

Edition:Edina



JULY 2020
Volume 7, Issue 8

CITY GOALS:  Strong Foundation

 Reliable Service

 Livable City

 Better Together

Continuity and Change: Celebrating Edina's Parade Tradition

First Edina July 4 Parade Held in 1930; 2020 Parade Goes 'Virtual'

BY DAVID KATZ

Edina's love affair with Fourth of July parades dates back nearly a century. Over the years, the celebration has certainly expanded and evolved – and so, too, has the city. In a way, then, the history of this community mainstay doubles as a capsule history of Edina itself.

The first Independence Day parade in Edina was held in a neighborhood around 1930. If given a time machine, "modern" spectators would find many familiar touchpoints in that inaugural procession. Marching bands, elected officials, a cavalcade of Police and Fire department representatives – the backbone of today's parades were present from the very beginning. They even had a float honoring Edina's burgeoning business community, albeit a fairly rudimentary one.

For decades, though, Edina's parades would remain modest in scale, insular in scope, and largely indistinguishable from other Fourth of July festivities held in suburbs across the country.

That trajectory changed in 1986-1988, as the City geared up for a year-long Centennial celebration. Activities planned for the 1988 milestone truly ran the gamut – from golf tournaments and silent auctions, to a fashion show of historical bridal gowns, and even an ambitious ice palace at Lake Cornelia.

Without a doubt, a reimagined Fourth of July procession took top billing. Committee co-chair Betty Hemstad signaled as much in a Jan. 14, 1988 interview with the Star Tribune. "July is the heart of the centennial. ... It'll be the biggest parade Edina has ever had." As one means to that end, volunteers split a staggering list and invited 23,000 graduates of Edina High School to attend.

Entertainers in the Edina centennial parade included the First John Philip Sousa Memorial Band and Jugheads Youth Juggling Company –



The First John Philip Sousa Memorial Band will be honored in this year's virtual parade. The band is celebrating its 50th anniversary. *File Photo*

two perennial favorites, noted former parade committee chair, Sousa Band member and current City Council Member Mary Brindle. Both continue to anchor Edina's lineups.

Parades marched on under the City's auspices for the next decade, Brindle said. The model, such as it was, received its next shot in the arm in 1998. In that year, organizers made a concerted push to enlist sponsors. Sponsorship dollars allowed for the recruitment of various out-of-town acts; and that, in turn, stoked interest and drew more spectators from outside Edina. Sponsorships remain key to the event's success, with the Edina Community Foundation now doing the yeomen's work of fundraising.

Also in 1998, a coalition of community stakeholders came together to overcome daunting logistics and stretch the traditional procession route from behind Edina City Hall at 4801 W. 50th St. all the way to 50th & France.

Between then and last summer, the story has been one more of growth than of evolution. Attendance swelled from an approximately 7,000 spectators in 2001, to upward of 20,000 people in 2019. 

Tune In to 'Virtual' July 4 Parade

Edina has reached the next "chapter" in its July 4 parade's storied history. Due to restrictions imposed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 4th of July parade is going VIRTUAL!

Tune into Edina TV or SWTV at 10 a.m. Saturday, July 4, for a procession of content from all your parade favorites. The theme of the video is "Anniversary Celebrations," honoring the 50th anniversaries of the Edina Crime Prevention Fund, First John Philip Sousa Memorial Band and Human Rights & Relations Commission and the 100th anniversary of the League of Women Voters.

Besides watching the video, residents are encouraged to decorate their yards and porches and organize children's parades in their neighborhoods. The Edina Community Foundation is also putting together a photo contest. Send photos of you dressed in your Independence Day gear or decorations to photocontest@edinaparade.org by July 2. Winners will be announced online July 4.

Visit edinaparade.org for more details.
Edina TV: Comcast Channels 813 or 16
SWTV: Comcast Channel 15



File Photo

Filing Period for Local Office Opens July 28

Voters to Elect Mayor and Two City Council Members

BY KAITLIN GAULT

Edina residents can file for local office between 8 a.m. Tuesday, July 28, and 5 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 11, for the upcoming General Election Nov. 3. City offices open for election are Mayor and two seats on the City Council currently held by Mary Brindle and Mike Fischer. Those elected will serve from January 2021 to January 2025.

