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ARTS & CULTURE

Bloomington-Normal is a community that fosters creativity. The community has multiple venues dedicated to visual and performing art exhibitions; community events and festivals; and local and national history, creating a vibrant artist population, enriching cultural experience, and historical significance. Residents and visitors are often unable to capture the full essence of the community, resulting from insufficient promotion and a lack of public awareness. As a result, Bloomington's artistic and cultural value remains a hidden gem. Throughout the Bloomington-Normal community there is an abundance of opportunities to explore and be enchanted.

over
900
Working Artists

Annual Events &
25+
Festivals

over
30
Studios &
Galleries

Average of
12,000
at the
Illinois Shakespeare
Festival

KEY FINDINGS

Bloomington-Normal has a vibrant community of artists. Over 900 people—roughly 1% of the workforce—are employed in the arts, with many more amateur and student artists making valuable contributions. This compares favorably to other Central Illinois cities and even larger metropolitan areas such as Chicago.

Bloomington-Normal is home to dozens of annual, one-time, and seasonal festivals, fairs, and other events, giving residents and visitors a plethora of year-round opportunities for entertainment and involvement. The weekly Farmers' Market and the summer Illinois Shakespeare Festival are two particularly popular events, with the Farmers' Market drawing an estimated 85,000 attendees and the Shakespeare Festival drawing over 12,000.

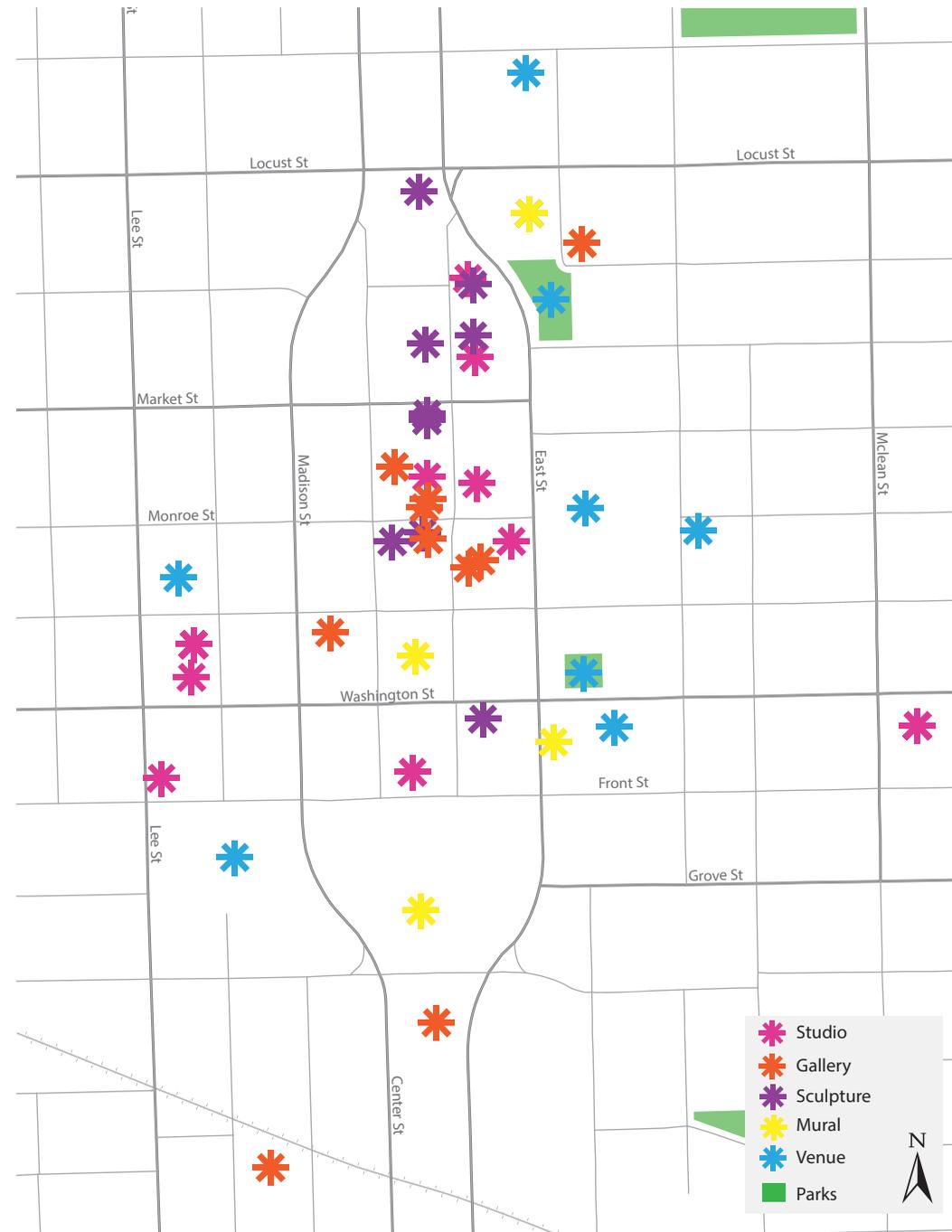
Downtown Bloomington is the cultural center of the community. Many artists live and work here, and there is a higher concentration of performing arts venues, galleries, and works of public art Downtown than anywhere else in the Bloomington-Normal community.

Despite Bloomington-Normal's many arts and culture amenities, there is no central online clearinghouse for arts and culture information. As a result, it can be difficult for residents and tourists to discover everything the community has to offer.

Across the country, communities have come to recognize the importance of arts, culture, and history as necessary elements to be interwoven into the fabric of a community. Each element plays an important role in fostering the success of a community. The arts have the power to inspire and connect people and cultures through all media such as music, dance, theatre and the visual arts. When a community's arts scene flourishes, residents and tourists alike find themselves in the midst of a desirable atmosphere. Arts and culture distinguish a community, creating a unique experience and enhancing the quality of life.

These elements expand beyond their initial intrinsic quality of life benefits; they also contribute a positive economic impact by increasing tourism and revenue; driving community development; attracting new businesses and a skilled, educated workforce; and propelling urban renewal. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, arts and cultural production contributed more than \$698 billion to the U.S. economy, 4.32 percent to the U.S. Gross Domestic Product in 2012. Over 4.7 million people were employed through arts and cultural productions, and those jobs had a ripple effect: every 100 jobs created from the demand for the arts leads to an additional 62 jobs in other fields. Partnering with the arts helps businesses "recruit talent," "put your company in the spotlight," "advance corporate objectives and strategies," "foster critical thinking," "engage your employees," "embrace diversity and team building," "say thanks," and "contribute

MAP OF CULTURAL AMENITIES IN DOWNTOWN BLOOMINGTON



to the economy and quality of life.” The economic impact of the arts can be felt locally as well as nationally: McLean County residents spent about \$418 per capita in selected categories of arts-related expenditures in 2013, as compared to \$346 in Peoria County, \$356 in Macon County, \$383 in Sangamon County, and \$388 in Champaign County¹.

There are abundant opportunities to experience arts, culture, and history in Bloomington-Normal, at a variety of venues and through a variety of media. The most thriving area of arts, culture, and history within the community is Downtown Bloomington, which contains Bloomington-Normal's highest density of artistic and cultural amenities. Downtown includes the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts (BCPA), a performing arts venue and City department dedicated to promoting arts and culture in the community; the McLean County Museum of History; the US Cellular Coliseum; and an assortment of other studios, galleries, and venues. This density of cultural activity represents an opportunity for the City to officially promote Downtown as the City's cultural district. A well-supported district with boundaries stretching across the entire Downtown area could serve as a powerful marketing tool.

Beyond Downtown Bloomington, there are many additional opportunities to be exposed to arts, culture, and history across the community. Bloomington-Normal's two universities, Illinois State University and Illinois Wesleyan University, offer unique contributions to the development and incor-

poration of arts, culture, and history as a college community. The universities are leaders in fostering environments that allow ideas to cascade into the community. Continuing to develop partnerships between the City and universities can provide residents, students, and visitors the opportunity to experience this artistic, cultural, and historical community.

