

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN  
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION 2026-002

RECOMMENDATION APPROVING A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT TO CITY COUNCIL  
TO MAKE TRANSPORTATION FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PERIMETER  
TRANSITION AREA

WHEREAS, the applicant, Carleton College (the “Applicant”), seeks a Conditional Use Permit, pursuant to Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, the Land Development Code, Secs. 3.2.8 and 8.5.9, in order to: 1) close that privately-owned portion of College St. north of 1<sup>st</sup> St. E.; 2) relocate the bus stop and parking spaces from that location to the parcel northwest of the intersection of Nevada St. and 1<sup>st</sup> St. E.; and 3) expand the existing parking lot north west of the intersection of Nevada St. and 1<sup>st</sup> St. E. to accommodate the relocated bus stop and parking (the “Conditional Use Permit”), which is within the Perimeter Transition Area of the property zoned CD-S: College Development; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant is the owner of the above-referenced property; and

WHEREAS, the above-referenced property is legally described on Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

WHEREAS, the City of Northfield Planning Commission (the “Planning Commission”) conducted a public hearing on March 19, 2026, and received public testimony regarding the proposed Conditional Use Permit; and,

WHEREAS, all required notices regarding the above-referenced public hearing were properly made; and

WHEREAS, following the public hearing, the Planning Commission reviewed the requested Conditional Use Permit at its March 19, 2026 meeting pursuant to the standards and criteria contained in Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, the Land Development Code, Secs. 3.2.8, and 8.5.9.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION THAT:

1. The recitals hereto are incorporated herein by reference as findings.
2. The Planning Commission’s hereby recommends approval to the City Council of the requested Conditional Use Permit, pursuant to Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, Secs. 3.2.8, and 8.5.9, in order to: 1) close that privately-owned portion of College St. north of 1st St. E.; 2) relocate the bus stop and parking spaces from that location to the parcel northwest of the intersection of Nevada St. and 1st St. E.; and 3) expand the existing parking lot north west of the intersection of Nevada St. and 1st St. E. to accommodate the relocated bus stop and parking, and adopts the findings, which are attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as Exhibit B.

PASSED by the Planning Commission of the City of Northfield on this 19<sup>th</sup> day of March 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member

VOTE:    \_\_\_ KUHLMANN    \_\_\_ SCHROEER    \_\_\_ BUCKHEIT  
         \_\_\_ HOLLERAN    \_\_\_ LAUER    \_\_\_ NOWAK    \_\_\_ SCHMIDT

**EXHIBIT A**

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY**

PID 2231375002

PID 2231375003

PID 2231400001

PID 2231352001

## EXHIBIT B

### PLANNING COMMISSION FINDINGS

#### Conditional Use Permit Approval Procedure & Approval Criteria:

A CUP follows the Type 4 Review Procedure found in Section 8.4.7 of the LDC. For the Type 4 Review Procedure, the Planning Commission holds a public hearing and makes a recommendation to City Council, and City Council makes the final decision.

In the approval of a conditional use permit, the Planning Commission may recommend that the City Council impose such conditions as necessary to make the use compatible with other uses allowed in the same district zone or vicinity. Northfield City Code, Section 8.5.9, Criterion (a) below must be met and criteria (b) through (n) shall be considered in the review of conditional use permit applications:

a) The proposed use is allowed as a conditional use in the district for which it is proposed as shown in Table 2.7-1;

Yes, the proposed uses of surface parking, bus stop, and pedestrian way are allowed either by-right or as conditional uses as an accessory to School (Institutions of Higher Education – College, Seminary, or University) and other uses, which are allowed as a conditional use in Table 2.7-1 within the CD-S: College Development zoning district. Section 2.4.2 College Development District divides the zoning in this district into two sub-zones. This area meets the definition of the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA), wherein development is subject to the development standards applicable to Conditional Use Permit criteria, and the Type 4 review procedure with a Neighborhood Meeting required.

b) The conditional use will be in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the city’s comprehensive plan and this LDC;

The expanded parking does meet the outcomes identified in the City’s Comprehensive Plan and LDC in the following categories:

Ch3 Strategy 1: Plan for accessibility –

- Outcome: Northfield has a well-connected and well-used transit, rideshare, and carshare alternatives for trips that require a vehicle.
  - Relocation of the bus stop to the proposed locating improves accessibility on and off campus, increasing utility and thereby likely increasing ridership.

Ch3 Strategy 5: Design for safe access

- Outcome: Street rights-of-way are allocated and designed for all users and modes of travel appropriate to the surrounding land use including access for people of all ages and abilities, pedestrian scale lighting, green infrastructure, and shade trees.
  - The proposed relocation of the bus stop and parking facilities improves safety along College Street, which sees substantial pedestrian traffic. The streets throughout the area are designed for people of all users, modes, ages and abilities.

Ch3 Strategy 6: Design for resiliency and sustainability –

- Outcome: The city, as a municipal entity, and its residents and businesses have collectively decreased our greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on non-local energy sources through mitigation strategies.
  - Improved accessibility and utility of transit will increase ridership and reduce vehicle miles traveled, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on non-local energy sources.
- Outcome: The city plans land uses and new development to reduce vehicle miles traveled and non-local inputs, including energy sources.
  - This project is likely to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Ch4 Strategy 6: Grow in a compact, sustainable development pattern –

- Outcome: Northfield’s development and redevelopment initiatives focus on projects that increase tax productivity, preserve natural resources, limits negative climate impacts, improves access to jobs and services, and assess the fiscal impact of the development or redevelopment project.
  - The relocation of the bus stop and reduction in parking will increase the use of more sustainable modes of transportation by students and residents, reducing vehicle miles traveled and the negative externalities associated with motor vehicles including negative impacts to natural resources, the climate, and city services.