Filing for office is a step to get your name on a ballot and declare your intention to run. Candidates must file in person with the City Clerk at City Hall, 4801 W. 50th St. A packet and campaign manual are available at EdinaMN.gov/Elections. The filing fee is \$5, or candidates can present a petition with 500 signatures of eligible voters in place of the fee.

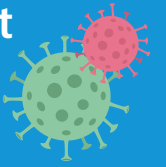
The deadline to withdraw from the election is 5 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 13. After that date, all names will appear on the ballot.

The Mayor and City Council are responsible for the strategic direction of the City government through policies and ordinances that are carried out by the City Manager. The City Council is responsible for budgeting and taxation, and is accountable for listening and making decisions on behalf of the residents of Edina.

Those elected in November will take the oath of office Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2021, joining Council Members Ron Anderson and Kevin Staunton on the City Council.

For more information about the election or filing for office, contact City Clerk Sharon Allison at SAllison@EdinaMN.gov or 952-826-0408.

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



Edina COVID-19 Resource Hotline
952-826-0370



Resources for businesses, residents and seniors can be found at **BetterTogetherEdina.org**



EdinaMN.gov/coronavirus




Sign up for City Extra emails at **EdinaMN.gov/CityExtra**



Sign up for text notifications by texting EDINA to **57838**

BY THE NUMBERS

Report a Problem on Edina 311

Use the Edina 311 app or go through the City's website at EdinaMN.gov/Edina311 to report concerns and feedback regarding issues such as animal control, damaged mailbox or sod, fire hydrant maintenance, streets or parks issues, overgrown vegetation, standing water and more. Code violations were recently added to the tool. These can include concerns about parked vehicles, boats, RVs and lighting. Residents are encouraged to send a photo with their submission. 



19 Number of City topics residents can give feedback about.

The app has been downloaded **937** times from the App Store or Google Play.

937



The top three topics that people report a problem under:

- 1** Streets
- 2** Other
- 3** Traffic Safety



– COMPILED BY KAYLIN EIDSNESS

City Council Bans Sale of Flavored Tobacco Products

Sept. 1 Ban Aimed to Curb Youth Vaping

BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

Flavored tobacco products cannot be sold in Edina after Aug. 31.

In response to the increase in use of vaping products by youth and the recent outbreak of vaping injuries, the Community Health Commission recommended the City revise its tobacco ordinance to ban the sale of flavored vaping products. Community Health Administrator Jeff Brown took it one step further, recommending a ban on the sale of any flavored tobacco products.

“This ban builds on the passage of the City’s Tobacco 21 ordinance and continues to show the City’s commitment to the health of residents of Edina, including those targeted by the marketing of flavored tobacco and vaping products, such as people with low income, young people and people of color,” Brown said.

The City Council approved the ordinance change at its June 16 meeting. The ban goes into effect Sept. 1, impacting fewer than 20 retailers in Edina that currently sell tobacco.

In other business last month, the City Council:

- Renewed the City’s service contract with DARTS for the CloverRide circulator bus for another year. The bus will continue to operate on demand on Fridays until DARTS determines regular service can be safely resumed. At that time, the south loop in the Southdale area will resume route service and the north loop in the 50th & France and Grandview areas will be discontinued due to lack of demand.
- Approved the sale of \$5.26 million in General Obligation Bonds to finance the City’s 2020 street reconstruction and utility improvement projects. Piper Sandler and Company was awarded the sale with an interest rate of just over 1 percent.
- Directed the Human Rights & Relations Commission to lead a community conversation about race, justice and policing in Edina.

The Edina City Council will next meet Tuesday, July 17. For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, July 8, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission meeting, Virtual

Thursday, July 9, 7 p.m.

Energy & Environment Commission meeting, Virtual

Tuesday, July 13, 6:30 p.m.

Community Health Commission meeting, Virtual

Wednesday, July 14, 7 p.m.

Parks & Recreation Commission meeting, Virtual

Thursday, July 16, 6 p.m.

Transportation Commission meeting, Virtual

Tuesday, July 21, 7 p.m.

City Council meeting, Virtual

Wednesday, July 22, 7 p.m.

Planning Commission meeting, Virtual



Watch City Council, Housing & Redevelopment Authority and Planning Commission meetings live:

- Edina TV (Comcast Channels 813 or 16)
- Facebook.com/EdinaMN
- “Watch a Meeting” web page at EdinaMN.gov/LiveMeetings

For audio recordings of all other meetings, submit a data request at bit.ly/EdinaData. For a complete listing of meetings and events, visit EdinaMN.gov.