Beyond Downtown Bloomington, there are many additional opportunities to be exposed to arts, culture and history across the community. Many of these opportunities come through the community's excellent education systems. Bloomington-Normal has four higher education institutions—Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Heartland Community College, and Lincoln College. These colleges and universities produce high-quality art and are leaders in fostering a creative culture that allows ideas to cascade into the community. Continuing to develop partnerships between the City and universities can provide residents, students, and visitors the opportunity to experience

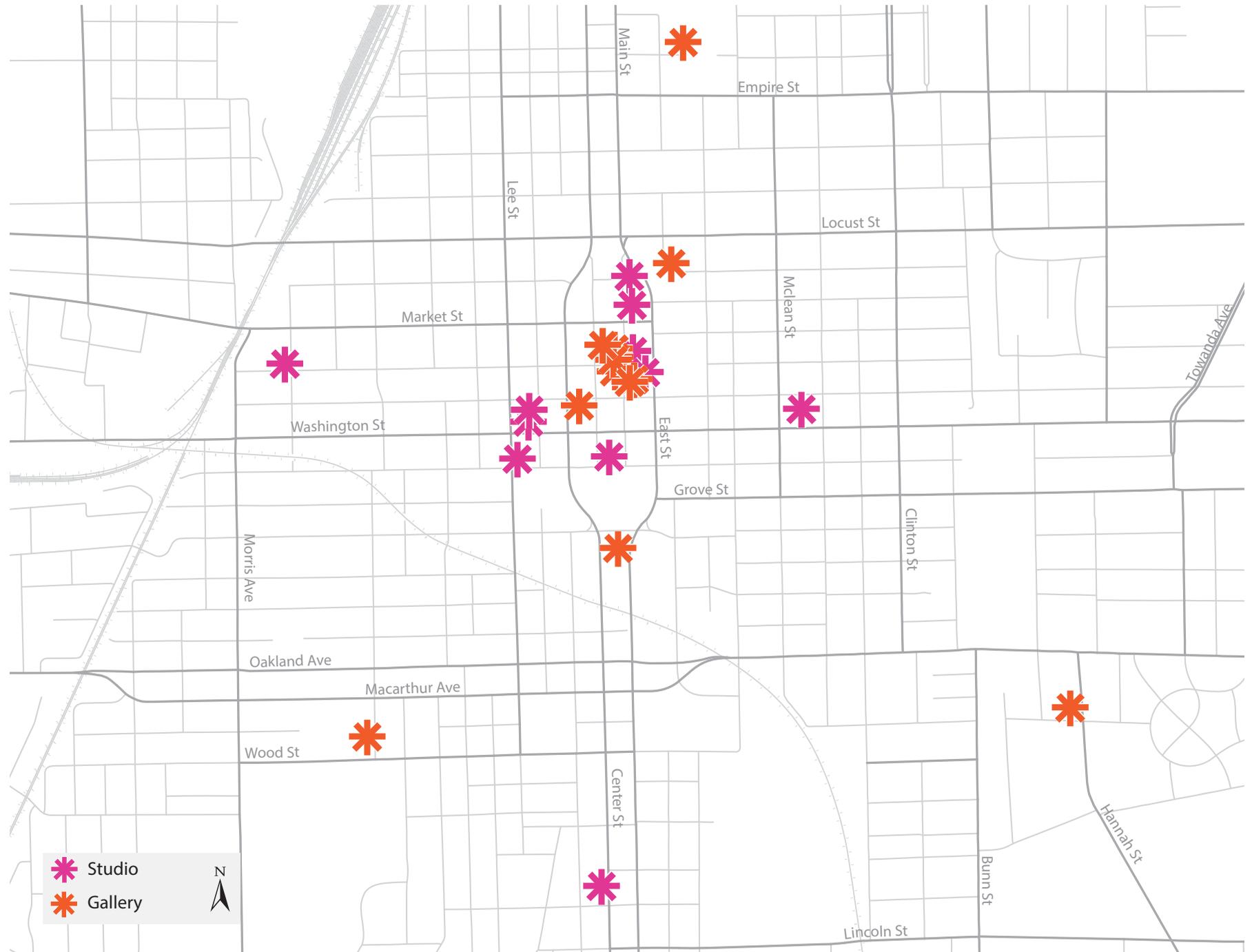
Footnotes:

1) National Endowment for the Arts. (2015). *Surprising Findings in Three New NEA Reports on the Arts*. Available at <http://arts.gov/news/2015/surprising-findings-three-new-nea-reports-arts>

2) Americans for the Arts. (2015). *8 Reasons to Partner with the Arts*. Retrieved from <http://www.partnership-movement.org/the-movement/>

3) Americans for the Arts. (2015). *Local Arts Index – Where I Live*. Available at <http://www.artsindexusa.org/where-i-live>. Accessed 3 April 2015. The categories in question were: entertainment admission fees, recorded media, musical instruments, photographic equipment and supplies, and reading materials.

MAP OF GALLERIES AND STUDIOS



this artistically, culturally, and historically rich community.

Primary and secondary education students in Bloomington-Normal also have many opportunities to be exposed to the arts. Each year, an estimated 15,000+ students from pre-K through high school participate in arts enrichment programs hosted by local arts organizations such as the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts (BCPA), McLean County Arts Center (MCAC), and others. These programs help keep the arts alive and thriving in each new generation.

ARTISTS

Bloomington-Normal hosts a vibrant community of artists. Professional, semi-professional, and amateur painters, photographers, musicians, actors, designers, sculptors, glassmakers, metalworkers, jewelers, woodworkers, writers, and more call Bloomington-Normal home. Many of these artists own their own businesses and have been rooted in the community for a long time. Their presence in the community is difficult to measure

Footnotes:

4) National Endowment for the Arts. (2013). Artists by Metropolitan Statistical Area Residence. Available at <http://arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/data-profiles/data-profile-1/dp1-nea-tables-eeo-2006-2010-data>. These numbers are based on 5-year American Community Survey estimates (2006-2010). ACS figures have a larger margin of error than those of the 10-year Census and must thus be treated more cautiously. The NEA includes actors, announcers, architects, fine artists, art directors, animators, dancers, choreographers, designers, and other entertainers in its count of total artists.

MAP PUBLIC ART



precisely but is clearly substantial. Workforce estimates based on the American Community Survey suggest that roughly one percent of the Bloomington-Normal MSA labor force are employed in artistic professions. This percentage is comparable to estimates for Decatur (0.6%), Springfield (0.9%), Peoria (1.2%), and Champaign-Urbana (1.4%). Other talented artists are not captured by labor force data due to amateur or student status.

The difficulty of quantification does not make it any less apparent that Bloomington-Normal has a strong, well-established community of artists. Over the course of the next 20 years, Bloomington's challenge is to promote and support this community at the local and regional levels to make arts and culture an even greater contributor to the area's high quality of life.

VISUAL ARTS

There is a strong presence of visual art and artists in Bloomington. Artists bring Bloomington to life by producing art in various media that is displayed in a number of studios and galleries throughout the community. Many of these studios and galleries are located Downtown. Approximately 30 working studios are clustered in Downtown; as of 2015, ten of these regularly open their doors to the public for the Downtown Art Walk, one of the First Friday events put on by the Downtown Bloomington Association. Another popular First Friday event is the Area Arts Showcase, started in May of 2012, where studios open and additional sidewalk events are held. Other studios are open periodically

for lessons or special occasions. Some of the local artists who work Downtown also reside in the same buildings that house their studios and galleries.

Other visual art venues can be found throughout the community. The colleges and universities are particular hotbeds of artistic activity. Illinois State University (ISU), Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU), and Heartland Community College all have public galleries that display art produced by faculty, students, and local artists. Many university art students remain in the community upon graduation, bolstering the ranks of working artists in Bloomington-Normal.

PUBLIC ART

Local artists have helped bring Bloomington to life by celebrating its art, culture, and history through displays of public art. A diverse array of statues, sculptures, and murals are on display throughout the community for residents and tourists. Through these works of art, artists give back to the community. In addition to making Bloomington more aesthetically pleasing, many of



the pieces provide opportunities for residents and tourists to learn about the community's culture and history.

With the assistance of the City of Bloomington, the Downtown Bloomington Association has established a Mural Committee within their existing Design Committee. The Mural Committee reviews design applications and select projects to be pursued.

PERFORMING ARTS

The Bloomington-Normal area has a multitude of performing arts venues. Major Downtown venues include the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts (BCPA), the Castle Theatre, and the US Cellular Coliseum, which host high-quality concerts, plays, and other events. Additional venues can be found beyond Downtown and throughout the community, including the stately Ewing Manor & Cultural Center, Normal's Corn Crib, the Normal Theater, and the Miller Park Pavilion. These venues host a wide variety of music, dance, theatre, and other performing arts events.

In addition to the various community venues, ISU and IWU are significant contributors to the performing arts scene in Bloomington-Normal. Each year the universities put on quality music, dance, and theatre productions, while their facilities also attract nationally known acts. The Heartland Theatre Company, the Community Players, and Illinois Theatre Consortium are three additional community organizations that produce professional-quality plays throughout the year.

