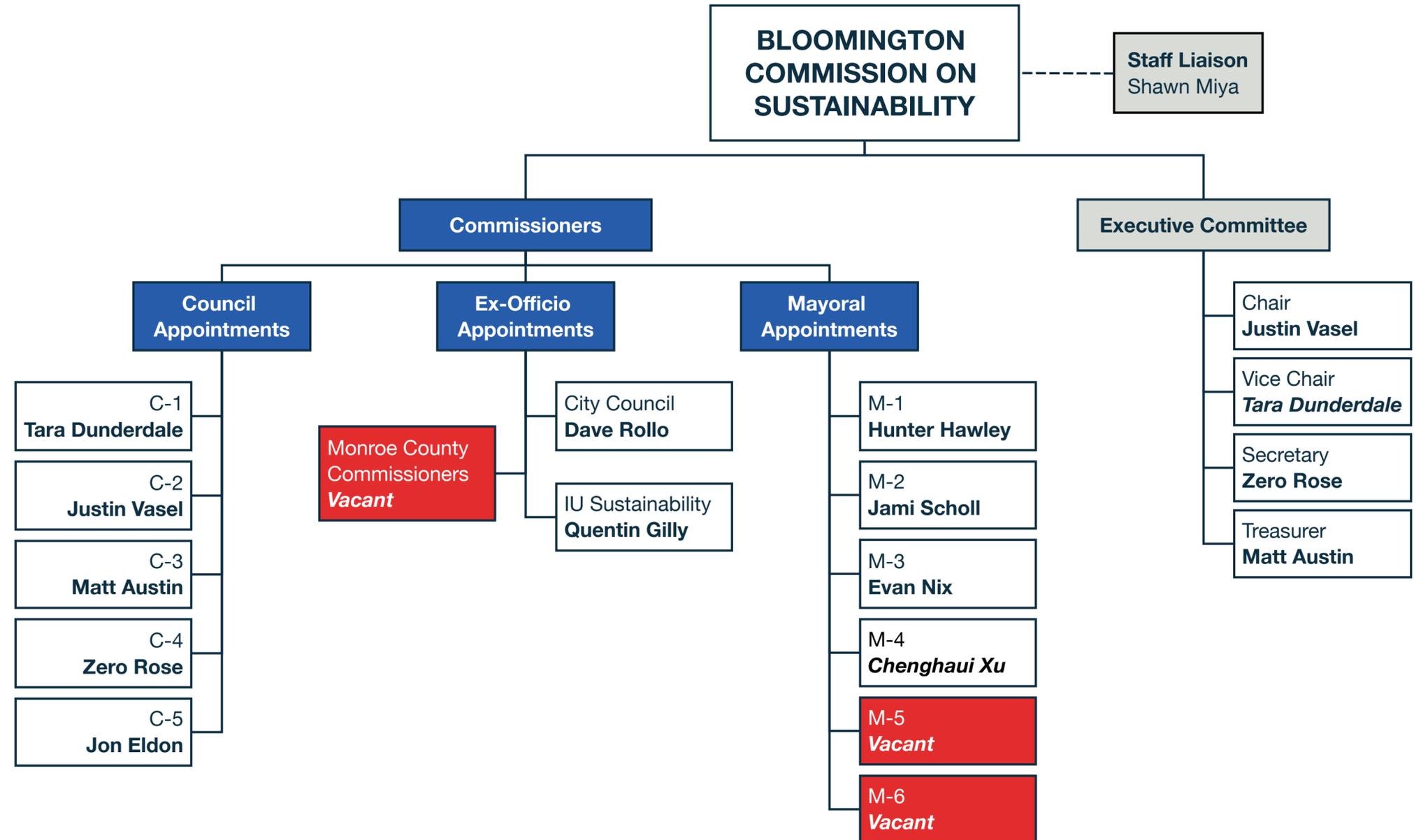
As of May 13, 2025

Current State

- Three vacancies
- Current quorum threshold: **6 / 11**

What Has Changed

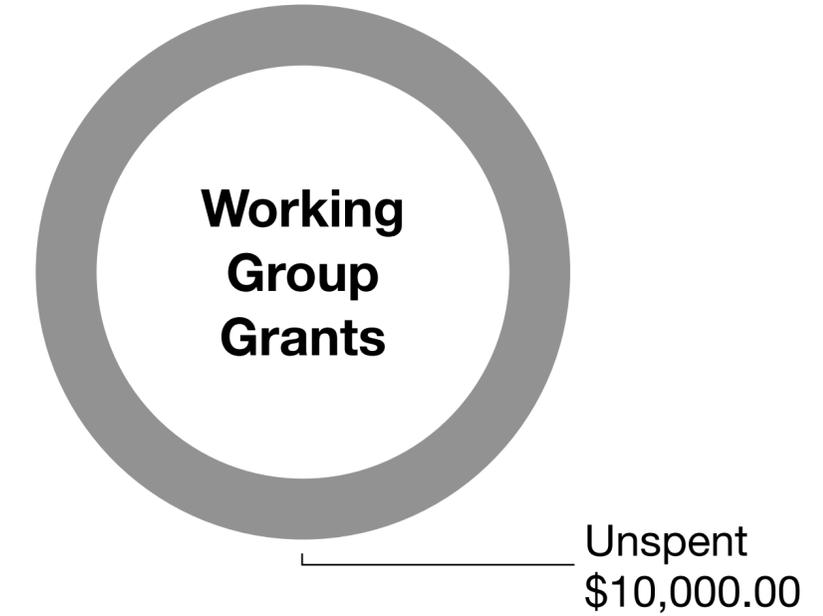
- N/A



Funding & Awards

2025 Working Group Grant Awards

Project	Award	Sponsor
Awarded		
N/A		
Proposed*		
N/A		
Idea†	\$ 7,500.00	
Community & Festival Food Waste Pilot Project (Bokashi)	\$ 5,000.00	M. Austin
Sustainability Interview Series	\$ 1,000.00	C. Xu
Downtown Garden Installation	\$ 1,500.00	J. Vasel



Current State

- Available: \$10,000
- Spent: \$0
- Remaining: \$10,000

What Has Changed

- N/A

* Proposed award amounts are as requested and are not final.

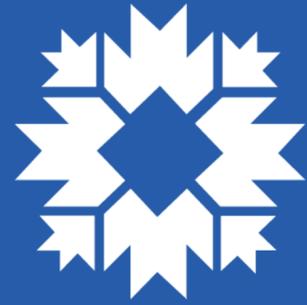
† Idea award amounts are suggestions; proposed amounts may differ significantly.

2024 Annual Report

- Final draft is ready for review & vote

Bylaws Reform

- **Step 1:** *Identify outdated/confusing aspects of current language and any gaps; discuss with Commission.*
- **Step 2:** **Draft new language; bring to Commission to discuss and collect input.**
- **Step 3:** Incorporate input into new language; bring to Commission for a vote.



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

BCOS 2025 Priorities

From Strategy to Implementation

Priority #1: Housing & Urban Agriculture

- Housing Affordability and Accessibility
- Food resilience & Urban Agriculture

Priority #2: Education, Outreach, and Coalition Building

- Resource Amplification
- Coalition Building
- Public Engagement

To ensure effective progress on these priorities, BCOS will:

- Initiate working group grant processes early in the year to avoid end-of-year rushes and allow for thorough project development
- Focus attention on time-bound opportunities such as providing input on the UDO amendment process
- Track the city's implementation of the Climate Action Plan through the Sustainability Assessment Report
- Monitor budget allocations related to sustainability initiatives to ensure alignment between financial commitments and stated priorities
- Maintain flexibility to address emerging opportunities and challenges in Bloomington's sustainability landscape.

2025 Plan Implementation

Tools at our disposal

- **Resolutions**
 - Declare a position
 - Make a formal recommendation
 - Urge Council/Administration to take a particular action
- **Requests for Information**
- **Reports**
- **Grants & Fundraising**

2025 Plan Implementation

Rethinking How We Do Our Work

To achieve results, we must be focused and intentional

- Meetings
 - Work sessions are for **brainstorming or group work**
 - Regular meetings are for **deliberation and decision-making**
- Initiatives
 - Working as a single group once/twice a month is inefficient
 - We need individual commissioners to work in parallel between meetings
 - You do not need permission or agreement to start work on something. Get started and bring it to the Commission once it is ready for review.

2025 Plan Implementation

Take Action: Bringing Your Ideas To The Commission

1. Pick an issue/topic that you think BCOS should address

- Alignment with 2025 priorities is encouraged, but not required

2. Conduct research to understand the scope of the issue

- What is the issue? Does the city already have a policy/ordinance about it? If so, does it need to be changed? What background info will Commissioners need to understand the issue?

3. Brainstorm one or more possible solutions

- e.g., raise awareness, declare a position, propose a specific legislative change, etc.

4. Determine how BCOS can support your solution

- e.g., develop educational materials, pass a resolution, formally request information/data from the city, invite an expert to address the Commission, working group grant, etc.

5. Make your case

- Ask for time on agenda, provide slides or materials that Commissioners need to make informed decision, draft resolution, etc.

2025 Plan Implementation

Submitting Meeting Agenda Items

Do ask for time for...

- ✓ Fully-formed, specific ideas that are ready for Commission action
- ✓ Partially-formed, specific ideas that require full Commission input before being finalized
- ✓ Urgent matters that would require fast action from the Commission
- ✓ Guest speakers who would provide valuable context to topics currently under consideration

Don't ask for time for...

- ✗ Something you think the Commission ought to look into
- ✗ Guest speakers on random topics
- ✗ Vague topics (e.g. “can I get 5 min on the agenda to discuss something?”)

2025 Plan Implementation

Making It Happen

My charge to each of us is to bring something actionable to the Commission

Homework for Next Time:

- **Pick a topic or issue you would like to see progress on. Send to Justin.**

Then:

- Begin thinking about how the issue could be addressed with policy, education, or funding.
- Decide on a solution and means to achieve it.
- Bring something to the Commission that we can vote on.