RECTIVITY BOX IS RECREATION DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR

Brothers Henry, 6, and Calvin, 3, open the Bright & Bold REctivity Box at their home in Edina. Bring the excitement into your home by choosing from different box themes like Summer STEM and Music in the Making. Pick out which #REctivityBox is right for your family and order online at EdinaMN.gov/REctivity. Photo by Kaitlin Gault



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.



Tax Base Diversification Helps Edina Weather Economic Storms

City Has Solid Base to Limit Impact of Coronavirus Fallout

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

The estimated market value of Edina's more than 20,000 properties totaled \$13.3 billion in 2020, according to City Assessor Bob Wilson.

That gives Edina the fourth-largest tax base in Hennepin County, one that has steadily grown since the 2008 recession. But what makes Edina's unique is its diversification in a way that shields the City from wild economic swings.

Three-quarters of the value is in residential property, and much of that is higher-end properties less susceptible to ups and downs in the economy. Seventeen percent is commercial/industrial and 9 percent is apartments.

Even at the low point following the 2008 recession, the average median home value in Edina was down less than 10 percent, compared to many cities that saw drops of 20, 30 or even 50 percent. While some communities are still struggling to get back to their pre-recession levels, Edina's median housing price in 2020 is 25 percent higher than before the recession.

"Historically, we have not seen these dramatic declines in tax base," said Finance Director Don Uram.

That diversification and history could be important as coronavirus weighs on the


economy. The National Association of Realtors Research Group, along with many financial experts, has predicted that COVID-19 will have the biggest hit on retail and office properties with stores closing and less demand for office space. The travel industry has been hammered already.

While Edina has retail and office properties that could be affected, retail-heavy communities that also have lots of hotels, such as Bloomington, have a much murkier outlook.

If a city's estimated market value falls, the tax rate has to rise to keep revenue levels up to pay for schools, roads and services. People end up paying more in taxes on property that is worth less. Often, due to limits on tax rate increases, they also see cuts in services, which lowers the attractiveness of that community to homebuyers and businesses.

While Uram can't predict exactly how Edina will be affected by coronavirus, he believes the City's tax base will provide a solid foundation through this crisis.

"From a tax base perspective, Edina is in a great place," Uram said.

For more information, contact Uram at 952-826-0414 or DUram@EdinaMN.gov. 

The City of Edina reports financial year-end results in its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). This report summarizes significant data from select funds in the Dec. 31, 2019 CAFR and is consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. For a complete review of the City's financial position for 2019, consult the CAFR, available at EdinaMN.gov/Finance.