Bloomington Center for Performing Arts (BCPA)

Concerts by the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, popular musicians, comedians, and ballet companies; Bruegala, the city's annual craft beer festival; musicals; and a variety of other events all happen at BCPA. The theatre can seat 1,320 patrons throughout the main floor and balcony, and the downstairs ballroom/banquet hall can accommodate 1,000.

Website: <http://www.cityblm.org/?page=7>



Bloomington-Normal Community Concert Band (CCB)

Sponsored by the Bloomington Parks and Rec Department, the CCB has around 70 volunteers from the Central Illinois area. The band performs at a variety of venues throughout the year, including Miller Park, Wesley Methodist Church, Westminster Village, and every-Thursday-night summer concerns in Franklin Park, as well as parades in Lexington, Hudson, Towanda and other locations.

Castle Theatre

Rich in architectural details such as gilded columns, ornate friezes and art deco-inspired chandeliers, the Castle is the perfect link between Bloomington's past, present and future. First opened in 1916 as a 1,000-seat theater, the Castle was a jewel in the series of gens created by the legendary theater builders Balaban & Katz, original inventors of the classic movie palace. For decades, the property served as one of the area's premier destinations. The Castle has been restored to its former glory with a \$1.5 million renovation. With a diverse mix of live music, corporate, public and private events, the Castle is poised to once again strike the right note in the future of Bloomington's cultural life.
Website: <http://www.thecastletheatre.com/about-the-castle/>



Community Players Theatre

Community Players is a charitable, nonprofit theatrical organization dedicated to the idea that live theater enhances the quality of life for our audiences, our participants, and the community. The Community Players present six productions, both musical and non-musical, per season, and host auditions that are open to everyone in central Illinois, regardless of age or previous theater experience.
Website: <http://www.communityplayers.org>

Heartland Jazz Orchestra

Formed in 1999, The Heartland Jazz Orchestra (HJO) is dedicated to preserving and furthering the classical music of America, Jazz. Their concerts feature some of the finest musicians in Central Illinois, who join with regional and national artists to create a wide variety of Jazz experiences for our communities.
Website: <http://hjojazz.com/>

Heart of Illinois Chorus

Heart of Illinois Chorus is a membership organization of female singers, who meet to practice, perform, socialize, and have fun. The Chorus provides entertainment and music education for our community. The group performs two annual shows at Illinois Central College in East Peoria. In the spring of every year, Heart of Illinois Chorus participates in the Midwest Region 3 chorus competition, whose winners travel to the International Competition.
Website: <http://www.hoichorus.com/>

Heartland Theatre

Heartland Theatre Company has been a professional-quality, non-profit organization since 1986. Besides presenting a season of five plays each year, Heartland hosts an annual 10-Minute Play Festival and a one-act competition and workshop for Midwest playwrights. Heartland occasionally partners with local universities and organizations to offer historical or musical theatre to the community.
Website: <http://heartlandtheatre.org>

Illinois Barbershop Harmony Society

The Illinois Barbershop Harmony Society district is one of seventeen regional districts within the Society, and has ushered ten quartets, four senior's quartets, and three choruses to the coveted International Gold. In addition to competing at the district and national levels, the local district also provides a number of educational and coaching opportunities for young artists through the programs such as Youth In Harmony and IDAH.
Website: <http://www.illinoisdistrict.org/about-us/>

Illinois State University Braden Auditorium

See "Illinois State University" in the Organizations Promoting Arts and Culture section.

Illinois State University School of Theatre and Dance

See "Illinois State University" in the Organizations Promoting Arts and Culture section.

Illinois State University School of Music
See "Illinois State University" in the Organizations Promoting Arts and Culture section.

Illinois Symphony Orchestra

The Illinois Symphony Orchestra (ISO) is a full-sized, regional orchestra based in central Illinois. The ISO serves as a vital cultural resource, an educational partner, and an invaluable enhancement to the quality of life in Bloomington-Normal and Springfield. In its Bloomington performances, the ISO performs at the BCPA and Second Presbyterian Church in Bloomington. Having numerous performance locations enables the orchestra to bring diverse repertoire and live musical experiences to audiences of all ages and backgrounds in both urban and rural settings.
Website: <http://www.ilsymphony.org>

Illinois Theatre Consortium

The Illinois Theatre Consortium is a non-profit theatre organization that serves three unique theatre companies: the Illinois Voices Theatre, New Route Theatre, and Seedling Theatre. These companies strive to give opportunities to all artists interesting in performing, designing, direct/write, and much more.
Website: <http://www.itconstage.org/About%20Us.html>

Illinois Wesleyan Civic Orchestra

See "Illinois Wesleyan University" in the Organizations Promoting Arts and Culture section.
Website: <http://blogs.iwu.edu/iwco/>

about-the-orchestra/

Illinois Wesleyan School of Music

See “Illinois Wesleyan University” in the Organizations Promoting Arts and Culture section.

Website: <https://www.iwu.edu/music/about-us/>

Illinois Wesleyan School of Theatre Arts

See “Illinois Wesleyan University” in the Organizations Promoting Arts and Culture section.

Website: <https://www.iwu.edu/theatre/>;
<https://www.iwu.edu/theatre/box-office.html>

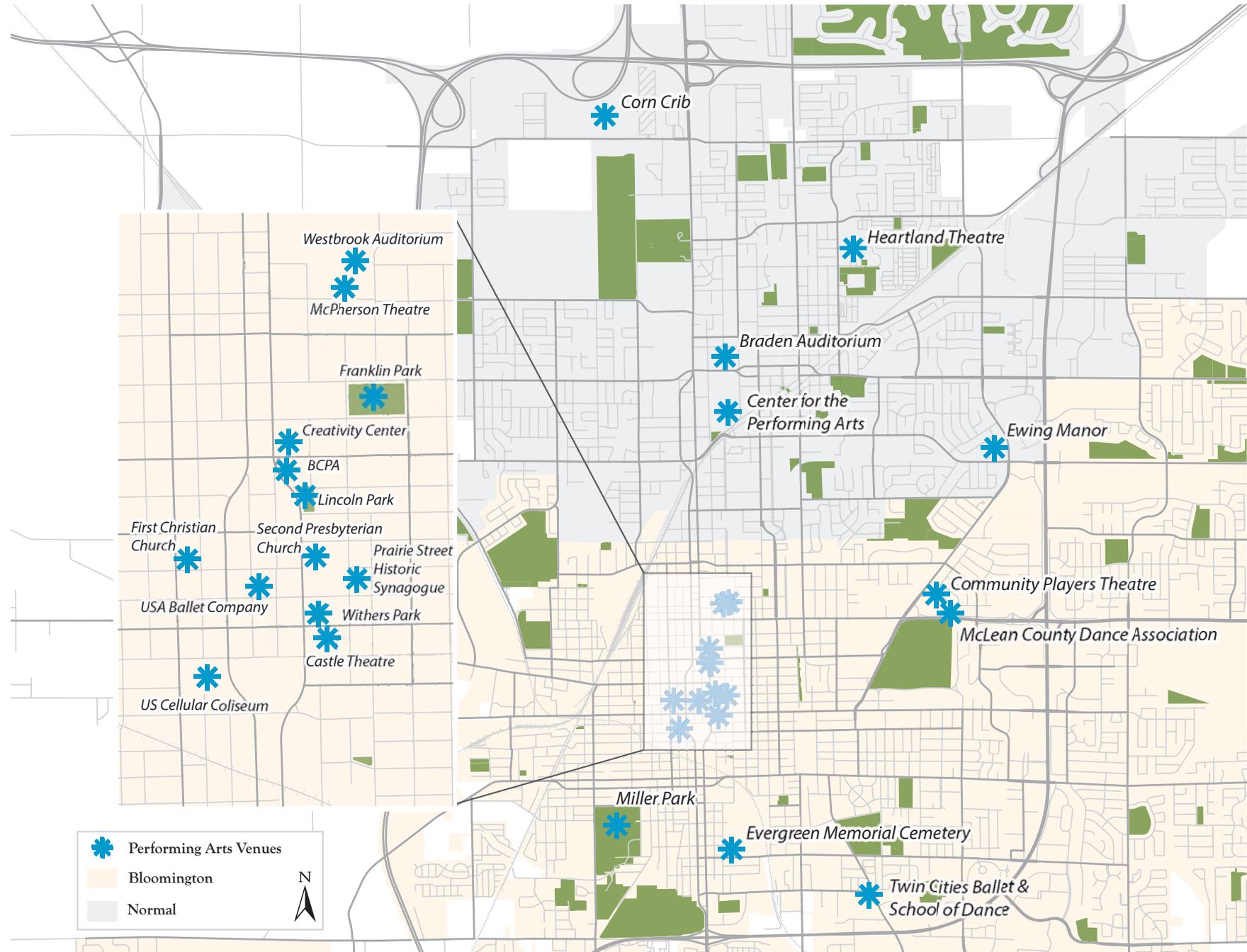
McLean County Dance Association

The McLean County Dance Association offers a harmonious, diverse environment that fosters creativity and appreciation of the art of dance, offering classes in ballet, modern, jazz, tap, creative, hip-hop and musical theater. Two performance companies are affiliated with The Dance Association: Bloomington Ballet and Contemporary Dance Theatre. Website: <http://www.mcleancountydance.org/>

Prairie Fire Theatre

Prairie Fire Theatre is a unique musical experience. The brainchild of local artist Robert Mangialardi, Prairie Fire is a theatrical group dedicated to bringing professional first-rate musical theatre and light opera to the local community. Prairie Fire has staged three to four musical theatre events each year since

MAP PERFORMING ARTS VENUES



incorporating in 1998. The majority of these performances are held on the campus of Illinois Wesleyan University, but the company prides itself in taking musical theatre to non-traditional community settings.

