



Friends of Downtown Northfield

To whom it may concern,

The Friends of Downtown Northfield have worked to bring this Special Service District (SSD) process forward because we (building owners, business owners, and many downtown stakeholders) want consistent snow removal of sidewalks, easier snow coordination for parking lots, and streamlined trash/refuse services. After reviewing the draft ordinance, we strongly support the establishment of this district.

Conversations about an SSD began years ago, under the branding of the Northfield Downtown Development Corporation (NDDC), and continued through the past five years. Helmed by different directors and championed by various building owners, the SSD failed to gain traction until Fall 2024, when the Friends set the SSD as their primary work plan component during our fall 2024 retreat.

These are some of the highlights of the engagement achieved during the process:

Pre petitioning:

- NDDC survey in 2020: 21 downtown building owner responses supporting consistent sidewalk snow removal, trash removal; hesitant about additional services.
- The Connecting Business and Community program was facilitated by the University of MN Extension in partnership with the EDA. The Chamber of Commerce, the Friends, and city staff, worked to interview over 50 Northfield businesses. 14 of these businesses were downtown building and business owners, and most answered very favorably to the idea of coordinating snow and trash removal.
- Summer of 2025: 3 informational sessions on zoom, reaching 25 building owners (35% of the building owners in the district on record.)
- Consistent communication through the Friends of Downtown Northfield newsletter (sign up on our website!)

During petitioning:

- Reached 2/3rds of the building owners in the district.
- Secured signatures based on the statutory guidelines; turned 47 petitions into the City Clerk. 3 were determined to be invalid, leaving 44 valid petitions.
- Valid petitions represented 56.2% of the district land area and 32.1% of the tax capacity of the district, each surpassing the 25% threshold outlined in state statute 428A.

After petitioning:

- Continued to engage both newsletter recipients and building owner email list (in development) to keep everyone informed of the timelines and opportunities for engagement
- Co-hosted a Building Owner Q&A with city staff on 9/30; over a dozen building owners represented
- Mailed every owner in the district an outline of the project, where we're at in the process, and what their opportunities are for engagement moving forward



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To convey the depth of our engagement and to articulate some concerns brought up by the building owner and business community throughout the process, we have summarized some of the things we heard. We understand that many of these questions and concerns will be addressed in the resolution (phase 3) of this process, while we are still in the ordinance (phase 2) process.

Our advocacy has centered on these three points, along with a general statutorily reinforced claim that any fees must be proportionate to the services being rendered.

We advocated for these points in the ordinance...

- There should be an advisory or steering committee of building owners to aid in governing the contracts and the district.
- The ordinance should be renewed in 3-5 years, meaning that we would re-petition to ensure building owners are still pleased with the services.
- The ordinance should limit the scope of the services to just snow and trash removal.

We heard these general concerns and questions...

- Strong desire to use local contractors for any work coordinated through the SSD
- Some in favor of an even shorter pilot period (1 year?); most in favor of 3-5 year pilot
- Ensuring that the limited scope of services maintained in future iterations if this is repetitioned
- Opposition to paying for things *not used* by the owners – like trash.
- Providers that fit in the tight alleys for snow AND trash removal
- Some building owners opposed any increase to their costs, regardless of services rendered.

We heard these concerns about snow...

- Business opening hours concerns re snow
- Snow timeliness with long storms – providers coming back during the day to clear (hourly? Every two hours?)
- Private parking lots to be included? Some building owners are very much in favor of having that service included as optional.

We heard these concerns about trash...

- Timing of this needs to be communicated as folks have trash contracts and trash contracts can be tricky to cancel (faxing in notice of cancellation in specific window, etc.)
- Compost needs, cardboard removal needs (not just trash and recycling)
- Dumpster locks are tricky for tenants in apt./residential settings, also for multiple commercial users that is tricky



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Northfield**

Included below are 2 letters, one from a building owner in favor of the district, and one opposed. As a board, we are filled with diverse perspectives on the district – what it means for building owners, businesses, and the downtown. We believe this offers cost savings for many – that is one of the key reasons we advocate for it. While we are very much in favor of moving forward with the SSD, we urge the council to remain wary of the high cost of doing business for many in our downtown. We would be remiss if we did not mention the near omnipresence of the response “did you know my taxes are [blank] thousands of dollars a year?” when we approached building owners around the district.

We hope the district will be formed, and a group of building owners, the advisory board, will find good, local, competitive contracts that save our building and business owners time and money. If the contracts come back high, remember that the advisory board and this council will have the responsibility to vote on whether they are worth taking on. But first, we need to get the district established!

Thank you for your consideration,

Friends of Downtown Northfield

Emery John, Acting Main Street Director

Josh Zimmerman, President of the Board



Friends of Downtown Northfield

On Mon, Sep 29, 2025 at 3:33 PM Dave Neuger <d[REDACTED]m> wrote:

Emery and Josh --

Thanks for your leadership on the Downtown Northfield Special Services District initiative. . Unfortunately, I will be out of the country when the Council is meeting to discuss this important action.

As a downtown business owner and property owner, I wanted to go on record of supporting the creation of a Special Services District. We currently own two properties that will be impacted by this initiative and I support the Council's effort to drive this forward for three primary reasons:

- 1) It is the best way to assure that the downtown district is as welcoming as can be by keeping it clean, snow free and safe.
- 2) The pooling and coordination of services will assuredly be more cost-effective than each business contracting on its own.
- 3) Placing a three-year sunset on the initiative (requiring renewal) will give all involved ample time to determine if this was a successful approach (which I'm confident it will be.)

Again, I thank you for your efforts to make Downtown Northfield (and all of Northfield for that matter) the best community it can be.

Good luck with the meeting and best regards,

Dave Neuger
CEO, NCG Holdings
Owner, 19 Bridge Square
Owner, 25 Bridge Square (and CEO of the current Tenant, Neuger)



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Leanne and Tim Noble
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To: City Council and City Staff

I have concerns regarding the petition to form a Special Service District for downtown as well as the process of drafting an ordinance to coordinate snow and trash removal that is currently in motion. I strongly oppose this action.

My opposition is rooted in the following points:

- 1) After a 30% property tax hike this year, an additional assessment fee would be detrimental to small businesses like mine running on a frugal budget.
Neither snow nor garbage removal are expenses to me at current; Zero cost to me.
- 2) I clear my own snow both timely and meticulously in care of my patients, some of whom are physically compromised.
I question how a cooperative snow removal effort would prioritize certain businesses to keep clear the sidewalks both early enough before opening for business at 7am and throughout a snowy day. Who carries the liability if not done well and an incident were to occur?
- 3) As for garbage removal, currently, I generate 1 bag/month which I bring home to add to my residential pick up. Again, no additional cost to me. Zero expense.

Lastly, if this ordinance does move ahead, please consider only a 1-year pilot program for the following reasons:

- 1) Reevaluate whether the concept really works at all.
- 2) All property owners become informed. I have spoken with several who only became aware of this August 20, 2025. When they expressed disinterest in signing the petition they became excluded from the conversation. This became apparent to me by the lack of attendance in listening sessions. Property owners have been kept out of the loop.
- 3) A law is rarely changed once implemented. Make this a true pilot program.

The steering committee is making all the decisions and not representing a collective voice of the property owners for whom it will impact. Unless you are a "Yes" and signed the petition there has been absolutely no way to gauge our interest.

I would strongly encourage each of you to stop the ordinance until the area defining the Special Service District is re-evaluated. More importantly, please consider a majority vote of the property owners or consider an "Opt-In" approach for those interested but do Not impose another expense on our operations budget.

Thank you for your consideration,

Leanne Noble
1-20-2025