City of Edina Directory

City Council

Mayor

Jim Hovland – 612-874-8550

Council Members

Ron Anderson – 952-833-9549

Mary Brindle – 952-941-7746

Mike Fischer – 952-833-9569

Kevin Staunton – 952-836-1020

Executive Leadership Team

City Manager

Scott Neal – 952-826-0401

Assistant City Manager

Lisa Schaefer – 952-826-0416

Communications Director

Jennifer Bennerotte – 952-833-9520

Community Development Director

Cary Teague – 952-826-0460

Engineering Director

Chad Millner – 952-826-0318

Finance Director

Don Uram – 952-826-0414

Fire Chief

Tom Schmitz – 952-826-0332

Human Resources Director

Kelly Curtin – 952-826-0402

I.T. Director

Ryan Browning – 952-826-0434

Parks & Recreation Director

Perry Vetter – 952-826-0430

Police Chief

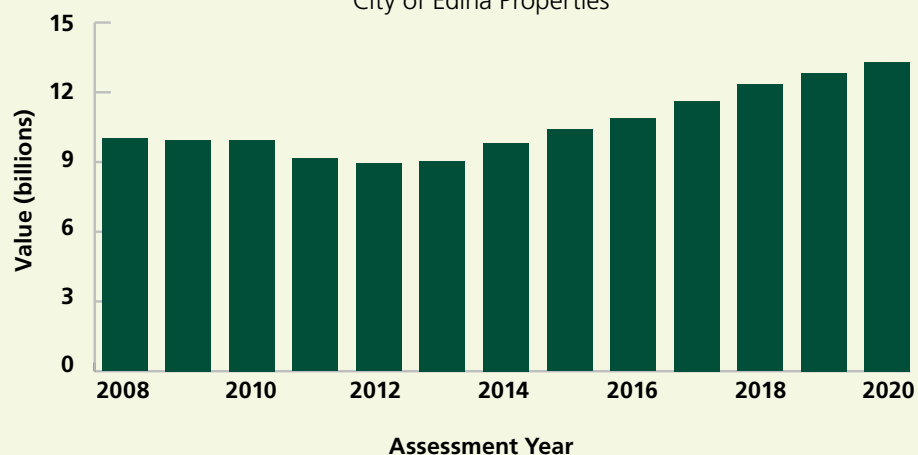
Dave Nelson – 952-826-1610

Public Works Director

Brian Olson – 952-826-0311

Estimated Value

City of Edina Properties



Ramp Improvements, New Apartments and Retail Space Refresh Market Street

Business Owners and Visitors Take Advantage of New Public Spaces



The Center Ramp was completed as a part of Nolan Mains at 50th & France last fall. Photo by Kaylin Eidsness

BY KAYLIN EIDSNESS

After five years of planning and two years of construction, the project to transform Market Street in downtown Edina has wrapped up.

“The City and Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) are proud to see the beginning of a new chapter at 50th & France,” said Economic Development Manager Bill Neuendorf.

“Market Street has been transformed into a vibrant place that welcomes residents, customers and clients.”

In December 2016, Buhl Investors and Saturday Properties were selected by the HRA to improve public parking and add vitality to this sleepy portion of 50th & France. Construction of the \$12 million expansion of the North Ramp was completed during the winter of 2018. The new Center Ramp and public amenities were paid for by the developers as a part of the \$74 million project. The City issued a \$10.1 million tax-increment financing note to the developer to reimburse them for qualified costs of the project. Construction was completed on the Center Ramp along with Nolan Mains during the winter of 2019.

As of April, 75 percent of the Nolan Mains apartments were occupied and about 25 percent of the 35,000 square feet of new commercial space is committed. 50th & France already features more than 175 retailers, restaurants and professional services.

John Breitinger sits on the 50th & France Business & Professional Association Board of Directors and has owned property in the area since 1985.

“The first quarter of this year, we saw things actually performing the best they have in the last three years,” said Breitinger. “There’s an energy with more people there more hours of the day and it’s definitely making a difference.”

Rachel Thelemann, Executive Director of the 50th & France Business & Professional Association, said they’re excited to engage the community with their new retail and outdoor plaza space.

“We look forward to offering fun programming for the community and families,” she said.

For more information on the construction project, visit EdinaMN.gov or contact Neuendorf at 952-826-0407. For more information on 50th & France, visit 50thandfrance.com.

Braemar Arena Invests in an Efficient Future

Energy Upgrades Save Operating Costs and Time

BY KAITLIN GAULT

Over the span of a year and a half, Braemar Arena received a major overhaul to improve its energy efficiency and upgrade old systems and failing equipment.

Out of the 25 largest buildings owned and maintained by the City of Edina, Braemar Arena was ranked in the top five for inefficiencies. Realizing this, the Arena and City’s Sustainability Division decided to participate in a recommissioning study in 2017 with the Center for Energy Efficiency, which recommended 26 energy conservation opportunities.

“We came to the decision that instead of being reactive to breaking equipment and failing systems, we need to be proactive and include sustainability with the solution,” said Braemar Arena & Field General Manager Chad Eischens. “I can tell you we are spending a lot less time and money fixing burned out rink lights.”

From the study, 18 recommendations have been completed, two were attempted and

proven unsuccessful, and six have not yet been attempted due to high cost.

