

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION 2026-001

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUNCIL FOR A ZONING
MAP AMENDMENT 304 2nd St. W.

WHEREAS, Ana Ortiz Pano (the “applicant”), seeks a Zoning Map Amendment, pursuant to Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, Sec. 8.5.14, to amend the zoning map from R1-B: Low Density Residential to C1-B: Downtown for 304 2nd St. W., Northfield, MN 55057 (PID 2236451010) located in Rice County, Minnesota; and

WHEREAS, the above-referenced property is described and depicted on Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference (the “property”); and

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

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on January 15, 2026, and received public testimony regarding the proposed Zoning Map Amendment; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission found that the application meets the standards in Northfield City Code, Chapter 34, the Land Development Code, for a zoning map amendment; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed and recommended approval to the City Council of the Zoning Map Amendment; and,

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

1. The Planning Commission’s findings from its January 15, 2026 meeting, which are attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as Exhibit B, are hereby recommended for adoption.
2. The Zoning Map Amendment to amend the zoning map for the property from R1-B: Low Density Residential to C1-B: Downtown is recommended to City Council for approval.

PASSED by the Planning Commission of the City of Northfield on this 15th day of January 2026.

Chair

Member

VOTE: ___ KUHLMANN ___ SCHROEER ___ BUCKHEIT
 ___ HOLLERAN ___ HOLMES ___ NOWAK ___ SCHMIDT

EXHIBIT A

304 2nd St. W. (PID 2236451010) located in Rice County, Minnesota.

ALL OF LOTS 1 AND 2 EXCEPT THAT PART THEREOF TAKEN FOR RAILROAD RIGHT OF WAY PURPOSES; AND ALL OF LOTS 9 AND 10 EXCEPT THE WEST 138 FEET THEREOF; ALL IN BLOCK 5 IN THE STATE SUBDIVISION OF THE SOUTHEAST QUARTER OF SECTION 36, TOWNSHIP 112 NORTH RANGE 20 WEST OF THE FIFTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, IN THE CITY OF NORTHFIELD, RICE COUNTY, MINNESOTA.

EXHIBIT B

Planning Commission Findings

Land Development Code Approval Criteria

When reviewing a zoning map amendment, the Planning Commission and City Council is to consider several criteria as established in Article 8 of the Land Development Code (8.5.14.C). The Planning Commission and City Council shall review the necessary submittal requirements, facts, and circumstances of the proposed amendment and make a recommendation and decision on the application based on, but not limited to, consideration of the following criteria:

(1) The specific policies, goals, objectives, and recommendations of the comprehensive plan and other city plans, including public facilities and the capital improvement plans.

The Future Land Use Map contained in the Access Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan guides this parcel for “Mixed Use Commercial.” The chapter underscores the need to build on the success of downtown Northfield’s compact development pattern, and the need to encourage more commercial, industrial, and residential development, with an emphasis on intensification, infill, and redevelopment. The goal of the mixed-use commercial area west of Division St is to “create[e] places that are similar in scale and use” to the historic downtown.

The area is identified as “Enhance” by the Interventions Framework Map. Enhance areas typically need smaller-scale interventions, typically because the existing infrastructure is robust and connectivity is high. Included in the list of appropriate interventions is “infill and redevelopment that increases the range of available housing types.” The residential neighborhood west of the river is specifically identified as benefitting from improved access to services and commercial enterprises. This map identifies the area to the east as T1 “Transform” specifically calling for expansion of the downtown land use pattern into this neighborhood by increasing density of housing and commercial uses.

Access Chapter Strategies:

Strategy 1: Plan for accessibility – the proposal improves access to commercial services for the west and northwest areas of town

Strategy 2: Develop in a compact, sustainable, and fiscally responsible pattern – the proposal is for infill development, intensifying the use of an existing lot.

Sustainable Economic Future Chapter Strategies:

Strategy 3: Small business development – the proposal facilitates the growth of a locally-owned small business.

Strategy 5: Diversity Northfield’s tax base – added commercial development strengthens Northfield’s tax base.

Strategy 6: Grow in a compact, sustainable development pattern – the proposal intensifies the use of an existing site, close to downtown, making use of existing infrastructure.

The rezoning supports the Improve Financial Strength strategic priority from the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, which calls for growing the commercial and industrial tax base. By zoning

additional land to commercial, specifically in support of compact infill development, the city improves its overall financial strength.

(2) The purpose and intent of this LDC, or in the case of a map amendment, whether it meets the purpose and intent of the individual district.

The purpose of the C1-B: Downtown zoning district is to:

- (1) The C1 district applies to those areas designated as "Core," "Center" and, in part, "Corridor" on the Framework map of the Comprehensive Plan.
- (2) The C1 district, which includes Northfield's historic town square, the Cannon River, Northfield's original flour mill, and historically preserved commercial center, creates Northfield's brand and a unique sense of place.
- (3) The purpose of the Downtown (C1) district is to sustain the historic central business district, make the Highway 3 corridor a more integral and attractive part of Downtown, provide design transitions to surrounding zoning districts, provide a strong relationship to the Cannon River and thus enhance the beauty, appreciation and benefits of the river, and to augment and increase Downtown viability and prosperity.
- (4) The C1 District aims to provide a compact, pedestrian friendly, active mix of land uses including business, hospitality, offices and services, housing, arts and culture, government, public gathering places and points of interest for residents and visitors alike.
- (5) The design standards of this district reflect the character of the historic downtown and will help create a sense of arrival and center by locating buildings close to the sidewalk or road, providing compatible facades along the Cannon River, building intimate places for people to gather outdoors, or minimizing negative effects on residential neighborhoods.

This rezoning supports the intent or purpose of the C1-B district by providing a transition from the Hwy 3 corridor and downtown to the residential neighborhood on the west and northwest side of town. The parcel is located one block from Highway 3 and the commercial uses along it, and adjacent to the Transit Hub, connected to these destinations by sidewalks which reinforces the compact, pedestrian friendly, and active mix of land uses intended for the C1-B district. Commercial development along the railroad corridor serves to buffer the low-density residential neighborhood to the west from the impacts of rail traffic.

(3) The adequacy of infrastructure available to serve the proposed action.

There is existing sewer and water infrastructure on Spring St. S. and 2nd St. W. Road infrastructure exists and the sidewalk network is nearly complete in this area of town, providing connections between St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges, Downtown, the Transit Station, and other local amenities. Spring St. S. is in the planning stages of reconfiguration to address safety concerns and the lack of a sidewalk and curb and gutter.

(4) The adequacy of a buffer or transition provided between potentially incompatible districts.

The land development code provides buffering and design standards that address compatibility between residential and commercial properties. The C1-Downtown district abuts the R1 – Low Density Residential district along most of its boundary. The parcel is bordered by C1 district to the east, northeast, and south, and the R1 to the west, northwest and north.