

City of Northfield

Northfield, Minnesota

Historic Designation Request Form

This City form is for requesting the local designation of sites within the City of Northfield as Historic Sites. The form utilizes topics and criteria similar to those on the Registration Form for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, adapted for the purpose of local designation only. This form is not to be used for nomination to the National Registration for Historic Places.

Each topic lists instructions for completing the form. Each numbered section can be expanded as needed with relevant and applicable information. Supplemental information can be referred to in the form and included by attached section continuation pages.

1. Name of the Site (a Site may be a district, property, building, landscape feature, or object) _____

Current name: Central Park
Historic name: Public Square
Other

2. Location _____

Street address:

Other: Block reserved in 1855 plat; surrounded by 3rd and 4th Streets (E-W) and College (originally Independence Ave.) and Winona Streets (N-S)

City: Northfield State: MN Zip Code: 55057 County: Rice

GPS (if available):

3. Ownership and Contact _____

Current owner: City of Northfield

Street Address: 801 Washington Street

City: Northfield State: MN

Zip Code: 55057

Telephone number(s): (507) 645-8833

Owner Representative or Contact:

Telephone Number(s):

4. Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) Recommendation

HPC received this Request Form on: _____ Reviewed Request on: _____

_____ The HPC recommends Approval of local designation (any qualifications are to be attached)

_____ The HPC recommends Denial of local designation at this time (any qualifications are to be attached)

Signature of HPC Chair or designee

date of signature

Name - printed

Note: Applicant may appeal HPC recommendation directly to the City Council.

5. City Council Certification

City Council received this Request on: _____ and reviewed Request on: _____

_____ The City Approves this local designation (qualifications may be attached)

_____ The City Denies this local designation (reasons are to be attached)

Signature of HPC Chair or designee

date of signature

Name - printed

ATTACHMENTS:

6. Historic Site Data

Enter information for each category below

<p>Ownership of Property . (Check as many as needed)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> private</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public - local</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> public - state</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> public- US</p>	<p>Category of Property (Check only one box)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> district</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> building(s)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site or landscape</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> structure(s)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> object</p>	<p>List number of resources by Category:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1</p> <p style="text-align: right;">total of 1</p>
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Property Dimensions and/or Area: The Public Square was plotted with the typical block size of 330ft per side, and was in the original plotted residential area of town. The block had streets on all sides and was bordered by 3rd and 4th Streets (E-W), and by Independence Ave. (now College St.) and Winona Street (N-S).

Date of Original Construction: The block was reserved as a Public Square in the original 1855 plat by surveyor, C. W. Iddings, for the land owner, John Wesley Northfield, who purchased 160 acres that year. Landscape elements in the square described below were added incrementally.

7. Historic Site Description

<p>Historic or Original Functional Uses: (List Uses chronologically if known)</p> <p>North designated the land as a Public Square, which in 1855 meant that it was to be held in trust by the town "as grounds of pleasure, amusement, recreation or health".¹</p> <p>(see Appendix A-1 for images of historic uses and details)</p>	<p>Recent and Current Functional Uses: (List chronologically if known and appropriate)</p> <p>The block remains the property of the City as a public park and sustains the original uses, i.e., pleasure, amusement, recreation and health".¹</p> <p>(see Appendix A-2 for images of current uses and details)</p>
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Describe Architectural Features and Characteristics:

The character defining features are as follows:

- a small, simple park surrounded by well preserved houses located in the earliest neighborhood with some of the city's best examples of Gothic Revival;
- a row of trees on each of the four sides of the block;
- a circular center area: plaza/surround at the center of the park where two diagonal crosswalks meet; and
- the two diagonal crosswalks as laid out in the 1855 plans.

(see Appendix B-1 for images of features)

Describe Historic/Original and Current Materials:

- The material of the two diagonal crosswalks changed over the years in the following order: mowed grass, bare ground, gravel, and concrete; they remain as crosswalks that meet at center.
- The circular area at the center once contained a fountain, a stone fountain surround, a narrow concrete pathway around the fountain surround, and bare ground between the pathway and edge of the circle. Currently, the circular area consists of a colored, textured concrete paver plaza and surrounded by an outer circular limestone wall.

(see Appendix B-2 for images of materials)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable Local Designation Criteria

Indicate the criteria applicable to the property that qualify it for Local Designation as an Historic Site.

More than one Criterion for Significance may be selected. Selected Criteria must be supported by information provided.

- A. The site is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local history
- B. The site is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past
- C. The site embodies the distinctive characteristics of a building type, time period, or method of construction; or the site represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values; or the site represents a significance and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- D. The site embodies distinctive characteristics that are representative examples of a local historic contexts, and/or its developmental history, and thereby important for continued public understanding of our heritage.
- E. The site has yielded or is likely to yield information important to pre-history or history.

Description of Significance

Complete the following descriptions of Significance utilizing expanded space for each, or by Section 8 Continuation pages so indicated.

(Note: See Appendices C and D for documentation and details for the following dimensions of significance)

Type of Use and its Significance. (see Appendix C-1)

The Public Square/Central Park has remained in continuous public use as intended by John W. North, i.e., as a public place for ornamentation, improvement, pleasure, amusement, recreation and health. The Public Square block was the first in the plat of Northfield;. The surveyor, C..W. Iddings, used the block subsequently to lay out the other streets and blocks.

Time or Period of Significance. (see Appendix C-2)

The period of significance ranges from 1855 (the time of the plotting and designation of the block as the Public Square) to 1950 (the end of the District and State Supreme Court cases that reaffirmed the Public Square original uses).

List Significant Persons and/or Events associated with the site. (see Appendix C-3)

Person: John W. North. The well known lawyer and politician, North was the founder of Northfield, and directed the plating of the city in 1855. The plat included a block identified as "Public Square".

Event: The 1948-1950 District and Minnesota Supreme Court Decisions regarding the use of the park. A permanent injunction was issued against the City and School Board in 1950 regarding their intention to condemn the property so it could be used as athletic fields for the adjacent high school. The multi-year threat to the park ended in 1950 with a protective court injunction regarding the use.

Architect and/or Builder. (see Appendix C-4)

Elements of the park design plans appeared very early (1869). The plans contained aspects of the Palladian style popular at the time on the east coast. As with other parks in newly founded villages, the landscaping features were added incrementally.

Narrative Statement of Significance. (see Appendix D) .

(Describe the significance expanding on the above summary items, and additional topics of interest.)

D-1. Expansion of Summary: Landscape Standards. Since the application form does not specifically address the seven qualities of integrity for landscapes as defined by the National Register Program, those qualities are addressed in this expansion component.

Note: Some of the documentation in Appendix D-1 duplicate some of that in previous items.

D-2 Additional Topic: Sense of Ownership. Evidence of the continued high level of use, dedication, sense of ownership, and protection of the park by the community can be found in Appendix D-2.

