

A VISION PLAN

**DEVELOPED IN 2022 BY MEMBERS OF THE BLOOMINGDALE COMMUNITY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON JUNE 21, 2022**

Under the leadership of
**THE STEERING COMMITTEE
ROADMAP 2027 VISION TEAM
ERIKA ATKINS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

And in Partnership with
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ABOUT BLOOMINGDALE

Bloomingdale was founded in 1964 by David Greer, the organist at West End Presbyterian Church on the Upper West Side. Initially named Bloomingdale House of Music, the school used 10 rooms at the church on Saturdays. In just two years enrollment was up to 500 students so a board of directors was formed in 1966 and it was confirmed in 1968 that the school's mission was to **“provide an opportunity for musical education for those who would otherwise not have it.”**



ABOUT BLOOMINGDALE



When New York City removed music education from public schools due to budget cuts in 1971, Greer responded with 'Project Bridge,' a program (that still exists today) that allowed students to continue their education through Bloomingdale. Also in 1971, two generous foundation gifts allowed the school to put a downpayment on its current home at 323 West 108th Street. In 1973, Bloomingdale became the first community music school to offer free weekly classes to public school students. The organization purchased 325 West 108th street in 1980 as a rental residence building and to house the school's offices. By 1984, thanks in part to the development of robust early childhood programming such as Orff, Suzuki and Kodaly, the school had 1500 students, over 1000 of which were public school students, 38 faculty members, and an established concert series that continues today.

Since Greer's sudden passing after 24 years of service, the organization's subsequent leaders have all shared his passion and commitment to excellence and access, including Paul Fran (1988-1991) and Lawrence Davis (1991-2013).

During Davis' 22 year tenure he instituted the 'Music Access Project' (MAP), a three year full scholarship program to prepare students for entry into college level music study, 'Album for the Young' (A4TY), an annual concert of student compositions, Theory in a Box, the Piano Project and Guitar Festival, and Performathon, a student fundraiser which funds the school's exceptional financial aid program. These programs are thriving cornerstones of Bloomingdale's offerings today.

In Bloomingdale's 50th year, Erika Floreska became the organization's fourth Executive Director. Along with her talented team, Floreska raised significant funds for capital improvements, and cultivated long term relationships with new and existing foundations and major donors, significantly growing the annual fund to support the increasing need for financial aid. Floreska was succeeded by Erika Atkins in 2020 who, with the incredible hard work of staff, faculty, Board and volunteers, skillfully navigated the school through the pandemic, and infused the organization with a collaborative leadership style that has inspired and guided ROADMAP 2027.

ABOUT BLOOMINGDALE

As the 2021-2022 academic year draws to a close, Bloomingdale has 553 onsite students and 150 students in partnership programs. Over the past year, the school has engaged hundreds of community members and friends of the school online through our faculty concerts, recitals, masterclasses, and concerts. The organization committed over \$200,000 to financial aid, and critical renovations to the brownstone created a safer and more welcoming environment for the community.

And, on top of all that, the board, faculty, staff, families, funders and supporters of the organization have embarked on a journey together - to answer the question **'What do we want Bloomingdale to look like in 2027?'**

WHAT DO WE WANT
TO LOOK LIKE IN



OUR MISSION

Bloomington School of Music's mission is to provide open access to high-quality music education to anyone who seeks it, regardless of economic status, ability level, ethnicity, or religious affiliation.

OUR ORGANIZATIONAL CORE VALUES

ACCESS

We believe music is for everyone. We work with students to surmount financial constraints or personal obstacles. We provide a variety of ways to perform, learn, and experience music, in an array of styles, including classical, jazz, rock, and world music.

EXPRESSION & CONNECTION

We believe music reflects our humanity and our complexity. Through music, all students have the potential to enhance their personal confidence, community responsibility, discipline, kindness, self-possession, and humility. In addition, it provides a joyful mode of expression and exchange; it assists in social, personal, and cognitive development; it allows students to accept “delayed gratification” and the deeper rewards that come when putting in sustained work over time;

and it fosters a strong work ethic. It is a means of expression and connection, of comfort and understanding, and of renewal and inspiration

EXCELLENCE

We strive for the highest level of achievement in our education, teaching and performance endeavors. We match students with the finest teaching artists available who will shape their lessons to meet the individual drive, talent, and passion of each person. We seek excellence in artistry, education, communication, and exchange. While we work towards top caliber musical results, we are equally focused on the excellence of our process. We want to shape a collective journey where the humanity, individuality, and creative exploration of our students is prioritized.

