GIS Supports COVID-19 Projects
City Turns to Data to Drive Decision-Making

BY KAITLIN GAULT

City of Edina GIS Coordinator Anna Dhennin has been using geographic information systems, commonly known as GIS, to help visually present and analyze data for about nine years. Just a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic, Dhennin is using her GIS expertise in new ways and helping assist the City's decision-making for three COVID-19 response projects.

"It’s truly a useful and powerful tool," said Dhennin. "As a local government agency, we want to make sure we use tax dollars responsibly and maximize staff time when resources may be limited. Using GIS allows us to get the most information out of our data to make better decisions. Data drives everything."

Her COVID-19 projects include a senior group housing response dashboard, multifamily housing vulnerability analysis and open restaurants map.

The senior group housing response dashboard helps the Edina Fire Department identify COVID-19 outbreaks at senior housing complexes in Edina. The dashboard breaks down calls for service across the city, information about congregate care facilities in Edina that have confirmed COVID-19 cases, and the trend of COVID-19-related calls by week since tracking first began.

"The work that Anna has been doing has provided us with a visual image of the potential COVID-19 infections within the City," said Fire Chief Tom Schmitz. "What I thought was going to be a simple map turned into much more. This has provided us with a quick and easy way to visually see what is happening in our city, and it provides us with vital information as we prepare and plan our response to this pandemic."

Another GIS project with a community-wide impact was a multifamily housing vulnerability analysis. Vulnerability was calculated using a variety of data retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, affordable housing status from the Planning Division and additional housing information from the Assessing Division. Dhennin’s data sourcing and analysis helped the City decide which multifamily housing facilities should receive 4-ounce bottles of hand sanitizer through the Clean Hands Across Edina project, ultimately getting nearly 5,000 bottles in the right hands.

Though the first two GIS projects were for internal use, a map of local restaurants that are currently open is available at BetterTogetherEdina.org. By choosing a restaurant from the list in the sidebar or selecting a location from the map, people can see what types of services are available and click through to restaurant websites.

"One of the reasons I joined local government was to be able to help residents directly," said Dhennin. "GIS may not be doing as much as some of the amazing stories you read across the world, but I do believe it’s having an impact in Edina. I’m thankful I can do my small part in this."

Stay Informed About the City’s Response to COVID-19!

Stay Healthy
Wash your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds; cover your coughs and sneezes; wear a mask when in public; practice social distancing and stay home if you are sick.

Stay Informed
To get reliable and updated information about COVID-19, refer to the Minnesota Department of Health, CDC or your health provider.

Challenge the Stigma
Sharing facts and accurate information about COVID-19 helps challenge rumors and stereotypes that have been negatively associated with racial and cultural groups or people wearing facemasks. There have been incidents of discrimination, bias and hate reported around the world during the pandemic.

If you believe you are a victim of a hate crime because of fear around COVID-19, contact the Edina Police Department, 952-826-1610.

If you feel you have experienced discrimination within the City’s services, facilities or institution, contact Race & Equity Coordinator Heidi Lee, 952-826-1622.
City Amends Budget to Offset Expected COVID-19 Losses
Departments Offer More Than $2 Million in Cuts to Help Bottom Line

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

Every department at the City of Edina has trimmed expenses as leaders grapple with expected revenue losses from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City’s Finance Department is expecting about 3 percent less revenue in the General Fund than what was budgeted for 2020. In dollars, that’s about $1.45 million less than the originally adopted $46.9 million budget.

The lost revenue comes mostly from fees not being collected, such as Parks & Recreation programs that aren’t happening this summer due to coronavirus; loss of park shelter and field rental revenue; a drop in donations; and reduced Edina Liquor profits that usually allowed for $50,000 to go into the General Fund.

Department managers were asked to scrutinize their budgets and make suggestions on what could be cut to help offset the losses. They came up with more than $2 million in reductions, a roughly $600,000 cushion above the projected shortfall.

“That $600,000 difference gives us a little flexibility in case something happens on the revenue side,” said Finance Director Don Uram.

The cuts included some interns, seasonal and part-time staff; delayed hiring; elimination of business travel and some training; purchasing reductions and deferring some maintenance.

“These are suggested expenses they can cut without harming the essential services that we provide,” Uram said. However, most cuts won’t be permanent because the City can’t continue to defer maintenance projects or run expected programs without staff or equipment.

The City Council adopted the amended budget May 19.

Uram called the budget amendment a “proactive move,” as the exact 2020 revenue won’t be known until toward the end of the year. Hennepin County delayed May property tax payments until mid-July. Historically, Edina has collected more than 99 percent of property tax owed, Uram said, but this year it’s unknown how much that might drop. Property taxes, along with licenses and permits related to development, make up the majority of General Fund revenue.

The 2021 budget, which is already complete as Edina budgets in two-year cycles, might need to be amended as well. That would happen at the end of 2020.

“We are taking the necessary steps to ensure that we can provide services that the residents expect,” Uram said. “The City is in a good position.”

For more information, contact the Finance Department at 952-826-0366 or email Uram at duram@EdinaMN.gov.

BY THE NUMBERS

Grants Offered to Offset Costs to Seal Private Wells

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

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Groundwater is the drinking water source for most residents and businesses in Edina. Because private wells are connected to groundwater, the City encourages private well owners to properly manage their private wells in order to reduce the risk of pollution contamination. Inactive wells that have not been permanently sealed must be put back into use, sealed by a licensed well contractor, or have a maintenance permit from the Minnesota Department of Health. Grant funding comes from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Land and Legacy Amendment.