9. Important Bibliographical References

Include bibliographical references in the Historic Significance narrative as part of Section 8.

Primary locations of this property and historical data used for this request:

City of Northfield HPC Files

Northfield Historical Society Rice County Historical Society

Northfield Public Library

Carleton College Library and Archives

St. Olaf College Library and Archives

State Historical Society Archives State Historic Preservation Office

1 0. Property/Site Graphics

This information may be included as part of the Historic Significance narrative as part of Section 8.

Illustrations of the site are required to include: historic, developmental, and current. Indicate those included:

Historic Photographs

Historic site drawing and/or plat map location

Photographs of key developmental changes to the property or site, if any

Current photographs

Current site plan and/or plat map location

Drawings or renderings of the original site, property, building, or object (if available)

Document: City of Northfield DESIGNATION FORM 2009.doc

¹ Minnesota Supreme Court (1949) , Leal A. Headley and others v. City of Northfield and Others, Case No. 34,810, . 227 Minnesota Reports, pp. 458-467.

8. The ordinary and usual signification of a public square dedicated by a private person, as here, for public use is an open tract of land for use for purposes of free passage or of ornamentation and improvement as grounds of pleasure, amusement, recreation, or health.

p. 459

APPENDIX A: 7. Historic Site Description

A-1 Historic or Original Functional Uses:

Summary statement on Request Form: Designated as a Public Square in 1855, which meant at the time that the land was to be held in trust by the town as a Public Square "for ornamentation and improvement as grounds of pleasure, amusement, recreation, or health"¹.

Below are the available archival images of individual and group uses of the park.



1910

- St. Olaf C.²



Circa 1910

- MNHS³



1910

Bandstand

- MNHS⁴



Circa 1920

Northfield Community Band

- NHS⁵



1912

Seventh Day Adventist Camp Meeting
attended by 750 members

- MNHS, Elmer Martinson Collection⁶

www.mnhistory.org
Martinson Collection

A-2 Recent and Current Functional Uses:

The block remains the property of the City as a public park and sustains the original uses: ornamentation, and improvement; and for pleasure, amusement, recreation and health.

The Public Square/Central Park has been in continuous use as a significant open community space in the center of a neighborhood of well preserved older homes, and is near the downtown business area. The uses of the park reflect the location, and the simple park design that includes the tree-lined edges around the block, a circular center area where the two diagonal crosswalks meet, and the four open quadrants between the crosswalks. Each area has some unique, but also flexible uses as indicated below.

Center Circular Area contains a sitting height limestone wall encircling a textured, colored concrete paver plaza area that provides adequate space for a variety of activities and events - small and large, private and public. A 1954 wall was in disrepair in 1991, and rehabilitated in a major project completed in 1994.⁷ It is a place used by groups for entertainment (see below) or a place where a single person can sit on the wall to reflect and view the adjacent flower gardens, or watch children playing nearby. The acoustics of the round, short wall make it a popular place to hold a meeting, a class, poetry reading, concert, or to practice an instrument, or a specialized use by small children - they enjoy standing in the center and listening to echoes of their voices. Other unique examples using the acoustics include a student who played his guitar every day one spring at 3 p.m.; and an out of town visitor wanted a place to practice her cello and did so for an hour entertaining two neighbor volunteers who were weeding the adjacent garden.

Below are some images of public events and gatherings in the circular center plaza.



Annual (until Covid) Arts Guild *Shakespeare in the Park* productions with temporary stage. - Krause Video Clips⁸
Note temporary steps outside of limestone wall for entrance of actors onto the stage, and temporary structure for lighting.



Weddings - Krause Video Clip⁹



A production of *These Trees Shall be my Books; A History of Central Park* written by Northfield author for and performed by neighbors using the temporary Arts Guild Stage. - TPC¹⁰



“Circle Soccer”
A “3 on 3” game invented by community soccer players that allows for a good game with as few as six players. - WPC¹¹

The North Quadrant is the only quadrant with fixed structures. Most of the quadrant is devoted to a playground for young children with benches for the supervising adults, and a porta potty in the summer (see aerial view in Appendix B). The playground is often used by a day-care in a near-by church, heavily used by neighbors as well as families who drive to the park. The North Quadrant also contains a permanent small square table with attached seating.



Park furnishings

The park has remained open and simple to accommodate a variety of uses. The furnishings include period benches (n=9, see example in image on left), and period light posts (on left). Portable picnic tables are provided during the summer months.

- Images from City Website, Parks¹²

The West Quadrant hosts a variety of activities. Because motorized access is at the west side of the park, it is the location used by the City's showmobile that is brought in for special events. It is also the area where the food trucks park for some events.



"Books & Stars" summer program. - City Website, Parks¹³
Children are encouraged to use the bookmobile (white van on left above), and sing and dance along with with the music. The event is held monthly and rotates among the parks.



Vintage Band Festival. - NNews Website¹⁴
About 30 vintage bands coming from several countries perform at the festival. Central Park serves as one location due to the proximity to the downtown.

West, South and East Quadrants provide open, flexible space for a wide variety of activities, a characteristic of this particular park and consistent with its origin. The images below capture the size and openness of the south quadrant that is similar to the West and East open quadrants.

2022 South Quadrant



2022 South quadrant - TPC¹⁵
Looking north at park from across 4th St.



North end of the south quadrant - City website, Parks¹⁶
Looking west near center circle



2008 Southwest entrance to central area - TPC¹⁷
Looking south-east across south quadrant



2008 Looking northwest along SE diagonal; - TPC¹⁸
. middle center circle in the distance on the left

The open areas encourage a wide variety of informal and often impromptu activities as well as a wide variety of games (softball, soccer, Frisbee, badminton); arts activities (some bring easels); large and small social gatherings (is a common sight to see people pulling up in their cars and getting out their folding lawn chairs); committee meetings; readings to young children; and yoga classes. The openness allows people to take advantage of being in the open but out of the sun by simply moving their chairs or the portable picnic tables to follow the shade - a common sight.



Gatherings of friends



Family gatherings - City website, Parks & Rec^{19,20}



Community Ed.: Summer Program



“Super Kids” Program - City website, Parks & Rec.^{21, 22}



2021 Pride in the Park Day - City website, NPB/Library²³



2022 Annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration - City website, Library²⁴



1960 - NHS²⁵

Annual Craft Fair: Defeat of Jesse James Days
Tents line all diagonal and boulevard sidewalks.