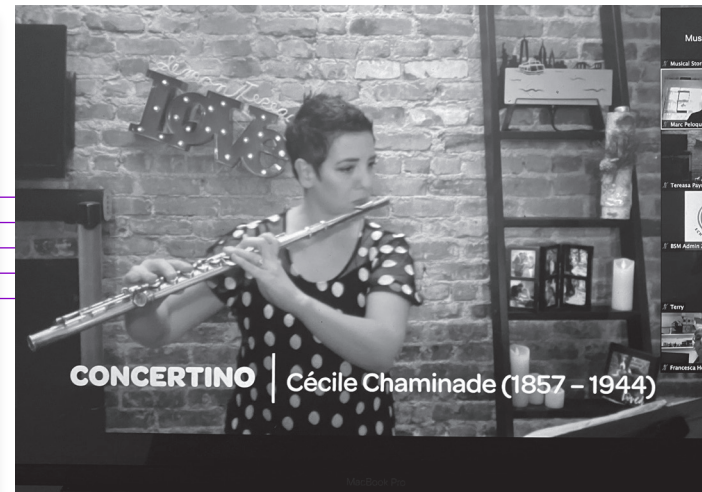
COMMUNITY

We welcome all people into our musical world. We celebrate the connections music brings to our community, both within Bloomingdale and in our neighborhood at large. We hold our teachers and our students in high esteem, and we regard each person’s musical potential with the utmost respect.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We are as diverse as the City of New York. We create an environment of multiple voices, where each member is inspired to be their best self, any person feels safe in this self-expression, and every participant is valued for their individual perspective. A community that unites all ages, classes, and cultures, Bloomingdale finds common purpose through the language of music.

CURRENT CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES



The contributors to this plan have identified five areas that represent challenges for Bloomingdale in its efforts to fully achieve its mission. And, 2020–2021 presented us with challenges that we could not possibly have anticipated. Even though we are coming back to some familiar ways of doing things, we are changed. As a result of COVID-19, **we have a different relationship with our working life, our sense of place, our ways of being together, and our ways of making music together.** Based on these experiences, we now have a tremendous opportunity to evaluate and adapt who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

Education looked dramatically different in 2020 and 2021. In the matter of just a few weeks, it became the norm that students learned and connected by way of their computer screens. For some of us, it was a struggle to adapt to learning remotely, but for others, it meant we could participate in music education in a more convenient, efficient, and affordable

way. Thanks to the creativity and resilience of our faculty, families, and students, remote music learning has become a viable option which, if done well, could significantly expand and adapt our offerings so we can include more people.

While the world reeled and strained under the stress of managing a global pandemic, long existing systemic racial and socio-economic inequities were yet again exposed. 2020–2021 will be remembered for the worst pandemic in modern times. It will also be marked as a period when we experienced a continued, growing call for a reckoning on race issues in the United States. Like COVID-19, the protests and demands for change surged in never-before-seen ways.



These challenges should in turn challenge us to respond, shift, and evaluate how we manifest Bloomingdale's mission and values to positively impact the lives of those in our community.

We cannot unlearn what we have learned, and we cannot go back to the way we used to do things. We have to commit to taking action in our organizations, to making changes that amplify our missions to respond to the challenges that we face. It is therefore opportune that we are coming together at this time to create a fresh and focused roadmap for Bloomingdale. **How are we going to be together, work together, and make music together in the next five years?**

