

# ANOKA COUNTY NEWS

Volume 3-2023

## PIECING TOGETHER *The projects*

*pgs. 2-4*



Want to Work  
for Anoka County?

Learn more: [pgs. 5-8](#)

ANOKA COUNTY  
HUMAN RESOURCES





## The Future of Highway 65

### Safer, Less Congestion

Those who travel Highway 65 through Anoka County know that if you cross the thoroughfare during peak travel times, traffic can come to a standstill at several intersections.

When vehicles are moving at a slow pace, Highway 65 can be more dangerous than other roads in the state, because it's a straight-away with a 55 mile-per-hour speed limit, interrupted by frequent traffic signals that can cause drivers to come to sudden halts and lead to accidents.

"Leaders at the federal, state, county and city levels have made transforming Highway 65 a priority,

and over the past three years, \$195.5 million has been secured to overhaul the stretch between 99th and 117th avenues," said Matt Look, chair, Anoka County Board of Commissioners. "Investing in transportation infrastructure is about improving safety, congestion, quality of life, and our economic growth."

The following pages will detail how funding was secured, the scope of the projects, and what work will still need to be done on Highway 65 in the coming years.

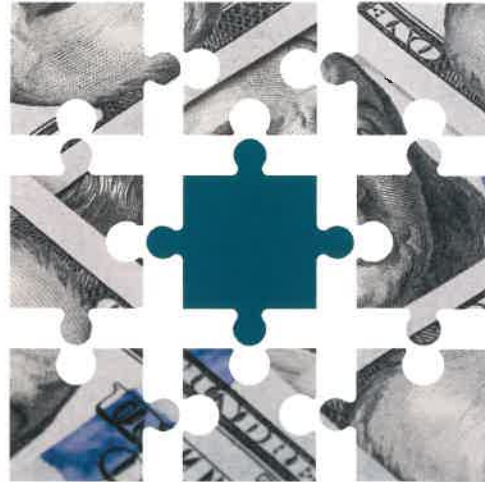


# How the Funding Came Together

Securing funding for the needed improvements on the section of Highway 65 between 99th and 117th avenues was the result of Anoka County, the City of Blaine, state, and federal officials all working together.

For example:

- In December of 2022, the Anoka County Board of Commissioners, the City of Blaine and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) worked with the House and Senate Congressional delegation to secure \$9 million



for improvements along Highway 65 in the City of Blaine. A total of \$5 million was awarded to the Highway 65 and 109th Avenue intersection, and \$4 million was awarded to the Highway 65 and 99th Avenue intersection.

- At the federal level, in late June, the Biden-Harris Administration awarded more than \$2.2 billion in discretionary projects across the country; the Highway 65 project was awarded more than \$20 million through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program.
- In July, a total of \$30 million in Corridors of Commerce funding — a state of Minnesota program — was allocated to the project.

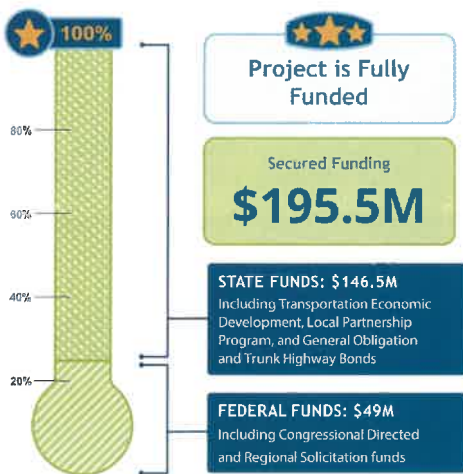
“Over the past three years, the project team has been focused, motivated, and tireless in our efforts to bring over a dozen funding sources together for this nearly \$196 million endeavor, and all the funding for improvements at these intersections has been secured,” said District 6 Commissioner Julie Jeppson.

District 2 Commissioner Julie Braastad, chair of the county’s Transportation Committee, noted the pace at which funding has been secured for these projects is impressive.

“Ten of our state’s 31 most dangerous intersections are on Highway 65, so improving this corridor is a high priority, but the short amount of time in which this funding has been secured to pay for several of these improvements is breathtaking,” she said. “It’s really a testament to how several government entities can work together for the betterment of our residents and other motorists who travel our roads.”

## Project Funding

As of July 2023



## Highway 65 Improvement Project



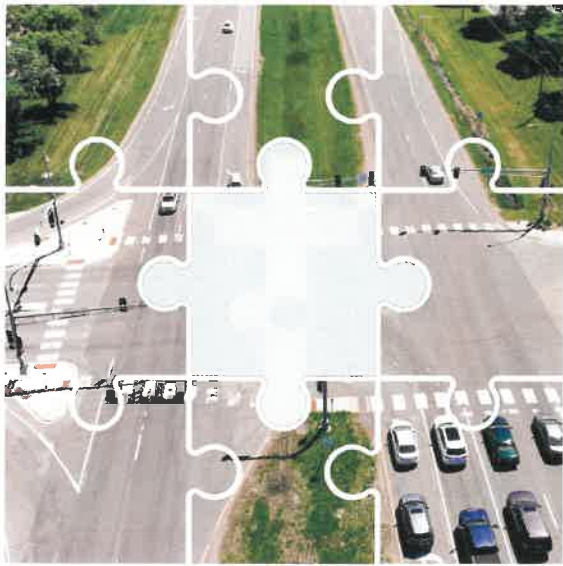
[blainemn.gov/Thriveon65](http://blainemn.gov/Thriveon65)



