

Edition: Edina



AUGUST 2021
Volume 8, Issue 8

CITY GOALS:



Strong Foundation



Reliable Service



Livable City



Better Together

Residents Rate Quality of Life High

Polco Completes 2021 Quality of Life Survey

Edina residents enjoy a high quality of life in 2021, as in previous years.

In the Quality of Life Survey conducted this spring by independent research company Polco, nearly all residents awarded “excellent” or “good” ratings to the quality of life in Edina, which was a higher rating than seen in other communities across the nation and similar to ratings given elsewhere in Minnesota. This rating has remained stable since 2011.

Other highlights of the survey include:

- More than 9 in 10 residents indicated they were very or somewhat likely to remain in Edina for the next five years

and would recommend living in Edina to someone who asks.

- Top community characteristics were defined as safety, education and enrichment, economic health and health/wellness opportunities.
- “Location/convenience,” “a safe community,” “good schools,” “an attractive community,” “good neighborhoods” and “amenities” were the most commonly chosen reasons for living in Edina.

The City of Edina conducts a Quality of Life survey in odd-numbered years to monitor trends in resident opinion; measure government performance; inform



File Photo

budget, land use and strategic planning decisions; and benchmark service ratings.

Complete survey results can be found online at EdinaMN.gov under “About>Information for Residents.” For more information, contact the City’s Communications Department, 952-826-0359.

– COMPILED BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

Low-Cost Loans Available To Improve Modest Homes

Income-Eligible Homeowners Can Borrow Funds Through Homeownership Rehabilitation Program

BY DAN REISIG

Many Edina homeowners can enhance their properties at little cost, thanks to the new City’s Homeownership Rehab Program. The loans range from \$2,000 to \$30,000 and allow for improvements to owner-occupied houses and condos valued up to \$425,000.

“This program allows income-eligible homeowners to borrow money from the City at lower-than-commercial rates to do rehabilitation projects on their homes,” said Affordable Housing Development Manager Stephanie Hawkinson. “It’s a highly popular program in other cities in Minnesota and gives us an opportunity to continue to preserve our modestly priced housing stock while providing immediate benefit to current homeowners.”

Administered by the Minnesota Center for Energy and Environment in partnership with the City, the program limits homeowner income to 125 percent of Area Median Income. That equates to \$105,000 for a two-person household.

“This program allows homeowners to address maintenance issues while continuing to live in their homes at little or no cost to them, while also allowing accessibility issues to be addressed,” Hawkinson said.

What makes the loans so attractive are the highly favorable terms – simply put, there are no monthly payments while the owner lives there. When ready to sell, the owner can give the City first right of refusal.

If the Housing & Redevelopment Authority chooses to purchase the house, the loan is forgiven. Otherwise, the loan’s principal amount plus 2 percent non-compounding simple interest is due upon sale.

“Unlike our Housing Preservation Program – which allows our affordable housing partner Homes Within Reach to acquire homes immediately in as-is condition – this program is intended for the current homeowner to borrow money and rehab their home while continuing to live in it, until they’re willing to sell or 30 years, whichever comes first,” Hawkinson explained.

A full list of loan terms and eligible improvements can be found at EdinaMN.gov/AffordableHousing.

Council Revises Special Assessment Policy

Cost of Street Reconstruction To Be Borne by All Taxpayers

By the year 2038, street reconstruction in Edina will be completely paid for with property taxes.

Since the late 1990s, adjacent property owners have been assessed roadway reconstruction costs. As estimates for special assessments increased to as much as \$32,000, it became apparent the City may not be able to justify the benefit of the cost to each property owner as required by Minnesota law. A Street Funding Task Force was formed by City Manager Scott Neal in 2020 and charged with reevaluating the Special Assessment Policy.

At its meeting July 21, the Edina City Council approved the Task Force's recommendation to reduce assessments each year until it reaches no assessment at Year 16. As a result, all taxpayers will pay taxes to the City for street reconstruction. In the first year, City taxes on the median-valued home will increase by approximately \$40 for funding street reconstruction. In the remaining 15 years of the transition, those taxes would increase by about \$11 per year.

