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CITY GOALS:



Policy Changes Aim to Help Reach Affordable Housing Goals Adjustments Encourage Developers to Include Affordable Units in Their Projects

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

The Edina Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) has approved three key changes to a policy meant to encourage development of affordable housing across the City.

The Multifamily Affordable Housing Policy applies to developments of 20 units or more. The changes that were unanimously approved Dec. 8 increase the buy-in fee for developers who don't want to include affordable housing in their projects, require affordable units in high-density projects and mandate cooperation with verifying compliance.

The buy-in fee is being raised from \$125,000 to \$175,000 per unit. That's still far short of the more than \$300,000 it would cost a developer to create an affordable unit and keep it that way over the required 20 years in Edina. Recently with increasing construction costs, more developers have been choosing the buy-in fee, explained Affordable Housing Development Manager Stephanie Hawkinson.

"Having the fee at \$125,000 was incentivizing developers to buy in rather than build," Hawkinson said.

While even a \$175,000 fee isn't enough to cover the cost of creating and maintaining an affordable housing unit, it increases the ability to fund a variety of affordable housing programs across the City. Since 2018, the fee has raised about \$8.5 million for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This helps fund programs such as purchasing moderately priced houses to keep them affordable, home rehabilitation loans to help people repair and stay in their homes, and down payment assistance for first-generation homebuyers.



A buy-in fee that is too low could impact the City's ability to reach its goal of 1,804 affordable housing units by 2030. "We want to achieve that goal, and we're not going to do it if everyone buys in," Hawkinson said.

The second policy change requires high-density projects to include affordable units. For mixed-use developments, that's 50% or more of the maximum allowed density. For residential developments, it's 75% or more. Projects that fall under the percentage limits could still choose to pay the buy-in fee instead.

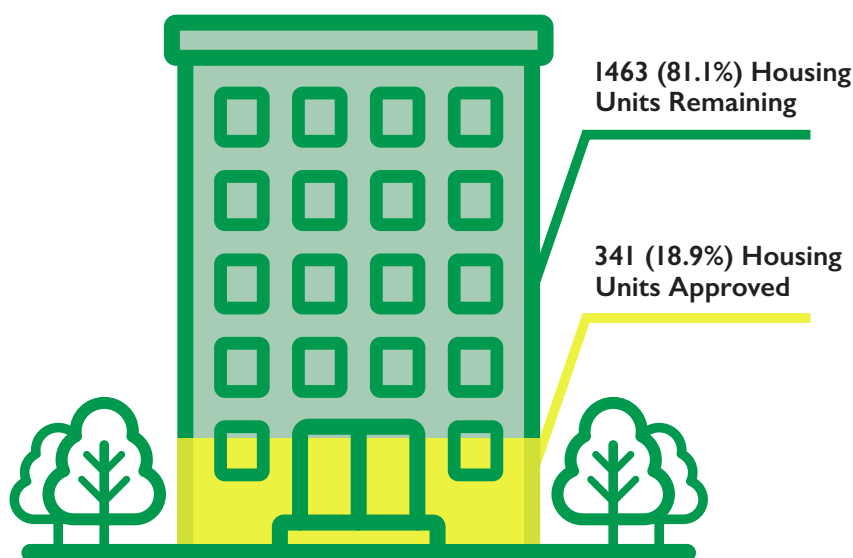
"It's a very clear and elegant solution," said Edina City Council Member Carolyn Jackson, noting it makes the process more transparent for both the City and developers.

The policy gives the HRA or City Council the flexibility to allow buy-ins for cause or if the City determines the fee would be better than units in a particular project or section of Edina.

The third policy change requires cooperation with the third-party compliance officer who needs to verify affordable units were included in the project as approved, that the rent amounts meet requirements and that the tenants in those units are income qualified.

For more information, visit OpenDoorsEdina.org or contact Hawkinson at shawkinson@EdinaMN.gov or 952-833-9578.  

Progress on Affordable Housing Goal: 1,804 Units Approved or Built by 2030



Data as of Jan. 1, 2023

City Council Approves Spending Plan for Remaining ARPA Funds

Plan Includes Spending on Government Operations and Public Safety

COMPILED BY BRITTANY BADER

Eleven programs and initiatives will be supported with the City of Edina's remaining \$3 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The City Council approved the Phase 2 spending plan at its Dec. 6 meeting.

The largest allocations are for government operations, capital improvements at Centennial Lakes and Edinborough parks, a surveillance camera network pilot project at 50th & France, and the Edina Education Fund for a literacy program.

In total, the City received \$4.9 million in ARPA funding from the federal government to provide relief from the COVID-19 pandemic and boost the economy. The City chose to develop two separate spending plans for the money, considering input from the community both times.