**Anoka County**  
**MINNESOTA**

Respectful, Innovative, Fiscally Responsible





# Project Scope and Future Needs

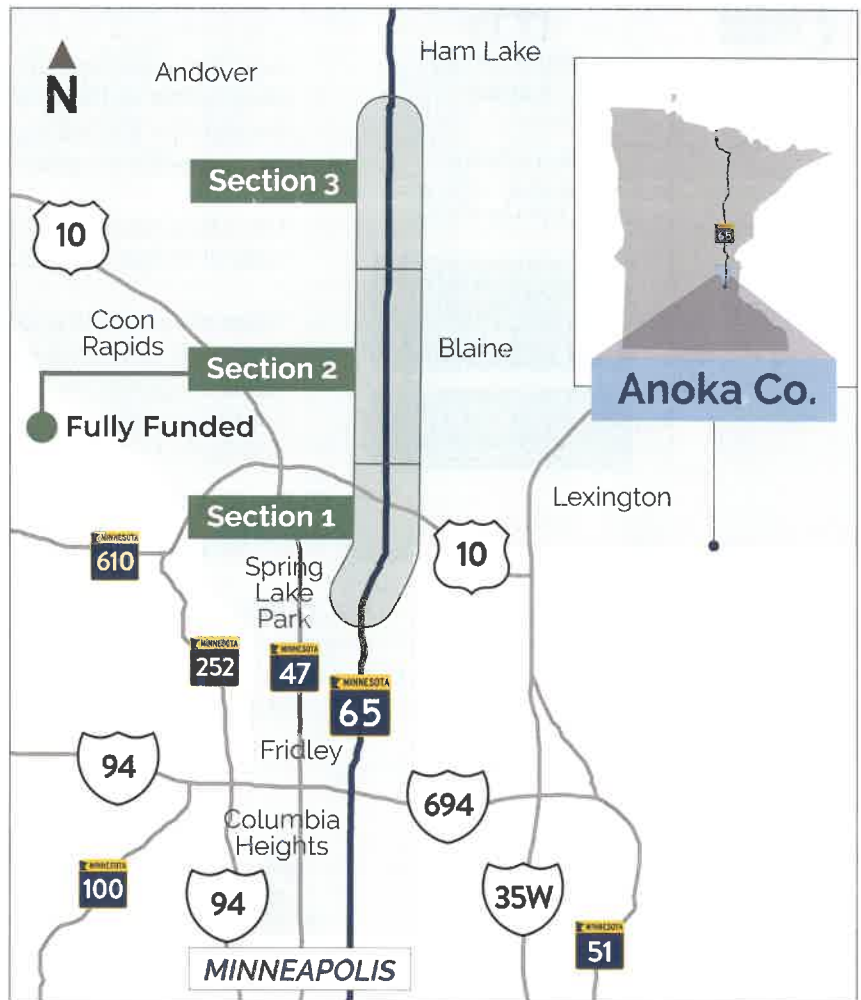
The aim of this project is to convert Highway 65 to a freeway-type thoroughfare with grade-separated interchanges (at 99th Avenue, 105th Avenue, 109th Avenue, and the 117th Avenue/Cloud Drive intersections). Existing local street/driveway connections to Highway 65 will be rerouted using frontage and backage roads.

The project, estimated to begin in 2025 or 2026 and last three years, will reduce crashes, improve travel time for people driving along and across Highway 65, and improve conditions for people walking and bicycling.

Moving forward, more work will have to be done to completely upgrade the Highway 65 corridor through Anoka County. In 2018, Anoka County, Blaine and the state worked together to assemble funding to complete a corridor Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, which was the first PEL study in Minnesota. Using that information, three areas of Highway 65 were marked as needing substantial improvements. The completely funded project area is section no. 2. Section no. 1 goes from 81st Avenue in Spring Lake Park to north of 93rd Avenue in Blaine. Section no. 3 is north of 117th Avenue/Cloud Drive in Blaine to Bunker Lake Boulevard in Ham Lake.

The next focus will be procuring funding for section no. 3. The project team plans to to apply for federal funds this fall to begin developing a funding package for delivery of the section no. 3 improvements. Similar to the section no. 2 project, the package to pay for the projects will likely contain several different sources of funding.

“It’s important to celebrate the successes that led to funding being secured so quickly for section no. 2 of the Highway 65 improvement project, but there’s still much work to be done to completely transform this corridor,” said District 4 Anoka County Commissioner Scott Schulte. “Hopefully, as we go into the future, local, state and federal leaders will keep Highway 65 a priority, so the whole corridor can be improved for our motorists and pedestrians.”



# WHY WORK for Anoka County?

When Anoka County employees are asked why they like their jobs, the answers are oftentimes varied.

Some say that many of the positions have a positive work/life balance. Others talk about the great culture in Anoka County and how good it feels to be part of a team that supports them. And then there are the employees who say they like to meet new people, and they feel great about serving the public and solving customers' problems.

Anoka County also offers competitive pay and a great benefits package that includes Public Employee Retirement Association benefits; deferred compensation that can be voluntarily set aside for retirement; affordable full medical, dental and vision packages; yearly employer contributions to Health Reimbursement Arrangement accounts; free virtual doctor visits, on-site medical and dental clinics; an Employee Assistance program that focuses on mental

wellbeing; and more.