- City website, Parks²⁶

Footnotes: Appendix A

- 1 Minnesota Supreme Court (1949) , *Leal A. Headley and others v. City of Northfield and Others*, Case No. 34,810,. In 227 Minnesota Reports, p. 459.
- 2 1910 Photo (enlarged clip): St. Olaf College Archives
- 3 Circa 1910 Photo (enlarged clip): Minnesota Historical Society
- 4 1910 Photo (enlarged): Minnesota Historical Society
- 5 Circa 1920 Photo: Northfield Historical Society
- 6 1912 Photo: Minnesota Historical Society, Elmer Martinson Personal Collection
<http://mnsdahistory.org/gatherings/camp-meetings/early/1912-northfield/>
- 7 1994, June 1. Northfield News, p.1b.
- 8 2000 Video clips. Images of play: *Central Park - The Legacy of John and Anne North*, Paul Krause (producer). <https://youtu.be/XjUZD9HQMmQ>
- 9 2000 Video clip. Image of wedding: Krause. Ibid.
- 10 Photo: Thomas A., Personal Collection (TPC)
- 11 Photo: Wornson B., Personal Collection (WPC)
- 12 Three photos: City of Northfield Website, Parks & Recreation
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/374/Parks-Recreation>
- 13 Photo: Ibid.
- 14 Photo: Northfield News Website, Vintage Band NorthfieldNews.com
- 15 2022 Photo: Thomas A., Personal Collection (TPC)
- 16 Photo: City of Northfield Website, Parks & Recreation
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/374/Parks-Recreation>
- 17- 18 2008 Two photos: Thomas A., Personal Collection (TPC)
- 19- 22 Four photos: City of Northfield Website, Parks & Recreation
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/374/Parks-Recreation>
- 23, 24 Two photos: City of Northfield Website, Library
- 25 1960 Photo: Northfield Historical Society
- 26 Photo: City of Northfield Website, Parks & Recreation
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/374/Parks-Recreation>

APPENDIX B: Historic Site Description

B-1 Architectural Features and Characteristics:

Documented below are the character defining features and characteristics:

Location, Trees, Sidewalks, and Circular Center Area.

Note: The summary statement entered on Request Form, is italicized and precedes the additional information for each section below.

- *Location: located in the earliest neighborhood; a small, simple park surrounded by well preserved houses and some of the city's best examples of Gothic Revival.¹*



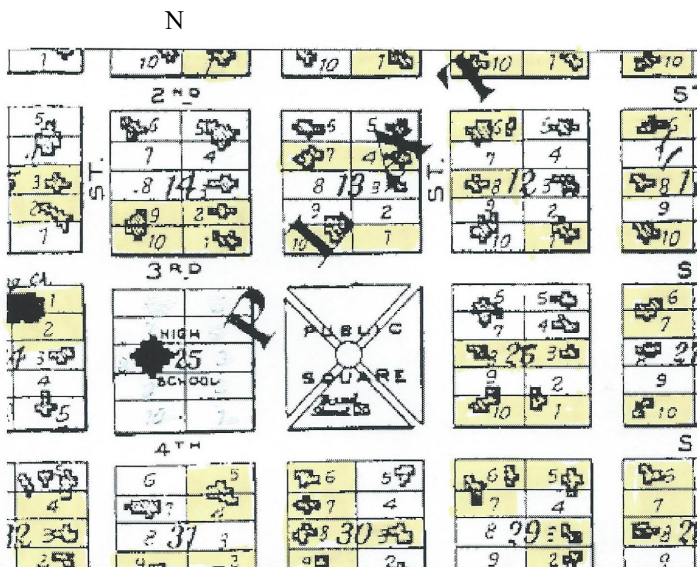
1869 - MNHS²

Park located three blocks east of the center of the business district and Bridge Square (looking SE)



Current City Basemap - City website, Maps³

Central park two blocks from downtown historical business district



1900 Map of neighborhood - Zellie 1991 Report⁴

Buildings located in the early neighborhood

- = Original residences still existing (color added)
- = Church still existing with additions
- = 1874 Public High School (burned in 1908; rebuilt in 1910; later additions)
- = Bandstand in Public Square



Current aerial view -Beacon,Rice Co.⁵

Features: Trees lining boulevards & diagonal sidewalks
 Diagonal crosswalks;
 Circular center area at sidewalk crossing.
 Current playground in north quadrant (added in 1992 with wood chips ground covering)

Trees: Rows of trees surrounding the block



1869

MNHS⁶

Sketch showing trees around all sides of the Public Square, and built houses in neighborhood. Square for public school on right has no features.



1910

- MNHS⁷

Row of trees (looking west on 4th St.)



1912.

- MNHS, Elmer Martinson Collection⁸

Seventh Day Adventist Camp Meeting attended by 750 members.

Mature trees visible on two sides of the park. The camp meeting report provides some information about the condition of the park.

“The brethren were fortunate in procuring the beautiful, shady city park in which to locate their camp. The large tent was pitched by the side of an artificial fountain in the center of the grounds, while the family tents were scattered through the park among the elms and maples. Many remarked that it was the most beautiful camp-ground they had ever seen.”⁹

Note: A Reunion of the 1912 Camp was held in 2019 in Northfield; the group held a meeting in the park, but did not camp.

Current Boulevard Trees

The rows of trees remain but on some sides there are fewer than originally.

The boulevard trees are of various ages as shown below.



2023 South side looking northeast - TPC¹⁰
across 4th St.
Young and mature trees (n=6)



2023 East side looking north - TPC¹¹
Young trees in center of snow bank (n=7)



2023 North side looking west -TPC¹²
(n = 10 trees)



2023 West side looking north -TPC¹³
Young trees (n=10)
Note: these trees are on the park side of the sidewalk
since the college building addition is adjacent to the walk.

Other Park Trees

In addition to the trees surrounding the park area, the interior includes the following:

- Thirty-five shade trees and five conifers are along the diagonal walkways, and around the center circular plaza (see the next page for images).
- A small flowering crabapple grove of six trees is located at both the southeast corner and the northwest corner (see shadows of the trees in Current Aerial View above on p. 1). While they are small trees, they do provide shade for picnic tables, portable tables, and benches.

- *Sidewalks: Two Diagonal Crosswalks;*



1905-1910 - NHS¹⁴



1907-1916 - Carleton C.¹⁵



1935-1950 - NHS¹⁶

Diagonal walk looking SE



- City website, Parks¹⁷

Diagonal sidewalk looking NE towards circular plaza



2013 - TPC¹⁸

Diagonal sidewalk looking NW towards plaza



2012

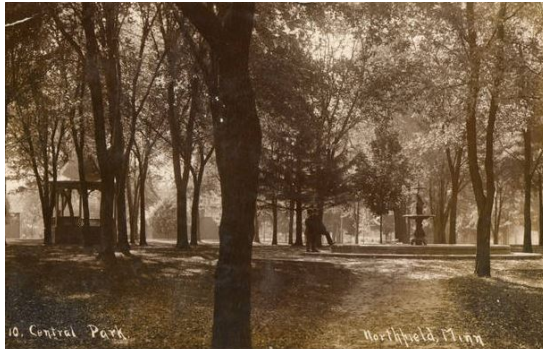
- MNHS, Kathy Parke Personal collection¹⁹

Diagonal sidewalk (middle walk in center) looking NW and curved walks connecting to adjacent diagonal sidewalks. Visible are the limestone wall entrance to center, period lighting, perennial plantings around the limestone wall, and shade trees lining interior walks.