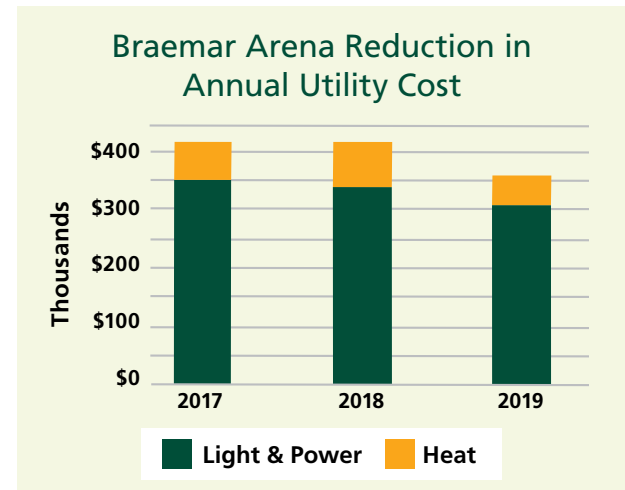
“We were strategic with implementing the recommendations,” said Eischens. “We dialed into the payback timeframe and the return on investment.”

After starting the process in 2018, staff continued in 2019 with updates, including additional LED lighting rink improvements, replacing the water heater, installing a low e-ceiling in the south arena, and installing a variable frequency drive to allow different pumps and fans to operate at different speeds. The City’s Sustainability Fund and part of the Arena’s Fund were used to pay \$122,813 for 2019 projects. Staff also made a concerted effort to partner with local utility companies to obtain rebates.

When it comes to seeing the value of the investments in real time, the robust recommission effort and resolution of the completed items have positively impacted the

building operations in kilowatts, maintenance cost and natural gas use. The Arena is spending less money and staff time on equipment repairs, and customers have said they enjoy the new lighting and say the quality and consistency of the ice has improved.

For more information about Braemar Arena, visit BraemarArena.com or call 952-833-9500.



First Season at Renovated Braemar Golf Course Sees Increased Play

New Amenities and Technology at Golf Dome Increase Revenue

BY KAITLIN GAULT

The City of Edina’s new Championship 18 at Braemar Golf Course opened for the season May 18, 2019, after its renovation debut to golfers across the region. The Championship 18 was the last piece of a \$7.5 million renovation at Braemar Golf Course, 6364 John Harris Drive, that included new putting and chipping practice areas, remodeled pro shop and the new outdoor Braemar Courtyard for games and events.

The decision to renovate the tired 27-hole course and consolidate golf operations to concentrate on core assets was a financial one. The City was losing between \$265,000 and \$360,000 annually due to deferred maintenance and major issues like an outdated irrigation system.

The goals of the redesign, led by Richard Mandell Golf Architecture, supported the emphasis on creating a course for all ages and abilities. The new design features the removal of gender-linked markers and addition of family-friendly improvements to the Braemar Courtyard, among other changes.

After waiting two seasons for construction and grow-in, golfers were eager to test out the completely transformed 6,884-yard golf course designed to create strategic options for all talent levels. In its first season, Braemar generated \$2,876,441 in revenue and hosted 60,511 total rounds of golf.

Braemar Golf Course General Manager Joe Abood said the first season went extremely well.

“Play was up on days we were open, and we were scheduled to be at capacity most of the time,” Abood said. “The course matured nicely, and it continued to improve throughout the season. Conditions-wise, it kept getting better.”

The course sold 60,488 buckets at the driving range, which brought in \$413,003 in revenue. Before the range was closed in 2017, it sold only \$330,053.

While there wasn’t a tee time to spare, the course also experienced external factors that impacted revenue. “We had some weather issues,” Abood said. “It was the second-wettest year in Minnesota recorded history, which hurt play. We were scheduled almost every day to be at capacity, but the weather was a challenge.”

Braemar Golf Dome, 7420 Braemar Blvd., increased revenue and the overall visitor experience by making strategic investments in 2019. The facility upgraded tee dividers, installed seating behind stalls, expanded its contract to allow the sale of alcohol, added additional parking and became a Toptracer Range facility. The Dome generated total revenue of \$519,374 in 2019.

Listening to visitors’ feedback and recognizing the shift from customers solely seeking a practice facility to also wanting more entertainment, the City decided to offer onsite



After closing for two full seasons for a complete course renovation, the Championship 18 at Braemar Golf Course opened for play May 18, 2019. Photo by Peter Wong

food service and alcohol sales at the Dome. Red River Kitchen now provides both.