For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov/Groundwater.

Estimated number of private wells in Edina yet to be sealed

2,214

Number of sealed private wells in Edina

1,000+

Grant value is 25% of the cost, up to $1,000

For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov/Groundwater.
City Purchases Body-Worn Cameras
Technology Should be in Place by End of 2020

BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

Edina Police Officers should be wearing body-worn cameras before the end of the year.

At a meeting last month, the Edina City Council approved the $110,000 purchase of the cameras from WatchGuard Video, the company from which the Police Department bought its in-squad and interview room video recording systems in 2018. Adding the body-worn cameras to the existing video system will allow for seamless integration of video evidence.

In-squad, or “dash cam” footage has proved to be an excellent tool for collecting evidence, documenting encounters and providing enhanced transparency and accountability. Body-worn cameras will dramatically expand this capability.

In other business last month, the Council:

• Amended the 2020 General Fund budget in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The amendment reduces service and spending levels by $2 million, a reduction of 4.4 percent.

• Awarded the 2020 Heritage Award to 4610 Browndale Ave. The homeowners completed an extensive renovation of this historic home, taking great care to honor its historic features. As a result of their efforts and investments, this 1932 English Tudor Revival home blends modern conveniences with classic craftsmanship, maintaining its status as a contributing heritage resource in the Country Club District.

• Denied a parking stall variance and revised final development site plan at 4500 France Ave. The developer, Orion Investments, requested the variance and revision to the site plan to accommodate a restaurant under construction.

• Purchased a 0.46-acre parcel of vacant land in the Countryside Neighborhood. Over the past several months, the City has participated in lengthy discussions between the property owner and surrounding neighbors over the potential development of the lot. Under an agreement, the City will purchase the land and agree to hold it for public purposes only. The neighbors will pay special assessments to reimburse the City and to obtain a conservation easement on the parcel so it remains in its natural condition. The City will consider vacating existing roadway right-of-way to further preserve the undeveloped land.

The Edina City Council will next meet 7 p.m. June 2 and 16. The meetings will be held electronically. For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov.

City of Edina Goals
The City of Edina has four budget goals. Look for the goal icons throughout this publication to read stories about how the City is working to meet these goals.

• Strong Foundation: Maintain physical assets and infrastructure.
• Reliable Service: Maintain service levels that best meet the needs of the community.
• Livable City: Plan for connected and sustainable development.
• Better Together: Foster an inclusive and engaged community.
**Organics Carts Coming Soon!**

Organics carts will roll into neighborhoods throughout June! See the map to find your delivery date.

Organics collection will begin one week after cart delivery.

If you have any questions, contact Organics Recycling Coordinator Twila Singh at 952-826-1657 or tsingh@EdinaMN.gov.

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**Vote Early by Mail**

**Absentee Voting for Primary Election is Underway**

**BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE**

Because of COVID-19, City of Edina election staff recommends you vote from home in 2020 for the August primary and the November general election to protect your health. City Clerk Sharon Allison says she understands that most voters prefer to cast their vote in person, but given the pandemic, voting absentee by mail is the safest way to vote.

In Minnesota, you do not have to wait until Election Day to vote. Request an absentee ballot application at MNVotes.org or by calling Edina election officials at 952-826-0363.

Allison reminds those who vote by absentee ballot to follow these steps:

- Complete your 2020 Minnesota Absentee Ballot Application. Check the box labeled “Both 8/11 and 11/3 Elections” to receive a ballot for each election. Return the completed application.
- After your absentee ballot application is approved, Hennepin County election officials will mail your absentee ballot materials June 26. If you apply after this date, your ballot will be sent when the application is received.
- Review the instructions carefully. Any mistakes like forgetting your signature could cause your ballot to be rejected.
- You’ll need a witness who must be a Minnesota Registered Voter or a Notary to help you complete your materials and make sure only you filled out your ballot. Your witness must also sign and provide their address.
- If you are not registered to vote, you’ll show your witness one of many identification options to prove your name and current residence. Your witness must mark the ID you showed them on your ballot materials.
- Once you’re done, package everything up in the prepaid envelope and return it right away to Hennepin County. If your ballot is received after Election Day, your vote will not count.

Hennepin County election officials will check that you and your witness filled out the signature envelope correctly. If you did not fill out the signature envelope correctly, election officials will mail you replacement materials, including an explanation why your signature envelope was rejected. If it’s within five days of Election Day, election officials will send you a replacement ballot and try to contact you. If this happens, you can hand deliver your completed replacement ballot to Edina City Hall by 3 p.m. Election Day or you can vote in person at your polling place. Your rejected ballot will be recorded as rejected.

If your signature envelope is correct, election staff will mark your ballot as accepted. Your ballot will be stored securely. Starting 14 days before Election Day, Hennepin County election officials will open your signature envelope and run your ballot through the ballot counter like you would have done on Election Day.

You can track the status of your ballot online to make sure it was received and counted at mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/AbsenteeBallotStatus.aspx.

For more information about voting early with an absentee ballot, visit MNVotes.org or call 952-826-0363.

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City of Edina EdinaMN.gov 952-927-8861 | mail@EdinaMN.gov