- *Circular Center Area: A circular area at the center of the park at crossing of walks*



1905-1910 - NHS²⁰



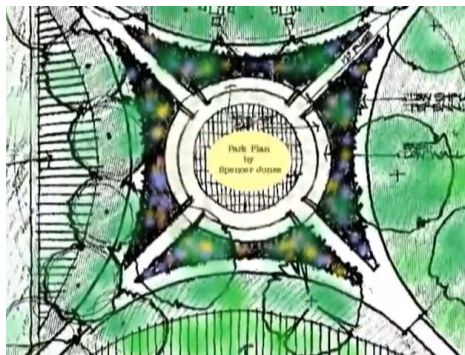
1910 - St. Olaf C.²¹



1935-1950 - NHS²²



1915 - St. Olaf C.²³



1991 Rehabilitation Plan - SMSQSE Architects²⁴

The 1991 plan retained the circular center where the diagonal sidewalks meet, and rehabilitated the deteriorating existing limestone outer wall.

Pavers were added to the bare ground in the center.



2013 - TPC²⁵

Circular sitting height wall surrounding plaza looking east



- City website, Parks²⁶

Circular sitting height wall surrounding plaza looking NE from center of plaza.

The pavers are in a concentric pattern. The perimeter of the pavers have a foot wide concrete walk adjacent to the interior wall.

B-2 Historic/Original and Current Materials:

Excluding the playground equipment, the structures in this landscape are limited to the walks and the center circular area.

Crosswalks

The material of the two diagonal crosswalks changed over the years in the following order: mowed grass, bare ground, gravel, and concrete; they remain as crosswalks that meet at center.

Original: A timeline of the development of the walks can be found in Appendix C. The original “walks” were paths through the grass; later the walks were gravel. In 1929 the first concrete walks were poured. (NNews, 4-5-29)²⁷

Current: All sidewalks in the block are concrete (see images below).

Center Circular Area

The circular area at the center once contained a fountain, what appears to be limestone fountain surround, a narrow concrete pathway around the fountain surround, and bare ground between the pathway and edge of the circle. Currently, the circular area consists of a colored, textured concrete paver plaza and an outer circular limestone wall surround.

Original Materials: See images below.



Enlarged 1910 photo -St.Olaf C.²⁸



1915

- St. Olaf C.²⁹



Circa 1915

- MNHS³⁰

The images of the original circular center area above include several components: a fountain and four rings around the fountain of different materials. The fountain surround consists of a stone wall with a smooth cap. A hard flat surface about the width of a sidewalk is apparent at the ground level around the surround. That hard surface is surrounded by an unfinished area with the appearance of bare ground; and lastly, in the first two images, a shadow of a low stone wall appears beyond the bare ground. The fountain was removed and later the fountain surround was removed in 1954 when it was reported that after the removal, they “hailed in black dirt” (NNews, 5-27-54)³¹.

Current Materials: See images below.



. - City website, Parks³²



2012

- TPC³³

Current images of the circular center area include concrete walks leading to the plaza; a textured, colored concrete paver plaza replacing gravel and bare ground from 1954; and a surrounding limestone wall. The surface of the wall is similar in appearance to the wall fountain surround, and the low outer wall in the images above.

Footnotes: Appendix B

- 1 Zellie, C. (1991, Dec. 16). Letter to City re: *Restoration of Central Park*, p.2.
- 2 1869 Birdseye engraving: Minnesota Historical Society [arrow added]
- 3 2023 Basemap Clip: City of Northfield website, Maps
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/587/Northfield-Street-Basemap-PDF?bidId=>
- 4 1900 Map Clip: Zellie, C. (1991). A portion of the Rice County 1900 Plat Book, *The Northfield Historic Sites Survey*, p. 93. [color added]
- 5 2023 Aerial view clip: Beacon, Rice Co., beacon.schneidercorp.com, Rice Co., MN
- 6 1869 Birdseye engraving (enlarged); Minnesota Historical Society
- 7 1910 Photo: Minnesota Historical Society
- 8 1912 Photo: Minnesota Historical Society, Elmer Martinson Personal Collection
<http://mnsdahistory.org/gatherings/camp-meetings/early/1912-northfield/>
- 9 *The Minnesota Camp-Meeting*, <http://mnsdahistory.org/gatherings/camp-meetings/early/1912-northfield/>
- 10-13 Four photos: Thomas A., Personal Collection (TPC)
- 14 1905-1910 Enlarged Plat Drawing: Northfield Historical Society
- 15 1907-1916 Photo: Carleton College
- 16 1935-1950 Photo: Northfield Historical Society
- 17 Photo: City of Northfield Website, Parks & Recreation
- 18 2013 Photo: Thomas, A. Personal Collection (TPC)
- 19 2012 Photo: Minnesota Historical Society, Kathy Parke Personal Collection
<http://mnsdahistory.org/gatherings/camp-meetings/early/1912-northfield/>
- 20 1905-1910 Enlarged Plat Drawing: Northfield Historical Society
- 21 1910 Photo: St. Olaf College
- 22 1935-1950 Photo: Northfield Historical Society
- 23 1915 Photo: St. Olaf College
- 24 1991 Drawing: Park Plan, SMSQSE Architects, Spencer Jones (Landscape Architect)
- 25 2013 Photo: Thomas, A. Personal Collection (TPC)
- 26 Photo: City of Northfield Website, Parks & Recreation
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/374/Parks-Recreation>
- 27 1929, May 5. Northfield News, p. 3.
- 28 1910 Enlarged Photo: St. Olaf College
- 29 1915 Photo: St. Olaf College
- 30 Circa 1915 Enlarged Photo: Minnesota Historical Society
- 31 1954, May 27. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 32 Photo: City of Northfield Website, Parks
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/374/Parks-Recreation>
- 33 2012 Photo: Thomas, A. Personal Collection (TPC)

APPENDIX C: 8. Description of Significance

Note: The summary statement entered on the Request Form is italicized and precedes the additional information for each section below.

C-1 Type of Use and its Significance.

The Public Square/Central Park has remained in continuous public use as intended originally, i.e., as grounds of pleasure, amusement, recreation or health.