Website: <http://www.prairiefiretheatre.org/>

Sound of Illinois Chorus

The Bloomington chapter of the Illinois District of the Barbershop Harmony has brought barber shop harmony to audiences in Central Illinois since its founding in 1942. Many international champion quartets have appeared on the SOI stage, which has always been the Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts. The SOI is a regular performer in Bloomington's Concert Under the Stars series at Miller Park; the Sounds of Christmas program in December, organized by The Music Shoppe of Normal, promoted by WJBC Radio, and hosted by State Farm Insurance Companies. The Sound of Illinois also organizes and finances a day-long festival each fall that provides free vocal education and training for Central Illinois high school music educators and their students. Held in Bloomington-Normal, the workshop also receives support from the Illinois District of BHS and Region 5 of Sweet Adelines International.

Website: <http://soundofillinois.org>

Sugar Creek Cloggers

The Sugar Creek Cloggers are a clog dance group which performs at fairs, festivals, reunions, and other events throughout Central Illinois. Clogging is a uniquely American

form of dance originating in the Appalachian Mountains. The influences of English step-dancing, Irish jigs, German high kicks, Indian ceremonial dances, and buck dances of African Americans are all clearly evident in modern clogging. Beginner lessons are offered twice a year.

Website: <http://www.sugarcreekcloggers.org>

Twin Cities Ballet and School of Dance

Twin Cities School of Dance, provides community residents the opportunity to receive quality dance instruction for all ages. A primary focus is on classical ballet technique, which provides a strong foundation for all other dance forms. Other classes offered include tap, jazz, latin jazz, hip hop, modern, lyrical, performance, and Zumba. The professional background of the artistic directors provides the more serious student with the knowledge and training necessary to prepare for a career in dance.

Website: <http://www.tcbdance.com>

US Cellular Coliseum

The U.S. Cellular Coliseum hosts a variety of events including concerts, family shows, ice shows, motor sports and trade shows. Attached to the arena is the Pepsi Ice Center, which is a public ice rink run by Bloomington Parks & Rec. The center features open skating, lessons and hockey leagues and is also the home of the State Farm Holiday Classic, one of the largest coed high school holiday basketball tournament in the nation. The Coliseum is publicly rentable for private meetings and wedding receptions.

Website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Cellular_Coliseum

USA Ballet and Academy

The USA Ballet Academy is an internationally acclaimed ballet school in the Bloomington/Normal community. The Academy features classes in a wide variety of styles, including two-week-long intensive studies during the summer months and a youth ensemble for ages 8 to 17. USA Ballet also provides children's workshops and outreach programs.

Website: <http://www.usaballet.us/>

Wrainbow Ballroom & Dance Studio

The Wrainbow Ballroom is a locally-owned and operated social ballroom dance lesson facility located in Bloomington. Lessons include a combination of International and American Smooth dance styles in addition to ballroom Latin dances.

Website: <http://wrainbowballroom.com>

33rd Illinois Volunteer Regiment Band

An authentic re-creation of the actual Civil War-era band that was mustered at Illinois State Normal University in 1861, the 33rd Illinois Volunteer Regiment Band has performed for historic programs, school events, and civic events throughout the Midwest, including many performances in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, Kentucky, and Wisconsin. The band also plays at military balls and conducts education programs that address the history of the Civil War era brass band movements and the evolution

of brass instruments. The band's uniforms, sewn from natural wool fibers, are authentic in every detail and are patterned from actual specimens worn by the Union soldier. The authenticity in dress presents the audience with the most accurate appearance possible. Website: <http://33rdband.com>

Galleries

Various galleries throughout Bloomington-Normal host music series and other workshops in addition to showing visual exhibits. Galleries include the McLean County Art Center, Cometogatherstudios, Eaton Gallery, and Timothy Kent Gallery.

Parks

Community residents and visitors have the opportunity to visit and enjoy great music throughout the summer at various local parks. Lincoln Park, Withers Park, Franklin Park, and Miller Park are all great venues to hear summer concerts.

Restaurants-

Restaurants and cafés are always popular venues to come out and hear live music performances. The Coffee Hound and Epiphany Farms Restaurant are two local businesses that support various music groups. Local bars such as Baxter's, Maguire's, Fat Jack's, and Six Strings also offer live music throughout the year.

Religious Institutions

Many religious organizations throughout Bloomington-Normal host musical and theat-

rical events put on by local community members and organizations. These venues include 2nd Presbyterian Church, First Christian Church, and the North Prairie Street Historic Synagogue.

Other venues – Bloomington Public Library hosts a summer concert series with various performers for adults and children alike to enjoy. The McLean County Museum of History hosts a variety of theater, music and special events throughout the year.

ORGANIZATIONS PROMOTING ARTS AND CULTURE

Many private and public organizations throughout Bloomington-Normal are dedicated to advocating for arts and culture in the community. Some of these organizations focus on promoting arts and culture to residents and tourists; however, among these organizations there is no unified, comprehensive calendar for events. To optimize the arts and culture experience in Bloomington-Normal, creating a single community events calendar – accessible from all sites – is essential to increase awareness and sponsoring the artistic and cultural community. Other organizations in the community work to incorporate arts and culture into existing community programs for local residents.

Area Arts Round Table (AART)

The Area Arts Round Table is a consortium of local arts groups that work to promote the artistic and cultural life in the Bloomington-Normal Community. The mission of this

organization is “Stimulating Arts Participation by Encouraging Cooperation and Building Leadership in the Arts Community.” The AART provides information to community members about current, local arts and culture events. On the AART website, events are posted to a calendar and are organized by category. The AART has a variety of committees to be involved in as well as many opportunities for members.

Website: <http://www.areaartsroundtable.org/>

Bloomington-Normal Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)

The CVB is a publicly funded organization that provides Bloomington-Normal residents and tourists with information pertaining to all facets of life within the community. Each year the CVB publishes a visitor guide containing local amenities, including major arts and culture attractions and a calendar of events happening throughout the area.

Website: <http://www.visitbn.org>

Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts (BCPA)

The BCPA is not only a venue; it is the City’s primary cultural arm. Aside from the concerts and other events it holds, the BCPA supports a variety of arts and culture activities throughout the area. It also works with the volunteer Cultural District Commission, which meets each month at the Creativity Center, the BCPA’s administrative offices, to advise the BCPA on arts and culture issues.

Website: <http://www.cityblm.org/index.aspx?page=378>;

<http://www.cityblm.org/index.aspx?page=472>

Conexiones Latinas de McLean County

The Conexiones Latinas de McLean County is a non-profit organization is dedicated to serving Latino families in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County. Through educational as well as arts and culture programming, volunteers work to provide families



with more opportunities and celebrate the Latino community.

Website: <http://conexionesmc.org/>

Downtown Bloomington Association (DBA)

The DBA is a non-profit organization that works to enhance and revitalize Downtown Bloomington. First Fridays (First Fridays) is the DBA’s largest community-based event, which unites businesses and residents with fun opportunities to experience local arts and culture. During the summer months, the DBA hosts the Farmer’s Market which includes farm products and exhibiting artists. Website: <http://downtownbloomington.org/>

Illinois State University (ISU)

Illinois State’s College of Fine Arts offers a wide variety of academic programs. The School of Theatre and Dance provides pre-professional training to dedicated young actors, dancers, designers, directors, and educators for both graduates and undergraduates. The School of Music offers ten programs for undergraduates and six for graduates, encompassing performance, composition, music business, and even music therapy. The School of Art offers five undergraduate and three graduate programs for a diverse array of media and career options. ISU’s several public venues help it to be perhaps the single largest contributor to the Bloomington-Normal arts and culture scene. The ISU Center for Performing Arts hosts a full calendar of musical, theatre, and dance productions, while the University Galleries and Transpace Gallery hold exhibitions of student and faculty work that are open to the public. Ewing Manor, which is owned by the Illinois State University Foundation, hosts the well-regarded Illinois Shakespeare Festival, an ISU-run project jointly supported by the School of Theatre and Dance and the College of Fine Arts. Braden Auditorium, with its 3,457 seats, is one of the largest venues in town and hosts Broadway shows, touring companies, concerts, ballets, conferences, and other events.