"I ask myself, 'If we were starting from scratch, how would we do this?' I think

we reached consensus that if we were starting from scratch, we would do it with 100 percent taxes," said Council Member Kevin Staunton during the meeting. "This notion of a special assessment is that a group of people who are getting something the rest of the community isn't pays extra for that. And while that kind of happens here, it isn't really true, because eventually everyone is getting the streets in their neighborhood redone. So, it doesn't really feel like an appropriate thing for a special assessment. ... I think this gets us to the right place. I think this is the right answer."

In other business last month, the Council:

- Appointed Student Commissioners for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Approved preliminary rezoning and a preliminary development plan for a redevelopment at 4660 77th St. W. Solhem Companies plans to raze two office buildings and build a five- to seven-story, 408-unit apartment complex.
- Affirmed and authorized submission of a request for State Bonding Bill funding. At the request of Sen. Melisa Franzen, the City submitted a request

for funding for an expansion of Braemar Arena.

The Council will next meet 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 4, and Tuesday, Aug. 17. For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov.



– COMPILED BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

Student Commissioners for 2021-2022 School Year

Arts & Culture Commission

- Reeya Anand
- Tiffany Shen

Community Health Commission

- Ben Hykes
- Elizabeth Mullen

Energy & Environment Commission

- Suryash Rawat
- Ava Shumway

Heritage Preservation Commission

- Ashwin Maheshwari
- Sadie Roy

Human Rights & Relations Commission

- Francesca Lichtenberger
- Sabeehudeen Mirza

Parks & Recreation Commission

- Urva Jha
- Sammy Prestus

Planning Commission

- Kenley Barberot
- William Hayward

Transportation Commission

- Anna Clark
- Stephen Kanti Mahanty

BY THE NUMBERS

Night to Unite

For the first time in two years, the Edina Police and Fire Departments will be out in the community Aug. 3 for "Night to Unite." Night to Unite is designed to build neighborhood involvement by bringing first responders and communities together and bring awareness to crime prevention and local law enforcement efforts. Learn more at EdinaMN.gov/NightToUnite.



– COMPILED BY DAN REISIG

Finance Director's Leadership and Experience Pay Off

Don Uram Retires After Helping City Improve Operations and Weather Pandemic



Finance Director Don Uram plans to retire in September. (Photo by Dan Reisig)

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

When Don Uram was hired as Finance Director in 2017, City Manager Scott Neal said, "I think his strengths are exactly what we needed at this time in the City's history."

How prescient that would turn out to be.

Uram's broad private and public work experience includes having served other communities as Finance Director, Community Development Director and City Manager. His knowledge of government, business, housing and economic development turned out to be the ideal combination. He got Finance more directly involved with assisting enterprise operations such as Braemar Arena and Edina Liquor, led City-wide projects beyond the usual finance arena, mentored other leaders and, most notably, guided the City financially through the COVID-19 crisis.

"Edina has benefitted greatly from Don," Neal said.

Uram is participating in a phased retirement program and will assist incoming Finance Director Alisha

McAndrews. McAndrews begins work Aug. 9.

One change Uram initiated was to have Finance staff work more directly with each department to better understand their needs, operations and what assistance Finance could provide. Parks & Recreation Director Perry Vetter found this invaluable.

"I think a big piece of what Don has brought to Parks & Recreation and the enterprises is a solid understanding of the intricacies of their operations and their value to the community, not just from a quantity perspective, but from a quality perspective," Vetter said.

Uram's leadership helped the Finance Department – and the City – come through the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in solid financial shape.


"We really worked together as a team to accomplish what we needed in the pandemic," said Assistant Finance Director Kyle Sawyer, noting Uram has been an excellent leader and mentor. "We will miss him in the Finance Department. He was always willing to roll up his sleeves and get the work done."

Even if that meant coding invoices or calling a resident who had a question about their utility bill.

"Every so often, I return calls to our customers just to talk to them," Uram said. "It really helps to work customer service occasionally so you can hear the concerns they have. I've learned a lot."

