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.

That model 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.

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
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

– COMPILED BY KAYLIN EIDSNESS
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.

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.
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.
## Ramp Improvements, New Apartments and Retail Space Refresh Market Street

**Business Owners and Visitors Take Advantage of New Public Spaces**

BY KAITLIN GAULT

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.

**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.”

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.

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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 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.
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).
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 remeandering 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 and special events once those resume. MCWD Planner-Project Manager Laura Domycich 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!” Domycich said.

For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov/ArdenParkProject.