"Anoka County employs nearly 2,000 people, and there are often open positions in several departments, including Human Services, the Sheriff's Office, Parks, the Attorney's Office, Emergency Communications, and more," said District 7 Anoka County Commissioner Mandy Meisner. "Many of our employees are here for more than just a job. It's not uncommon to meet employees who have been here for decades — Anoka County is truly a place where careers are made."

The following pages include articles about employees who talk about why they decided to work for Anoka County.



**SCAN ME!**

## Highways Senior Equipment Operator

Anoka County senior equipment operator Eric Johnson hardly spends any time at a desk. He gets to work in various parts of the county, and he's had the opportunity to operate a variety of heavy equipment, including snowplows, skid-steers, excavators, and front-end loaders.

Johnson is an 11-year employee of the county who started as an equipment operator before being promoted to senior equipment operator a few years ago. He said during the winter some operators are primarily driving snowplows, but when there's less snow several of the county's crews spend their time improving sightlines along roadways.

"A lot of time is spent cutting trees along the road — we weren't able to do that last winter because of how much snow there was, so there's a lot of that work to be done this year," he said.

During the warmer months, crews spend their time patching potholes, replacing culverts, working on catch basins, and conducting other maintenance-related work along county roadways.

Johnson came to Anoka County after years of doing landscaping and garden nursery work, so he had experience operating machinery. He noted experience is

a plus, but the county does train employees on how to use its equipment.



"We learn a lot from working here, and one of the great things about Anoka County is that they invest in the equipment we need to do our jobs well," he said. "All of their equipment is very nice — it's newer and well taken care of, from the loaders all the way down to the chainsaws."

Johnson noted Anoka County usually has a need for more equipment operators, and the benefits to working for the county are many.

"After the union contract was approved by the County Board, wages are going up, so that's great, and the county's retirement package, time off, and emergency medical leave are benefits a lot of other places don't have," he said. "And another reason why I like working here is the culture — the crews and leadership are great to work with. They're helpful and fun to be around, which makes your workdays a lot easier."

# Emergency Communications 911 Dispatcher



Melanie Lloyd, Anoka County Emergency Communications Center (ECC) dispatcher/trainer, is an 8-year veteran of the field, and she enjoys her job because she gets

to be a “voice of calm” to callers in their times of distress.

“I can really set the tone for someone’s worst day — I’m the first person many people speak to during an emergency, and every day I know I’m making a difference in people’s lives.”

Lloyd said to begin a career in emergency dispatching, applicants don’t necessarily need to have a background in a closely related field. Prior to working for Anoka County Emergency Communications, Lloyd was a hairstylist who was going back to school for criminal justice. She said one of her class assignments involved applying for a job that might involve a criminal-justice-type component, so she decided to fill out an application for Anoka County Emergency Communications. Lloyd said she didn’t expect to be called in for an interview, but that’s what happened, and after learning more about dispatching from the interviewing process, she decided to accept the job offer.

Lloyd explained that transitioning into 911 dispatching isn’t as simple as accepting a job and then starting work the next week. She said it was a several-month process from the time she applied for the job until she was fielding live calls.

“They ease into it really well,” she said. “You spend three weeks in the classroom, and you handle mock calls, which are from incidents that actually happened. You listen to the clips, and you have to field them the way you would actually process them.”

Lloyd said there’s a misperception about day-to-day work in 911 dispatching. She explained dispatchers take calls throughout their shifts, but it’s not always life-or-death situations. Oftentimes, they’re responding to callers who just need some help from officers, EMS or fire departments, and dispatchers work to relay information

from those callers to responders who will be dealing with the situations on scene. By the time the responders arrive, the situations might not be as dire as they initially sounded on the phone.

Lloyd said one of the great benefits of the job is occasionally hearing from people she’s helped in an emergency.

“I took a call from a daycare provider who had a baby who was choking,” Lloyd said. “I could hear the baby crying, so I knew the baby was getting some air. I calmed her down, walked her through the situation, and dispatched emergency responders. After I ended the call, the daycare provider called our Emergency Communications Center and asked to speak with me so she could thank me. It’s very touching when you have people thank you like that.”

Lloyd also noted there’s a “family-type” atmosphere at Anoka County 911, which is integral for the success of the dispatchers. Commiserating after difficult days is important, Lloyd said, as is support from dispatchers’ families.

“We’re all in it together, so it’s important to have that caring, fun dynamic,” Lloyd said. “We talk to one another, celebrate birthdays and weddings, and we support each other when times are difficult. It’s really a great place to work.”



## New ECC

Anoka County Emergency Communications will have a new home next year. A 42,000-square-foot Emergency Communications Center/radio shop off Hanson Boulevard in Andover will be finished in mid-to-late summer of 2024. District 5 Anoka County Commissioner Mike Gamache noted the new ECC will be an asset to more than just the dispatchers and radio shop staff.

“This new facility is of tremendous benefit to public safety in our area,” Gamache said. “Our dispatchers will work in an environment that is more conducive to better mental health and teamwork, which benefits them, our emergency responders, and our residents. This facility will also allow us to expand our operations in the future.”



# License and Passport Services Service Center Specialist

Tasha Rodriguez gets to interact with people nearly every day who tell her about interesting places they've visited, the people they're going to marry, and how exciting it is to become a citizen.