The block was designated as a Public Square in the 1855 plat¹. The Minnesota Supreme Court (1949) stated that at the time, a “Public Square” meant the land was to be held in trust by the town “for purposes of free passage or of ornamentation and improvement as grounds of pleasure, amusement, recreation, or health”.² The Public Square/Central Park has remained in continuous use as a significant open community space in the center of a neighborhood and near the downtown. It is used by the neighbors, but also by the larger community. Due to the proximity to the downtown area, the City and community organizations use Central Park for varied programs and events. The diversity of events in size and focus, in addition to the informal use have expanded with the growth of the community, but the vision remains the same (see examples in Appendix A: Historic or Original Functional Uses).

C-2 Time or Period of Significance.

The period of significance ranges from 1855 (the time of the plotting and designation of the block as the Public Square) to 1950 (the end of the District and State Supreme Court cases that reaffirmed the Public Square original uses).

The period of significance for the Public Square/Central Park begins with the 1855 purchase by John North and the initial platting of a portion of the land he purchased for the founding of the village of Northfield. The period of significance ends in 1950, the date of last of the judgments of the State Supreme and District Courts regarding the use of the park.

Beginning date: 1855 and early years.

Below is a timetable of the incremental development of the Public Square landscape. The documentation is presented for each of the individual long-term character defining features: location and size; a row of trees along each of the four sides of the block; two diagonal crosswalks; and a circular area at the center of the park where the two diagonal crosswalks meet. (see Appendix B for images of the long-term character defining features).

Location and Size (and grounds)

1855 John North purchased 160 square acres of prairie land ground on the east side of the Cannon River; the Great Woods was on the west side of the river. ³

1855 C.W. Iddings surveyed the land for John North for a village and placed four large stones at the corners of the first block; it was designated as the “Public Square”. The stones were used as reference points for laying out all the future streets.⁴

1884 Volunteer citizens cut the high grasses in Central Park and suggested shorter grasses be used (NNews, 6-28-84).⁵

1886 “The City Park with its neatly trimmed grass and rustic seats is a pretty site, but suggest to the city council that lamps be placed at each corner and one in the center” (NNews, 6-26-86)⁶

- 1892 “The city park has not been raked for over a year. It is possible that last year’s leaves and broken twigs may in time make a good fertilizer but that can hardly be claimed for the fallen branches, broken bottles, old shoes and small boulders. . . The season is fast approaching when the city will be visited by hundreds of people...” (NNews, 5-14-92).⁷
- 1898 Citizens were volunteering to sprinkle the park (NNews, 8-6-98⁸ and 8-20-98).⁹

Rows of Trees

- 1869 Panoramic image; includes rows of trees on all sides of the block, but no indication of a diagonal sidewalk; empty adjacent west block as identified as “Public School Land”; high school built later on the block in 1874.¹⁰
- 1895 Citizen reported that some trees on one side of the park were being “destroyed” and lamented the loss of shade. “The first thing I did was to sit on the opposite sidewalk and recite that beautiful old poem ‘Alderman, spare that tree.’” (NNews, 5-20-95).¹¹
- 1898 New trees were planted in the park on the Winona street side (NNews, 8-6-98).¹²
“Trees in Central Park have been topped and trimmed” and “. . . the increase in shade will be very noticeable in a few years”, (NNews, 10-1-98).¹³
- 1899 Photo; includes images of diagonal sidewalk, young trees and bandstand (St. Olaf).¹⁴
- 1910 Photo; 4th St. looking west; west boulevard lined with trees and a bandstand in the park (MNHS).¹⁵ [Bandstand moved between 1899 and 1910. Citizen had suggested in 1898 that it be moved due to connectivity issue in winter to move through park]. (NNews, 12-31-1898).¹⁶

Diagonal Walks

- 1885 “Through our park we have 8 walks. . . We would suggest that these several walks be kept mowed close all through season” (NNews, 4-4-85).¹⁷
- 1905-1910 Plat drawing; with diagonal sidewalk and circular feature in center. (NHS)¹⁸
- 1910 Photo; includes two men standing near fountain; trees; diagonal sidewalk; fountain with circular surround; a narrow circular hard surface between fountain surround; bare ground; and a shadow of an outer circular, low wall. (St. Olaf)¹⁹
- 1929 Council repaired fountain city park in 1st Ward and approved laying cement walk diagonally across from northeast to southwest, (NNews, 4-5-29).²⁰
- 1935 “ Construction of a sidewalk running diagonally through Central Park, southeast to northwest, was completed last week”, (NNews, 5-30-35)²¹
- 1935-1950 Aerial Photo. Visible: High school on “Public School Land”, diagonal sidewalk, circular plaza (NHS)²²

Plaza

- 1895 Bids were placed for a fountain in the park; no contract has yet been awarded (NNews, 5-4-95).²³
- 1898 “Parks are now in splendid condition and ideal place to spend a hot afternoon...” Could be improved with a fountain, (NNews, 7-16-98).²⁴ Citizens presented a petition to the Council to install a fountain; was approved, (NNews, 8-6-98).²⁵

- 1898 Fountain was being installed with a 20 ft. wide basin. “For the present a plain spray will be placed in center but a statue or other artistic piece is hope for the future”, (NNews, 9-3-98).²⁶ “. . .water is thrown from a straight jet in the center rising to a height of about 15 ft.,” (NNews, 9-24-98).²⁷
- Some citizens had wanted the fountain to be located a “little to the west of the cross walk intersection” but the decision was to place it in the center. For the winter the fountain was covered with a “straw stack” and “the drifts about the fountain have made it desirable for pedestrians to take a still wider circle as they cross the park. . .the intersection of the walks in close proximity to the band stand, probably necessitating a removal of that frail structure and adding considerable distance to daily travel of First Ward park crossers.” (NNews, 12-31-98).²⁸
- 1903 Basin leaked; water turned off, (NNews, 8-8-1903).²⁹ Council approved purchasing a fountain, (NNews, 9-12-1903).³⁰ “The new fountain has been received and set in place in the basin”, (NNews, 10-17-1903).³¹
- 1905-1910 Plat drawing; with diagonal sidewalk and circular feature in center (NHS).³²
- 1910 Photo; includes two men standing near fountain; trees; diagonal sidewalk; fountain with circular surround; a narrow circular hard surface between fountain surround; bare ground; and a shadow of an outer circular, low wall. (St. Olaf)³³
- 1915 Photo; includes fountain with circular surround on a plaza (St. Olaf).³⁴
- 1915 (circa) Photo includes fountain and woman sitting on surround (MNHS).³⁵
- 1935-1950 Photo; High school on “Public School Land”, diagonal sidewalk, circular plaza (NHS).³⁶
- 1929 Council repaired city park fountain in 1st Ward and approved laying cement walk diagonally across from northeast to southwest (NNews, 4-5-29).³⁷
- 1954 “City has removed concrete fountain circle from the middle of park and hauled in black dirt. . . . The NIA [Northfield Improvement Association] installed water pipes to center of park last summer and began installation of an ornamental stone wall which this summer will contain a terraced bed of flowers and shrubs. The NIA will also install a drinking fountain at the center of the park” (NNews, 5-27-54).³⁸

Ending Date of Period of Significance: 1950 (continued from C-2)

and

Significant Event (continued from C-3)

The 1950 Minnesota Supreme Court decision regarding Central Park is both the End Date of the Period of Significance, and is a Significant Event. Thus, the information below serves as documentation for both items in *Section 8 Statement of Significance*.