Website: <http://finearts.illinoisstate.edu/>

Illinois Wesleyan University (IWU)

A highly rated national liberal arts university,

Illinois Wesleyan is unusual among small liberal arts schools in that it has a separate Fine Arts college within the university. This allows fine arts students to obtain an uncommonly full-featured arts education while still being a part of the broader liberal arts experience. Within the College of Fine Arts, the School of Theatre Arts, School of Music, and Ames School of Art all offer pre-professional degrees. Theatre students perform a wide variety of repertoire from theatre to musicals and dance, several of which are student-run productions. Music students have opportunities to hone their skills through ensembles including the Collegiate and University Choirs, Symphonic Winds, Titan Band, Chamber Singers, and brass, woodwind, string, and percussion chamber ensembles. School of Art students explore their personal creative potential in a challenging atmosphere, with courses offered in ceramics, drawing, painting, graphic design, printmaking, photography, sculpture, and glass. All three schools give students the chance to share their art with their fellow students and the general public. Theatre performances at the McPherson, Phoenix (black box), and E. Melba Johnson Kirkpatrick Laboratory Theatres; concerts at Westbrook Auditorium and venues around the community; and exhibitions in the Merwin and Wakeley Galleries are all open to the public.

Website: <https://www.iwu.edu/arts/>

McLean County Arts Center (MCAC)

The McLean County Arts Center presents approximately twelve exhibitions yearly, includ-

ing the annual Holiday Treasures exhibition and the Amateur Competition and Exhibition, which showcases the best amateur artists from the region. During April and July, the organization hosts the Spring Bloom and Sugar Creek Art Festivals, respectively. The Center also offers art classes, artist lectures, workshops for children and adults and associated performing and literary arts presentations. The rental and purchase of artwork is made possible through the Center's Sales & Rental Gift Gallery.

Website: <http://www.mcac.wildapricot.org/>

McLean Home and Community Education Group

Purpose of the McLean County Home and Community Education (HCE) is to provide educational opportunities and the exchange of ideas while promoting leadership abilities and friendship in our local community. The HCE strives to enhance the lives, homes, family and community of McLean county and Central Illinois. This is accomplished through personal and community enrichment programming, fine arts workshops and shows, philanthropic ventures and the organization of various units/clubs that meet throughout the year to bring everything together.

Website: <http://www.mcleanhce.org>

Normal Community Activity Center

The Normal Community Activity Center, with the support of the Town of Normal, provides programs for children and seniors and is a publicly rentable space for meetings

and performances. The Community Activity Center is also home to the Heartland Theatre and contains historic materials from the Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School Historical Society.

Website: <https://www.normal.org/Facilities/Facility/Details/31>

Western Avenue Community Center

WACC is an organization that provides services for families that live on the West Side of Bloomington. Some of these events include art/cultural enrichment programs.

Website: <http://www.westernavenuecc.org>

HISTORIC SITES AND MUSEUMS

Bloomington-Normal has nearly two hundred years of local history to preserve and appreciate. As described in Chapter 1 (Historic Context), Bloomington evolved in the mid-19th century from a small pioneer settlement to a steadily growing town centered on railroads, coal, small farms, and a university (Illinois Wesleyan University, founded in 1850). Bloomington's growth occurred during a tense and pivotal period in American history, as railroads transformed the nation's economy and geography and increasingly bitter debates around slavery and states' rights pushed the nation toward civil war.

Small though it was, Bloomington played its part in these broader regional and national goings-on. The town's central location within the state helped it attract the Illinois Central and Chicago and Alton rail-

National Register of Historic Places Bloomington and Normal, Illinois

Bloomington

- Bloomington Central Business District
- Chicago & Alton Freight depot
- Clover Lawn (aka David Davis Mansion)
- David Davis III and IV House
- East Grove Street District
- Franklin Square
- George H. Cox House
- George H. Miller House
- Holy Trinity Church Rectory and Convent
- John M. Hamilton House
- McLean County Courthouse and Square
- Miller-Davis Law Building
- Robert Greenlee House
- Ruben M. Benjamin House
- Scott-Vrooman House
- Stevenson House
- US Army Aircraft C-53-DO-41-20124
- White Building (aka Heberling Building)
- White Place Historic District

Normal

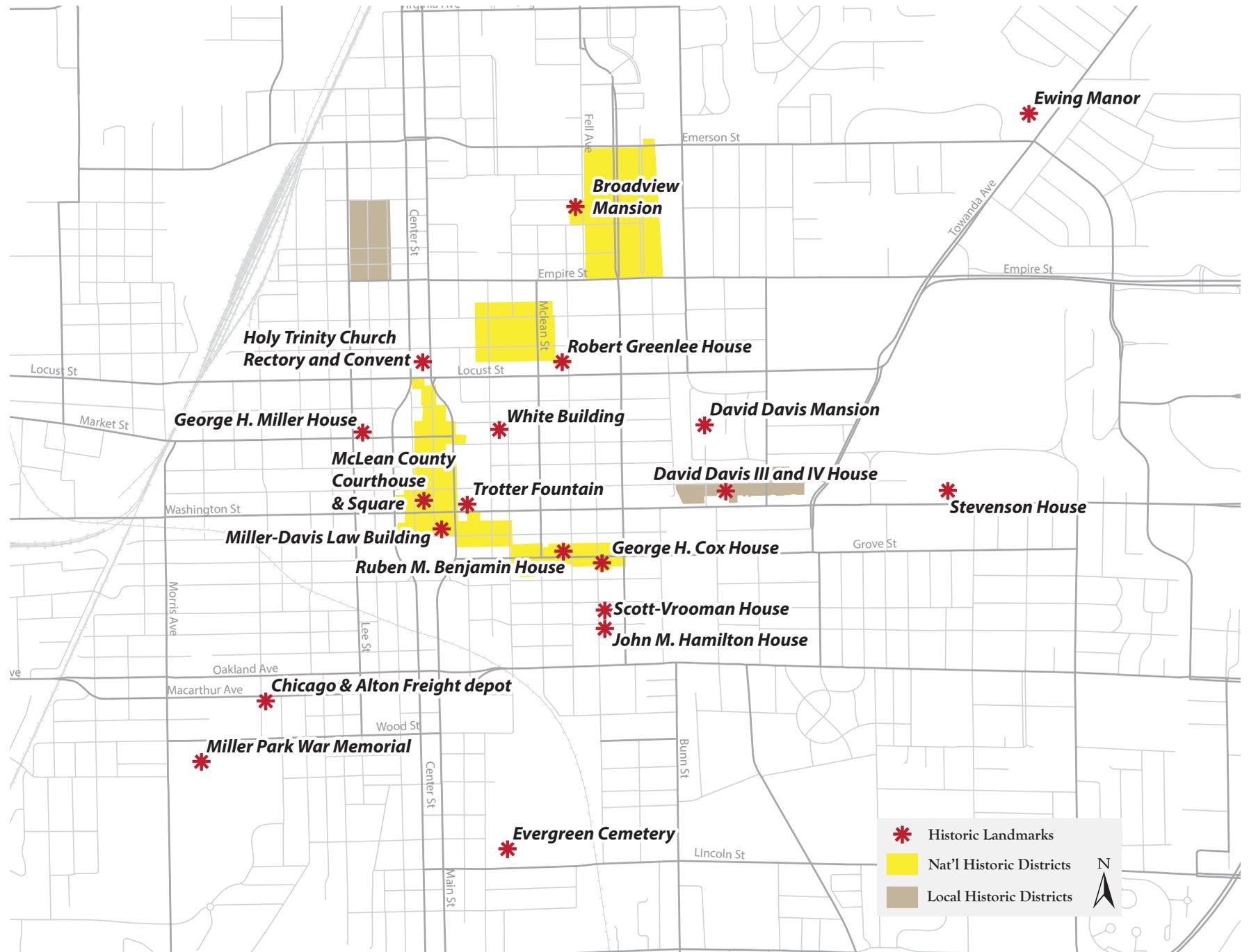
- Camelback Bridge
- Cedar Crest Addition Historic District
- Jesse Fell House
- John W. Cook Hall
- Normal Theater
- Sprague's Super Service

roads, and Chicago and Alton's Bloomington rail shops manufactured the cars, ties, and equipment that made the line run. The arrival of the railroads and the discovery of coal on the town's outskirts spurred immediate and dramatic growth and put Bloomington on the map. Meanwhile, the towering figure of the era, Abraham Lincoln, left an indelible imprint on Bloomington. Bloomington was one of the larger towns in Illinois' Eighth Judicial Circuit, where Lincoln built his career as a lawyer and met many of his greatest friends and supporters, including local moguls Jesse Fell, David Davis, and Asahel Gridley, among others. Lincoln's successful arguments on behalf of the Illinois Central Railroad facilitated the growth of that and other railroads in Illinois. More famously, Bloomington was the site of Lincoln's famous "Lost Speech," and where Fell convinced the rising star of the fledgling anti-slavery Republican Party to run for President.