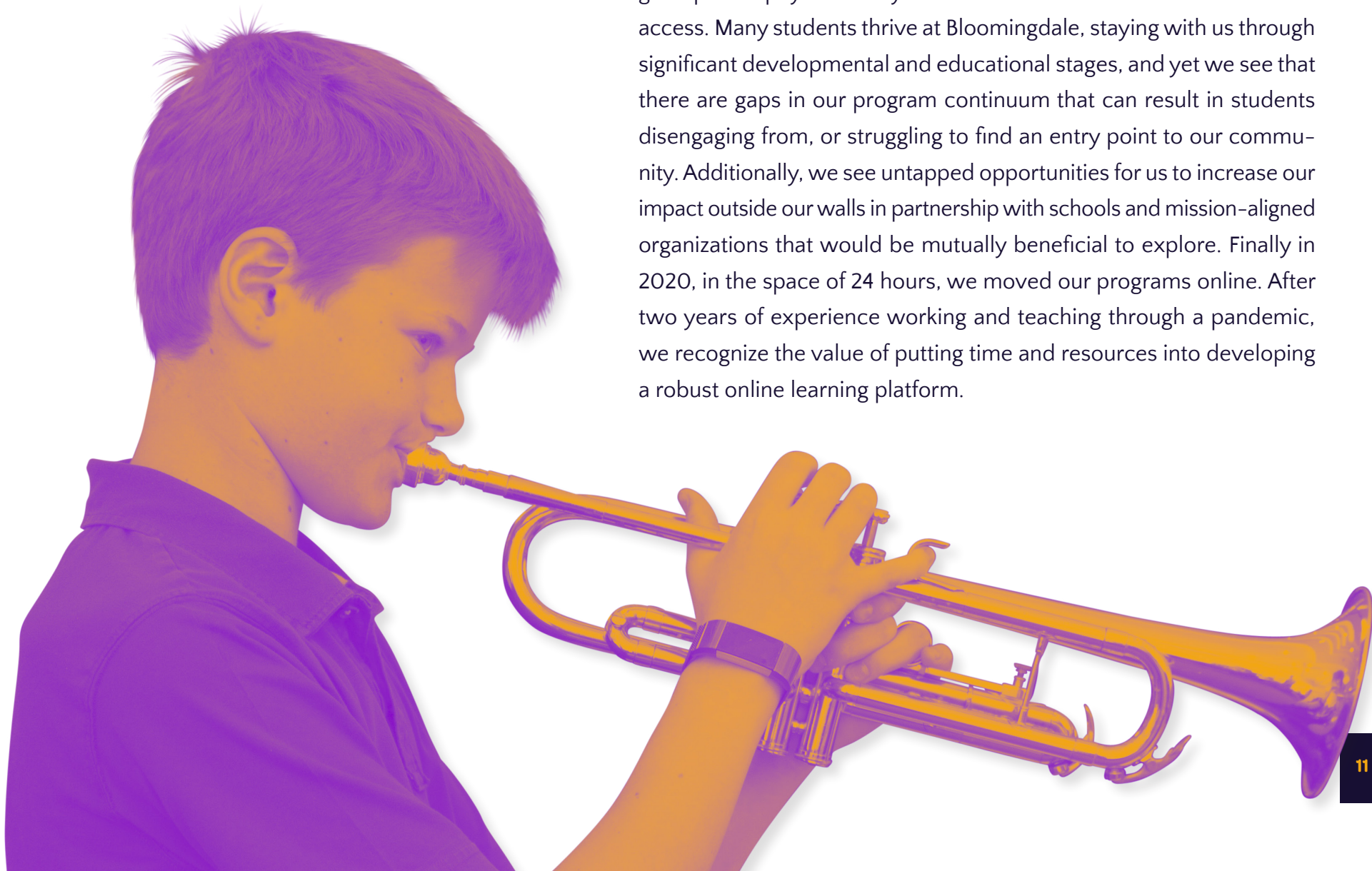
HOW ARE WE GOING TO BE
TOGETHER?
WE WORK TOGETHER
TO MAKE MUSIC TOGETHER
FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

HERE ARE THE FIVE CHALLENGE AREAS THAT HAVE RESULTED IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLOOMINGDALE TO MOVE ITS MISSION FORWARD:



1

While we serve a diverse population, our programs are not reaching the full spectrum of populations that we have identified we want to serve. Bloomingdale resides in, and abuts diverse neighborhoods where there is less access to music education, and our student body should more fully reflect the diversity of our potential catchment, economically, socially, and racially. Additionally, our facility presents barriers to entry for older adults and for those experiencing mobility impairment. We are looking to invest in our teaching artist's expertise through training and professional development opportunities so they can support individuals who learn differently. Finally, while Bloomingdale has been located in the same building for 46 years, there are still people in our neighborhood who don't know that we are here, or what we do.