In retirement, Uram plans to travel, spend time with family and continue to compete in cross-country skiing, mountain biking and swimming events. He deflects any credit for leaving the City better off financially than when he arrived.

"I'm really proud of the staff, both my staff and all the staff I've worked with," Uram said. "The staff is what makes this place great."

Learn more about the Finance Department at EdinaMN.gov/Finance. 

UPCOMING EVENTS

Recurring Events:

Children's Entertainment,
Centennial Lakes Park
11 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays

Concerts in the Park,
Centennial Lakes Park
7 p.m. Sundays, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Farmers Market,
Centennial Lakes Park
3-7 p.m. Thursdays

Movies in the Park,
Centennial Lakes Park
Sunset, Thursdays

Performance on the Plaza (P.O.P.),
Nolan Mains Plaza
4-7 p.m. Fridays

Tuesday, Aug. 3

Night to Unite

Each year, Edina neighborhoods join forces with communities statewide for the "Night to Unite" crime prevention event. Neighbors are encouraged to lock their doors, turn on outside lights and spend the evening outside with neighbors.

Wednesday, Aug. 4, 7 p.m.

City Council meeting, Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

Thursday, Aug. 12, 7:30 a.m.

Housing & Redevelopment Authority meeting, Edina City Hall

Tuesday, Aug. 17, 7 p.m.

City Council meeting, Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

Wednesday, Aug. 18, 6:30 p.m.

Walk With the Mayor, Fred Richards Park

Thursday, Aug. 26, 7:30 a.m.

Housing & Redevelopment Authority meeting, Edina City Hall

For a complete listing of meetings and events, visit EdinaMN.gov.

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

Watch other meetings live at youtube.com/EdinaTV.

BRAEMAR ARENA

STREAMING EDINA HOCKEY LIVE ALL SEASON



MnHockey.Tv

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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EDINA, MN 55424

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TWIN CITIES MN
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Rental Housing Inspections Program Focuses on Safety

Despite Limited In-Person Capabilities, Staff Successfully Launched New Program

BY KAITLIN GAULT

The City of Edina's rental housing inspections program began in late 2019 to more proactively address tenant safety.

Before the creation of the program, when the Health Division received complaints about rental properties, staff was sent out for an inspection. Now, property owners who want to rent out their multi-family apartments and single-family home, duplex, townhome or condo must apply for an annual rental license. Through the licensing process, property owners are made aware of the requirements and what type of issues to look out for to ensure compliance with the building code.

Community Health Administrator Jeff Brown says proactive inspections are a big component of the new program's success.

"Historically, the Health Division did complaint-based enforcement of property maintenance," he said. "We realized communities around us were starting to license rental properties to better oversee the issues we'd get calls about, so the idea was put forward and ultimately adopted. We use the same code, but now work with property owners to conduct proactive inspections."

Aidrous Ali, a Housing Inspector for the City, said the program started strong at the beginning of 2020.

"We had good momentum going until the global pandemic happened and everything changed starting mid-March," Ali explained. "Until late fall, we paused on doing rental inspections and we only inspected vacant properties and emergency cases."

Apartment inspections were put on pause because a typical day for an inspector at an apartment involves visiting 25 units.

Despite the in-person challenges of COVID-19, the City completed 140 inspections in 2020 and issued 685 licenses for single-family and multi-family buildings.

Common issues inspectors look for include missing or damaged handrails and electrical outlets, inoperable smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, deteriorating furnaces and boilers and bare wood and peeling paint on exterior surfaces. Housing Inspector Abdullahi Ahmed says he tries to give property owners ample time to make corrections and encourages compliance while being patient.



Housing Inspector Aidrous Ali checks plumbing at a rental. He is one of two Inspectors and a Licensing Specialist who helped make the new program a success in 2020. (Photo by Scott Denfeld)

"I explain to them that they get an adequate amount of time to remedy and make repairs, and even then can get an extension if they need one," said Ahmed. "I also reiterate to them that resident safety is our top priority."

Inspections have now resumed to normal operations.

To learn more about the Rental Housing program, visit EdinaMN.gov/rentalinspections or call 952-826-1656. 