In the series of court cases noted below, the “opponents” were citizens that included members of the Northfield Improvement Association (NIA) whose spokesperson was Leal Headley. They were opposing the attempts of the City Council and Board of Education to transform the majority of the park into an athletic field.

The end of the court cases that confirmed the public use of the park is a key to both the period of significance, and in the history and future of the park. The timeline below documents each of the stages leading to the final court decision in 1950.

1946 School Needs and Proposal

The State Department of Education indicated that the growing school did not have adequate outdoor space for physical education.

At a City Council meeting, the school superintendent asked that the supervision and use of the park be “turned over” to the Northfield Board of Education (NNews, 7-4-46, p. 1).³⁹

One council member suggested the question be submitted to voters in a special election.

1947 Controversy regarding Proposal

Northfield Public Schools and City of Northfield collaborated on a plan to close the city street between the high school and Central Park, and to use the majority of the park for athletic fields.

“It was proposed to install archery, softball, horseshoe, touch football, and soccer courts. Trees, walks, and other improvements thereon were to be removed as part of the conversion process” (227 MN Reports, p. 461).⁴⁰

A special election was held to determine if the property should be turned over to the school system. The City and School proposal was approved by majority of residents, and City Council approved (NNews, 7-10-47).⁴¹

A community organization (Northfield Improvement Association), protested against the proposal.

The opponents argued that, since it was a dedicated Public Square, it could not be used in any way other than the original use of a Public Square (Northfield Independent, 10-23-47⁴²; 10-30-47,⁴³; 12-11- 47).⁴⁴

1948 Court Case #1: Request for Restraining Order filed by opponents in District Court

The City and School District officials hired a firm to start on the project to convert the park into a school athletic area. Opponents sought an injunction to stop the work. (NInd., 04-15-48).⁴⁵

Subsequently, the District judge denied the original order but issued a temporary 30 day restraining order through July 3. (NInd., 6-10-48).⁴⁶

1948 – 1949 Court Case #2: Opponents file appeal to Minnesota State Supreme Court;
Supreme Court reverses District Court ruling

Opponents filed an appeal from denying order to the MN Supreme Court; filed on the deadline date of July 3 (NInd., 7-8-48)⁴⁷.

State Supreme Court reversed the District Court decision noting that because Central Park had been dedicated as “a public square” by the town’s founder in 1855, it must remain such in perpetuity. The court issued several findings in their court records, 227 Minnesota Reports, of the case of *Leal A. Headley and others vs. City of Northfield*, that include the following

- **Use:** Court cited numerous precedents for this action and noted that “the term ‘public square’ as used in the dedication meant an ornamental square and a square to be used and enjoyed by the public generally, and that it did not mean a square or space to be used as a school athletic field or school playground.” (p.460)⁴⁸. “Use of the square for a playground or athletic field would be a public use, but one not only different in kind from use as a public square, but positively inconsistent therewith and destructive thereof and consequently unlawful” (p. 465).⁴⁹
- **Right of Neighbors:** Court found that the neighbors of the park have a right to oppose usage and development of adjacent properties, i.e., “Plaintiff abutting owners have a right to maintain an action for the injunctive relief here sought” (p. 467).⁵⁰
- **Role of the City.** Findings concluded that “It is entirely inaccurate, therefore, to speak of the public square here involved as property belonging to the city of Northfield. Rather, it should be spoken of as the property of the dedicator or his successors in interest, in which the city, as trustee for the benefit of the public and not in its own right as such, has such an interest as is necessary to enjoy the use thereof as a public square” (p.463).⁵¹

1949 - 1950 Court Case #3” City requested a special session in District Court;
District judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs (opponents).

City attorney requested a District Court session regarding the City’s intent to gain possession by condemning the park property (NNews, 3-24-49).⁵²

District judge denied the request and

“granted a permanent injunction in favor of plaintiffs in court action to enjoin city and school district from using a portion of Central Park for playground and recreational purpose. Unless appealed to state supreme court, case is now closed” (NNews, 11-23-50).⁵³

C-3 List Significant Persons and/or Events associated with the site.

Person: *John W. North, a well known lawyer and politician, was the founder of Northfield, and directed the plating of the city in 1855. The plat included a block identified as “Public Square”.*

In addition to his local initiatives to establish a local business economy, John North was influential and accomplished in a wide range of political achievements beyond Northfield and Minnesota as summarized below.

NORTHFIELD, platted in October, 1855, incorporated as a village in 1871 and as a city February 26, 1875, and the adjoining township of this name, organized in 1858, commemorate John W. North, principal founder of the village, who was born in Onondaga county, N. Y. in February, 1815, and died in Oleander, Cal., February 22, 1890. He was educated at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn.; was admitted to practice law in 1845; came to Minnesota in 1849, and settled

here in 1855; was a member of the territorial legislature in 1851, and presided over the Republican wing of the convention in 1857 that framed the state constitution; was influential in founding the University of Minnesota, and was treasurer of its board of regents, 1851-60. In 1861 he removed to Nevada, being appointed by President Lincoln surveyor general of that territory. He presided over the convention that formed the state constitution of Nevada, in 1864, and was one of the judges of its supreme court. Later he organized the company that established the fruit-growing settlement of Riverside, near Los Angeles, Cal., and was United States judge for that state.

- Upham (1920). p. 463.⁵⁴

Event: *The 1948-1950 District and Minnesota Supreme Court Decisions regarding the use of the park.*

A permanent injunction was issued against the City and School Board in 1950 regarding their intention to condemn the property so it could be used as athletic fields for the adjacent high school. The multi-year threat to the park ended in 1950 with a protective court injunction regarding the use.

See full documentation for the Significant Event in D-2 Period of Significance.

Summary:

Event: The almost five-year effort by the City and the School Board from mid-1946 to the end of 1950 to change the use of the public park to a school athletic field.

That period included two years of several court cases that ended in 1950. The 1950 injunction that legally established the public use of the park by the public has, and will in the future, assure the permanent public use of the park.

The protection of the court decision is particularly significant for the future of the park given the proximity to the college and the downtown. The 1950 decision will be increasingly critical to assure the “public use”, and is a highly significant event in the history and survival of the park.

Architect and/or Builder.

Elements of the park design plans appeared very early (1869). The plans contained aspects of the Palladian style popular at the time on the east coast. As with other parks in newly founded villages, the landscaping features were added incrementally.