2

People's reasons and goals for engaging with music education continue to evolve and expand. The vehicles for learning are changing rapidly, and we know much more about the different ways in which people learn than we did when the school was founded. Bloomingdale's program philosophy has always lived at the intersection of excellence and access. Many students thrive at Bloomingdale, staying with us through significant developmental and educational stages, and yet we see that there are gaps in our program continuum that can result in students disengaging from, or struggling to find an entry point to our community. Additionally, we see untapped opportunities for us to increase our impact outside our walls in partnership with schools and mission-aligned organizations that would be mutually beneficial to explore. Finally in 2020, in the space of 24 hours, we moved our programs online. After two years of experience working and teaching through a pandemic, we recognize the value of putting time and resources into developing a robust online learning platform.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

SUPPORT
CHANGING
MORE DIVERSE
BLOOMINGDALE



3

Bloomington has grown and changed gradually over the last 57 years. In the last 5 years, the organization hit the \$2 million operating budget milestone. In 2020, the school's first black leader assumed the role of Executive Director and, at the time of writing this plan, the staff are majority people of color. **How does the organization respond and adapt to these shifts to prepare itself to support a changing and more diverse workforce?** The world has changed significantly in the last two years, and the demands on the staff and faculty personally and professionally are stretched to meet the needs of a growing and changing organization and world. Recent staffing shifts, additions, and compensation adjustments have made a step in the right direction, but concerns exist around the organization's ability to continue to attract and sustain talent in an increasingly expensive city. Additionally, we intend to reach into communities where students may need significant financial support to participate in Bloomington's programs. The organization has a robust financial aid program but that will need to be increased to meet the demand and the goals expressed in this plan. Bloomington will need to build capacity in its staff and faculty, work to grow and diversify the board both in size and background, and increase its resources to maintain its current status, and in anticipation of future growth.