The years leading up to the Civil War saw the birth of Bloomington's sister town of Normal. Founded by Fell as North Bloomington in 1854, the new town grew around the Illinois State Normal School (founded in 1857), after which it was renamed "Normal" in 1865. The school eventually became Illinois State University and has long been one of the cornerstones of the Bloomington-Normal community.

Like innumerable towns throughout the United States, Bloomington-Normal's culture absorbed and was absorbed by waves of immigrants and pioneers during the second half of the 19th century. Irish, Scotch-Irish,

MAP OF HISTORIC LANDMARKS & MUSEUMS



German, and African-American pioneers established communities in Bloomington-Normal. Many of the neighborhoods that grew up around them are still here today, composing the community's historic core.

In the 20th century, the coal mines and railroads faded away, but the rise of State Farm (founded 1922), Route 66 (which opened from Chicago to St. Louis in 1926), and interstates 55 and 74 replaced those fading icons as major contributors to growth and the shifting of the City's culture.

Bloomington-Normal's historic legacy lives on today through a variety of sites and neighborhoods, representing distinct historic periods and architectural styles. The National Register of Historic Places lists a total of twenty-five historic sites and districts for the Bloomington-Normal community, nineteen in Bloomington and six in Normal. Many of Bloomington-Normal's buildings go back to the mid-19th century, and Bloomington today has more buildings with a historical connection to Abraham Lincoln than Springfield, where he lived and practiced law. The McLean County Museum of History and groups of interested citizens such as the Old House Society work with the City of Bloomington, other local governments, and various private entities to maintain these heritage resources and our community's historical memory.

Bloomington Central Business District*
Downtown Bloomington's Central Business District has been at the center of much of Bloomington-Normal's most significant his-

torical activity. Many of the pre-1900 buildings have been replaced or were burned down in the 1900 fire that devastated Downtown. Still, a number of historically significant sites, including the **Miller-Davis law offices*** and the **bank building owned by Lincoln supporter Asahel Gridley**, anchor the ongoing revitalization of a district that has retained much of its character since the days of Lincoln's famous "Lost Speech" (given in 1856 in Downtown Bloomington). At the heart of the Business District, the **McLean County Museum of History*** in the former Courthouse building serves as an impressive architectural centerpiece and repository of historical knowledge.

Website: <http://downtownbloomington.org/about-us/our-history/>

Broadview Mansion/Immanuel Bible Foundation

Constructed in 1906 for the Van Leer family, the Broadview Mansion originally served as both the Van Leer home and a meeting place for Christians of differing denominations who wished to share and grow in their faith. Upon her passing in 1949, Mrs. Van Leer left the entirety of the estate to the Immanuel Bible Foundation under the stipulation that it be used as a non-denominational center for religious, musical and artistic resources. Today, the estate houses the Van Leer Academy of Music and Art, which provides voice, art and poetry lessons to local citizens. The Immanuel Bible Foundation also provides a number of fellowship opportunities for both men and women and oversees a large sacred

music repository and lending library.
Website: <http://www.ibfoundation.org/#>



Camelback Bridge*

This wooden bridge, originally built in 1906 by the Illinois Central Railroad to allow traffic to pass over the rail line, gets its name from its unique humped shape that gives it its popular name. Today, the bridge allows vehicular traffic to pass over the Constitution Trail, which was built along the former railroad right-of-way. It is distinctive not only for its shape but for its Phoenix columns and King Post pony truss.

Website: <http://gis.hpa.state.il.us/pdfs/201083.pdf> (National Register of Historic Places nomination form); <http://mchistory.org/research/resources/findingaids/places/camelback-bridge.php>

Chicago and Alton Freight Depot*

Located in the railyard complex in northwestern Bloomington, the Chicago and Alton Freight Depot is a reminder of the vital role the railroads played in sparking Bloomington's early growth. The Chicago and Alton

Railroad, which connected Chicago with St. Louis, maintained its primary shop complex in Bloomington due to Bloomington's convenient location roughly halfway between the two ends of the line. The shops were Bloomington's main employer for the latter half of the 19th century; today, the area is largely abandoned, and the Freight Depot is one of the few intact remnants of a key period in Bloomington's history.

Website: <http://www.mchistory.org/old/find/camisc.html#scope>; http://www.pantagraph.com/news/local/railyards-land-targeted-for-revitalization-project/article_528265fa-52aa-11e0-a61e-001cc4c002e0.html

Clover Lawn/David Davis Mansion State Historic Site*

The David Davis Mansion State Historic Site is the restored and preserved home of David Davis, a judge and political ally of Abraham Lincoln whom Lincoln appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Victorian-style home has been converted into a museum, where visitors can take guided tours of the home and discover the substantial impact Davis and his family had on local and national history. The estate is also home to the Upper Garden, also known as Sarah's Garden. Created in 1872, Sarah's Garden was modeled after classical Italian gardens of the 17th century and the formal English gardens of the 18th century. To this day, the garden remains a unique and beautiful part of David Davis Mansion State

Note: * denotes inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places

Historic Site.
Website: <http://daviddavismansion.org>



East Grove Street Historic District*

Designated a Historic District in the National Register of Historic Places, the 400-700 blocks of East Grove Street in Bloomington contain a number of historically significant houses, some of which date back to before the Civil War. Two of these, the **Ruben M. Benjamin House*** and **George H. Cox House***, are themselves on the National Register. Representing a variety of period architectural styles, these beautiful homes remain some of Bloomington's most desirable places to live.

Website: <http://gis.hpa.state.il.us/pdfs/201435.pdf> (National Register of Historic Places nomination form)

Evergreen Cemetery

The Evergreen Memorial Cemetery, founded in the early 1820's, is a historic cemetery nestled in the heart of Bloomington. The 87-acre cemetery's simple entrance gives way to wind-

ing avenues, towering trees and an elaborate mausoleum. It is a wonderful example of preservation, culture and tradition in Central Illinois. Notable Bloomingtonians buried in Evergreen include Vice President Adlai Stevenson I, Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson II and Supreme Court Justice David Davis.
Website: <http://www.evergreen-cemetery.com>

Ewing Manor



Inspired by the worldwide travels of its first owners, prominent Bloomingtonians Hazle Buck Ewing and Davis Ewing, the architecture and landscaping of the Ewing Manor (built between 1927 and 1929) reflect a diverse set of styles. The estate contains impressive Channel-Norman-style residential buildings; an amphitheater, which hosts the well-regarded Illinois Shakespeare Festival; and two gardens, the Moriyama Japanese Garden (1982) and the Genevieve Green Gardens (2007). The Ewing Manor was bequeathed to the Illinois State University Foundation upon the passing of Hazle Buck Ewing in 1969.

Website: <http://ewingmanor.illinoisstate.edu>

Franklin Square*

Located a few blocks north of Downtown Bloomington, Franklin Square contains exclusively pre-20th century homes that are built in a variety of architectural styles ranging from Victorian (Queen Anne and Georgian Revival) to Italianate and Romanesque. These ornate houses have been home to many of Bloomington's most prominent residents. Individual houses of note include the Burr House; the Lillard House; the McClure House; the Fifer-Bohrer house, home of Illinois Governor Joseph Fifer; and the Dodson-Stevenson House, home of Vice President of the United States Adlai E. Stevenson I. During the summer months, the park in the center of Franklin Square serves as a recreational area, featuring a number of parades, concerts and gatherings.

Website: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Square_\(Bloomington,_Illinois\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_Square_(Bloomington,_Illinois))

McLean County Museum of History*

The McLean County Museum of History is located in Bloomington's former courthouse, an impressive American Renaissance-style building in the heart of Downtown. The Museum's collection, which contains over 19,000 historical objects and 11,000 historical texts, is organized into five permanent exhibit galleries and two rotating galleries touching on local history. The building itself was finished in 1903 and features a limestone-clad facade and a dome modeled after that of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Beneath the dome is a three-story tall rotunda that is

elaborately decorated with paintings, mosaics and sculpture. The Museum provides regular programming and tours, as well as original research, tied to its mission of education and preservation of the history of the local community.