Rodriguez has been working primarily on the passport side of the Anoka County License and Passport Center in Coon Rapids for more than five years.

"When I was hired, I was impressed with the amount of training they offered, and that's only grown since I've been here," she said. "Now, when you're new to the job, they have a specific training program that's set out, day by day. It's really a good system."

Rodriguez said there are multiple benefits to the job, and she thoroughly enjoys interacting with customers.

"I like to travel, so when people come in for passports, you get to hear about where they've been or where they're going, whether it's for vacation, a wedding or a honeymoon," she said. "Usually, they're here for a happy reason, and it's fun to connect with people in that way. We are also the first stop for a lot of people who have become citizens, since they can now get passports. We get to be a part of that journey for them, too."

Rodriguez said there are about 60 employees across all of Anoka County's License and Passport Center locations, and Anoka County cross-trains its employees, so wherever help is needed, employees can step in and assist, whether

it's due to a staffing shortage or from higher volumes of customers at certain times.

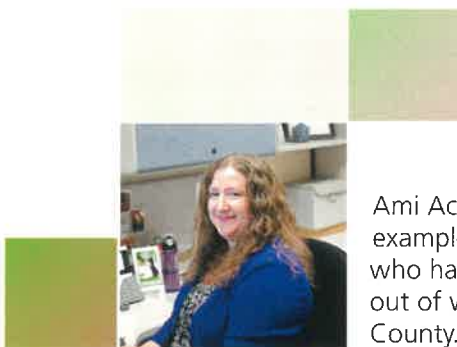
"It's nice that people can move around, because then we're able to help each other out, and nobody is left hanging," she said.

Rodriguez noted there are several benefits to being an Anoka County employee.

"When I started here, I actually took a bit of a pay cut, but it didn't take long before I was making more than at my previous job, she said. "The county just finished a market-based pay analysis, so wages are competitive. I also enjoy the Employees Club, which offers discounts to several things like concerts, movies, live theater performances, and museums — and they set up employee events. My family and I just went to an event at Waldoch Farm, and we had a great time."

Rodriguez said the Anoka County License and Passport Centers are great places to work at for those looking to start a new career.

"You have different work to do every day, and the people you meet are interesting," she said. "It's not monotonous — you're not doing the same thing over and over again. There's variety, and that's why I like working here."



# FM&C Lead Security Specialist

Ami Acker is the prime example of an employee who has made a career out of working for Anoka County. She started with the county in 1998, at

19 years old, and she's held several positions within the Facilities Management and Construction Department (FM&C).

Acker spent 13 years in the custodial services unit, and while she was working in that area she went back to school and obtained her A.S. degree in accounting. Even though she was pursuing further education in a different field, Acker said she really enjoyed FM&C, she'd learned a lot about the department in her years working for the

county, and she had an interest in staying. So, when a position opened in the department's Administration and Security unit, she applied, hoping to further her career at Anoka County.

"I've really continued to grow within Anoka County, and I've moved up over the years within my department. Now, I'm the lead security specialist for FM&C."

Acker explained that some of her job duties include general administration for the department; overseeing the county's card access system to customize access for vendors, contractors, and county departments; troubleshooting issues; and setting up background checks for vendors.

**Article continues on page 8 ...**

### **FM&C from pg. 7 ...**

"I never thought I'd be in a technical/security role, but I really enjoy serving FM&C in this capacity," she said. "FM&C is an interesting department because you get to work with a variety of positions in Maintenance (engineers, electricians, HVAC and plumbing), Custodial Services, Space Planning and Design, Security, Administration, and more."

Acker said Anoka County has allowed her to have a positive work/life balance, she's enjoyed the stability of

her positions, and she likes being part of team of people who care about one another.

"Our management staff encourage us work toward professional and personal goals, staff are recognized for their hard work by management and fellow employees, and the true teamwork and collaboration in our department is something I think we all appreciate," she said. "This, along with several other positive reasons, is why I'm still at Anoka County after 25 years. I'd certainly encourage anyone who is thinking about working for the county to apply and become part of our team."

## **Anoka County Sheriff's Office Detention Deputy**

Have you considered a new and fulfilling career? The Anoka County Sheriff's Office is hiring full-time detention deputies with a starting salary of \$28.75/hour plus great benefits (including pension). Additionally, no prior experience is needed. The role of detention deputy is versatile and brings new experiences and challenges every day.

The Anoka County Jail is a 238-bed facility that houses adult offenders for all law enforcement agencies within the county and the United States Marshals Service. Inmates within the facility are generally pretrial offenders who, if sentenced to incarceration, are transferred to other facilities to serve their sentences.

During their shift, a detention deputy may be assigned to one or more of the following areas of the jail:

### **Booking**

In booking, a detention deputy will process inmates into the facility. This includes conducting inmate searches at intake, inventorying inmate property, conducting medical/mental health assessments, and getting basic classification information from the new intake. The detention deputy will also assess new intakes for appropriate housing. Equally as important is the job of releasing inmates by ensuring they are clear on current charges and not pending charges from other agencies. If they have a hold, the detention deputy ensures they are released to the proper authority with all their property.

### **Housing**

When assigned to a housing unit, the detention deputy is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of up to 60 inmates by enforcing the facility rules and regulations through communication and progressive discipline. Interpersonal communication skills are needed, as the detention deputy will respond to inmate questions and grievances, emergency situations, and conduct cell searches.