4

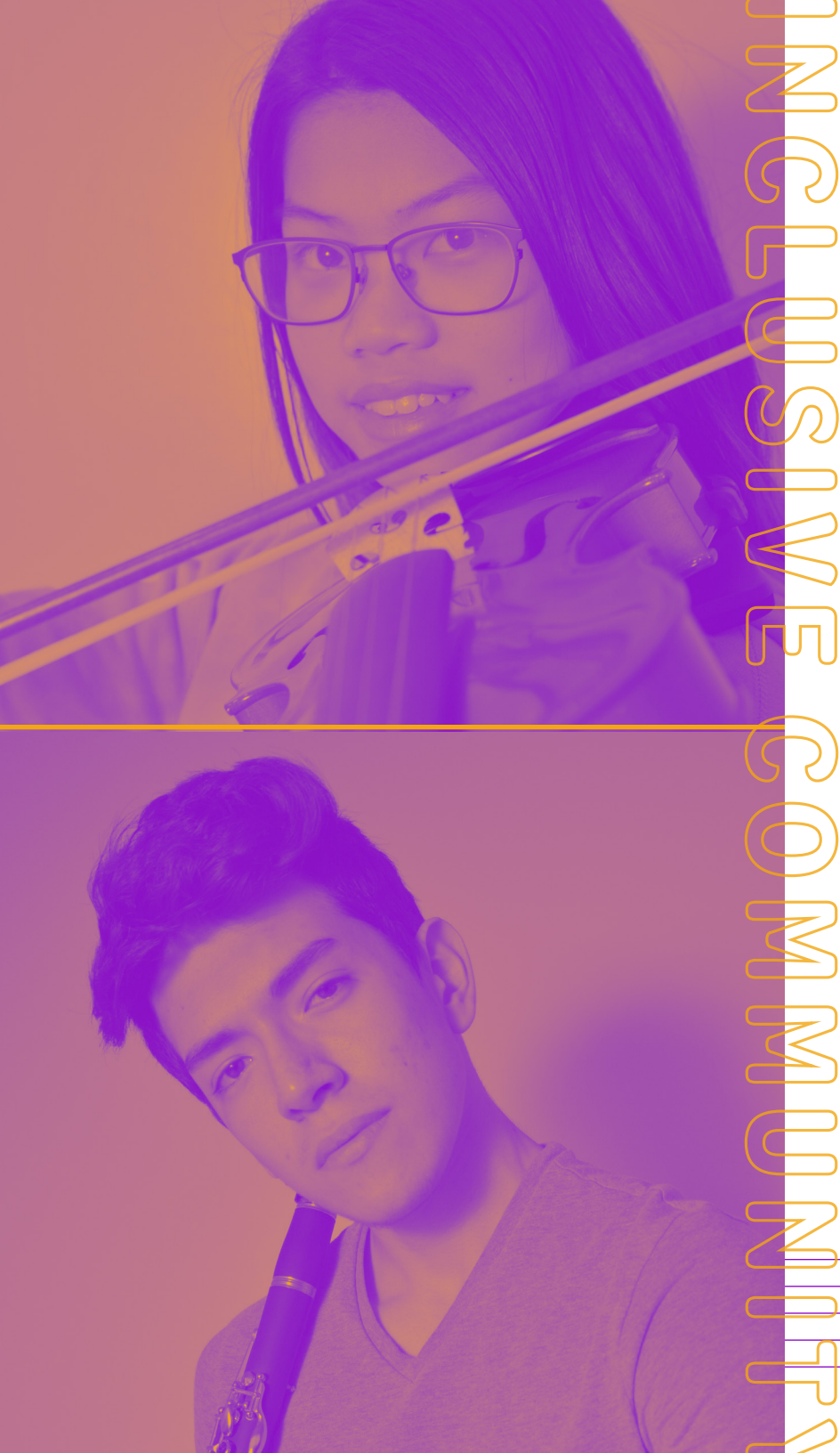
The school's 108th Street home is one of the organization's most treasured assets. It is the vessel for the mission of the school and should be responsive to its needs. The sense of place is palpable and central to the organization's identity. But the building is aging, and costly to maintain. Notably, its physical structure as a walk-up building presents major accessibility barriers; barriers that directly conflict with the intention to expand early child programming, as well build and adapt programs specifically for older adults, and people with disabilities. Significant improvements have been made in the last two years to update and modernize the space, but there is much more to do to maximize the current facility to accommodate more students during peak hours, and to welcome in a diverse and differently abled student population. Finally, Bloomingdale seeks to expand its definition of educational space to include both accessible physical spaces in the community outside the current school building, and the virtual space.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

5

The final challenge is vital to the success of our meeting the other four. **Bloomington strives to be an inclusive community.** As the organization grows, diversifies, and strives for greater impact, it will be critical that we intentionally cultivate and strengthen the ways in which we communicate and connect. We recognize the importance of modeling this first internally in the way we communicate and include each other in our daily work. Coming from a place of strength and openness, we can invite the community in to be a part of the important conversations that will lead to the realization of our vision. At the heart of this opportunity is a desire to work collaboratively, gathering the contributing voices of our community into decision making.



OUR VISION FOR BLOOMINGDALE

ROADMAP 2027 CREATES A PATHWAY FOR BLOOMINGDALE TO CONTINUE BRINGING THE JOY OF MUSIC INTO THE LIVES OF MORE PEOPLE.



The steps we are taking will **build upon what we already do well** and what is unique about our school, while responding to the changing needs of our community and world. They acknowledge both an increase and a shift in the reasons why people need and choose to engage with music. The steps we are taking aim to **remove some of the barriers** that can prevent people from participating in music and music education. And finally, the steps we are taking will **strengthen the human fabric of our organization**, allowing us to sustain ourselves and each other so that BSM can continue to adapt and thrive for future generations.



THE PLAN COMPONENTS

EXPAND		ADAPT		INCLUDE
REACH	PROGRAMS	CAPACITY	SPACE	CONNECTION
By 2027, Bloomingdale will have deepened its reach into the Upper West Side, and expanded its borders physically and virtually to reach more diverse communities and populations.	By 2027, Bloomingdale will have developed a cohesive and relevant continuum of programming that engages and accommodates diverse students and audiences of all ages and abilities in our space, in the spaces of partner organizations, and in the virtual space.	By 2027, Bloomingdale will have built and strengthened its resources and capacity to support and sustain the people who work at Bloomingdale and to ensure excellence in all its programs.	By 2027, Bloomingdale will have expanded access to its programs by improving and adapting its current space, and by sharing space with other mission aligned organizations.	By 2027, Bloomingdale will have greater connectivity and openness, and more opportunities for collaboration between and across its community members, and an increased relationship with and presence in the community at large.