Commissioner	Topic(s)
Tara Dunderdale	
Justin Vasel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commission functions• Inter-commission engagement• AI/data center sustainability
Matt Austin	
Zero Rose	
Jon Eldon	
Dave Rollo	
Quentin Gilly	
Hunter Hawley	
Jami Scholl	
Evan Nix	
Chenghuai Xu	

2025 Plan Implementation

Resources & Help

Resources

- [BCOS Resolution Template](#)
- [BCOS Bylaws](#)
- [BCOS Working Group Grants SOP](#)
- [BCOS Working Group Grant Application](#)
- [Bloomington Municipal Code \(BMC\)](#)
- [Bloomington Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#)
- [Bloomington Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Bloomington Unified Developer Ordinance \(UDO\)](#)

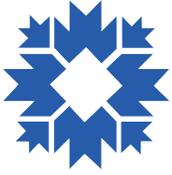
Getting Help

- ***Not sure where to start? Having trouble identifying a concrete issue or solution?***
Bring your ideas to a working session and we can brainstorm. Let Justin know in advance if you can.
- ***Need input from another Commissioner with expertise on a topic?*** Reach out 1-on-1 offline. Just remember not to discuss with multiple commissioners to avoid ODL violations.
- ***Confused about City policy, organizations, requirements, etc.?*** Reach out to Shawn and Jolie
- ***Want another pair of eyes to review your resolution? Not sure if it's ready for full commission yet?*** Send to Justin.

Council 2026 Budget Priorities Process

- Council is switching to an “outcome-based budgeting (OBB)” model.
 - **May 14:** Council-Administration deliberation session to discuss shared priorities and explore alignment
 - **Council summer recess:** most of June and first half of July.
 - **Late July:** Likely follow-up discussions prior to formal budget presentations

Name	Section	Line Number(s)	Comment Type	Comment	Status	Response
Quentin Gilly	Commission Overview	43	Substance	Misspelling. My last name is spelled "Gilly"	Incorporated	Apologies!
Jami Scholl	Accomplishments of 2024	70	Style	missing punctuation, period.	Not Incorporated	Sentence continues onto L71.
Quentin Gilly	Accomplishments of 2024	79	Substance	Pending the results, do we have aspirational goals or next steps? If so, I think they should be included here.	Incorporated	Added: "The results of this project will provide valuable insight into the popularity, accessibility, and sustainability impact of this approach to waste management. We hope that its success will serve as a springboard for wider adoption among Bloomington communities."
Quentin Gilly	Accomplishments of 2024	81	Substance	Can we include a name, or ward number of the neighborhood?	Incorporated	Replaced "a neighborhood" with "the Grandview Hills neighborhood"
Quentin Gilly	Accomplishments of 2024	83	Substance	If this project has next steps/goals, we should include here.	Not Incorporated	We don't have clear next steps as a commission following the completion of this project. The deliverable of educational materials is mentioned in the text.
Quentin Gilly	Accomplishments of 2024	91	Substance	Perhaps we could include a reference map with the general locations of these projects?	Incorporated	Added a map with a caption at the end of the sub-section.
Quentin Gilly	Accomplishments of 2024	180	Substance	If these info sessions are to be continued, we could mention it here.	Incorporated	Added: "The Commission intends to continue seeking informational presentations to maintain awareness of current topics that touch on sustainability in Bloomington."
Jami Scholl	Plan for 2025	274	Substance	Perhaps I misunderstood, but my impression is that a dual priority of Housing Policy & Urban Agriculture Policy, which may or may not be integrated with housing policy & planning.	Incorporated	Changed Priority 1 title from "Housing and Zoning Policy" to "Housing and Urban Agriculture"
Quentin Gilly	Plan for 2025	281	Substance	Perhaps it doesn't make sense to include it here, but with regards to zoning, I think we could make a strong argument to challenge the fire code requirement for two fire escape stairs. Changing this code requirement is happening in cities around the country. It is probably the easiest thing to change that would likely spur real development projects in higher density residential zones in Bloomington.	Not Incorporated	This is a specific issue that we can certainly look into as a Commission. I don't think this is the right place to include it, especially since we haven't discussed it as a group. But it does fall under the broader category of zoning reform.
Jami Scholl	Plan for 2025	283	Substance	This section can include policy regarding Food Resilience. As supply chains face increasing instability and global risks mount—from climate disruption to cyberattacks—Bloomington must establish a resilient, decentralized food system to ensure long-term community wellbeing. It was noted that in the new residential development approved by City Council in 2024, there was no addition or discussion that this area was previously designated in a City Report as a Food Desert. Actions that were discussed and presented included HAND and a new Notice of Violation (NOV) for the Weed Ordinance, Policy to ensure alignment between stated City goals and the UDO, a way that the City could assist neighborhoods with Covenants & Restrictions to UA could amend their Bylaws, and after Policy change by the City Council that it may be a benefit for BCOS to review all developments, prior to build, do a final review to ensure compliance to sustainability goals, which includes agriculture and food resilience goals.	Incorporated	I tried to zoom out a bit to capture the essence of the challenge we're trying to address. I added the following: "BCOS recognizes that access to abundant, affordable, and nutritious food is critically important to the long-term economic vitality and health of our community. As climate change continues to impose increasing strain on global, national, and local food supply chains, any short-term crisis threatens to amplify those strains in unpredictable and potentially disastrous ways. While emergency management is not the purview of this Commission, vulnerability to long-term impacts from short-lived events is a sustainability issue. BCOS will investigate the current state of food security and resiliency in Bloomington through this lens to identify and recommend policy changes that help mitigate these risks through increased urban agriculture or other means."
Quentin Gilly	Plan for 2025	298	Substance	We are actively exploring the possibility of including a fix-it clinic later this year somewhere in the city, or in 2026, pending the results of the pilot at IU. (which went really well).	Incorporated	Added: "...hosting practical educational events such as 'fix-it clinics', ..." to the list.
Quentin Gilly	Conclusion	323	Style	Perhaps we could include a thank you to those who are recording our meetings, and the visitors who join from the public. (its up to you, it was only a thought).	Incorporated	Great idea. Added: "Finally, the Commission thanks the residents of Bloomington who attend our meetings and make their voices heard on sustainability issues that are important to them. The Commission also deeply appreciates the staff of Community Access Television Services (CATS) for recording our meetings and making them accessible for all Bloomingtonians."
Quentin Gilly	Plan for 2025	301-308	Style	Should the starting word of each bullet point be capitalized?	Incorporated	I had separated each bullet point with a semicolon so that the bullets and the paragraph that precedes them read as one full sentence, but I did forget to add a period after the final bullet, which I have now added.



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

Bloomington Commission on Sustainability
2024 Annual Report

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Version ~~2~~

~~May~~ 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

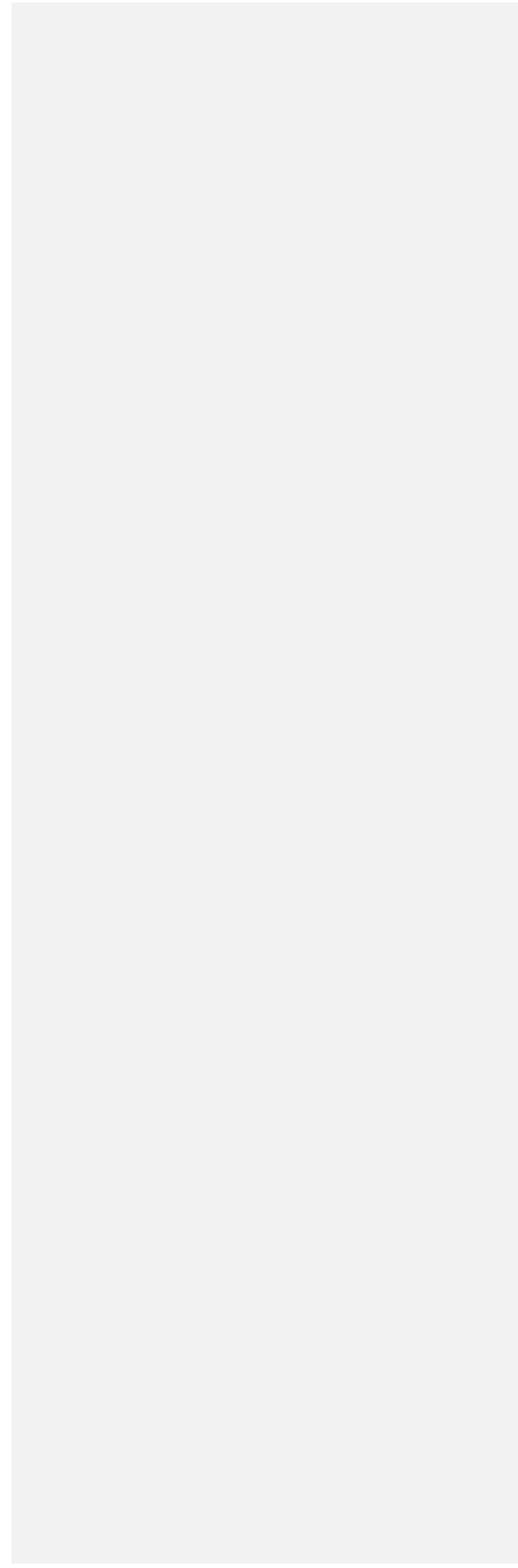
1
2 The Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS) experienced a year of rebuilding and renewal in 2024.
3 Despite challenges with commission vacancies and meeting quorum requirements, BCOS made significant strides in
4 advancing sustainability initiatives across Bloomington. The Commission successfully awarded grants for
5 innovative community projects, engaged with urban agriculture and waste reduction initiatives, and provided input
6 on municipal code revisions affecting sustainability.

7 BCOS also expanded its collaborative approach by initiating regular work sessions, developing stronger
8 relationships with other city commissions, and establishing an ad-hoc committee to conduct a comprehensive
9 sustainability assessment. Notably, the Commission passed Resolution 2024-01 to affirm and clarify its unique role
10 within the city's governance structure.