### **Central Control**

While working in central control, a detention deputy is responsible for facilitating the movement of staff, volunteers, visitors, and inmates into and out of the jail. As the control room has access to all the many cameras within the facility, they also coordinate responses to emergency situations. They organize the logistics of moving police squads in/out of the sallyport, which is how inmates arrive at the jail. Finally, they serve as a liaison to the public, answering phone calls and disseminating public information.



### **Medical/Kitchen/Laundry/Recreation**

Detention deputies are responsible for overseeing activities outside of the housing units including the medical area, kitchen, laundry facility, and recreation space. While contracted service providers administer some of the above responsibilities, detention deputies are always present to ensure the safety of all inmates and staff.

### **Visiting**

When working in the inmate visiting area, detention deputies serve as a liaison to the public, law enforcement agencies, and professional visitors such as attorneys, doctors, etc. Additionally, they complete bail bonds, assist with virtual court proceedings and virtual meetings via the tablet system, process victim witness/domestic violence forms, and ensure that inmate property set for release is well maintained and processed accordingly.

The Anoka County Sheriff's Office encourages anyone interested in this exceptional career choice to visit [www.anokacountymn.gov/3742/Careers](http://www.anokacountymn.gov/3742/Careers) to learn more and fill out an application.



# Anoka County, Area Cities Working to Meet Adaptive Needs



"I am so grateful to be involved with the Anoka County Adaptive Programming team! I believe our collaboration has opened people's eyes to the struggles of differently abled people in every community. And, in turn, it has made that community that my family is part of feel listened to, supported and a little less alone."  
- Tara Johnson

Life has its challenges, but for parents of children with special needs and varying abilities, life has even greater challenges.

In January of this year, Nicole called Commissioner Julie Jeppson, informing her of the lack of community programs for kids with special needs, like her daughter.

"Parks are turning over aging equipment to include more adaptive and accessible equipment, which is great," Nicole said. "But my daughter isn't very athletic and oftentimes playing at a park is a solo activity. My child, like all children, needs social options so that she can interact

with other kids."

The lack of programs, the distances she must travel to find these programs outside of her community, and the costs associated with them were certainly an obstacle for Nicole and her daughter.

"Before Nicole called me, I had no idea what she and other families go through," Jeppson said. "I'm so thankful that everyone we reached out to has jumped at the chance to be involved."

In response, staff from Anoka County Parks, the Anoka County Library system, and the cities of Blaine and Spring Lake Park, along with parents who Nicole invited, all came together to learn and understand the needs, and how they could be addressed. As a result of that very first meeting, everyone left with ideas and plans they would take back to their departments to start implementing. One of the simplest, quickest, and most inexpensive changes was to install changing tables in bathrooms at county and city buildings so children of varying weights can be changed in a healthy, private, and respectful environment. The City of Spring Lake Park's City Hall remodel and the City of Blaine's Aquatore Bandshell are just two examples where these tables will be available.

*Article continues on page 14 ...*

## ATV, Side-by-Side, Golf Cart Regulations Vary by City

The locations in Anoka County where ATVs, side-by-sides and golf carts can be driven is based upon the class of the vehicle, date of operation and city of operation.

Class 1 ATVs have a width of 50 inches or less, which generally means this type of vehicle is a traditional 4-wheeler. Class 2 ATVs have a width of more than 50 inches but less than 65 inches. This type of vehicle is usually a side-by-side.

Where drivers can operate ATVs in Anoka County is very limited, and all state laws apply, in addition to city codes. The following QR codes can be scanned for ATV code information for cities within Anoka County — this list primarily covers more rural areas of the county. To search city codes via laptop or desktop computer, type in these links:

**Ham Lake:** <https://tinyurl.com/mr2vtdpa>  
**Oak Grove:** <https://tinyurl.com/mvwzx5t3>  
**East Bethel:** <https://tinyurl.com/57wunbrb>  
**Andover:** <https://tinyurl.com/2pcp8w86>  
**Andover map:** <https://tinyurl.com/2v8pxvne>

**Columbus:** <https://tinyurl.com/3du4cwbr>  
**Nowthen:** <https://tinyurl.com/4tmb3a6j>  
**Linwood:** <https://tinyurl.com/4eazyya3>  
**St. Francis:** <https://tinyurl.com/2f9rzv9c>



**1 Ham Lake**  
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**4 Andover**  
Section 6-4-1 


**7 Nowthen**  
Pg. 9 

**2 Oak Grove**  
Section 22-63 

**5 Andover**  
Map 

**8 Linwood**  
Section 26-67 

**3 East Bethel**  
Section 70-85 

**6 Columbus**  
Section 5-503 

**9 St. Francis**  
Pg. 16 

# WORK & PLAY IN THE PARKS



With approximately 6 million visits annually, the Anoka County park system is an incredible asset to county residents and visitors throughout the region by offering unique natural resources, high quality facilities, and outdoor recreation. It takes a dedicated team of staff and volunteers to ensure current and future generations can enjoy these opportunities and every team member is essential in providing impactful experiences for guests. Whether through operations, program delivery, or guest services, each corner of the system allows team members the opportunity to educate, engage and make memories that will last a lifetime. A position in the park system allows for a sense of accomplishment in seeing natural areas flourish while witnessing the positive impact access to the outdoors has for the community. With a variety of opportunities throughout the year, the Parks Department encourages those looking for a rewarding work or volunteer experience to consider applying and joining a dedicated team connecting people to the outdoors.