PILLARS: OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

EXPAND. ADAPT. INCLUDE.

We plan to build on the work we are already doing by expanding our offerings and capacity, and by adapting our space, current programs, and ways of working so that ultimately, we have the ability **to include more people.**

These three pillars will hold up our work over the next five years. They will help to hold us accountable to this plan. **When we consider a new initiative, partnership or program, we will need to check in with these pillars to ensure that we are remaining true to the direction that was set** when Bloomingdale was founded, and to the intention that was set when we came together to write this plan.



GOALS: OUR FIVE FOCUS AREAS

1 Reach

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have deepened its reach into the Upper West Side, and expanded its borders physically and virtually to reach more diverse communities and populations.

2 Programs

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have developed a cohesive and relevant continuum of programming that engages and accommodates diverse students and audiences of all ages and abilities in our space, in the spaces of partner organizations, and in the virtual space.

3 Capacity

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have built and strengthened its resources and capacity to support and sustain the people who work at Bloomingdale and to ensure excellence in all its programs.

4 Space

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have expanded access to its programs by improving and adapting its current space, and by sharing space with other mission aligned organizations.

5 Connection

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have greater connectivity and openness, and more opportunities for collaboration between and across our community members, and an increased relationship with and presence in the community at large.

OBJECTIVES

1 REACH

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have deepened its reach into the Upper West Side, and expanded its borders physically and virtually to reach more diverse communities and populations.

1.1. Increase Bloomingdale's visibility within the Upper West Side by bringing music outside our walls, and by inviting more people in, through concerts and events, and music making and learning

1.2. Institute professional development and training opportunities for faculty and staff to ensure we can effectively teach programs that attract and support a diverse student population with varying needs

1.3. Develop new partnerships and/or expand current partnerships with local organizations, focusing specifically on the identified gaps in who we reach: young adults, older adults, persons with disabilities, and students with different cultural and racial identities

1.4. Broaden our marketing and outreach efforts to Harlem, Washington Heights, and potentially the Bronx and Queens, in order to attract and engage students from the larger NYC community who can travel to the building

1.5. Utilize the virtual space by creating Bloomingdale branded offerings to reach students and audiences who cannot access our facility or who live outside of the catchment area





2 PROGRAMS

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have developed a cohesive and relevant continuum of programming that engages and accommodates diverse students and audiences of all ages and abilities in our space, in the spaces of partner organizations, and in the virtual space.

2.1. Build and strengthen the program continuum from early childhood to elementary age to bridge any developmental gaps and to provide multiple accessible entry points, creating a foundational base for students at the beginning of their musical journey, and for those those who learn differently

2.2. Encourage teens and young adults to take a leadership role in co-creating their musical experiences at Bloomingdale, promoting a culture of peer-support, fostering their long term connection to the school, and inspiring their continued musical engagement post-high school

2.3. Create accessible programs that invite and enable adults and older adults to participate in music making and learning while building social connections

2.4. Establish Bloomingdale's place in the virtual learning space by developing programming that will appeal to our current and desired communities while upholding the school's commitment to excellence

2.5. Identify opportunities where Bloomingdale can complement and/or support local schools and organizations in their music and music education programming

3 CAPACITY

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have built and strengthened its resources and capacity to support and sustain the people who work at Bloomingdale and to ensure excellence in all its programs.