The Phase 1 spending plan was approved by the City Council in July 2021 and was primarily focused on providing business aid, rental and food assistance, mental health resources and free internet service to eligible households.

While much of Phase 2 spending is going back into the community, City Manager

Scott Neal explains the plan also includes spending on internal municipal needs, like government operations and public safety.



"The reason for the change in policy on this matter is the need to increase spending on our human resources, including compensation market increases, training, mental health assistance, staffing levels and general non-compensation support," said Neal in a Nov. 15 staff report to the City Council. "The proposed human resources Phase 2 spending will enable the City to be more successful in competitive labor markets in attracting and retaining full-time, part-time and seasonal employees; enables us to cover anticipated gaps in staffing levels in our public safety service areas by flexing staffing levels up in advance of anticipated vacancies; and enables the City to provide enhanced levels of technology and other workplace support to improve employee productivity."

ARPA Phase 2 Spending Plan

- \$1.1 million on Government Operations, primarily employee compensation, training, support and operations
- \$500,000 to public-facing capital improvements at Centennial Lakes and Edinborough parks

- \$300,000 to a community surveillance camera network pilot project at 50th & France
- \$300,000 to the Edina Education Fund for support of the Edina LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) program
- \$200,000 to continue the expansion of the City's broadband network to City utility facilities
- \$150,000 to the Edina Chamber of Commerce's "Innovation Lab" program
- \$150,000 to the NextGen Trees program
- \$100,000 to continue the City's Internet Essentials program with Comcast
- \$100,000 to Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP) for rental assistance
- \$80,000 to support the creation of a new affordable housing financing program
- \$20,000 to Edina Give and Go to support their operations assisting low- and moderate-income families with supplemental school and activity-related expenses


To learn more about the City's use of ARPA funds, visit

BetterTogetherEdina.org/arpa.  



BY THE NUMBERS

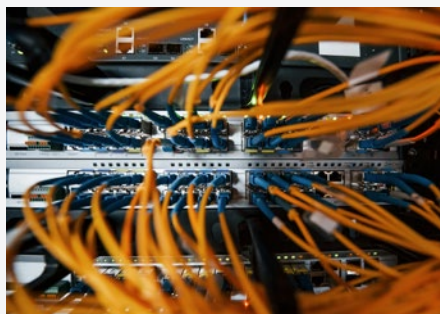
Information Technology

The City of Edina Information Technology Department makes sure your local government stays technologically strong and optimized for the best possible service. Nine dedicated staff members work to service City facilities; maintain and respond to device service needs; maintain servers, software and internet security; and implement new technology. 



37

City facilities supported



681

Computers and mobile devices supported

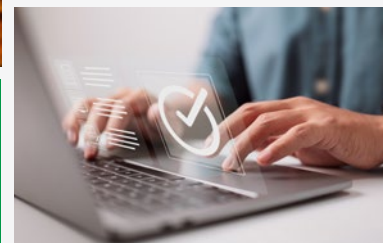
3,400

I.T. support requests by City staff in 2022



25

Miles of fiber optic cabling in Edina



COMPILED BY AMY KYLLO

Slater Named Executive Director of South Metro Public Safety Training Facility

Former Educator Continues to Foster Learning in a New Setting

BY LAUREN SIEBENALER

The walls of the South Metro Public Safety Training Facility (SMPSTF) are bursting at the seams with personality and new perspective since Robert Slater started his new role as its Executive Director in December.

Slater spent most of his career as an administrator at Saint Thomas Academy in Mendota Heights. He most recently worked at KIPP Minnesota Public Schools in North Minneapolis. As a former educator, Slater didn't see his career path crossing with public safety. His son, who works for the St. Paul Police Department, gave him a different insight on public safety.

"I have a heightened awareness to what the police experiences are," said Slater. "I think my personality lends itself to working with first responders. And then when I saw the facility, the opportunity to run a place like this was very attractive."

The SMPSTF, 7525 Braemar Blvd., operates under a joint powers agreement among the cities of Bloomington, Eden Prairie and Edina and the Metropolitan Airports Commission. The facility has four classrooms, two indoor shooting ranges, a gun cleaning room and a defensive tactics gym. There is a room with a MILO virtual system for critical incident, de-escalation, decision support, traditional tactical judgment and firearms proficiency training. The property has a tower for fire training scenarios and a large parking lot that is also used for training.

"I want to see what kind of improvements we can make that will serve the police and fire departments. If you talk to each of them separately, they have ideas on what they want to see happen," said Slater. "The wish list is always much greater than the available monies to build it, but that's exciting to me, too. I enjoy the challenge of meeting their needs and wants."

The facility is operated by the City of Edina. Edina Fire Department's Training & Safety Chief Shaun White supervises the Executive Director position and led the hiring process to find Slater when Deb Fields retired after 15 years.