Website: <http://www.mchistory.org/index.php>

Miller Park War Memorial

The great centerpiece of the Miller Park War Memorial is the McLean County Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. Designed as a replacement for the deteriorating Civil War monument in Franklin Square, this monument was dedicated to the memory of local participants of each major American war prior to its completion in 1913. With eight bronze plaques and over 6,000 inscribed names, Bloomington and McLean County residents who lost their lives in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Black Hawk War, the Mexican War, the Civil War and the Spanish-American War are recognized.

The monument also contains three bronze statuettes entitled 'Picket,' 'Anxiety,' and 'The Color Bearer.' These were sculpted by Frederick C. Hibbard of Chicago. The surrounding sidewalks contain the inscriptions of the names of those killed or missing in action.

Website: http://www.pantagraph.com/news/imposing-miller-park-monument-dedicated-memorial-day/article_eff6979a-a464-5535-b665-7593e31ed3de.html



Prairie Aviation Museum

Located next to the Central Illinois Regional Airport, the Prairie Aviation Museum is currently home to almost a dozen military planes and helicopters of entirely different eras and manufacturers. There are a number of different exhibits and displays that are certain to pique the interest of any level of flight enthusiast. The Museum also hosts a number of educational events each year and provides social dinners and galas for its donating and volunteering membership.

Website: <http://prairieaviationmuseum.org>

Scott-Vrooman House*

More commonly referred to as the Vrooman Mansion, the Scott-Vrooman house is the historic home of Julia Scott Vrooman (1876-

1981) and her husband, Carl, a prominent Bloomington couple whose circle of friends included political figures like President & Mrs. Wilson, Franklin & Eleanor Roosevelt, Julia's cousin Adlai Stevenson II, William Jennings Bryan, and many European Heads of State. After Julia died in 1981, most of her estate was donated to charity, and the house itself became a popular bed and breakfast. Website: <http://vroomanmansion.com/history.html>



Stevenson Home*

Also known as the Ives House, this house was the childhood home of Adlai Stevenson II, a two-time presidential candidate and ambassador to the United Nations, and his sister Elizabeth Stevenson Ives, who continued to live in the home as an adult. The home was designed by Arthur Pillsbury, a noted Bloomington architect.

Website: <http://gis.hpa.state.il.us/pdfs/200776.pdf> (National Register of Historic Places nomination form)

Trotter Fountain

Located in Downtown's Withers Park, the

Trotter Fountain was willed to the city by James Trotter, an Irish immigrant whose family members became active, prominent citizens of Bloomington. Sculptor Lorado Taft, who later taught at the Art Institute of Chicago and is officially recognized by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, designed the Trotter Fountain. The fountain was dedicated officially on May 30th, 1911, and depicts Native American children at play. Mr. Taft explained that the placement of the fountain in the playground of the library park represents the children of the past, present, and future.

Website: <http://trotterfountain.wix.com/trotter-fountain-bloomington#>

EVENTS & FESTIVALS

Every year Bloomington-Normal hosts over 25 annual community events and festivals. Each festival provides a unique experience for residents and tourists, adding to Bloomington-Normal's rich artistic presence, cultural value, and historical background. One of Bloomington-Normal's claims to fame is the ever-popular Illinois Shakespeare Festival. In addition, Bloomington-Normal is home to the Gamma Phi Circus, the oldest collegiate circus in the United States. On the local scale, residents enjoy community-based events such as the Downtown Bloomington Association's monthly First Fridays (First Fridays) and the annual summer Farmers' Market.

American Passion Play

Travel back in time over 2,000 years and ex-

perience the story of Christ and His apostles through the American Passion Play. Come out to the BCPA and watch the historic biblical story unfold, right before of your eyes. Featuring live animals, colorful costumes and scenery, and pipe organ music, the Passion Play travels around the U.S. but comes home to Bloomington-Normal to honor this tradition for its 92nd season.

Time: Spring (March/April)

Location: BCPA

Website: <http://www.americanpassionplay.org/>

Bloomington Criterium

Come out and race along the streets of Bloomington in the Bloomington Criterium, hosted by the Bloomington-Normal Jaycees. Grab your bikes and helmets and ride on down for a fun time. After the race, head over to the Bruëgala Festival in downtown Bloomington.

Time: Summer (August)

Location: Downtown Bloomington

Website: <http://blmcrit.com/>

Bruëgala - A Festival of Beer

Come out and celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Bruëgala Beer Festival, hosted by the Bloomington Normal Jaycees. For patrons over the age of 21, this festival is full of great music, delicious food, and tasty beer. Spend time on the lawn or inside the BCPA and choose from over 200 craft beers and 50 wines to sample.

Time: Summer (August)

Location: BCPA

Website: <http://www.bruegala.com/>

Celebrate America – Holiday Spectacular Concert

A concert to celebrate America, filled with dancing, singing and a little history, this concert is held on the 4th of July and produced by the Holiday Spectacular organization.

The show is packed with dozens of singers, tappers, and even some elected officials, who remind us why we celebrate this holiday. It's a grand night to come together as a community. A few songs have become Celebrate America perennials, such as the tightly choreographed, flags-waving-in-the-breeze You're a Grand Ole Flag and the stirring Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor. After the show, in the gathering dusk, many move their lawn chairs closer to the lake and stay for the fireworks.

Date: Summer (July)

Location: Miller Park Pavilion

Cultural Festival

The festival's primary purpose is to promote and foster appreciation for a variety of cultures through entertainment and educational activities. It's also a forum for other community organizations to promote and conduct positive activities for civic, patriotic, educational and social purposes. It is further intended to provide good, wholesome, fun activities and entertainment in a facility atmosphere. The free festival is a wonderful weekend with a little bit of something for everyone. One of the main treats for those with an appetite is access to several food vendors with offerings visitors can't resist. The

food vendor lineup provides everything from the traditional festival fare of corndogs and elephant ears to deep fried ice cream.

Time: August

Website: http://www.pantagraph.com/special-section/summer-fun/cultural-festival-returns-to-bloomington-in-august/article_1360e2a6-87da-11e0-9b1e-001cc4c002e0.html

Corn Crib

The Corn Crib is a multi-purpose stadium in Normal, Illinois. It is primarily used for baseball and is the home of the Normal CornBelts of the Frontier League. The



ballpark has a capacity of 7,000 and is located on the campus of Heartland Community College, where it also hosts their baseball, softball, and soccer teams. The Corn Crib also presents an evening concert series during the summer.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Corn_Crib

David Davis Mansion Events

The David Davis Mansion hosts a multitude



of historical and cultural events open to the community year round. With opportunities to explore, learn, and be entertained through history, the community is enriched by the Mansion's presence, as it hosts celebrations including Lincoln's Birthday, the Glorious Garden Festival, the Champagne British Car Show, Antique Auto Exhibition, and Christmas at the Mansions Tour.

Website: <http://daviddavismansion.org/programs/>

Evergreen Cemetery Walk

Every October, Bloomington's past awakens at Evergreen Cemetery, just in time for Halloween. Through the collaboration of Evergreen Cemetery, McLean County Museum of History, and Illinois Voices Theatre, community members embark on a one mile-long tour through the cemetery, learning about the history of their home and individuals who greatly impacted McLean County. The cemetery is brought to life through costumed actors' portrayals, providing a new medium for history through the art of theatre.

Time: Fall (October)

Location: Evergreen Cemetery

Website: <http://www.mchistory.org/learn/programs/cemwalk.php>

Farmers Market

Every Saturday morning from 7:30 am to noon during the summer and autumn months, residents of Bloomington come to the local farmers market put on by the Downtown Bloomington Association. Located in the historic Downtown square, customers enjoy shopping for goods at this producer-only market, including fresh local produce, baked goods, fine arts, plants, and more. In addition to shopping, there are new musical performances each week, as well as frequent cooking demos and a Kid's Zone full of activities.

Time: Summer/Autumn (May - Oct.)

Location: Downtown Bloomington

Website: <http://downtownbloomington.org/farmers-market/>

Festival of Trees

The Festival of Trees is a family-centered holiday event for the community. Proceeds from the Festival go toward serving the children and families of The Baby Fold. Visitors enjoy a venue of custom-designed trees, a large selection of celebrity items, a gingerbread village, unique centerpieces, wreaths, and holiday table settings.