## WHERE WILL YOU HELP?



PARK MAINTENANCE



NATURAL RESOURCES



PROGRAM & GUEST SERVICES



BUNKER BEACH WATER PARK



CHOMONIX GOLF COURSE



**EMPLOYEE  
EXPERIENCES**



**VOLUNTEER  
OPPORTUNITIES**

*Anoka County News*





## WINTER RECREATION SAMPLER

**DECEMBER 17, 1-3 PM**  
AT WARGO NATURE CENTER  
Ages 5+ - \$7/adult, \$5/child +tax

Try kick sledding, snowshoeing and more!  
Pre-registration required.



## SNOW DAY

**JANUARY 27, 1-4 PM**  
AT WARGO NATURE CENTER  
All Ages - FREE

Try snowshoeing, ice fishing, kick sledding, winter crafts, and watch live animal presentations.



## MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

**MARCH 23, 12-2 PM**  
AT WARGO NATURE CENTER  
All Ages - \$5/person +tax

Learn how to make maple syrup, maple crafts, and go on a scavenger hunt.  
Pre-registration required.

WARGO NATURE CENTER • 7701 Main Street, Lino Lakes, MN

# EXPLORE THIS WINTER

SNOWSHOEING • ICE FISHING • CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING • KICK SLEDDING

## LUNCH WITH A NATURALIST

### WEDNESDAYS

WARGO NATURE CENTER, 11:30AM - 1PM

November 1 (Skulls)	March 6 (Waterfowl)
December 6 (Otters)	April 3 (Maple Syruping)
January 10 (Wolves)	May 1 (Tree Identification)
February 7 (Wildcats of MN)	

**All Ages** Bring your lunch and enjoy a monthly presentation and possible stroll on the trails at Wargo. **FREE!**

## WINTER WILDLIFE TRACKING

### SATURDAYS

WARGO NATURE CENTER, 10AM - 12:30PM

December 9 • December 16 • January 6 • January 13  
February 10 • February 17 • March 2 • March 9

**Ages 14+** Explore the winter landscape of Minnesota with one of Wargo Nature Center's three certified wildlife trackers to learn how to distinguish the numerous tracks and signs of local wildlife.

**\$10/person +tax per single session**  
**\$70/person +tax for all sessions**

**REGISTER TODAY 763-324-3350**  
**ANOKACOUNTYPARKS.COM**





# ANOKA COUNTY LIBRARY

## SAVE THE DATES



### **BOOK SALE** hosted by **Friends of Anoka County Library** Saturday, Jan. 13, 2024

Northtown Library 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.  
Donations to the Friends funds library programs like Summer Adventures, Reading Bridge, and collections like Park Packs and Book Club in a Bag. Visit [tinyurl.com/FriendsofACL](https://tinyurl.com/FriendsofACL)



### **Spring Reading Bridge mentors needed**



Reading Bridge activities build confidence in young readers. One in three Minnesota 4<sup>th</sup> graders cannot read at a basic level for their grade, according to 2022 reading test results -National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

You can help by volunteering to be a reading mentor. Meet with a student at the library for one hour once a week from February - April. Learn more and apply at [tinyurl.com/ACLReadingMentor](https://tinyurl.com/ACLReadingMentor)

### **65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sapphire Jubilee**

Saturday, Nov. 18  
Northtown Library  
10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

*65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1958 - 2023*

Join us and celebrate 65 years of Anoka County Library!

### **Rum Runners: Temperance Tantrums**

Presented by Anoka County Historical Society  
Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024  
Forgotten Star Brewery, Fridley, 6-7 p.m.

Anoka County waged its own wars over liquor before the 18th Amendment went into effect in 1920 and even after it was repealed. This program uses a local lens to look at the battle over booze that divided so many communities.

### **Groove On: Jazz Dance with Rhythmically Speaking!**

Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024  
Centennial Library, 4:30-6 p.m.

Come groove together – learn about how interaction and improvisation inspire jazz music and dance! This interactive performance is for all ages and abilities.

### **Saving Earth Together: Science Powered by Stories** Thursday, March 14, 2024

Bunker Hills Activities Center, 4-5 p.m.  
Experience the fusion of science and interactive stories as the audience helps us act out an adventure about Professor Noble and the Science Heroes, who must save their town from a super-polluting mastermind!



Anoka County News

Visit the online event calendar for information on upcoming events & programs  
[anokacountylibrary.org](http://anokacountylibrary.org)

## READ LOCAL MINNESOTA

**Winter Reads 2024** kicks off Jan. 1 and marks the next chapter of featured local authors. Read Local and use the Beanstack Tracker app to track your reads & share book reviews year-round, visit [tinyurl.com/ACLBeanstack](http://tinyurl.com/ACLBeanstack). During the Winter Reads challenge, readers can also complete activities and earn digital badges and access bonus levels in Beanstack.

 **beanstack -Track your reads!**



Author, **Curtis Sittenfeld**

## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Local Author Fair

**Saturday, Feb. 24, 2024**

**Northtown Library, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

– Don't miss Anoka County's literary event of the year, the highlight of Winter Reads.

Come meet writers from our community and purchase signed copies of their books. Best-selling author Curtis Sittenfeld will give the keynote address at 10:15 a.m. followed by the featured authors fair at 11 a.m.