11 As we look toward 2025, BCOS is positioned to build on these accomplishments with a focused approach to
12 contribute meaningfully to city policy, engaging community partners, promoting educational initiatives, and
13 continuing to fund grassroots sustainability projects.

14

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15

INTRODUCTION

16 The Bloomington Commission on Sustainability serves as the city's primary advisory body for advancing the
17 sustainable socio-environmental-economic well-being for all Bloomington residents. Established in 2005, BCOS has
18 evolved to address the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges of climate change, social equity, and
19 economic resilience.

20 The Commission's mandate, as outlined in Bloomington Municipal Code (BMC) §2.12.100, includes advising the
21 City Administration on sustainability and resilience issues, recommending policy changes, facilitating community
22 education, and coordinating with other governmental and non-governmental organizations. In 2024, BCOS focused
23 on strengthening its operational foundation, fostering collaborative relationships, and supporting community-based
24 sustainability initiatives through targeted grant programs.

25 This annual report documents the Commission's activities, accomplishments, and challenges during 2024, while
26 outlining strategic priorities for the coming year. Our work reflects a holistic approach to sustainability that
27 integrates environmental protection, social equity, and economic vitality—recognizing that true sustainability
28 requires balance among all three domains.

29

COMMISSION OVERVIEW

Commission Composition and Membership

31 BCOS is composed of 14 members as defined in BMC §2.12.100: Five seats appointed by the Bloomington
32 Common Council, six seats appointed by the Office of the Mayor, and three ex-officio seats held by designees of the
33 Monroe County Commissioners, the Bloomington Common Council, and the IU Office of Sustainability. Four
34 members are annually elected by the Commission to fill four executive offices: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and
35 Treasurer. The Commission also has a staff liaison from the Department of Economic & Sustainable Development
36 (Figure 1).

37 BCOS experienced significant membership transitions throughout 2024, which affected the Commission's ability to
38 maintain quorum and conduct business at times. The Commission elected new leadership in May 2024, with Justin
39 Vasel serving as Chair, Andrew Guenther as Vice Chair, and Matt Austin as Treasurer. The Secretary position
40 remained unfilled until August when Zero Rose was elected to the role. Shawn Miya served as BCOS Staff Liaison
41 throughout the year.

42 New commissioners joining BCOS in 2024 included Andrew Guenther, Jami Scholl, Zero Rose, Tara Dunderdale,
43 Evan Nix, Hunter Hawley, and Quentin Gilly (representing IU's Office of Sustainability). The Commission bid
44 farewell to Kate-Lyn Edwards, who announced her departure in May 2024.

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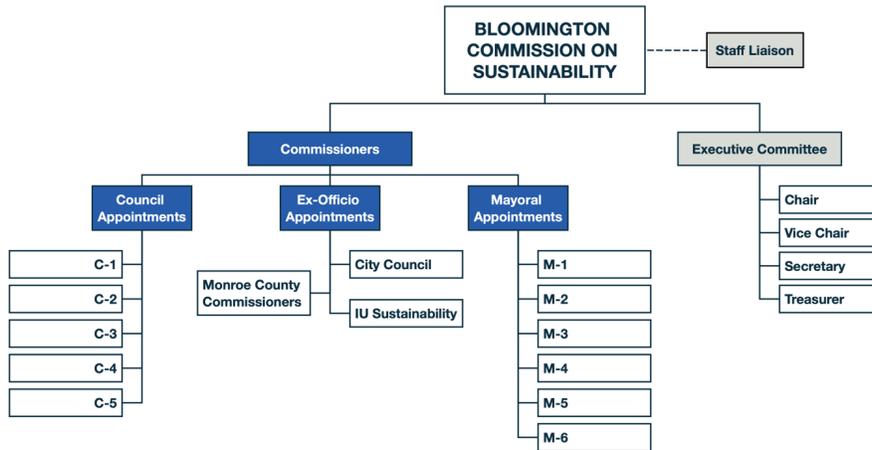


Figure 1. Structure of the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability.

Meetings and Attendance

BCOS held nine regular meetings during 2024, with scheduled meetings in April and July canceled due to anticipated lack of quorum and the State of the City event. The Commission struggled with quorum issues early in the year, particularly during the March meeting when incorrect guidance about counting ex-officio members and vacancies initially led to a misunderstanding about whether quorum had been achieved.

In September 2024, BCOS initiated a new approach to increasing productivity by introducing work sessions separate from regular business meetings. These work sessions, held at the Monroe County Public Library, provided an informal setting for commissioners to collaboratively advance projects without the time constraints of regular meetings. Two work sessions were conducted in September and proved valuable for developing grant proposals and discussing strategic initiatives.

Regular business meetings were held in the McCloskey Conference Room at City Hall, with hybrid attendance options available for commissioners unable to attend in person. The Commission's meeting minutes document a gradual improvement in attendance throughout the year, with more robust participation evident in the second half of 2024.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2024

Grants Programs and Projects

The Commission facilitated several impactful sustainability initiatives through its grant programs in partnership with the Department of Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD).

Sustainable Neighborhoods Grant Program

This program, established in 2023, provides \$10,000 annually to support small-scale neighborhood sustainability projects, typically limited to \$1,000 per project. In 2024, BCOS oversaw the implementation of previously approved grants and approved new initiatives.

TerraCycle 1.0. A \$1,000 grant awarded to GardenQuest in late 2023 was successfully implemented throughout 2024. The project procured specialized recycling boxes from TerraCycle

72 to divert hard-to-recycle materials from landfills. Data collected showed that laminated paper
73 products constituted the highest percentage of household trash diverted, followed by food
74 wrappers. The program trained ten neighbors and collected valuable data on household waste
75 management practices, with participants expressing strong interest in continuing and expanding
76 the program.

77 **TerraCycle 2.0.** Building on the success of the first phase, BCOS approved a follow-on \$1,000
78 grant in December 2024 to test a hybrid approach comparing time-savings versus cost-savings
79 models. The project will focus on the most popular recycling categories from phase one and
80 continue collecting weight and volume data to assess impact. The results of this project will
81 provide valuable insight into the popularity, accessibility, and sustainability impact of this
82 approach to waste management. We hope that its success will serve as a springboard for wider
83 adoption among Bloomington communities.

84 **New Pollinator Gardens.** In November 2024, the Commission approved a \$1,000 grant proposal
85 to purchase pre-made pollinator garden kits for installation in the Grandview Hills neighborhood.
86 The project aims to increase native pollinator habitat and provide educational resources to
87 residents about the importance of native plants.

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88 *Working Group Grant Program*

89 This program provides \$10,000 annually for Commission-initiated projects. After significant effort to navigate the
90 city's approval processes, BCOS approved two important projects in late 2024 and developed a proposal for a waste
91 redirection effort that it hopes to pursue in 2025.

92 **CanopyBloomington Tree Planting.** The Commission approved a \$4,000 Working Group grant
93 to support CanopyBloomington's tree planting initiative, representing one of the most substantial
94 sustainability investments BCOS made in 2024. This project will replace 16 trees in areas of
95 Bloomington previously identified as high-need neighborhoods where tree mortality had occurred.
96 The Commission chose to partner with CanopyBloomington, a non-profit organization dedicated
97 to expanding and maintaining Bloomington's urban forest, based on their demonstrated expertise
98 in tree selection, planting, and long-term care.

99 The proposal, championed by Commissioner Andrew Guenther, underwent extensive development
100 with input from multiple BCOS members. It received unanimous support after careful
101 consideration of its alignment with the city's Climate Action Plan, which identifies urban tree
102 canopy expansion as a key climate adaptation strategy. During the extensive discussion process,
103 the Commission emphasized the importance of selecting native species that demonstrate resilience
104 to changing climate conditions, supporting biodiversity while ensuring the long-term survival of
105 the investment.

106 A distinguishing feature of this project is its comprehensive maintenance plan. Each planting site
107 requires a signed letter of intent from the property owner or manager committing to tree
108 maintenance for a minimum of three years, addressing a common shortcoming in many tree
109 planting initiatives where insufficient aftercare leads to high mortality rates. CanopyBloomington
110 supplements these commitments with professional oversight and technical support for tree
111 stewards.

112 Through this partnership, BCOS is helping to advance multiple sustainability goals
113 simultaneously: mitigating urban heat island effects, sequestering carbon, reducing stormwater
114 runoff, providing habitat for native species, and enhancing neighborhood aesthetics and property
115 values. The project also demonstrates the Commission's commitment to equitable distribution of
116 environmental benefits by focusing planting efforts in underserved areas of the city where tree
117 canopy is often disproportionately sparse.

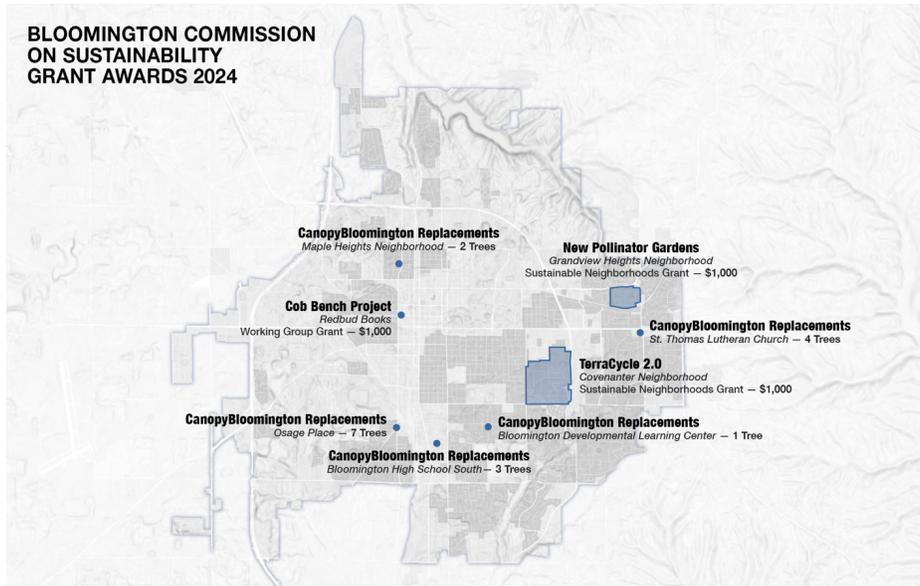
118 **Cob Bench Project.** The Commission approved a \$1,000 Working Group grant to support the
119 creation of an innovative community gathering space at Redbud Books on Kirkwood Avenue,
120 featuring benches constructed using the ancient cob building technique. Commissioners Zero Rose
121 and Evan Nix championed this project, drawing on their expertise in sustainable building practices

123 and community engagement to develop a proposal that seamlessly integrates multiple
124 sustainability principles. The project encompasses not only the construction of cob benches—
125 made from a mixture of clay, sand, and straw—but also the installation of an arbor, bike racks,
126 native pollinator gardens, and edible landscaping, creating a multifunctional community hub in a
127 high-visibility downtown location.