Time: Winter

Website: <http://thebabyfold.net/>

First Fridays (First Fridays)

On the first Friday of every month, the Downtown Bloomington Association hosts

events for community members to learn about and experience local arts and culture first hand. Local businesses open their doors for people to come shop, dine, and experience the best of Bloomington! From live music to free samples, there are plenty of things for people of all ages to enjoy. Previous First Friday events have included February's Tour de Chocolat, May's Area Art Showcase, November's Downtown Art Walk, and December's Once Upon a Holiday.

Time: Year Round

Location: Downtown Bloomington; Specific locations TBD

Website: <http://downtownbloomington.org/>

Franklin Park Summer Concerts

Conductor Michael Wallace and the Community Concert Band perform a wide variety of music including marches, overtures, show tunes, dance music, and traditional selections. Concerts are held on Thursdays from 7:00 – 8:00 pm in Franklin Park.

Time: Summer

Website: <http://4.17.232.139/parks/Programs-Events/Cultural-Arts/cultural-music.htm>

Gamma Phi Circus

The Gamma Phi Circus was founded at Illinois State in 1929, by Clifford "Pop" Horton. It is the oldest collegiate circus in the United States, with members going on to participate in well-known circus groups, including Cirque du Soleil, Circus Vargus and many others. Gamma Phi has distanced itself from the fraternity label to focus on being an arts

performance organization. The group travels around the country to perform, in addition to hosting local performances. Gamma Phi circus is entertainment for all ages. The circus is always in town!

Website: <http://gammaphicircus.illinoisstate.edu/>

GLT Summer Concert

GLT Summer Concert is an annual outdoor concert in Downtown held on the second Saturday of June. The streets are closed around the McLean County Museum of History square, allowing for lawn chair seating on the street and lawn. Free and open to all, the GLT Summer Concert offers an eclectic lineup of the best blues, swing jazz, and bluegrass/folk performers of the day. Walk-around beer/wine garden and festival food available.

Time: Summer

Location: Downtown Bloomington

Website: http://wgl.org/events/summer_concert.shtml#sthash.9QZnHfnW.dpuf

Holiday Spectacular

Sponsored by the Pantagraph, the Holiday Spectacular is a Central Illinois tradition. Holiday Spectacular, Inc. enriches the lives of people in our community by encouraging them to audition and participate in our productions as actors and singers. The production is directed by both professional and amateur individuals whose goal and challenge is to provide a quality production. All planned productions are original works of art. They are written by local playwrights,

and the music selection and choreography are designed specifically for each show.

Time: Winter (December)

Location: Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts

Website: <http://holidayspectacular.org/>

Illinois Shakespeare Festival

Recognized in media and scholarly journals in Chicago, New York, and England, the Illinois Shakespeare Festival provides entertainment for all ages. Performed on a stage located at the Ewing Cultural Center in Normal, the Festival puts on four productions both inspired and written by William Shakespeare. In addition to theatre performances, this summer-long event has scene tours, live music, and ice cream socials. Grab some lawn chairs and be enchanted at this summer long festival!

Time: Summer (July/August)

Location: Ewing Cultural Center

Website: <http://thefestival.org/>

Jaycee Christmas Parade

Come Christmas time the streets of Bloomington-Normal come alive with the annual Bloomington-Normal Jaycee's Christmas Parade. Each year a different theme is picked filling the streets of Christmas cheer.

Website: <http://www.bnjaycees.org/events/christmas-parade/>

Lincoln's Festival

Explore Bloomington to find all things Lincoln-related during Lincoln's Festival. Visit the McLean County History Museum and

David Davis Mansion to participate in the Looking for Lincoln Tour; walk to Franklin Park to see historic reenactments, play period style games, or shop for antiques; or see a Civil War reenactment on Illinois Wesleyan's Ames Library Lawn. Carriage and wagon rides, tours, and much more are available for the whole family to enjoy!

Time: Summer (July)

Website: <http://home.comcast.net/~leigh-ton.cook/LincolnsFestival/>

Looking for Lincoln Walk

The Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition is a wonderful opportunity for Illinois communities to celebrate their shared histories and connections to Abraham Lincoln. Ranging across the state, communities have developed interactive programs for participants to learn about the connections their communities had to President Lincoln in addition to their local histories. An adventure to the McLean County History Museum and David Davis Mansion provide members of McLean County with a fun day of history to learn about their community and its connection to President Lincoln.

Time: Year Round

Location: McLean County History Museum; David Davis Mansion

Website: <http://www.lookingforlincoln.com/home>

Martin Luther King Jr. National Holiday Gospel Festival

Illinois Wesleyan University hosts the Martin Luther King Gospel Festival year as a dedica-

tion to civil rights and King, who spoke twice on Illinois Wesleyan's campus. This festival celebrates King's legacy through gospel music and dance performances from organizations all over Illinois.

Time: Winter (January)

Location: Illinois Wesleyan University

Website: <https://www.iwu.edu>; <https://www.iwu.edu/news/2015/events/gospel-festival.html>

McLean County Fair

There is never a lack of things to do at the McLean County Fair. Come out for 4-H events in addition to delicious food, free entertainment and even a carnival!

Time: Summer (August)

Location: McLean County Fair Grounds

Website: <http://www.mcleancountyfair.org/>

Miller Park Outdoor Summer Concert Series

Great music combined with warm summer nights offer a perfect evening to be out under the stars with family and friends. The concerts are on various Sunday and Tuesday evenings at 7:30 pm at the Miller Park Bandstand.

Time: Summer

Location: Miller Park Pavilion

Website: <http://4.17.232.139/parks/Parks-Facilities/MP-bandstand.htm>

Northern Exposure Blues Festival

The Northern Exposure Blues Festival is designed for blues and guitar lovers alike. With performances from Chicago blues musicians,

guitar clinics and vendors along the streets, this festival is great for the musician at heart. Even bring your ailing guitar in for an assessment by owner of Guitar Remedies, and festival's creator Todd Seefeld.

Time: Summer (August)

Location: BCPA

Website: <http://www.cityblm.org/index.aspx?page=360>

Sounds of Christmas

The Sounds of Christmas is a long-standing tradition during the holiday season, hosted by State Farm in the atrium of their corporate headquarters. The community's most gifted musicians donate their time and talent to present this concert and, along with State Farm's generosity, make it possible to offer this concert for free.

Time: Winter (December)

Location: State Farm Hall

Website: <http://wgl.org/events/sound-schristmas.shtml#sthash.27ZIRCEq.dpuf>

Spring Bloom Arts Festival

The Spring Bloom Arts Festival is one to make a tradition. Sponsored by the McLean County Arts Center, this festival brings a variety of exhibits and artists to Bloomington-Normal for patrons to enjoy. With plenty of food, music, activities, and original artwork, there is no shortage of fun opportunities to celebrate Spring!

Time: Spring (April)

Location: McLean County Fairgrounds, Interstate Center

Website: <http://www.mcac.wildapricot.org/>

SBAF

St. Patrick's Day Parade

Sponsored by the McLean County Irish Heritage Society, WJBC, Easter Seals, and Uptown Normal, this annual tradition is a great way to show your Irish spirit and "share some green" with Easter Seals, an organization that helps provide services to children with disabilities. Have your green ready for the ENORMOUS Irish flag at the head of the procession. Parade goers feed the flag by tossing their donations in to support the cause. The event is free to onlookers and parade participants as well.

Website: <http://www.normal.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=902>

Sugar Creek Arts Festival

Attracting over 100 artists from across the country, the Sugar Creek Arts Festival comes to life on the streets of Uptown Normal. The festival is a juried art show that displays all disciplines of art for community members to enjoy. Come out to enjoy art and other activities during this weekend-long art festival.

Time: Summer (July)

Location: Uptown Normal

Website: <http://www.mcac.wildapricot.org/SCAF>

Sweet Corn Blues Festival

There's no better way to send off summer than at the Sweet Corn Blues Festival! Eat endless amounts of sweet corn while jamming to some red hot blues music. Vendors line the streets with booths dedicated to arts

and crafts and more delicious food. This festival is one the whole family can enjoy! So grab your bikes and ride to Uptown Normal and don't miss any of the fun. Sponsored by the Town of Normal, Uptown Partners, and public radio station WGLT.

Time: Summer (August)

Location: Uptown Normal

Website: <http://wgl.org/events/sweetcorn.shtml>

3rd Sunday Market

On the 3rd Sunday during the months of May to October, Midwestern collectors come out to the Market to shop for antiques, crafts, collectibles, and more. Booths are set up both inside and outside, with over 450 vendors representing 17 states. This market has been a Bloomington tradition for over 25 years. No matter if you're looking for collectable memorabilia; art; or furniture, clothes, and linen, stop by this market full of antique treasures.

Time: May-October

Location: Interstate Market

Website: <http://www.thirdsundaymarket.com/>