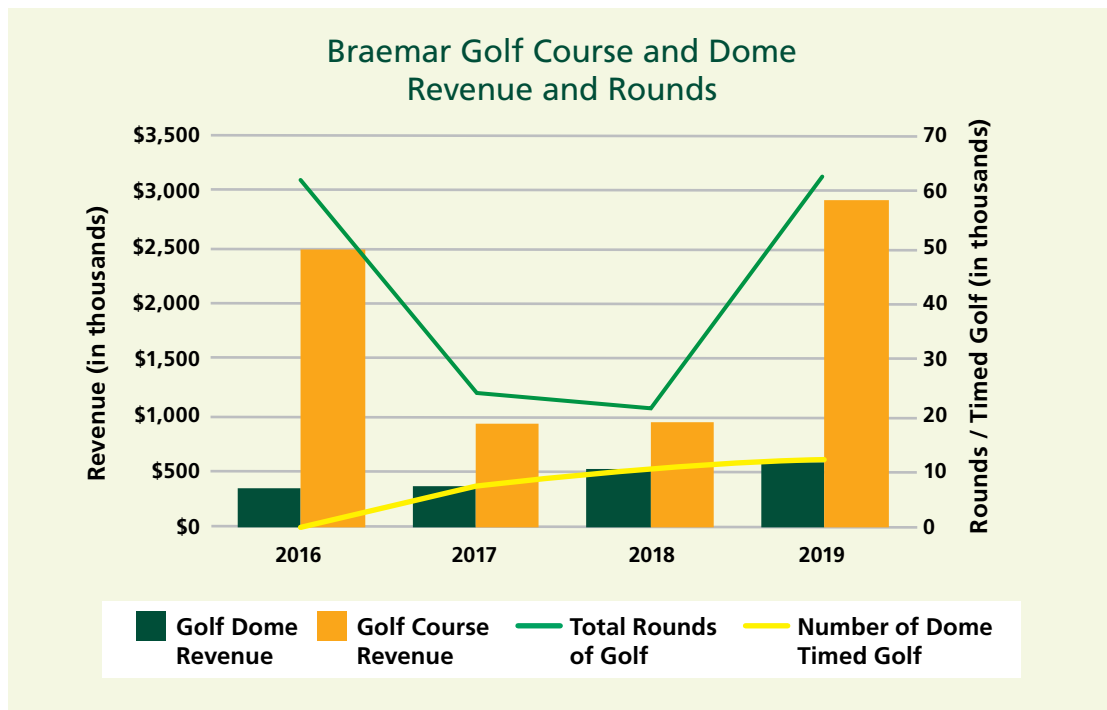
Anticipating an increase in visitors from the new Toptracer Range technology, the City spent \$60,000 from the Golf Course Fund to increase the Dome’s parking lot capacity. Staff was correct with their predictions. From November through December with the new Toptracer technology, the Dome made \$174,987 in revenue. In 2018 during the same two months, it made \$99,784.

Just three months after the technology debuted at the facility, the Dome became one of Toptracer Range’s top facilities in participation and usage globally. That same month, the Dome had a record month in customer visits and revenue.

“We know our customers were looking for that upgraded experience, and this technology has really added to the overall value of our facility,” said Abood. “The Braemar Golf Dome is one of the only indoor driving ranges in Minnesota equipped with Toptracer Range, the same ball-tracking technology the pros use.”

From January through mid-March 2020, the Dome generated \$477,960 in revenue, a significant increase from the \$311,679 revenue in 2019 in the same months. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Dome was forced to close a few weeks early for the season on March 13.

For more information, visit www.BraemarGolf.com or call 952-903-5750.

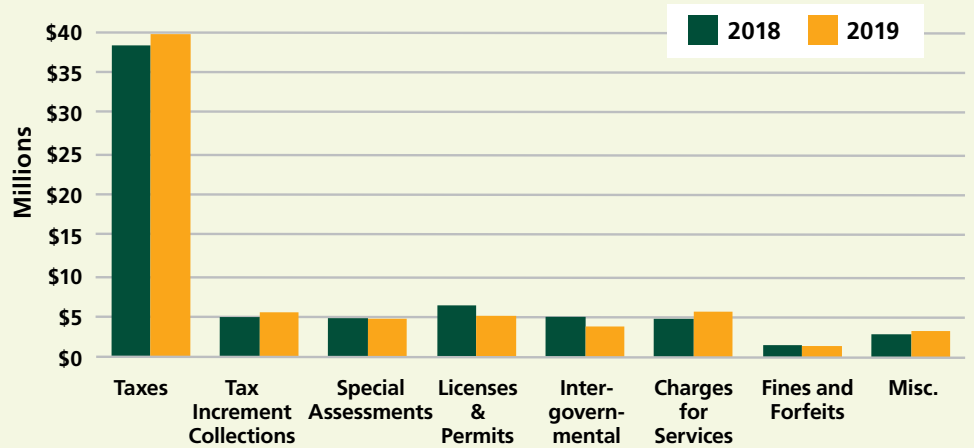


Governmental Funds

Governmental Fund Revenues

	2018	2019	Difference
Taxes	\$38,198,624	\$39,998,919	▲ \$1,800,295
Tax Increment Collections	\$4,997,706	\$5,447,108	▲ \$449,402
Special Assessments	\$4,747,205	\$4,741,557	▼ \$5,648
Licenses and Permits	\$5,912,757	\$5,183,754	▼ \$729,003
Intergovernmental	\$5,124,573	\$3,687,620	▼ \$1,436,953
Charges for Services	\$4,898,548	\$5,431,941	▲ \$533,393
Fines and Forfeits	\$1,122,426	\$1,097,122	▼ \$25,304
Miscellaneous	\$2,511,838	\$3,078,583	▲ \$566,745
Totals	\$67,513,677	\$68,666,604	▲ \$1,152,927

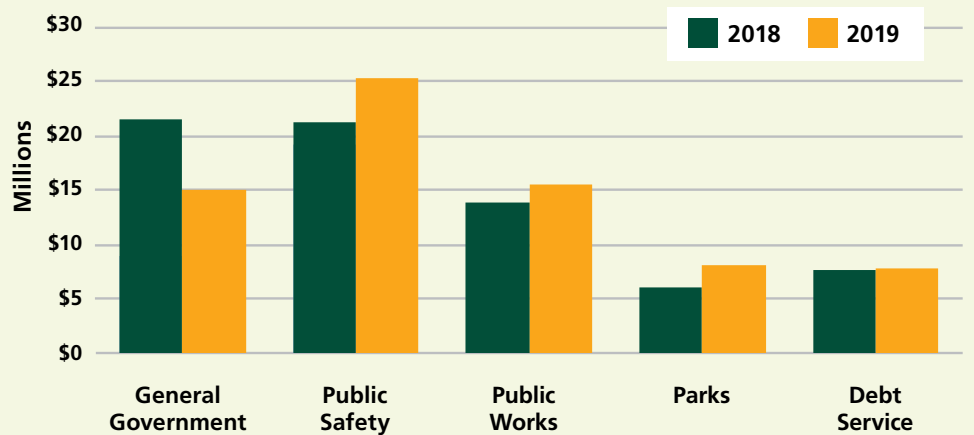
Governmental Fund Revenues Comparison



Governmental Fund Expenditures

	2018	2019	Difference
General Government	\$21,523,784	\$15,171,968	▼ \$6,351,816
Public Safety	\$21,156,896	\$25,163,672	▲ \$4,006,776
Public Works	\$13,917,199	\$15,301,476	▲ \$1,384,277
Parks	\$5,994,213	\$8,047,901	▲ \$2,053,688
Debt Service	\$7,622,963	\$7,702,002	▲ \$79,039
Totals	\$70,215,055	\$71,387,019	▲ \$1,171,964

Governmental Fund Expenditures Comparison



Detailed in the graphs provided are the 2019 and 2018 total revenues and expenditures for all the governmental funds. Expenditures are presented by function, while revenues are presented by category. At the end of the current fiscal year, revenues and expenditures totaled \$68.7 million and \$71.4 million respectively, for an overall decrease in fund balance before other financing sources of \$2.7 million.

Revenues came in 2 percent, or \$1.2 million higher than 2018. The increase is primarily attributed to \$1.8 million more collected for taxes. The increase in taxes is the result of an increased General Fund operating levy that provides funding to continue existing services levels. Taxes, which are made up of property, franchise and lodging taxes, remain a heavily relied on revenue source for governmental operations, making up 58

percent of all governmental fund revenues and 67 percent of the General Fund. Tax increment collections increased due to more being received in the Southdale 2 Tax Increment Financing district than anticipated. Licenses and permits as well as intergovernmental revenue were down in 2019. Licenses and permits is dependent upon the number and valuation of residential/commercial projects; intergovernmental revenue fluctuates based upon the infrastructure projects and their related Municipal State Aid (MSA) in any given year. Charges for services was up due to a change in billing provider for ambulance services at the end of 2018. The increase in miscellaneous revenues is due to investment income as the result of better economic conditions.