128 This initiative stands out for its strong community support, with over 20 neighbors signing letters
129 of support and more than 30 individuals volunteering to participate in the construction process.
130 The project exemplifies BCOS's commitment to demonstrating practical sustainability solutions
131 that engage citizens directly in implementation. By using site-sourced clay, reclaimed limestone,
132 and other local materials, the Cob Bench Project will serve as a living educational tool for
133 sustainable building techniques while enhancing neighborhood connectivity and providing
134 ecological benefits through native plantings. Commissioner Nix secured partnerships with Redbud
135 Books, which is providing a \$200 in-kind contribution, and Blue Bee Ecological Endeavors,
136 which will donate plants, soil, and seeds.

137 **Bokashi Composting Initiative.** The Commission's Waste Management Working Group, led by
138 Commissioner Matt Austin, developed a comprehensive proposal for a \$5,000 project to establish
139 a Bokashi composting training and implementation program across Bloomington. This innovative
140 initiative emerged from extensive community needs assessment and collaboration with multiple
141 local organizations including Garden Quest, the Lotus Festival, Purdue Extension, and the Waste
142 Reduction District of Monroe County (WRDMC). The proposal exemplifies BCOS's commitment
143 to addressing food waste—a significant contributor to landfill emissions and a key concern
144 identified in the Climate Action Plan. The Commission has structured the project as a public-
145 private partnership, successfully securing matching funds of \$5,000 from WRDMC, effectively
146 doubling the initiative's impact and demonstrating the Commission's skill in leveraging limited
147 resources.

148 The Bokashi method offers distinct advantages over traditional composting, particularly for urban
149 settings, as it uses an anaerobic fermentation process that can safely process all food waste—
150 including meat, dairy, and oily foods typically excluded from conventional composting.
151 Commissioner Austin highlighted that this approach is especially valuable for apartment dwellers
152 and those with limited outdoor space, making it an equity-focused solution that expands
153 composting access beyond homeowners with yards. The project design incorporates both practical
154 implementation and educational components, with plans to establish a "Compost Captains"
155 volunteer training program modeled after successful initiatives in other communities. While final
156 approval of this ambitious proposal remained pending at year's end due to administrative
157 processing requirements, the groundwork laid in 2024 positions this initiative for immediate
158 implementation in early 2025, with potential to significantly reduce landfill waste while building
159 valuable soil resources for community gardens.



160
161 *Figure 2. Geographical distribution of BCOS-approved projects funded by Sustainable Neighborhood Grants and BCOS Working*
162 *Group Grants.*

163 ***Policy Development and Municipal Code Engagement***

164 BCOS actively participated in discussions about its own role within city governance and provided input on
165 sustainability-related policies throughout 2024. The Commission engaged meaningfully with proposed changes to
166 the Bloomington Municipal Code, particularly as they related to the Commission's purpose, structure, and
167 responsibilities.

168 In the wake of the 2022 Novak Report, which recommended potentially merging BCOS with the Environmental
169 Commission, BCOS devoted significant attention to clarifying its unique identity and value within the city's
170 governance framework. This included detailed discussions spanning multiple meetings about the Commission's
171 integration of environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability—a holistic approach distinguishing
172 BCOS from other advisory bodies.

173 **Resolution 2024-01.** In December 2024, the Commission unanimously passed its first formal
174 resolution of the year, expressing support for proposed changes to BMC §2.12.100 with specific
175 recommendations to maintain the Commission's broad advisory role to the City Administration
176 and incorporate resilience into the Commission's purview

177 ***Knowledge Building and Assessment***

178 BCOS took significant steps to enhance its understanding of sustainability challenges and measure progress toward
179 city climate goals.

180 **Sustainability Assessment Ad-Hoc Committee.** In September 2024, the Commission established
181 an ad-hoc committee to conduct a comprehensive sustainability assessment. After surveying
182 commissioners to prioritize focus areas, the committee began developing a framework to evaluate
183 the city's progress on climate action goals, focusing initially on energy and the built environment,
184 green space and ecosystems, and local food and agriculture.

185 **Educational Presentations.** The Commission hosted informative presentations throughout the
186 year, including a detailed overview of the Summit Development project on Bloomington's
187 southwest side, examining its sustainability features and potential impacts on housing,
188 transportation, and natural resources. [The Commission intends to continue seeking informational](#)
189 [presentations to maintain awareness of current topics that touch on sustainability in Bloomington.](#)

190 **Engagement and Collaboration**

191 BCOS strengthened relationships with other commissions and community organizations.

192 **Cross-Commission Coordination.** Commissioners began attending meetings of the
193 Environmental Commission, Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs, and other city boards to
194 identify opportunities for collaboration and reduce duplication of efforts.

195 **Strategic Engagement Planning.** The Commission developed a formal engagement strategy with
196 three primary objectives: identifying related organizations, maintaining awareness of their
197 activities, and pursuing collaboration opportunities.

198 **FINANCIAL OVERVIEW**

199 BCOS managed two primary funding streams in 2024, both provided through the Department of Economic and
200 Sustainable Development (ESD):

201 **Sustainable Neighborhoods Grant Program:** \$10,000 annual allocation

- 202 • Funds committed in 2024: \$2,000 (TerraCycle 2.0; New Pollinator Gardens)
- 203 • Projects completed using prior year funding: \$1,000 (TerraCycle 1.0)

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- 206 • Additional proposals pending: \$5,000 (Bokashi Composting Initiative)

207 Both grant programs operate on a calendar year basis, with funds that must be encumbered by December 31. The
208 Commission worked diligently in the latter part of 2024 to identify and approve high-impact projects to utilize
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211 administered directly by ESD without requiring BCOS approval. While this change streamlines the process for
212 applicants, the Commission expressed interest in maintaining an advisory role to ensure alignment with broader
213 sustainability priorities.

214 **CHALLENGES IN 2024**

215 **Commission Functionality & Productivity**

216 The Commission faced several operational challenges that affected its efficiency and effectiveness:

217 **Leadership Transition.** BCOS operated without permanent leadership for the first four months of
218 2024, with Commissioner David Maenner serving as Acting Chair until elections were held in
219 May. While Acting Chair Maenner performed commendably, this transition period limited the
220 Commission's ability to advance strategic initiatives and maintain momentum.

221 **Document Management.** The Commission and City staff worked to find solutions for document
222 storage and collaboration that would meet both the practical needs of commissioners and the City's
223 legal and policy requirements, though this remained a challenging balance to achieve. This

224 stemmed primarily from concerns about Indiana's Open Door Law (ODL), which regulates how
225 public bodies conduct business and maintain transparency. The City Attorney's office expressed
226 concern that commissioners collaboratively editing documents outside of public meetings could
227 potentially constitute a "meeting" under the ODL if a quorum of members were involved in the
228 editing process, even asynchronously.

229 Despite extensive discussions with City staff and legal counsel throughout the year, a satisfactory
230 resolution remained elusive. The Commission explored various approaches to balance efficient
231 document collaboration with strict ODL compliance, including the creation of read-only document
232 repositories and establishing clear protocols for sequential document editing. However, in
233 December, the City Attorney ultimately recommended all document management occur
234 exclusively through OnBoard rather than through shared drives created by commissioners. This
235 solution prioritized legal compliance but created practical difficulties for collaborative work on
236 complex documents like the Sustainability Assessment Report. This tension between
237 administrative efficiency and legal compliance represents an ongoing challenge for the
238 Commission's productivity that will require continued attention in 2025.

239 **Meeting Format Limitations.** Standard monthly business meetings proved insufficient for the
240 Commission's workload, leading to truncated discussions and deferred agenda items. In response,
241 BCOS introduced work sessions in September to provide dedicated time for more in-depth
242 collaboration and project development.

243 **Procedural Guidance.** The Commission and staff navigated complex procedural questions
244 throughout the year, including during the March meeting when differing interpretations of quorum
245 calculation requirements led to uncertainty about whether official business could be conducted.

246 *Grant Process Complexity*

247 **Administrative Hurdles.** Both grant programs administered by BCOS involved multi-step
248 approval processes requiring coordination between the Commission, ESD staff, and city financial
249 departments. The time required to move projects from concept to implementation created
250 challenges for timely project execution.

251 **Funding Authority Limitations.** Questions arose about the Commission's authority to seek
252 external funding or engage in fundraising activities, with differing interpretations of the
253 Commission's mandate creating uncertainty about potential revenue sources beyond city
254 allocations.

255 **Loss of Grant Oversight.** In November, ESD announced that Sustainable Neighborhoods Grants
256 would no longer require BCOS approval beginning in January 2025. While intended to streamline
257 the process, this change raised concerns about the Commission's diminishing role in community
258 sustainability initiatives and reduced opportunities for commissioner expertise to inform project
259 selection.

260 *Commission Continuity Issues*

261 **Membership Gaps.** Throughout 2024, BCOS operated with vacant positions and experienced
262 turnover in membership, creating knowledge gaps and increased workload for remaining
263 commissioners.