Featured Local Authors 2023

## Keep warm, explore hobbies and connect with loved ones this winter with the library.

Video games, board games, Binge Box DVD sets, cookware, book club bags, and Memory Maker kits are all available for free indoor activities. Place holds in the catalog at [tinyurl.com/ACLSpecialCollections](http://tinyurl.com/ACLSpecialCollections)

Librarian recommends:

### DECEMBER



- **Springerle Rolling Pin**
- **Unwrap the Classics**  
Holiday favorites  
- Binge Box DVDs
- **Memory Maker Kit 20:**  
Spark seasonal memories with a snow-themed puzzle, *Winter's Solstice* CD, and 1940 Armistice Day blizzard book

Librarian recommends:

### JANUARY



- **Electric Fondue Pot**
- **Knitting with Craftsy**  
- Binge Box DVDs
- **Memory Maker Kit 1:**  
Set the tone for your new year with classical music, *365 Days of Renewal* book, & *TRIO* card game

Librarian recommends:

### FEBRUARY



- **Silicone Candy Mold**
- **Indie Romance Films**  
- Binge Box DVDs
- **Memory Maker Kit 12:**  
Bond over your love of sports with *Spot It!* Sports game, *Minnesota Sports Almanac*, & *Great Moments in Sports* CD



# Safeguards in Place to Protect Elections

## Voter Registration

Key safeguards are in place before, during and after voting to maintain secure elections in Anoka County.

In the next four issues of the Anoka County News, there will be information regarding various aspects of secure elections: voter registration and public accuracy tests, Election Day activities, voting machine counts, and the post-election review. After publication in the Anoka County News, these articles will be available on the county's website, [anokacountymn.gov/3966/Election-Integrity](http://anokacountymn.gov/3966/Election-Integrity). More information on the elections process in Anoka County can also be found on this site.

### Voter registration

Anoka County continually updates its voter rolls as required by Minnesota law. The county performs updates daily as new information is received. Registrations and registration updates come to the county from a variety of sources, including:

- Directly from the voter via paper applications.
- Directly from the voter via online registrations/updates.
- DVS (Driver and Vehicle Services).
- DOH (Department of Health).
- USPS (US Postal Service).
- DOC (Department of Corrections).
- ERIC (Group of states that share registration information).

The identity of all registrants is verified by either sending the registrant's driver's license number to DVS or sending the last four digits of the registrant's social security number to the Social Security Administration. Each address is then verified by sending a postal verification card to the address provided by the registrant. If a registrant's identity cannot be confirmed through those methods, then that registrant is marked as "challenged." A voter whose registration is challenged must complete additional steps prior to being allowed to vote.

### Public Accuracy Tests

Prior to every election, the equipment to be used in that

election must be tested to ensure accuracy and that it is working as intended. This process is referred to as Preliminary Testing and includes the DS200 voting machines that will be used in the polling locations as well as the DS450 and DS850 high throughput scanners and tabulators used by Anoka County for processing absentee ballots. The Public Accuracy Test (PAT) is a public demonstration of that testing. There are certain requirements that must be met for this test laid out by statute:



- Notice of the PAT must be posted and published at least 48 hours in advance.
- Two election judges of different major parties must witness the test.
- The testing of the voting systems and programs must be with the test deck — there is a test deck for each precinct.

All test ballots must be marked "TEST." The test deck includes all scenarios for how a ballot might be marked by a voter:

- Valid votes for each candidate or question on the ballot.
- Overvotes: Vote for one candidate but two are chosen.
- Undervotes: Vote for two candidates but only one is chosen.
- Blank ballots in which no positions have been voted.
- Ballots marked by the omniballot (assistive voting device).
- Ballots marked by hand.
- At least one test ballot must be intentionally damaged so that it is unreadable by the machine.

In election jurisdictions with more than three precincts, a minimum of three precincts must be tested. In a jurisdiction with three or less precincts, all precincts must be tested.

### Adaptive Needs from pg. 9 ...

#### Anoka County Parks

Within the Anoka County Park system, the entire guest experience is being examined to see how universal design and adaptive needs can be met within facilities, equipment and programs. A variety of programs are in development that will provide inclusive and adaptive opportunities to engage with nature, animals, and peer-to-peer interaction. To help deliver these new program offerings, a grant application is being submitted to secure equipment, such as track wheelchairs for off trail access, modified kayaks and water entry chairs, and adaptive ski equipment for winter recreation.

#### Anoka County Library System

Last year, the Library system obtained sensory kits with items like fidget spinners and noise-canceling headphones to help make visiting the library more enjoyable for people of all abilities. The Library also started offering Sensory-Friendly Storytimes for families with young children with special needs. Based on input from families, the Library offered adaptive cooking and art classes that paired teens with disabilities with peer buddies to learn and create together this summer. While their students were in class, parents had the opportunity to meet other caregivers in a supportive space led by special educator Rachel Jorgensen, author of "Supporting Your Child with Special Needs: 50 Fundamental Tools for Families." You can find adaptive and sensory-friendly programs on the Library's event calendar at [tinyurl.com/ACLAdaptiveEvents](http://tinyurl.com/ACLAdaptiveEvents).





## 'Tire Fishing' Project Leads to a Cleaner Rum River

One of the most recent and unique conservation projects on the Rum River started with an idea from an Anoka County resident and avid river kayaker.