Expenditures came in 2 percent, or \$1.2 million higher than 2018. The increase is attributed to

a decrease in general government (\$6.4 million) offset by increases in public safety (\$4 million), Public Works (\$1.4 million) and parks (\$2.1 million). The general government is lower because 2018 had substantial capital outlay expenses related to the expansion of the north parking ramp in the 50th & France 2 TIF District (\$10.5 million). 2019 had lower capital outlay of \$4.1 million mostly attributable to the \$2.9 million land purchase of 4100 W. 76th St. out of the Southdale 2 TIF District. The public safety increase is due to the purchase of three new fire trucks (\$2 million), along with the addition of four new fire positions and increased costs of services due to inflation. The Public Works increase is mostly driven by the purchase of three new snow plows and an asphalt patching truck (\$905,000). Likewise, the increase in parks is mostly driven by capital outlay for the Arden Park shelter and Fred Richards project (\$2 million).



CITY OF EDINA
4801 WEST 50TH STREET
EDINA, MN 55424

PRESORT STD
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TWIN CITIES MN
Permit No. 3932

ECRWSS
POSTAL PATRON
CAR-RT-WS

Federal Grant Helps City Hire Six Paramedic/Firefighters

Paramedic/Firefighters John Meyer, Ryan Schmitz, Allie Adie and Alex Heroff prepare to get sworn in March 17, 2020. The four were part of a group of six Paramedic/Firefighters hired through a federal Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant the Edina Fire Department was awarded in 2019. The roughly \$900,000 grant will help offset the expense of hiring the additional staff through the grant's completion in March 2023. Photo by Kaylin Eidsness

For more information on the Edina Fire Department, visit EdinaMN.gov/Fire. 

Residents Flock to Newly Restored Arden Park

Creek Access, Playgrounds and Trails Are Popular Improvements

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

Sleepy Arden Park, where a few neighbors walked their dogs, children clambered on the outdated playground and the occasional fisherman dropped a line, has found new life.

"Before it was under-utilized, and now with the trails and everyone wanting to get outside, it is completely full of people," said Tom Swenson, Assistant Director - Parks & Natural Resources. "We have received a lot of positive feedback on the trails from the users out there."

The final touches are wrapping up on a restoration project that has transformed Arden Park, 5230 Minnehaha Blvd. And Edina residents paid only part of the bill.

The restoration included re-meandering a section of Minnehaha Creek, removing invasive buckthorn that blocked it from view, adding trails and water access points, installing an elaborate system to clean stormwater before it enters the creek, and planting thousands of native trees and bushes. The City paid about \$1.37 million of the total \$3.5 million costs, with project partner Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) and grants picking up the remaining cost.

Taking advantage of that project, the City used the opportunity to replace the outdated shelter building with what Swenson called "the nicest shelter in town," install a new playground and hockey rink, and improve lighting. Those added up to nearly \$1.2 million. Funding for the project came from fees on new development, the Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety Fund, utility fees and dedicated park funds.

The park restoration plan, which was developed with extensive public input, was followed closely, Engineering Services Manager Ross Bintner said. "It's been good to see all the people using the park and strolling in the natural areas," he said.

Shallow areas, ripples and boulders along the creek have already proven popular, along with easy access points that let people walk right up to the water.

"I've seen a lot of young families playing in the water next to the creek," Swenson said. "Before, I don't recall seeing anyone interacting with the creek water other than to fish."

Trails through the park and sidewalks around it have been busy. The main lawn area will grow in by late summer and host playground programs



Paddlers and tubers enjoy the now visible Minnehaha Creek at Arden Park. Photo by Katie Laux

and special events once those resume. MCWD Planner-Project Manager Laura Domyancich expects it will take three to five years for the new plants and trees to grow in and start to fill out the spaces. A maintenance contract, part of the original project price, will cover the cost of replanting any trees or bushes that don't make it through the early years of the restoration.

"Seeing so many people enjoying the trails that lead to all corners of the park and noticing the diversity of plants and animals that are using the various restored habitats is such a joy!" Domyancich said.

For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov/ArdenParkProject. 