264 **Quorum Challenges.** Meeting quorum requirements proved challenging at times due to the
265 combination of vacant positions and unavoidable commissioner absences, leading to the
266 rescheduling of planned meetings in April and July. When meetings proceeded with minimal
267 attendance, the Commission's ability to take formal actions was limited.

268 *Lessons Learned*

269 The challenges faced in 2024 yielded valuable insights for future Commission operations:

270 **Flexible Meeting Structures.** The introduction of work sessions demonstrated the value of
 271 supplementing formal business meetings with more collaborative formats, allowing for deeper
 272 engagement on complex topics without the constraints of formal meeting procedures.

273 **Strategic Focus.** The experience with the Sustainability Assessment Ad-Hoc Committee
 274 highlighted the importance of prioritizing and narrowing focus areas to achieve meaningful
 275 outcomes within the Commission's limited capacity.

276 **Advance Planning.** The year-end rush to approve grant projects underscored the need for earlier
 277 identification and development of potential initiatives to allow adequate time for administrative
 278 processing.

279 PLAN FOR 2025

280 Building on the foundation established in 2024, BCOS has identified two strategic priority areas for 2025. Rather
 281 than selecting specific projects, the Commission has chosen broader thematic domains to provide strategic direction
 282 while maintaining flexibility for commissioners to pursue various initiatives within these areas.

283 **Priority 1: Housing and Urban Agriculture**

284 The Commission has identified housing and zoning policy as a critical area where sustainability principles can
 285 significantly impact Bloomington's development trajectory. This priority encompasses several interrelated
 286 components:

287 *Housing Affordability and Accessibility*

288 The Commission will engage with the social equity components of housing policy by exploring how green building
 289 practices can improve both sustainability and affordability, investigating alternative housing models such as tiny
 290 home zoning, and addressing the balance between rental properties and owner-occupied homes. The Commission
 291 will also monitor major developments like Summit District for adherence to sustainability principles.

292 *Food Resilience & Urban Agriculture*

293 BCOS recognizes that access to abundant, affordable, and nutritious food is critically important to the long-term
 294 economic vitality and health of our community. As climate change continues to impose increasing strain on global,
 295 national, and local food supply chains, any short-term crisis threatens to amplify those strains in unpredictable and
 296 potentially disastrous ways. While emergency management is not the purview of this Commission, vulnerability to
 297 long-term impacts from short-lived events is a sustainability issue. BCOS will investigate the current state of food
 298 security and resiliency in Bloomington through this lens to identify and recommend policy changes that help
 299 mitigate these risks through increased urban agriculture or other means.

300 **Priority 2: Education, Outreach, and Coalition Building**

301 Recognizing the limitations of its meeting schedule and procedural constraints, BCOS will leverage its position to
 302 amplify existing community initiatives through strategic education and partnership efforts:

303 *Resource Amplification*

304 The Commission will connect community members with available sustainability resources by promoting city grant
 305 programs, educating the public about BCOS Working Group Grants, and creating informative materials about
 306 sustainability initiatives and best practices.

307 *Coalition Building*

308 BCOS will strengthen connections with organizations already engaged in sustainability work, focusing on
 309 partnerships rather than duplicating efforts. This will include inviting organizations to present to the Commission
 310 and identifying partnership opportunities with other city commissions and boards.

Deleted: Zoning Policy

312 *Public Engagement*

313 The Commission will increase direct interaction with community members by maintaining a presence at events such
314 as Earth Day, developing interactive educational activities, creating surveys to gather community input on
315 sustainability priorities, [hosting practical educational events such as “fix-it clinics”](#), and encouraging public
316 attendance and comment at BCOS meetings.

317 **Implementation Strategy**

318 To ensure effective progress on these priorities, BCOS will:

- 319 • [initiate Working Group Grant processes early in the year to avoid end-of-year rushes and allow for](#)
320 [thorough project development;](#)
- 321 • [focus attention on time-bound opportunities such as providing input on the UDO amendment process;](#)
- 322 • [track the city's implementation of the Climate Action Plan through the Sustainability Assessment Report;](#)
- 323 • [monitor budget allocations related to sustainability initiatives to ensure alignment between financial](#)
324 [commitments and stated priorities; and](#)
- 325 • [maintain flexibility to address emerging opportunities and challenges in Bloomington's sustainability](#)
326 [landscape.](#)

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327 This strategic approach will allow BCOS to maximize its impact despite limited resources, focusing on areas where
328 the Commission can provide the greatest value to Bloomington's sustainability.

329 **CONCLUSION**

330 The Bloomington Commission on Sustainability demonstrated resilience and determination in 2024, overcoming
331 operational challenges to advance important sustainability initiatives. By successfully funding innovative
332 community projects, providing thoughtful policy input, and laying the groundwork for the first Commission-
333 authored sustainability assessment in many years, BCOS has reinforced its value to the city's governance structure.

334 As Bloomington faces the intensifying challenges of climate change, resource constraints, and equity concerns,
335 BCOS's integrative approach to sustainability—bridging environmental, social, and economic considerations—
336 provides an essential perspective for city decision-making. The Commission enters 2025 with renewed focus,
337 improved processes, and a commitment to measurable progress toward Bloomington's sustainability goals.

338 The Commission extends its appreciation to the Department of Economic and Sustainable Development staff,
339 particularly Shawn Miya and Jolie Perry, for their dedicated support throughout the year. We also thank the
340 community partners who collaborated on grant-funded projects and the city leadership for their continued
341 commitment to a sustainable future for all Bloomington residents.

342 [Finally, the Commission thanks the residents of Bloomington who attend our meetings and make their voices heard](#)
343 [on sustainability issues that are important to them. The Commission also deeply appreciates the staff of Community](#)
344 [Access Television Services \(CATS\) for recording our meetings and making them accessible for all Bloomingtonians.](#)

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APPENDIX A: 2024 MEETING SCHEDULE

Date	Meeting Type
January 9, 2024	Regular Meeting
February 13, 2024	Regular Meeting
March 12, 2024	Regular Meeting <i>(No quorum for official business)</i>
April 9, 2024	Meeting Canceled
May 22, 2024	Regular Meeting
June 11, 2024	Regular Meeting
July 9, 2024	Meeting Canceled
August 13, 2024	Regular Meeting
September 3, 2024	Work Session
September 10, 2024	Regular Meeting
September 24, 2024	Work Session
October 8, 2024	Regular Meeting
November 12, 2024	Regular Meeting
December 10, 2024	Regular Meeting

349

APPENDIX B: 2024 GRANT SUMMARY

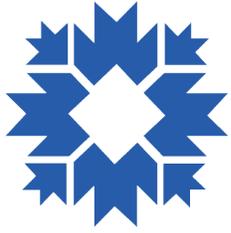
Grant	Recipient/Project	Amount	Status
Sustainable Neighborhoods	GardenQuest—TerraCycle 1.0 (2023)	\$1,000	Completed
Sustainable Neighborhoods	GardenQuest—TerraCycle 2.0	\$1,000	Approved
Sustainable Neighborhoods	New Pollinator Gardens	\$1,000	Approved
Working Group	CanopyBloomington	\$4,000	Approved
Working Group	Cob Bench Project	\$1,000	Approved
Working Group	Bokashi Composting (2025)	\$5,000	Pending

350

APPENDIX C: COMMISSIONER ROSTER (AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024)

Seat	Appointing Authority	Commissioner	Dates of Service
C-1	City Council	Alex Hakes Tara Dunderdale	03/29/2023 – 06/05/2024 06/19/2024 – Present
C-2	City Council	Justin Vasel	03/29/2023 – Present
C-3	City Council	Matt Austin	02/17/2022 – Present
C-4	City Council	Heidi Dowding Zero Rose	06/21/2023 – 01/31/2024 06/19/2025 – Present
C-5	City Council	Jon Eldon	12/07/2022 – Present
Ex-Council	City Council	Dave Rollo	01/10/2024 – Present
IU	Indiana University Sustainability	Jessica Davis Quentin Gilly	11/16/2022 – 11/20/2024 11/21/2024 – Present
M-1	Mayor	Nejla Routsong Hunter Hawley	02/01/2022 – 01/31/2024 08/06/2024 – Present
M-2	Mayor	Emma Ferguson Jami Scholl	02/01/2022 – 01/31/2024 02/01/2024 – Present
M-3	Mayor	Hannah Gregory Evan Nix	02/13/2023 – 06/30/2024 08/06/2024 – Present
M-4	Mayor	KateLyn Edwards	02/01/2023 – 08/14/2024
M-5	Mayor	Dennis Vera	06/15/2023 – 08/13/2024
M-6	Mayor	David Maenner	01/10/2022 – Present
MCC	Monroe County Commissioners	Nolan Hendon Andrew Guenther	10/15/2020 – 04/30/2024 05/01/2024 – Present

351



CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY

Bloomington Commission on Sustainability
2024 Annual Report

Version 2

May 2025

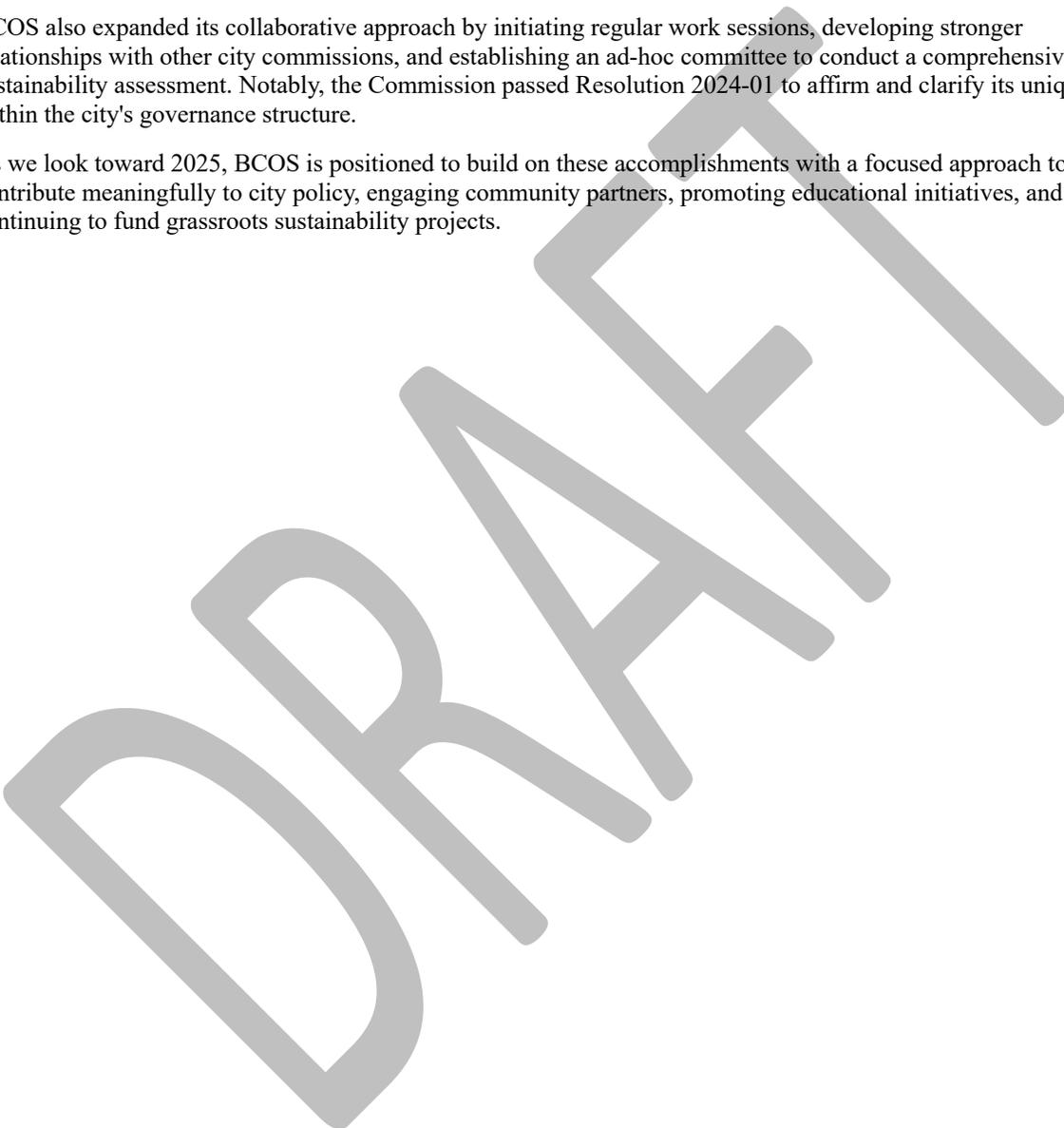
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Bloomington Commission on Sustainability (BCOS) experienced a year of rebuilding and renewal in 2024. Despite challenges with commission vacancies and meeting quorum requirements, BCOS made significant strides in advancing sustainability initiatives across Bloomington. The Commission successfully awarded grants for innovative community projects, engaged with urban agriculture and waste reduction initiatives, and provided input on municipal code revisions affecting sustainability.

BCOS also expanded its collaborative approach by initiating regular work sessions, developing stronger relationships with other city commissions, and establishing an ad-hoc committee to conduct a comprehensive sustainability assessment. Notably, the Commission passed Resolution 2024-01 to affirm and clarify its unique role within the city's governance structure.

As we look toward 2025, BCOS is positioned to build on these accomplishments with a focused approach to contribute meaningfully to city policy, engaging community partners, promoting educational initiatives, and continuing to fund grassroots sustainability projects.



INTRODUCTION

15

16 The Bloomington Commission on Sustainability serves as the city's primary advisory body for advancing the
17 sustainable socio-environmental-economic well-being for all Bloomington residents. Established in 2005, BCOS has
18 evolved to address the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges of climate change, social equity, and
19 economic resilience.

20 The Commission's mandate, as outlined in Bloomington Municipal Code (BMC) §2.12.100, includes advising the
21 City Administration on sustainability and resilience issues, recommending policy changes, facilitating community
22 education, and coordinating with other governmental and non-governmental organizations. In 2024, BCOS focused
23 on strengthening its operational foundation, fostering collaborative relationships, and supporting community-based
24 sustainability initiatives through targeted grant programs.

25 This annual report documents the Commission's activities, accomplishments, and challenges during 2024, while
26 outlining strategic priorities for the coming year. Our work reflects a holistic approach to sustainability that
27 integrates environmental protection, social equity, and economic vitality—recognizing that true sustainability
28 requires balance among all three domains.

29

COMMISSION OVERVIEW

Commission Composition and Membership

31 BCOS is composed of 14 members as defined in BMC §2.12.100: Five seats appointed by the Bloomington
32 Common Council, six seats appointed by the Office of the Mayor, and three ex-officio seats held by designees of the
33 Monroe County Commissioners, the Bloomington Common Council, and the IU Office of Sustainability. Four
34 members are annually elected by the Commission to fill four executive offices: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and
35 Treasurer. The Commission also has a staff liaison from the Department of Economic & Sustainable Development
36 (Figure 1).

37 BCOS experienced significant membership transitions throughout 2024, which affected the Commission's ability to
38 maintain quorum and conduct business at times. The Commission elected new leadership in May 2024, with Justin
39 Vassel serving as Chair, Andrew Guenther as Vice Chair, and Matt Austin as Treasurer. The Secretary position
40 remained unfilled until August when Zero Rose was elected to the role. Shawn Miya served as BCOS Staff Liaison
41 throughout the year.

42 New commissioners joining BCOS in 2024 included Andrew Guenther, Jami Scholl, Zero Rose, Tara Dunderdale,
43 Evan Nix, Hunter Hawley, and Quentin Gilly (representing IU's Office of Sustainability). The Commission bid
44 farewell to Kate-Lyn Edwards, who announced her departure in May 2024.

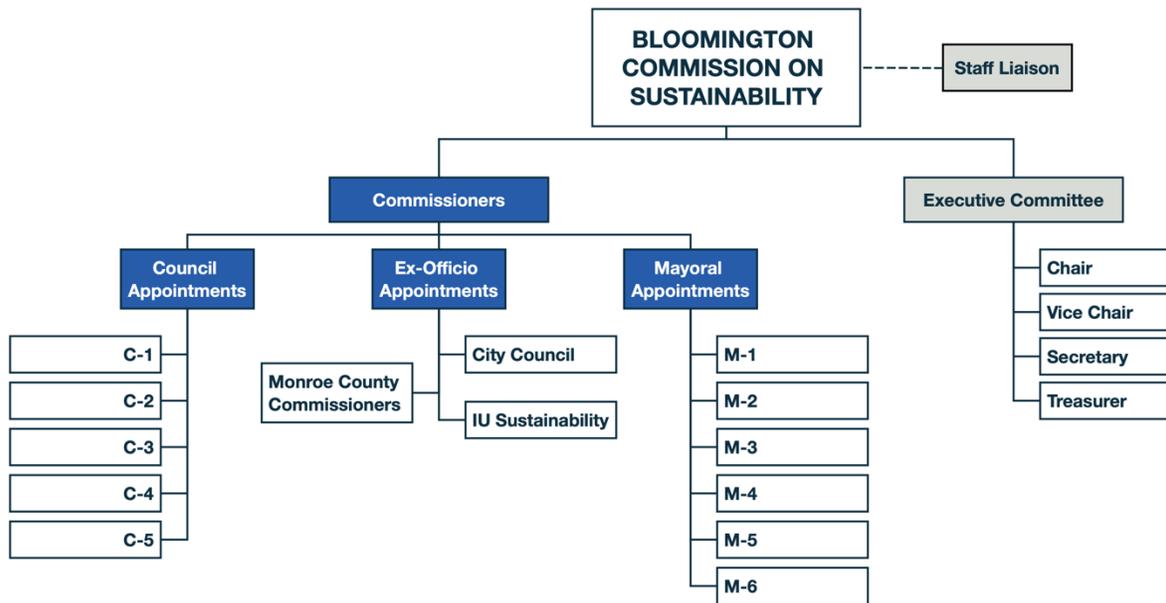


Figure 1. Structure of the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability.

Meetings and Attendance

BCOS held nine regular meetings during 2024, with scheduled meetings in April and July canceled due to anticipated lack of quorum and the State of the City event. The Commission struggled with quorum issues early in the year, particularly during the March meeting when incorrect guidance about counting ex-officio members and vacancies initially led to a misunderstanding about whether quorum had been achieved.

In September 2024, BCOS initiated a new approach to increasing productivity by introducing work sessions separate from regular business meetings. These work sessions, held at the Monroe County Public Library, provided an informal setting for commissioners to collaboratively advance projects without the time constraints of regular meetings. Two work sessions were conducted in September and proved valuable for developing grant proposals and discussing strategic initiatives.

Regular business meetings were held in the McCloskey Conference Room at City Hall, with hybrid attendance options available for commissioners unable to attend in person. The Commission's meeting minutes document a gradual improvement in attendance throughout the year, with more robust participation evident in the second half of 2024.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2024

Grants Programs and Projects

The Commission facilitated several impactful sustainability initiatives through its grant programs in partnership with the Department of Economic and Sustainable Development (ESD).

Sustainable Neighborhoods Grant Program

This program, established in 2023, provides \$10,000 annually to support small-scale neighborhood sustainability projects, typically limited to \$1,000 per project. In 2024, BCOS oversaw the implementation of previously approved grants and approved new initiatives.

TerraCycle 1.0. A \$1,000 grant awarded to GardenQuest in late 2023 was successfully implemented throughout 2024. The project procured specialized recycling boxes from TerraCycle

71 to divert hard-to-recycle materials from landfills. Data collected showed that laminated paper
72 products constituted the highest percentage of household trash diverted, followed by food
73 wrappers. The program trained ten neighbors and collected valuable data on household waste
74 management practices, with participants expressing strong interest in continuing and expanding
75 the program.

76 **TerraCycle 2.0.** Building on the success of the first phase, BCOS approved a follow-on \$1,000
77 grant in December 2024 to test a hybrid approach comparing time-savings versus cost-savings
78 models. The project will focus on the most popular recycling categories from phase one and
79 continue collecting weight and volume data to assess impact. The results of this project will
80 provide valuable insight into the popularity, accessibility, and sustainability impact of this
81 approach to waste management. We hope that its success will serve as a springboard for wider
82 adoption among Bloomington communities.

83 **New Pollinator Gardens.** In November 2024, the Commission approved a \$1,000 grant proposal
84 to purchase pre-made pollinator garden kits for installation in the Grandview Hills neighborhood.
85 The project aims to increase native pollinator habitat and provide educational resources to
86 residents about the importance of native plants.

87 *Working Group Grant Program*

88 This program provides \$10,000 annually for Commission-initiated projects. After significant effort to navigate the
89 city's approval processes, BCOS approved two important projects in late 2024 and developed a proposal for a waste
90 redirection effort that it hopes to pursue in 2025.

91 **CanopyBloomington Tree Planting.** The Commission approved a \$4,000 Working Group grant
92 to support CanopyBloomington's tree planting initiative, representing one of the most substantial
93 sustainability investments BCOS made in 2024. This project will replace 16 trees in areas of
94 Bloomington previously identified as high-need neighborhoods where tree mortality had occurred.
95 The Commission chose to partner with CanopyBloomington, a non-profit organization dedicated
96 to expanding and maintaining Bloomington's urban forest, based on their demonstrated expertise
97 in tree selection, planting, and long-term care.

98 The proposal, championed by Commissioner Andrew Guenther, underwent extensive development
99 with input from multiple BCOS members. It received unanimous support after careful
100 consideration of its alignment with the city's Climate Action Plan, which identifies urban tree
101 canopy expansion as a key climate adaptation strategy. During the extensive discussion process,
102 the Commission emphasized the importance of selecting native species that demonstrate resilience
103 to changing climate conditions, supporting biodiversity while ensuring the long-term survival of
104 the investment.

105 A distinguishing feature of this project is its comprehensive maintenance plan. Each planting site
106 requires a signed letter of intent from the property owner or manager committing to tree
107 maintenance for a minimum of three years, addressing a common shortcoming in many tree
108 planting initiatives where insufficient aftercare leads to high mortality rates. CanopyBloomington
109 supplements these commitments with professional oversight and technical support for tree
110 stewards.

111 Through this partnership, BCOS is helping to advance multiple sustainability goals
112 simultaneously: mitigating urban heat island effects, sequestering carbon, reducing stormwater
113 runoff, providing habitat for native species, and enhancing neighborhood aesthetics and property
114 values. The project also demonstrates the Commission's commitment to equitable distribution of
115 environmental benefits by focusing planting efforts in underserved areas of the city where tree
116 canopy is often disproportionately sparse.

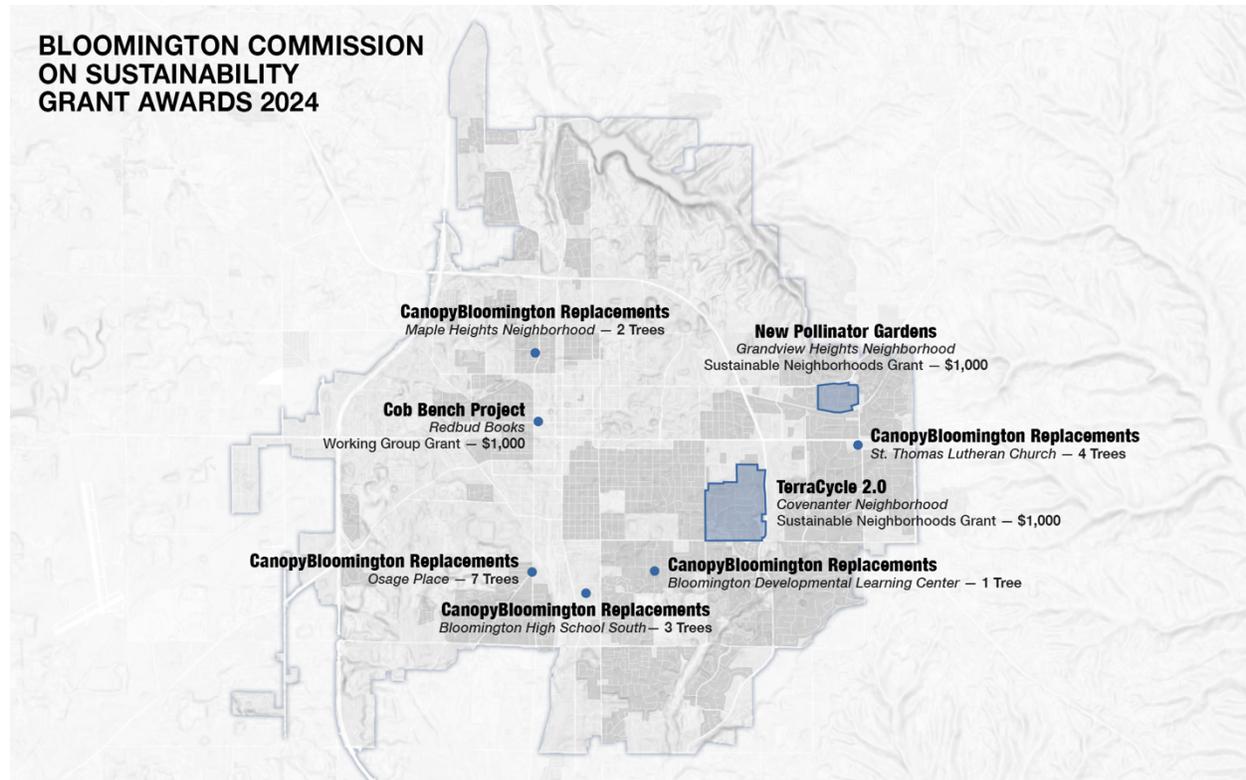
117 **Cob Bench Project.** The Commission approved a \$1,000 Working Group grant to support the
118 creation of an innovative community gathering space at Redbud Books on Kirkwood Avenue,
119 featuring benches constructed using the ancient cob building technique. Commissioners Zero Rose
120 and Evan Nix championed this project, drawing on their expertise in sustainable building practices

121 and community engagement to develop a proposal that seamlessly integrates multiple
122 sustainability principles. The project encompasses not only the construction of cob benches—
123 made from a mixture of clay, sand, and straw—but also the installation of an arbor, bike racks,
124 native pollinator gardens, and edible landscaping, creating a multifunctional community hub in a
125 high-visibility downtown location.

126 This initiative stands out for its strong community support, with over 20 neighbors signing letters
127 of support and more than 30 individuals volunteering to participate in the construction process.
128 The project exemplifies BCOS's commitment to demonstrating practical sustainability solutions
129 that engage citizens directly in implementation. By using site-sourced clay, reclaimed limestone,
130 and other local materials, the Cob Bench Project will serve as a living educational tool for
131 sustainable building techniques while enhancing neighborhood connectivity and providing
132 ecological benefits through native plantings. Commissioner Nix secured partnerships with Redbud
133 Books, which is providing a \$200 in-kind contribution, and Blue Bee Ecological Endeavors,
134 which will donate plants, soil, and seeds.

135 **Bokashi Composting Initiative.** The Commission's Waste Management Working Group, led by
136 Commissioner Matt Austin, developed a comprehensive proposal for a \$5,000 project to establish
137 a Bokashi composting training and implementation program across Bloomington. This innovative
138 initiative emerged from extensive community needs assessment and collaboration with multiple
139 local organizations including Garden Quest, the Lotus Festival, Purdue Extension, and the Waste
140 Reduction District of Monroe County (WRDMC). The proposal exemplifies BCOS's commitment
141 to addressing food waste—a significant contributor to landfill emissions and a key concern
142 identified in the Climate Action Plan. The Commission has structured the project as a public-
143 private partnership, successfully securing matching funds of \$5,000 from WRDMC, effectively
144 doubling the initiative's impact and demonstrating the Commission's skill in leveraging limited
145 resources.

146 The Bokashi method offers distinct advantages over traditional composting, particularly for urban
147 settings, as it uses an anaerobic fermentation process that can safely process all food waste—
148 including meat, dairy, and oily foods typically excluded from conventional composting.
149 Commissioner Austin highlighted that this approach is especially valuable for apartment dwellers
150 and those with limited outdoor space, making it an equity-focused solution that expands
151 composting access beyond homeowners with yards. The project design incorporates both practical
152 implementation and educational components, with plans to establish a "Compost Captains"
153 volunteer training program modeled after successful initiatives in other communities. While final
154 approval of this ambitious proposal remained pending at year's end due to administrative
155 processing requirements, the groundwork laid in 2024 positions this initiative for immediate
156 implementation in early 2025, with potential to significantly reduce landfill waste while building
157 valuable soil resources for community gardens.



158

159 *Figure 2. Geographical distribution of BCOS-approved projects funded by Sustainable Neighborhood Grants and BCOS Working*
 160 *Group Grants.*

161 ***Policy Development and Municipal Code Engagement***

162 BCOS actively participated in discussions about its own role within city governance and provided input on
 163 sustainability-related policies throughout 2024. The Commission engaged meaningfully with proposed changes to
 164 the Bloomington Municipal Code, particularly as they related to the Commission's purpose, structure, and
 165 responsibilities.

166 In the wake of the 2022 Novak Report, which recommended potentially merging BCOS with the Environmental
 167 Commission, BCOS devoted significant attention to clarifying its unique identity and value within the city's
 168 governance framework. This included detailed discussions spanning multiple meetings about the Commission's
 169 integration of environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability—a holistic approach distinguishing
 170 BCOS from other advisory bodies.

171 **Resolution 2024-01.** In December 2024, the Commission unanimously passed its first formal
 172 resolution of the year, expressing support for proposed changes to BMC §2.12.100 with specific
 173 recommendations to maintain the Commission's broad advisory role to the City Administration
 174 and incorporate resilience into the Commission's purview

175 ***Knowledge Building and Assessment***

176 BCOS took significant steps to enhance its understanding of sustainability challenges and measure progress toward
 177 city climate goals.