Over the summer, with the clear and low water conditions, the resident noticed multiple tires in the river and crafted the idea to reach out to Andover High School to explore a potential tire removal project with the students. The resident also recorded the locations of

the highest concentrations of the tires.



As a result, Bob Ameli, an Outdoor Adventures/Environmental Science teacher at Andover High School, coordinated a "tire fishing" project Sept. 18. Ameli coordinated and deployed 65 students in 28 canoes on a mission to extract tires from the river between 219th Avenue in Oak Grove and Rum River Central Regional Park in Ramsey. Remarkably, the students removed more than 200 tires. The tires were picked up free of charge by the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District. The tire fishing project concluded at Rum River Central Regional Park, where the students enjoyed a cookout lunch to celebrate their hard work and accomplishments.

The Anoka County Parks Department is incredibly grateful to the Anoka County resident who came up with the idea, Mr. Ameli, and the 65 motivated students from Andover High School who made a difference on the Rum River with their remarkable cleanup project," said District 3 Commissioner Jeff Reinert. "Meaningful efforts such as these reinforce and strengthen the community-based environmental stewardship and teamwork that play a vital role in preserving the quality of the Rum River into the future."

## WHEN BUSINESSES RECYCLE, WE ALL WIN!

Anoka County offers resources to encourage business recycling.

**Grants**  
The county provides up to \$10,000 for equipment and supplies to help a business recycle more.

**FREE Technical Assistance**  
An expert will visit a site to help find ways to reduce waste, design a new or improved recycling program, or get started with organics recycling.

**FREE Labels**  
Labels are an essential part of an effective recycling program. The county offers a variety of label types to fit a business's need.

Call **763-324-3481** or visit **AnokaBizRecycle.com** for more details

**AnokaBizRecycle**

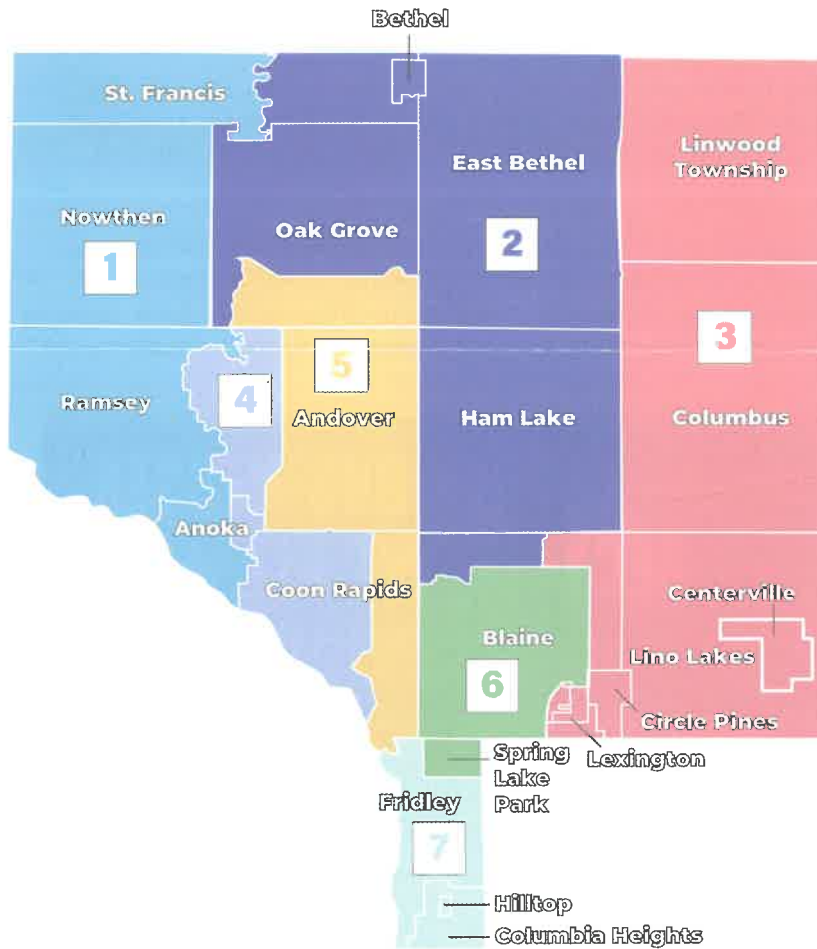
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*Visit our website!*

## ANOKA COUNTY LEADERSHIP

763-324-4700



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 COMMISSIONER



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 DISTRICT 2  
 COMMISSIONER



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 DISTRICT 3  
 COMMISSIONER



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 COMMISSIONER



*Mandy Meisner*  
 DISTRICT 7  
 COMMISSIONER



*Brad Wise*  
 COUNTY  
 SHERIFF



*Brad Johnson*  
 COUNTY  
 ATTORNEY

County board meetings are generally held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at 9:30 a.m. in Room 705 of the Anoka County Government Center in Anoka. Watch board meetings live at [anokacountymn.gov](http://anokacountymn.gov). "Anoka County News" is produced by Anoka County Communications, Erik Thorson, Chief Officer, 763-324-4612 [publicinfo@anokacountymn.gov](mailto:publicinfo@anokacountymn.gov) • [anokacountymn.gov/newsletter](http://anokacountymn.gov/newsletter)  
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