



# Edition:Edina

APRIL 2021

Volume 8, Issue 4

CITY GOALS:



Strong Foundation



Reliable Service



Livable City



Better Together

## Longtime Park Manager Ready for A New Adventure: Retirement After 30 Years, Tom Shirley Will Say Goodbye to Centennial Lakes

BY KAITLIN GAULT

If you have found yourself at Centennial Lakes Park in the past 30 years, there is a good chance you've seen "that tall guy." With his big smile, warm demeanor, can-do attitude and stature, he is hard to miss.

"That tall guy," Tom Shirley, will retire April 29 after spending 30 years working for the City, most recently as the General Manager of Centennial Lakes Park.

Born and raised in Farmington, Minnesota, Shirley's childhood consisted of biking, fishing and swimming – anything the sun touched. He attended the University of Minnesota Duluth where he balanced studying business administration and exploring Lake Superior. Out of college, he followed his passion for the outdoors to Colorado and landed at Keystone Resort.

On July 30, 1990, he began working for the City of Edina after moving back to be closer to family. He was hired as the Assistant Manager of Edinborough Park and Centennial Lakes Park, which were coupled for management purposes at that time. In 1993, Shirley became the General Manager of both and led operations for 16 years. The operations separated in 2006, and Shirley chose to continue managing the facility that kept him outside – Centennial Lakes Park.

Shirley was part of the team that created all of the things to do in the park, including the popular farmers market.

"Helping plan and design the entire park and helping the master plan come to fruition in 2000 has been a highlight," he said. "Working through the different phases of the plan, building the putting course in-house with staff and developing



amphitheater programs have all been special."

City of Bloomington Director of Parks and Recreation Ann Kattreh, who worked for the City of Edina for 27 years, has fond memories of working with her friend Tom.

"I think my favorite thing about Tom is his tremendous sense of humor," she said. "Tom also learned the hard way how to pull utility vehicles and trucks out of a seemingly frozen pond."

When asked how he feels about retiring, Shirley responded, "It's a strange mix of happiness, jubilation and sadness." Those close to him echo those feelings.

"Tom is one of the kindest bosses I have ever worked for," said Centennial Lakes Park Assistant Manager Laura Fulton. "He has always impressed me with how quickly he can come up with solutions amicable to all parties. Tom is always quick to lend

**Tom Shirley says his love of the outdoors and the people who inspired him along the way have made his 30-year career in Edina special.**  
Photo by Scott Denfeld

a helping hand, and we often think of him as our fourth maintenance person because whenever we are shorthanded, he can be found on a piece of equipment or with a garbage picker in his hand."

Shirley plans to spend as much time as possible outdoors during retirement and already has a trip booked to the Blue Ridge Mountains. He also plans to spend more time at a lake home with his wife and family.

For those grappling with not seeing "that tall guy" around anymore, you may be in luck.

"I'm not going that far, and I will come to visit," he said, "This place has been part of me for 30 years."

# City Plans New Staffing Model for Edina Fire Department

## Paid-on-Call Firefighter Program to End April 30

BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE



To maintain Edina's excellence in Emergency Medical Service, the City of Edina will focus on a new staffing model with more Paramedic/Firefighters for the Edina Fire Department and discontinue its paid-on-call firefighter program.

The Edina Fire Department's paid-on-call program has been in existence since 1942 when the population totaled less than 6,000 and the community was still developing from mostly farmland. The demographics and needs of the community have evolved over time, and the operations and needs of the Fire Department have changed dramatically. Because the City's reliance and need for the paid-on-call program have greatly diminished, City Manager Scott Neal determined it is time for a different staffing model.

"We thank our paid-on-call firefighters for their dedicated service. We are at a point where it is not sustainable in the long term to continue the paid-on-call program," he said. "EMS calls have long made up 80 percent or more of our calls to the Fire

Department. The primary increase in calls for service over the past several decades is due to EMS calls. Paid-on-call staff are trained as Emergency Medical Technicians, but not paramedics. That affects their ability to directly support our greatest service area. We need a staffing model that better responds to EMS growth in our operations."

The City of Edina's paid-on-call program is staffed by seven part-time employees who solely respond to fire calls and dozens of full-time Paramedic/Firefighters who serve as paid-on-call staff and respond to fire calls outside of their regular shifts. Since paid-on-call firefighters do not provide EMS service, residents can expect the same level of service without the paid-on-call program. When fires occur, residents will be well protected by the recent hire of more Paramedic/Firefighters and solid mutual aid agreements with area communities and agencies.


Neal also cited difficulty recruiting, training and equipping paid-on-call staff as a reason for the change in staffing model. Nationwide, it is becoming more difficult to recruit and train paid-on-call Firefighters. "Paid-on-call programs work best when the firefighters can train and

work alongside the full-time staff," he said. "It is becoming more difficult to recruit individuals who have that kind of flexibility and time."