"I am very excited to have Robert Slater with us in Edina as our new SMPSTF Director. The unique attributes and multiple stakeholders can be a challenge, which is why Bob was selected," White said. "His combination of experience, background in education and relationship-based leadership will prove incredibly beneficial as the primary training facility of the southwest metro continues to grow and improve."



Slater has some big projects on his radar, including a new HVAC system that needs repair or replacement soon. This is a priority because of the amount of lead put in the air at the two shooting ranges.

Slater will also focus on building relationships with the primary tenants of the facility and the primary renters. Slater hopes to spread the word about SMPSTF to spur new rentals and public safety clients.



Robert Slater started his new Executive Director position at the South Metro Public Safety Training Facility the end of December. (Photo by Lauren Siebenaler)


"I've been really struck by the high priority placed on safety and cleanliness," said Slater. "The firing range officers, the custodians, everybody that comes in contact with this place wants it to stay a top-notch facility. I think it's in all of our best interests that we continue to move this facility forward as far as technology and what it offers to different public safety organizations."

For more information on SMPSTF, visit policeandfire.training.  

WINTER WONDERLAND

Hundreds of people attended the annual Winter Ice Festival Jan. 8 at Centennial Lakes Park, 7499 France Ave. S. Guests enjoyed skating and gliding across the 10-acre lake, music and trolley rides.

Weather permitting, Centennial Lakes Park will remain open noon to 9:30 p.m. daily for ice skating through mid-February. Hours for skate rental and concessions vary.

For more information, visit CentennialLakesPark.com. 

(Photo by Amy Kylo)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, Feb. 1

Black History Month begins

Thursday, Feb. 2, 7:30 a.m.

Housing & Redevelopment Authority meeting, Edina City Hall

Sunday, Feb. 5, 6 p.m.

Family Full Moon Snowshoe, Braemar Golf Course

Tuesday, Feb. 7, 7 p.m.

City Council meeting, Edina City Hall

Friday, Feb. 10, 5:30 p.m.

Movie Night in the Amphitheater, "Minions: The Rise of Gru," Edinborough Park

Saturday, Feb. 11, 6 p.m.

Skate with your Date, Arden Park

Thursday, Feb. 16, 7:30 a.m.

Housing & Redevelopment Authority meeting, Edina City Hall

Monday, Feb. 20

Presidents Day, City offices closed

Tuesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m.

City Council 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](https://www.facebook.com/EdinaMN)
- "Watch a Meeting" web page at EdinaMN.gov/LiveMeetings

City Sets 2023 Legislative Agenda

Edina Requests State Bonding for Fire Station, Training Facility and Pedestrian Bridge

There are several issues the City is asking to be considered during the current State Legislative Session.

The City seeks a sales tax exemption for the material and supplies to be purchased for the construction of Fire Station 2 and improvements at Braemar Park and Arena and Fred Richards Park.


In addition, the City seeks additional spending capacity of the local sales and use tax approved by Edina voters last year to fund another sheet of ice at Braemar Arena. The proposal does not require an increase or duration of the approved local sales tax as the money raised from the half-percent tax is expected to cover the cost of the projects at Braemar Park and Arena and Fred Richards Park and the additional sheet of ice.

The City is requesting \$10 million in State bonding for Fire Station 2, \$1 million for improvements at the South Metro Public Safety Training Facility and \$2 million for the replacement of the pedestrian bridge over Minnesota Highway 62. The current pedestrian bridge is owned by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, but its replacement will likely include Edina assuming ownership and maintenance of it. The \$2 million would finance Edina's portion of the cost of the new bridge.

The City Council and staff met last month with Edina's legislative delegation to explain these requests and positions. The 2023 legislative session is expected to adjourn in May.

In other business last month, the City Council:

- Swore in new Council Members Kate Agnew and Julie Risser. The women also took the oath of office as Commissioners of the Housing & Redevelopment Authority.
- Appointed James Pierce as Acting Mayor for 2023. The Acting Mayor serves when the Mayor is unavailable or incapacitated.
- Approved new sidewalks on Kipling Avenue, Monterey Avenue and West 40th Street. The new sidewalks will be constructed during the Morningside C Neighborhood Roadway project later this year.
- Denied a request to modify a conservation restriction at a property in the 6800 block of Indian Hills Road. The homeowners requested the change to allow a newly constructed screened room, which was found to be in violation of the easement and setback requirements. The Council gave the property owners several months to move the screened room or get it into compliance.
- Purchased three charging stations for the Public Works & Park Maintenance Facility to accommodate upcoming purchases of electric vehicles for the City's fleet.

The City Council next meets 7 p.m. Feb. 7 and 21. For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov. 

- COMPILED BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE