

City of Northfield

*City Hall
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057
northfieldmn.gov*



Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, July 15, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Environmental Quality Commission

6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CONSENT AGENDA

The proposed consent agenda is included on the Council Chamber screens. The purpose of a consent agenda is to allow for routine motions, resolutions, and ordinances, or those previously discussed with consensus made, to be passed with one motion. These are still important and necessary considerations and full background memo and materials are publicly available on the website and a copy on the table in the room. Board/Commission Members may ask questions for clarification of an item. If a Member wants to discuss an item, our rules request it be made by advance notice by noon on the Monday immediately prior to the meeting date to the Chair and Staff Liaison, or without said prior notice, during the approval of the agenda. The agenda was passed earlier including the consent agenda.

1. [26-377](#) June 17, 2026 EQC Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [1 - June 17, 2026 EQC Meeting Minutes](#)

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

Persons may take one opportunity to address the Board/Commission for two (2) minutes (not including interpreter's time) on any topic, even if on the agenda, with the condition that they may not speak on the same item later in the meeting. No notification of the Chair is required. However, speakers are asked to complete a sign up card. Persons wanting a response to a question must submit the question in writing to the recording secretary. Questions must include name and information on how to contact. You may use the back side of the comment cards available in the meeting room. Persons cannot gift their 2 minute speaking time to other members of the public.

BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

REGULAR AGENDA

Persons that wish to speak on a regular agenda item must provide name and address by completing & submitting a sign up card. Persons may also contact the staff liaison via the City's website no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the meeting. The Chair will call up individuals to speak, based on preregistration and cards submitted, after the staff report on an item. Please be respectful of the public's and the Commission's time. Members of the public wishing to speak must adhere to the following guidelines:

- *Speak only once for no more than two minutes (not including interpreter's time) on the topic unless the speaker is addressed by the Commission;*
- *Identify your relationship to the topic;*
- *Have a spokesperson or two for your group to present your comments;*
- *Persons wanting a response to a question must submit the question in writing to the recording secretary, including name and how you would like to be contacted.*

2. [26-378](#) Xcel Energy Conversation and Optimization Program Triannual Plan

Attachments: [1 - ECO Presentation](#)
[1 - Draft Northfield ECO Letter](#)

3. [26-379](#) 2026-2027 Work Plan and Commission Priorities

Attachments: [1 - 2026 Work Plan Tracker FINAL](#)
 [2 - 2026-2027 Work Plan Final Initiatives](#)

STAFF UPDATES

4. [26-380](#) Staff Update

ADJOURNMENT



Legislation Text

File #: 26-377, Version: 1

Environmental Quality Commission Meeting Date: July 15, 2026

To: Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

From: Matt Bailey, Meeting Associate

June 17, 2026 EQC Meeting Minutes

Action Requested:

Please review the June 17, 2026 EQC Meeting Minutes and approve or approve with amendments.

Summary Report:

N/A

City Plans & Policies Relevance:

N/A

Alternative Options:

N/A

Financial Impacts:

N/A

Tentative Timelines:

N/A



City of Northfield

City Hall
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057
northfieldmn.gov

Meeting Minutes - Draft Environmental Quality Commission

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Hanson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: 4 - Commissioner Janet Petri, Commissioner Susannah Shmurak, Chair Rob Hanson and Commissioner Kimberly Haroldson

Absent: 2 - Vice Chair Michael Provancha and Commissioner Simon Pryor

Also present: Erica Zweifel, Mayor; Ben Martig, City Administrator; Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator; Matt Bailey, Meeting Associate; Alex Halverson, Youth Representative (voting)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Shmurak, seconded by Commissioner Petri, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Shmurak, Chair Hanson, Commissioner Haroldson, and Youth Representative Halverson

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Petri, seconded by Commissioner Shmurak, to approve the consent agenda containing the May 20, 2026 EQC Meeting Minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Shmurak, Chair Hanson, Commissioner Haroldson, and Youth Representative Halverson

1. [26-315](#)

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was received.

BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

No board and commissioner reports were submitted.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. [26-316](#)

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Update through Regional Indicators

Sustainability Coordinator Sara Pabich introduced Mackenzie Thelen, Maureen Colburn, and Becky Alexander of LHB, Inc., who presented, via Zoom, updated Regional Indicators Initiative data for the City of Northfield through 2024. The presenters responded to questions and comments from the EQC.

3. [26-317](#)

Consider Recommendation on Pathway for Organics Recycling

Sustainability Coordinator Sara Pabich presented an overview of organic recycling options in Northfield, and requested the EQC consider a recommendation on pathway for organics recycling in the city. Pabich and City Administrator Ben Martig responded to questions and comments from the HPC.

A motion was made by Commissioner Shmurak, seconded by Commissioner Haroldson, to extend the meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Shmurak, Chair Hanson, Commissioner Haroldson, and Youth Representative Halverson

A motion was made by Commissioner Haroldson, seconded by Commissioner Shmurak, to approve a recommendation to City Council that they consider adopting the proposed Pathway C, a universal organics recycling program. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Shmurak, Chair Hanson, Commissioner Haroldson, and Youth Representative Halverson

4. [26-318](#)

2026-2027 Work Plan and Commission Priorities

Sustainability Coordinator Sara Pabich provided background on the priorities for and evolution of the Environmental Quality Commission's 2026-2027 Work Plan and future activities. Pabich responded to questions and comments from the EQC.

Commissioner Petri requested an update on the schedule and coverage for tabling at Riverwalk Market Fair. Pabich responded that a table is scheduled for July 18, 2026, with a possible additional date in August.

STAFF UPDATES

5. [26-319](#)

Staff Update

Sustainability Coordinator Sara Pabich and Mayor Erica Zweifel provided updates from City staff.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Shmurak, seconded by Commissioner Haroldson, to adjourn the meeting at 8:06 p.m. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 5 - Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Shmurak, Chair Hanson, Commissioner Haroldson, and Youth Representative Halverson



Legislation Text

File #: 26-378, **Version:** 1

EQC Meeting Date: July 15, 2026

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator

Xcel Energy Conversation and Optimization Program Triannual Plan

Action Requested:

The EQC will receive a presentation on Xcel Energy's Conservation Improvement Program and consider approval of a comment letter for submission to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's eDockets system.

Summary Report:

Xcel Energy's proposed 2027-2029 Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Triennial Plan outlines programs that support energy efficiency, electrification, and conservation efforts for residential and commercial customers. The plan directly connects to City priorities outlined in the 2045 Comprehensive Plan and the Carbon-Free Community by 2040 goal, particularly around reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy affordability, and expanding equitable access to resources.

The EQC's role is to review the proposed plan from a Northfield perspective, consider potential impacts and opportunities for the community, and provide feedback on a draft comment letter to be submitted to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission's eDockets system.

Alternative Options:

NA

Financial Impacts:

NA

Tentative Timelines:

Submit comments by July 27



Xcel Energy Conservation & Optimization

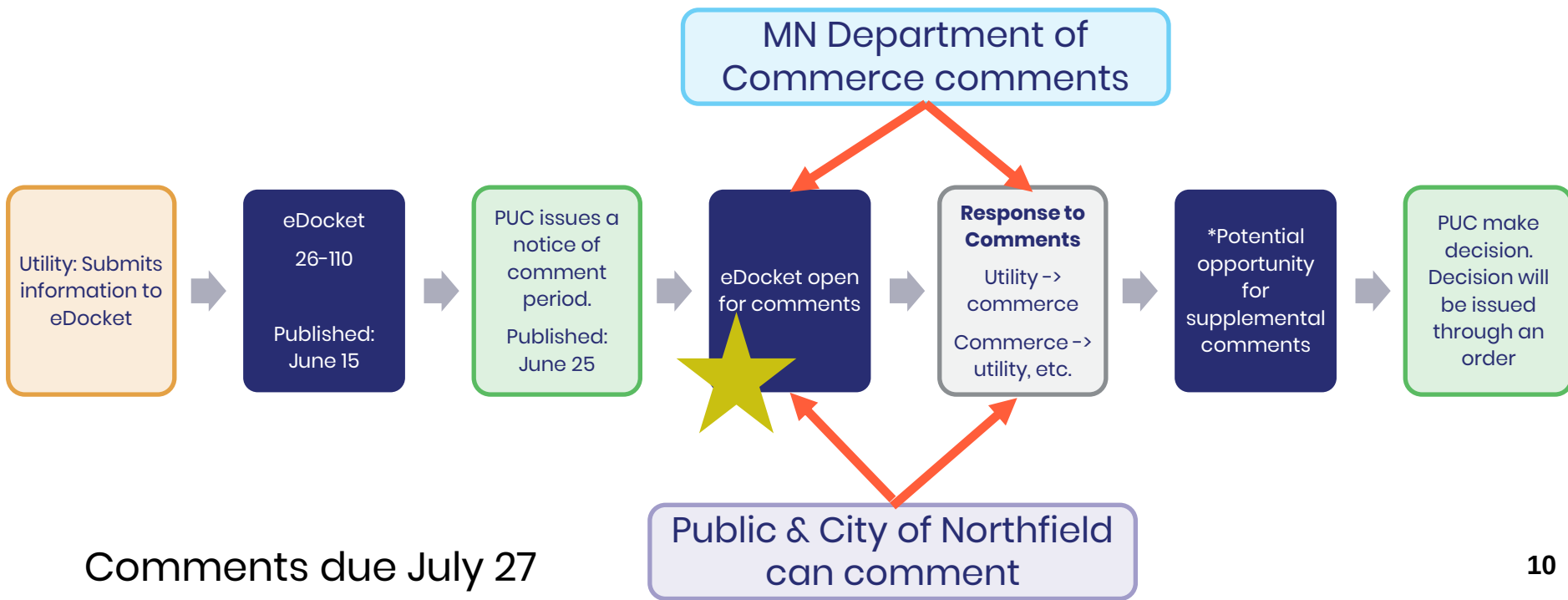
What is the Energy Conservation & Optimization (ECO) Plan?