The proposed use meets the following purposes of the LDC without running contrary to any others:

- 1.1.1 Maintain and enhance the community's distinct small-town character.
- 1.1.4 Create residential community areas with strong neighborhood qualities including pedestrian-friendly streets, community gathering spaces, and basic commercial needs within walking distance.
- 1.1.9 Promote an ethic of sustainability in all activities to ensure that proposed development and redevelopment will, at a minimum, conserve energy and natural resources.
- 1.1.11 Ensure that proposed development is of human scale, primarily pedestrian-oriented to the extent appropriate, and designed to create exceptional streetscapes and pedestrian spaces.
- 1.1.12 Minimize vehicle traffic by providing for a mixture of land uses, pedestrian-oriented development, compact community form, safe and effective multi-modal traffic circulation (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular), and adequate on- and off-street parking facilities.
- 1.1.15 Ensure compatibility between different types of development and land uses.
- 1.1.16 Create a comprehensive and stable pattern of land uses upon which to plan transportation, water supply, sewerage, energy, and other public facilities and utilities.

c) The conditional use will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the same area; The proposed use reduces overall parking supply and reduces demand for parking by facilitating improved campus and neighborhood access to transit. The area is characterized by the transition from low-density residential to college campus, abundant landscaping, and

neighborhood style streets, and pedestrian-scale structures are typical. These features will not be altered by the project. The existing parking lot includes a large, landscaped buffer, which mitigates the impact of the lot on nearby residents, and the traffic impacts will not require reconfiguration of any streets.

- d) The conditional use will not be hazardous or reasonably disturbing to existing or future uses;  
The conditional use will not be hazardous or reasonably disturbing to existing or future uses. The additional bus traffic will be minimal, with approximately 1 bus running every hour during normal operating hours. Screening, lighting, and other potential impacts are addressed via the Land Development Code which regulates impacts and mitigation in transitions between different zones. Additionally, the desire to relocate the vehicle traffic from College St. to the proposed lot stems, in part, from a need to mitigate conflicts between high volumes of pedestrian traffic and the vehicles currently using College St. thereby reducing overall hazards in the area.
- e) The conditional use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water and sewer;  
The parking lot and bus stop would be adequately served by essential public services. The property is served by 1<sup>st</sup> St. E. and a robust street grid with high connectivity to the south. Emergency services will have access from multiple access points. Drainage on site is served by a storm sewer. The project will not have a significant impact on refuse disposal or water and sewer connections.
- f) The benefits of the conditional use outweigh the potential negative effects of the surrounding community;  
The benefits of the proposed development outweigh the potential negative effects. This project will likely decrease vehicle miles traveled by the students and the community by improving access to local and regional transit services, improve pedestrian safety along College Street, and reducing on-campus parking. The impact of the additional traffic is minimal, with updated bus routes impacting the minimum necessary blocks, and additional traffic on those blocks limited to a reasonable volume.
- g) The conditional use will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services;  
The conditional use will not create additional public cost for public facilities or services.
- h) The conditional use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions or operations that will be detrimental to any persons, property or the general welfare by reason of excessive traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors;  
The relocated parking and bus stop is not expected to generate noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors that are any more excessive than the existing conditions. There will be a localized, minimal increase in traffic.
- i) The conditional use will not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance as may be established in the comprehensive plan or other city plans related to natural, scenic, or historic features;

The parking lot and bus stop is not expected to result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance as may be established in the comprehensive plan or other city plans related to natural, scenic, or historic features.

j) The traffic and parking generated by the use will not lower the Levels of Services as described in the comprehensive plan update of intersections within a quarter mile of the site. The additional trips generated by this use are not significant enough to lower the Levels of Services within a quarter mile of the site.

k) In residential districts, the use is of a similar height, building orientation, massing, setback, and scale as to be compatible with surrounding uses in compliance with Section 3.5 Neighborhood Compatibility Standards;

The proposed parking lot and bus stop is within the Perimeter Transition Area because it is adjacent to a residential district, and special consideration is due to this proximity.

l) In the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA) within the college development district (CD-S) that abut residential and commercial districts, height, building orientation, massing, setback and scale shall be considered in building renovation and/or new construction in order to maintain compatibility with surrounding areas as described in Section 3.4, Neighborhood Compatibility Standards. These neighborhood compatibility standards are to be administered in order to maintain a harmonious neighborhood environment and absolute compliance with these standards is not intended.

The primary focus of the compatibility standards is to ensure that new infill development, redevelopment, or building expansion relates to the massing and scale of the surrounding structures. The proposed bus shelters will not be out of scale with the surrounding neighborhood. Screening comprised of vegetation has been installed between the existing parking lot and the street, and the parking is set back approximately 50 feet from the right-of-way creating a park-like setting along this section of 1<sup>st</sup> St. E. and is compatible with the surrounding areas.

m) Impacts such as noise, hours of activity, and outdoor lighting have been addressed to mitigate negative impacts on nearby uses.

The Land Development Code includes regulations designed to mitigate noise and impacts of outdoor lighting, compliance with these provisions is required for site plan approval. Hours of activity will be consistent with existing conditions. Blue Route buses run from 6:00 AM until 6:00 PM and the Express bus runs from 3:00 PM to 9:45 PM.

n) Parking is adequately provided for the proposed conditional use.

The LDC requires no additional off-street parking in the CD-S: College Development zone. Instead, it requires a parking study to assess mitigation strategies that will reduce demand for parking. Improving student access to transit will reduce demand for parking. Carleton College's 2021 parking study concluded there was a need for 806 off-street parking spaces and identified a supply of 980 off-street spaces. The proposed project will reduce parking by 5-10 spaces. Parking is therefore adequate.