178 **Sustainability Assessment Ad-Hoc Committee.** In September 2024, the Commission established
 179 an ad-hoc committee to conduct a comprehensive sustainability assessment. After surveying
 180 commissioners to prioritize focus areas, the committee began developing a framework to evaluate
 181 the city's progress on climate action goals, focusing initially on energy and the built environment,
 182 green space and ecosystems, and local food and agriculture.

183 **Educational Presentations.** The Commission hosted informative presentations throughout the
184 year, including a detailed overview of the Summit Development project on Bloomington's
185 southwest side, examining its sustainability features and potential impacts on housing,
186 transportation, and natural resources. The Commission intends to continue seeking informational
187 presentations to maintain awareness of current topics that touch on sustainability in Bloomington.

188 *Engagement and Collaboration*

189 BCOS strengthened relationships with other commissions and community organizations.

190 **Cross-Commission Coordination.** Commissioners began attending meetings of the
191 Environmental Commission, Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs, and other city boards to
192 identify opportunities for collaboration and reduce duplication of efforts.

193 **Strategic Engagement Planning.** The Commission developed a formal engagement strategy with
194 three primary objectives: identifying related organizations, maintaining awareness of their
195 activities, and pursuing collaboration opportunities.

196 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

197 BCOS managed two primary funding streams in 2024, both provided through the Department of Economic and
198 Sustainable Development (ESD):

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260 turnover in membership, creating knowledge gaps and increased workload for remaining
261 commissioners.

262 **Quorum Challenges.** Meeting quorum requirements proved challenging at times due to the
263 combination of vacant positions and unavoidable commissioner absences, leading to the
264 rescheduling of planned meetings in April and July. When meetings proceeded with minimal
265 attendance, the Commission's ability to take formal actions was limited.

266 ***Lessons Learned***

267 The challenges faced in 2024 yielded valuable insights for future Commission operations:

268 **Flexible Meeting Structures.** The introduction of work sessions demonstrated the value of
269 supplementing formal business meetings with more collaborative formats, allowing for deeper
270 engagement on complex topics without the constraints of formal meeting procedures.

271 **Strategic Focus.** The experience with the Sustainability Assessment Ad-Hoc Committee
272 highlighted the importance of prioritizing and narrowing focus areas to achieve meaningful
273 outcomes within the Commission's limited capacity.

274 **Advance Planning.** The year-end rush to approve grant projects underscored the need for earlier
275 identification and development of potential initiatives to allow adequate time for administrative
276 processing.

277 **PLAN FOR 2025**

278 Building on the foundation established in 2024, BCOS has identified two strategic priority areas for 2025. Rather
279 than selecting specific projects, the Commission has chosen broader thematic domains to provide strategic direction
280 while maintaining flexibility for commissioners to pursue various initiatives within these areas.

281 ***Priority 1: Housing and Urban Agriculture***

282 The Commission has identified housing and zoning policy as a critical area where sustainability principles can
283 significantly impact Bloomington's development trajectory. This priority encompasses several interrelated
284 components:

285 ***Housing Affordability and Accessibility***

286 The Commission will engage with the social equity components of housing policy by exploring how green building
287 practices can improve both sustainability and affordability, investigating alternative housing models such as tiny
288 home zoning, and addressing the balance between rental properties and owner-occupied homes. The Commission
289 will also monitor major developments like Summit District for adherence to sustainability principles.

290 ***Food Resilience & Urban Agriculture***

291 BCOS recognizes that access to abundant, affordable, and nutritious food is critically important to the long-term
292 economic vitality and health of our community. As climate change continues to impose increasing strain on global,
293 national, and local food supply chains, any short-term crisis threatens to amplify those strains in unpredictable and
294 potentially disastrous ways. While emergency management is not the purview of this Commission, vulnerability to
295 long-term impacts from short-lived events is a sustainability issue. BCOS will investigate the current state of food
296 security and resiliency in Bloomington through this lens to identify and recommend policy changes that help
297 mitigate these risks through increased urban agriculture or other means.

298 ***Priority 2: Education, Outreach, and Coalition Building***

299 Recognizing the limitations of its meeting schedule and procedural constraints, BCOS will leverage its position to
300 amplify existing community initiatives through strategic education and partnership efforts:

301 ***Resource Amplification***

302 The Commission will connect community members with available sustainability resources by promoting city grant
303 programs, educating the public about BCOS Working Group Grants, and creating informative materials about
304 sustainability initiatives and best practices.

305 ***Coalition Building***

306 BCOS will strengthen connections with organizations already engaged in sustainability work, focusing on
307 partnerships rather than duplicating efforts. This will include inviting organizations to present to the Commission
308 and identifying partnership opportunities with other city commissions and boards.

309 *Public Engagement*

310 The Commission will increase direct interaction with community members by maintaining a presence at events such
311 as Earth Day, developing interactive educational activities, creating surveys to gather community input on
312 sustainability priorities, hosting practical educational events such as “fix-it clinics”, and encouraging public
313 attendance and comment at BCOS meetings.

314 *Implementation Strategy*

315 To ensure effective progress on these priorities, BCOS will:

- 316 • initiate Working Group Grant processes early in the year to avoid end-of-year rushes and allow for
317 thorough project development;
- 318 • focus attention on time-bound opportunities such as providing input on the UDO amendment process;
- 319 • track the city's implementation of the Climate Action Plan through the Sustainability Assessment Report;
- 320 • monitor budget allocations related to sustainability initiatives to ensure alignment between financial
321 commitments and stated priorities; and
- 322 • maintain flexibility to address emerging opportunities and challenges in Bloomington's sustainability
323 landscape.

324 This strategic approach will allow BCOS to maximize its impact despite limited resources, focusing on areas where
325 the Commission can provide the greatest value to Bloomington's sustainability.

326

CONCLUSION

327 The Bloomington Commission on Sustainability demonstrated resilience and determination in 2024, overcoming
328 operational challenges to advance important sustainability initiatives. By successfully funding innovative
329 community projects, providing thoughtful policy input, and laying the groundwork for the first Commission-
330 authored sustainability assessment in many years, BCOS has reinforced its value to the city's governance structure.

331 As Bloomington faces the intensifying challenges of climate change, resource constraints, and equity concerns,
332 BCOS's integrative approach to sustainability—bridging environmental, social, and economic considerations—
333 provides an essential perspective for city decision-making. The Commission enters 2025 with renewed focus,
334 improved processes, and a commitment to measurable progress toward Bloomington's sustainability goals.

335 The Commission extends its appreciation to the Department of Economic and Sustainable Development staff,
336 particularly Shawn Miya and Jolie Perry, for their dedicated support throughout the year. We also thank the
337 community partners who collaborated on grant-funded projects and the city leadership for their continued
338 commitment to a sustainable future for all Bloomington residents.

339 Finally, the Commission thanks the residents of Bloomington who attend our meetings and make their voices heard
340 on sustainability issues that are important to them. The Commission also deeply appreciates the staff of Community
341 Access Television Services (CATS) for recording our meetings and making them accessible for all Bloomingtonians.

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APPENDIX A: 2024 MEETING SCHEDULE

Date	Meeting Type
January 9, 2024	Regular Meeting
February 13, 2024	Regular Meeting
March 12, 2024	Regular Meeting <i>(No quorum for official business)</i>
April 9, 2024	Meeting Canceled
May 22, 2024	Regular Meeting
June 11, 2024	Regular Meeting
July 9, 2024	Meeting Canceled
August 13, 2024	Regular Meeting
September 3, 2024	Work Session
September 10, 2024	Regular Meeting
September 24, 2024	Work Session
October 8, 2024	Regular Meeting
November 12, 2024	Regular Meeting
December 10, 2024	Regular Meeting

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APPENDIX B: 2024 GRANT SUMMARY

Grant	Recipient/Project	Amount	Status
Sustainable Neighborhoods	GardenQuest—TerraCycle 1.0 (2023)	\$1,000	Completed
Sustainable Neighborhoods	GardenQuest—TerraCycle 2.0	\$1,000	Approved
Sustainable Neighborhoods	New Pollinator Gardens	\$1,000	Approved
Working Group	CanopyBloomington	\$4,000	Approved
Working Group	Cob Bench Project	\$1,000	Approved
Working Group	Bokashi Composting (2025)	\$5,000	Pending

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APPENDIX C: COMMISSIONER ROSTER (AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2024)

Seat	Appointing Authority	Commissioner	Dates of Service
C-1	City Council	Alex Hakes	03/29/2023 – 06/05/2024
		Tara Dunderdale	06/19/2024 – Present
C-2	City Council	Justin Vasel	03/29/2023 – Present
C-3	City Council	Matt Austin	02/17/2022 – Present
C-4	City Council	Heidi Dowding	06/21/2023 – 01/31/2024
		Zero Rose	06/19/2025 – Present
C-5	City Council	Jon Eldon	12/07/2022 – Present
Ex-Council	City Council	Dave Rollo	01/10/2024 – Present
IU	Indiana University Sustainability	Jessica Davis	11/16/2022 – 11/20/2024
		Quentin Gilly	11/21/2024 – Present
M-1	Mayor	Nejla Routsong	02/01/2022 – 01/31/2024
		Hunter Hawley	08/06/2024 – Present
M-2	Mayor	Emma Ferguson	02/01/2022 – 01/31/2024
		Jami Scholl	02/01/2024 – Present
M-3	Mayor	Hannah Gregory	02/13/2023 – 06/30/2024
		Evan Nix	08/06/2024 – Present
M-4	Mayor	KateLyn Edwards	02/01/2023 – 08/14/2024
M-5	Mayor	Dennis Vera	06/15/2023 – 08/13/2024
M-6	Mayor	David Maenner	01/10/2022 – Present
MCC	Monroe County Commissioners	Nolan Hendon	10/15/2020 – 04/30/2024
		Andrew Guenther	05/01/2024 – Present

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