The paid-on-call program will end this month, and the City will work with the Edina Fire Relief Association to phase out the program by the end of the year. Money that had been used to recruit, train, equip and provide retirement benefits to paid-on-call Firefighters can support the new staffing model.

A 2019 study of the Fire Department's response times and locations determined it is necessary to relocate Fire Station 2 and build a new Fire Station 3 to maintain response times. Specifically, the study recommended Fire Station 2 be moved north and west of the current location and a second Advanced Life Support crew be stationed there. A third station in the northeast quadrant would be needed in 5 to 10 years to respond to population growth in that part of the city.

"As we prepare for the construction of new Fire Stations, it's important that we also plan for adequate staffing," Neal said.

*For more information on the Edina Fire Department, visit [EdinaMN.gov/fire](http://EdinaMN.gov/fire).* 

## City Added 2.6 Miles of Sidewalks, Paths in 2020

### Utility Franchise Fees Will Pay for More Projects in 2021

About 2.6 miles of new sidewalks and bike paths were installed in Edina in 2020 using money collected from energy users.

Money for the City's Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety (PACS) Fund is generated by a franchise fee of \$1.45 per month for residential customers of Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy. There are higher franchise fees for commercial customers. The PACS Fund is used to improve and maintain Edina's sidewalks, trails, bikeways, pedestrian crossings and related signs and pavement markings.

Last month, Transportation Planner Andrew Scipioni reported a summary of 2020 projects to the City Council. In all, \$1,681,625 was spent, up 53 percent from the year before. About 1.5 miles more of sidewalks and bike paths were

built in 2020 than 2019.

A shared-use path on Tracy Avenue from Minnesota Highway 62 to Valley Lane was built in 2020, as well as several sidewalks:


- Valley View Road from Moccasin Valley Road to Mark Terrace Drive
- France Avenue from Highway 62 to West 65th Street
- West 58th Street from Wooddale Avenue to Xerxes Avenue

Sidewalks planned for 2021 include:

- Hansen Road from Vernon Avenue to West 60th Street and West 56th Street from Hansen to Normandale Road
- Beard Avenue from West 54th Street to Minnehaha Creek
- France Avenue from West 55th Street to West 57th Street and West 58th to West 60th

Other projects include shared-use paths on Eden Avenue and McCauley Trail and at Highlands Park, a bike boulevard on part of West 54th Street, and pedestrian improvements at France and West 69th Street. In other business last month, the City Council approved a:

- Conditional-use permit for parking lot improvements at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
- Application for Urban Hennepin County Community Development Block Grant Funds
- Three-year contract for City Manager Scott Neal

*The City Council will next meet 7 p.m. Tuesdays April 6 and 20. For more information, visit [EdinaMN.gov](http://EdinaMN.gov).* 

– COMPILED BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

# Racial Justice Becomes Focus for Edina Community Foundation

## Organization Offers Ways to Invite People to Share Experiences and Listen

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

In the days after George Floyd's killing, a few longtime friends asked Bredesen Park resident Jasmine Brett Stringer about her experiences with racism.

"It made me think, 'Why haven't I shared my experience?'" said Stringer. Maybe because her White friends never asked.

At the same time, a single invitation brought together residents of the Rolling Green Neighborhood to gather, socially distanced, in a driveway to share their experiences and to listen.

It's often said to make social change, start where you live. It's a method the Edina Community Foundation (ECF) has embraced full force in recent months. Stringer joined its Board of Directors, and together with members Robert Blanton and Elena Brito Sifferlin, amplified the voices of minorities. Terrie Rose, sender of that original Rolling Green invite, volunteered to help. The ECF has long supported diversity and inclusion efforts, but now is leading with action on racial justice.

Among the efforts so far are creating a lending library of anti-racism books (purchased with money from a grant facilitated by Edina Mayor Jim Hovland), neighborhood book discussions and a calendar devoted exclusively to racial justice events in the area. One of those events is a couples' ally workshop, hosted by Stephanie and James Pierce, an Edina City Council member.

One-on-one and small conversations are still the core. Several discussions called "Learning with Leaders" have brought enthusiastic support from local leaders from groups around Edina. The plan is to expand those discussions to more organizations and to businesses. Another effort is to help neighborhoods replicate the Rolling Green experience.


"Most people have small, homogenous groups – most people look like them and think like them," Stringer said, urging people to move outside their comfort zone to hear other voices.

"It's the willingness to come forward to the invitation and share their stories" that's the key, said Rose, who says she just invites people to the table.

Stringer, who launched #SharetheMicMN to amplify the voices of Brown and Black women, lauded a series of City-produced videos called "The Stories We Share" that does just that. The project, viewable at [BetterTogetherEdina.org](http://BetterTogetherEdina.org), is one of many City steps toward racial equity.

Executive Director Dick Crockett said the ECF is uniquely situated to work with community organizations, local businesses, the City and residents toward the singular goal of racial justice.

"We have a whole community to help change," he said.