3.1. Strategically scale up the staffing and faculty capacity to meet the current workload and to support the growth of the additional initiatives identified in this plan

3.2. Strengthen Bloomingdale's operations by creating and implementing holistic HR policies and systems to support staff and faculty to be successful in their work

3.3. Create a supportive workplace that will attract and retain highly skilled and diverse staff and faculty through competitive compensation, benefits and a healthy and equitable working culture

3.4. Provide resources that engage the Board of Directors in their oversight of a growing and changing organization, and for the role they play in ensuring the realization of this plan

3.5. Invest in technology to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of operations as well as support existing and new program initiatives such as remote learning and live streaming

3.6. Expand our fundraising capacity, through staff and board development, to allow us to cultivate funding relationships with local businesses, corporations, foundations, government officials, and potential major donors

3.7. Increase earned revenue streams through a comprehensive effort to grow programs that serve larger groups such as ensembles, group classes, and partnership programs

4 SPACE

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have expanded access to its programs by improving and adapting its current space, and by sharing space with other mission aligned organizations.

4.1. Develop a facilities modernization plan to support programming excellence and student and faculty experience by maximizing the square footage, increasing energy efficiency, upgrading technological infrastructure, and improving the instruments and sound treatment

4.2. Identify, and where possible address Universal Design and accessibility issues in the physical and virtual space that result in a barrier of entry for current students and for those this plan has identified Bloomingdale wants to reach

4.3. Build affiliations with organizations on the Upper West Side that could mutually benefit from sharing space and resources to meet their programming needs and move both their missions forward

4.4. Increase and diversify revenue streams by maximizing the use of the building during off peak times for programming, events, and by building a robust rental program that establishes Bloomingdale as an Upper West Side venue where the community can gather



5 CONNECTION

By 2027, Bloomingdale will have greater connectivity and openness, and more opportunities for collaboration between and across its community members, and an increased relationship with and presence in the community at large.

5.1. Create opportunities for Bloomingdale's students and families to deepen their connection with each other and to the organization through inclusive communication, student-led events and initiatives, and by instituting a holistic and welcoming onboarding process

5.2. Raise up and integrate Bloomingdale's collective voices to ensure that the staff, faculty, students, and families experience belonging and commitment to the community as a whole

5.3. Leverage Bloomingdale's ability to connect people through, and to the power of music, by investing in programs that support and connect our local community

5.4. Co-create a defined articulation of community standards for acceptance and inclusivity that results in everyone feeling welcome in our community and space

5.5. Develop a communications and event plan that specifically targets alumni; telling their stories, celebrating their successes, and connecting them back to faculty, current students, and donors



THE ROAD AHEAD

It has been a rich learning experience for everyone who has worked collaboratively on this plan over the last 6 months. We have listened, we have learned together, and we have learned from each other. In closing, we want to reiterate that this is a vision plan; it strives to paint a picture, set a direction, and create a pathway towards a deeper realization of our mission.

When we asked the question, “What do you want Bloomingdale to look like in 2027?” the answers did not come in the form of bold, reach goals. The consensus was that the organization is excited to **build on its unique identity, strengths, and many recent successes. This is a strengthening plan** – strengthening the organization internally, strengthening its role and presence externally in the community, and continuing to strengthen that inextricable link between excellence and access, the seed that was planted in 1964 when Bloomingdale was formed.

BUILD ON ITS UNIQUE IDENTITY
BUILD ON ITS UNIQUE IDENTITY



We acknowledge that there is a lot here that we want to achieve by 2027. We don't yet know what additional challenges the next five years might bring that might impact our progress, and we anticipate that the ideas generated here will live and extend beyond the life of this plan. We cannot predict how, or when our resources, capacity, or objectives might shift, and we don't know what new priorities and opportunities might emerge. **But, at this time, we are making an agreement to commit to the direction laid out in this plan. We promise to let it be a living, breathing document that accommodates and informs the ebb and flow of our annual operations.** To that end, each year the senior leadership team will create actions and tactics that fall out of these goals and objectives, scaffolding the work over the five year life of the plan. This ensures that our progress is responsive, careful, timely, and within the confines of our capacity and budget.

Our success in achieving this plan will require the full engagement of the board, staff, and our many supporters across the Bloomingdale community to accomplish its goals. At the same time, we still have a lot more learning to do over the plan period. Despite the ambition of the Expand, Adapt, and Include strategic priorities, and of the five focus areas outlined in this plan, they are just a starting point if we are to realize the full potential of Bloomingdale, as a leading voice of music experiences and music education in our neighborhood, city and beyond.

FULL ENGAGEMENT



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ROADMAP 2027 -

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