No information was located regarding individuals responsible for the design of the fountains with surround at the center of the block. The documentation above regarding the incremental development of the park indicates that it was the citizens including the Northfield Improvement Association (first founded in 1884 as the Rural Improvement Society of Northfield) who focused on beautification, collectively determined the timing and design of the components of the park, and incorporated the early plan of trees along the edges specified in the initial plat.⁵⁵

Footnotes: Appendix C

- 1 Iddings, C. W. (1855). *Northfield, Rice County, Minnesota Ter'y*. Survey Map; Minnesota Historical Society.
- 2 Minnesota Supreme Court (1949). *Leal A. Headley and others v. City of Northfield and Others, Case No. 34,810*,. 227 Minnesota Reports, p. 459.
- 3 Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission (1997). *Northfield: The History and Architecture of a Community*, p.2.
- 4 Krause, P. (2000). Video: *Central Park - The Legacy of John and Anne North*.
- 5 1884, June 28. Northfield News, p. 3.
- 6 1886, June 26. Northfield News, p.3
- 7 1892, May 14. Northfield News, p.5
- 8 1898, August 6. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 9 1898, August 20. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 10 Emery, A. (1996). *A History of School Buildings in Northfield*, p.1.. Northfield Historical Society. Northfield-Rice County Digital Collection.
- 11 1895, June 20. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 12 1898, August 6. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 13 1898, October 1. Northfield News, p. 7.
- 14 1899 Photo: St. Olaf College
- 15 1910 Photo: Minnesota Historical Society
- 16 1898, December 31. Northfield News, p.1.
- 17 1885, April 4. Northfield News, p. 2.
- 18 1905-1910 Enlarged Plat Drawing: Northfield Historical Society
- 19 1910 Enlarged Photo: St. Olaf College
- 20 1929, April 5. Northfield News, p. 3.
- 21 1935, June 30. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 22 1935-1950 Photo: Northfield Historical Society
- 23 1895, May 4. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 24 1898, July 16. Northfield News, p. 4.
- 25 1898, August 6. Northfield News, p. 2.
- 26 1898, September 3. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 27 1898, September 24. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 28 1898, December 31. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 29 1903, August 8. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 30 1903, September 12. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 31 1903, October 17. Northfield News, p. 5.
- 32 1905-1910 Enlarged Plat Drawing: Northfield Historical Society
- 33 1910 Photo: St. Olaf College
- 34 1915 Photo: St. Olaf College
- 35 Circa 1915 Enlarged Photo: Minnesota Historical Society
- 36 1935-1950 Photo: Northfield Historical Society
- 37 1929, April 5. Northfield News, p. 3.
- 38 1954 , May 27. Northfield News, p. 1.

- 39 1946 , July 4. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 40 Minnesota Supreme Court (1949) , *Leal A. Headley and others v. City of Northfield and Others*, Case No. 34,810,. In 227 Minnesota Reports, p. 461.
- 41 1947, July 10. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 42 1947, October 23. Northfield Independent, p. 1.
- 43 1947, October 30. Northfield Independent, p. 1.
- 44 1947, December 11. Northfield Independent, p. 6.
- 45 1948, April 15. Northfield Independent, p. 1.
- 46 1948, June 10. Northfield Independent, p. 1.
- 47 1948, July 8. Northfield Independent, p. 1.
- 48 Minnesota Supreme Court (1949) , *Leal A. Headley and others v. City of Northfield and Others*, Case No. 34,810,. In 227 Minnesota Reports, p. 460.
- 49 Ibid. p. 465.
- 50 Ibid. p. 467.
- 51 Ibid, p. 463.
- 52 1949, March 24. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 53 1950, November 23. Northfield News, p. 1.
- 54 Upham, W. (1920). *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance*.. Minnesota Historical Society, p. 463.
- 55 Zellie, C. (1991, Dec. 16). Letter to City re: *Restoration of Central Park*, p.2.

APPENDIX D: Narrative Statement of Significance.

(Expansion of summary items and Additional topic of interest)

D-1 Expansion of Summary Items: The Secretary of Interior's components of historical integrity of landscapes.

Note: Since the application form does not specifically address the seven qualities of integrity for landscapes as defined by the National Register Program, those qualities are addressed in this expansion component. Thus, some of the documentation in Appendix D-1 duplicates information in the earlier documentation sections.

Location and Setting:

The Public Square was the first plotted property within the 160 square acre purchase of John North in 1855.¹ The Public Square/Central Park is uniquely located. It is surrounded by some of the earliest houses built in Northfield that are well maintained, and is only two blocks east of the business district and three blocks east of Bridge Square which in the center of the business district (see Appendix B-1) This unique location and its open, flexible areas result in its serving both as a neighborhood park, but also as a community park (see Appendix A for the various uses by the neighborhood but also the city and community). The diverse use of the block has been a characteristic since it was designated as the Public Square in 1855.

The block laid out west of the Public Square was set aside for the public school (see 1869 map in Appendix B-1); a high school was built in 1874, but rebuilt in 1910 after a fire.² The use of the "public school" block has affected the park (see details of court cases in Appendix C-2). The public schools closed College Street and made several additions before closing in 2004³; the new owner, Carleton College, expanded the footprint of the building with an addition adjacent to the west sidewalk. The overall setting in the neighborhood and next to a block for education remains.

Design:

Below are some of the character-defining features of the landscape design identified by the Secretary of Interior and how they apply to the Public Square/Central Park.

- Topography. The land is flat – conducive to its diversity of uses. The area was part of the prairie land east of the Cannon River, while the west side was part of the Great Woods.⁴
- Circulation. As noted in Appendix A, the design of diagonal intersecting walks has been an integral pattern since the park's inception. Those walks were originally mowed paths through the grasses; later they were graveled; and eventually became concrete sidewalks. Given the foot traffic from its inception, the diagonal sidewalks are very functional for the neighborhood.

To address increased use of the park, the circulation through and around the park was improved in 1993 by adding curved sidewalks flanking the center circle. The curved sidewalks allow pedestrians to pass easily through the park when the center circle is occupied (see 1991 plan in Appendix B).

- Vegetation. The trees provide the most notable vegetation in the simple park. The rows of deciduous trees surrounding all sides of the park have been a continuous feature. While the number of trees on each side fluctuates with the life span of the trees, the tree pattern around the park remains. Shade trees are also found along the interior walks and the circular center plaza (see Appendix A). Perennial plants are in the small areas on the exterior of each of the four segments of the limestone wall surrounding the plaza. No plants or shrubs appear in the rest of the park.
- Structures. Through the years, the historic structures of the fountain and bandstand have been removed. The bandstand function has been replaced with the mobile stage which allows for more open space in the park; the center circle is also a site for music. The footprint, function, focal point, and feeling of the fountain and surround area in the middle of the park remain with the circular limestone wall and plaza as described below..