*For upcoming events, the lending library and more information, visit [EdinaCommunityFoundation.org](http://EdinaCommunityFoundation.org) or call 952-300-2378.* 

## 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.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Friday, April 2**

Good Friday, No City meetings

**Sunday, April 4**

Easter

**Tuesday, April 6, 7 p.m.**

City Council meeting

**Thursday, April 8, 7:30 a.m.**

Housing & Redevelopment Authority meeting

**Thursday, April 8, 7 p.m.**

Energy & Environment Commission meeting

**Monday, April 12**

Ramadan

**Monday, April 12, 7 p.m.**

Community Health Commission meeting

**Tuesday, April 13, 7 p.m.**

Heritage Preservation Commission meeting

**Tuesday, April 13, 7 p.m.**

Parks & Recreation Commission meeting

**Wednesday, April 14, 7 p.m.**

Planning Commission meeting

**Thursday, April 15, 6 p.m.**

Transportation Commission meeting

**Tuesday, April 20, 7 p.m.**

City Council meeting

**Thursday, April 22, 7:30 a.m.**

Housing & Redevelopment Authority meeting

**Thursday, April 22, 4:30 p.m.**

Arts & Culture Commission meeting

**Tuesday, April 27, 7 p.m.**

Human Rights & Relations Commission meeting

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

- Edina TV (Comcast Channels 813 or 16)
- [Facebook.com/EdinaMN](https://www.facebook.com/EdinaMN)
- "Watch a Meeting" web page at [EdinaMN.gov/LiveMeetings](http://EdinaMN.gov/LiveMeetings)

Watch other meetings live at [youtube.com/EdinaTV](https://www.youtube.com/EdinaTV).

For a complete listing of meetings and events, visit [EdinaMN.gov](http://EdinaMN.gov).





**CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!**



The City of Edina and Edina Magazine invite those who live, work or go to school in Edina to submit their best photos that tell Edina’s story in the 18th annual “Images of Edina” photo contest.

Free to enter, photos can be submitted online between April 15 and June 21 at [edinamag.com](http://edinamag.com). Following the entry period, readers can vote for their favorite photos until July 20.

For a complete list of official rules, contest criteria and to submit your photos, visit [EdinaMN.gov/PhotoContest](http://EdinaMN.gov/PhotoContest) or [edinamag.com](http://edinamag.com).

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

PRESORT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TWIN CITIES MN  
Permit No. 3932

\*\*\*ECRWSS\*\*\*  
POSTAL PATRON  
CAR-RT-WS



Iskaan-garee koodhkan oo ku fiiri  
**soomaali**  
[EdinaMN.gov/SomaliEE](http://EdinaMN.gov/SomaliEE)



Escanee este código para ver en  
**español**  
[EdinaMN.gov/SpanishEE](http://EdinaMN.gov/SpanishEE)

# As Earth Day Approaches, City Commitment to Sustainability and Organics Recycling Grows

## Nearly 900 Tons of Organics Waste Collected Since June 2020

BY DAN REISIG

When the first Earth Day launched in April 1970, Simon & Garfunkel’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water” ruled the Billboard charts, a gallon of gasoline cost less than 50 cents, and the Edina Garden Council had just started a monthly glass recycling program in a supermarket parking lot.

More than 50 years later, the City has maintained and expanded its commitment to Mother Nature with sustainability as one of its principal goals.

“The through line of commitment to reducing waste continues from that parking lot in 1970,” said Sustainability Coordinator Grace Hancock. “The same thing that drove residents to start recycling 50 years ago is what is pushing the organics recycling program.”

That program provides residents with weekly curbside service for their food scraps and other compostable waste.

“The really exciting thing about organics recycling is that it comes back to the community and helps us learn to live with

a changed climate,” explained Hancock. “The compost is there to help us plant our trees and stabilize our watershed.”

Organics Recycling Coordinator Twila Singh championed the benefits of compost while helping to dispel some of the myths. “It’s all been broken down, has no off-putting smell, helps the soil retain water, provides nutrients and makes higher yields when used in gardens,” she explained.

Beyond flower beds and planting pots, there is a further use for the “black gold.” “In Minnesota, we have thin topsoil, so compost is essential for growing grass – it can serve as a potential cost-saving alternative to traditional fertilizer without polluting our waterways,” she said. “It’s extremely valuable.”

In just nine months of available data, the City has collected nearly 900 tons of material.

“It’s important to keep in mind that we are talking about blue whales and school buses worth of tons, just from Edina,” Singh said. “There’s no contribution that’s



**Edina’s organics recycling program launched in spring 2020 in response to a Hennepin County mandate.** File Photo

too small. Even if you have a bread-bag worth of organics recycling each week, that amount contributes to our City’s urgent fight against climate change and not to landfill.”

Long term, Hancock highlighted three areas where the program makes an impact. “Organics recycling can reduce the cost to residents for their waste, help the City meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, and make a positive overall impact on the environment.”

*To learn more about the City’s organics recycling program, visit [EdinaMN.gov/organics](http://EdinaMN.gov/organics). Earth Day will be celebrated April 22.* 