- Center circular limestone wall with interior plaza:

Although the 1910 era fountain with a 20 ft. diameter surround no longer exists, a concentric outer limestone wall with a 50 ft. diameter built in 1954 remains. It was possibly in the same location as the border/lower wall that can be seen in archival photos (see Appendix B). In many similar ways, the current sitting height wall functions similarly to the 1910 era fountain and its surround. The current plaza with surrounding limestone wall is a place for

- reflection with the views of the four adjacent flower gardens,
- seating on the limestone wall while visiting with others,
- entertainment and performances,
- creativity (e.g., chalking, drawing),
- exercise (e.g., jumping rope, yoga, and a version of soccer invented by neighborhood youth, hop scotch), and
- amusement with its acoustical characteristics (musicians like to play their instruments, and children enjoy standing in the center and hearing their echoes.)

- Other Structures:

Permanent structures, other than the playground equipment on the north side for young children, have not been added which maintains the flexibility and integrity of the small park.

Period light posts and period benches have been added for safety and comfort.

The City brings movable picnic tables to the park for the summer. The tables are moved around the park to follow the shade sometimes placing them together for a larger group.

“Over the years, the removal of various historic components such as the gazebo [bandstand] and the fountain and the addition of some playground equipment along the school side have been among gradual changes, but not devastating to the park’s overall historic character” (Zellie, 1991)⁵. Note: Since that time the playground has been moved from the west to the north quadrant.

Materials and Workmanship:

The only “materials” used in the park are concrete for the sidewalks (historically ground or gravel); limestone in the center circular wall (historically and currently limestone); and colored, textured concrete pavers chiefly in the center plaza (historically bare ground/narrow concrete edge of 1910 era fountain).

Because the limestone wall and center area were in disrepair in 1991, a rehabilitation project was completed using a plan created by an architectural firm and a landscape architect.

The walls were repaired using matching limestone. The deteriorated concrete and gravel surface in the center was replaced with colored, textured concrete pavers. Pavers were also used in the fan shaped entrance courts added to each of the corner diagonal walk entrances an indication of the “entrances” to the park, and to reduce turf damage (see 1991 plan in Appendix A).

Feeling and Association:

In a 1990 Resources Research Survey, the preliminary statement of significance noted that Central Park was “A good example of a simple public park with its origins in the mid-nineteenth century”. (Zellie, 1990)⁶. As documented earlier, the simple park has had minimal changes to its materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.

Only a few sources are available to document the “feeling and association” of those who used the park in the early periods (see Appendices B-1 and C-2 for early quotes about shade, pleasant park, etc.). The current features, similar to those of the earlier park, provide the following feeling and associations:

- a welcoming circulation pattern with sidewalks leading to the center that encourages going “through” vs. “around” the park on the boulevard walks.
- a center space area with a sitting height wall for private reflection, to socialize with others, or to be entertained.
- a significant amount of peaceful open lawn areas with space enough for individuals or groups to enjoy simultaneously.
- a generous amount of shady places defined solely by walks and trees.
- warm and attractive features of the natural, warm limestone wall in the center space.
- minimal but important furnishings of period benches and lights for comfort and safety
- convenient location near the downtown conducive to a wide variety of users and uses.

The above features contribute to the feeling, association, and use of the simple park - consistent with the vision of John North. The 2011 college addition to the former school building extends to the sidewalk on the west side of the park affecting the view on the west side, but no structures, walls or hedges limit the clear unobstructed views within the park and beyond the park on the remaining three sides. The park has retained its historic character and feeling of a “Public Square” with a simple arrangement of paths, open grassy areas, rows of trees around the perimeter of the block, and a prominence of deciduous trees adjacent to the paths.

D-2 Additional Topic of Interest: Community Sense of Ownership

Additional Topic: Evidence of the continued high level of use, dedication, sense of ownership, and protection of the park by the community (see Appendix A for use).

The community has a long history of a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for the park. As noted by Zellie (1991), “The beatification of the park was among the concerns of the Rural Improvement Society of Northfield founded in 1884 (later the Northfield Improvement Society).”⁷

While most residents are unaware they are carrying out the historic “Public Square” vision and mission, they do so in two important ways: assuring the continued public use, and monitoring and maintaining its condition.

Public Use. In 1991, in an almost identical situation to the 1948 controversy, the Northfield Schools once again asked the City Council to vacate about half of Central Park. In this 1991 proposal, the school proposed two new baseball fields for the Middle School by using the southeast and southwest quadrants plus the center circle area with the removal of all trees in the area.

When it was eventually established that it was indeed unlawful to proceed with the taking of the park based on the earlier Minnesota Supreme Court Cases, an action group, Citizens for Central Park, was formed and raised \$80,000 to revitalize the square. With the assistance of a landscape architect, outside advice from a preservation expert, and engagement of the City and Historic Preservation Commission, a plan was adopted that involved new circulation sidewalks, period benches, period lighting, rehabilitated center limestone sitting height wall, a paver plaza in the center wall, and new trees and sod.. The laying of the pavers in the center plaza and at the entrances to the park, the landscaping, and the watering of the new plants and trees were completed chiefly by volunteers. The neighborhood has a strong sense of ownership of the park and has been its protector at critical points.

Park Maintenance. Individuals in the group organized in 1991 continue to actively maintain the integrity of the park. When threats to its integrity arise, various individuals in the groups serve as liaisons to the chief stakeholders: city, neighborhood, and the college (the current owner of the former public school building); see a few examples below.

- City: Schedule delivery of mulch to be used by neighbors who tend the four gardens around the limestone wall; alert to needed repairs.
- Neighborhood: Seek volunteers to maintain gardens; write grants to finance garden renewal; alert neighborhood of actions proposed by City or college affecting the park.
- College: Suggest appropriate education of students regarding use of the park space; notify officials of abuse of children’s playground equipment.

The community sense of ownership has been strong and long-term. While basically unaware of North’s vision, the residents’ attention to and care for the park has resulted in a park that is substantially consistent with his designation as a “Public Square” in 1855.

Footnotes: Appendix D

- 1 Krause, P. (2000). Video: *Central Park - The Legacy of John and Anne North*.
- 2 Emery, A. (1996). *A History of School Buildings in Northfield*. Northfield Historical Society. Northfield-Rice County Digital Collection.
- 3 Colwell, B. (2021). *Celebrating Arts and Community: The History of the Northfield Arts Guild*, p. 112.
- 4 Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission (1997). *Northfield: The History and Architecture of a Community*, p.2.
- 5 Zellie, C. (1991, Dec. 16). Letter to City re: *Restoration of Central Park*, p.2.
- 6 Zellie, C. (1990). *1990 Historic Resources Survey: Northfield, Minnesota*. Public Square/Central Park, #RC-NFC-76.
- 7 Zellie, C. (1991, Dec. 16). Letter to City re: *Restoration of Central Park*, p.2.