- Investor-owned utilities are required by state statute to fill ECO plans every 3 years
- Covers both electric and natural gas customers
- Includes residential, commercial, industrial and income qualified programs



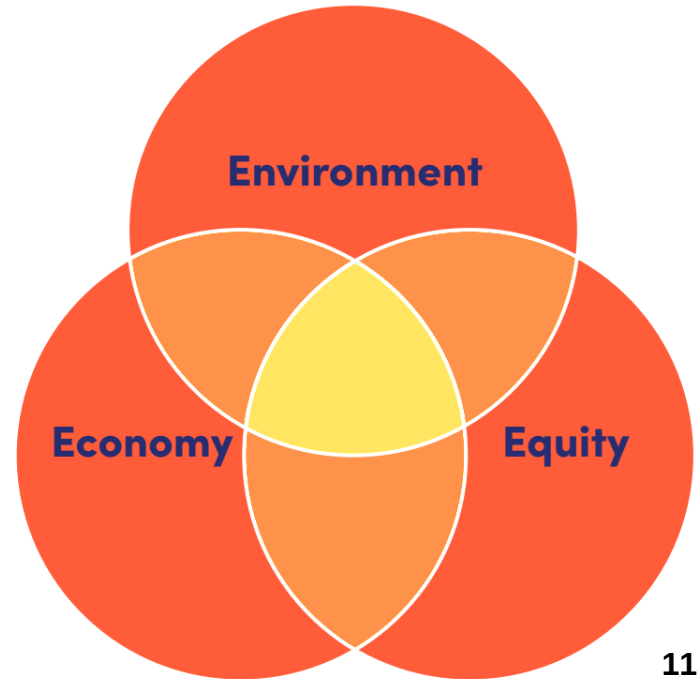
How does the Process Work



Why is Northfield Reviewing the Plan?



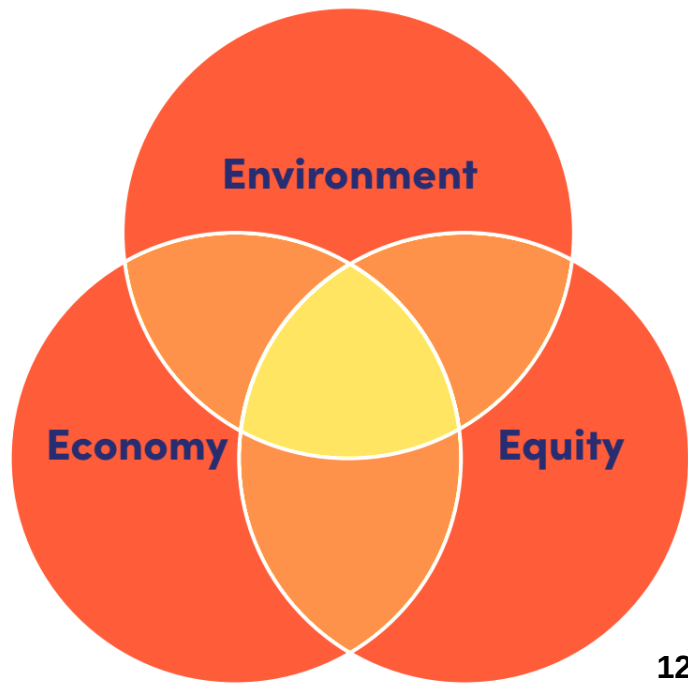
- **Comprehensive Plan & Climate Action Plan**
 - “residents and businesses have collectively decreased our greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on non-local energy sources through mitigation strategies”
- Influences electrification, energy affordability, and emissions reductions.
- Provides an opportunity to improve programs before they are finalized.



Themes in reviewing Xcel's ECO



1. Ensure access for income qualified households
2. Strengthen building decarbonization strategies
3. Improve program transparency & customer navigation
4. Greater Certainty for commercial customers



Residential Programs



Residential Programs: To provide residential customers with energy efficiency programs and incentives that reduce energy use, lower utility costs, and support adoption of more efficient technologies.

- Programs include:
 - Home Energy Squad
 - Energy efficiency rebates
 - Income qualified energy efficiency
 - Customer education

Residential Programs – Home Energy Squad



Home Energy Squad: Energy assessments to help residents identify opportunities to reduce energy use

- Proposed changes:
 - Greater emphasis on advisory service before/after assessments (pg. 73-75)
 - Expanded virtual assessment options (pg. 73/74)
 - Additional customer intake and screening process (pg. 73-75)
 - Continue direct install easy equipment measures (pg. 74)

Residential Programs – Home Energy Squad



Home Energy Squad: provides energy assessments to help residents identify opportunities to reduce energy use

- Support
 - Continue offering home energy assessments
 - Maintain energy advisors to help customers navigate programs
 - Direct install measures
 - Expand advisory services
- Clarifications/Recommendations
 - Unclear on proportion of virtual vs on-site assessments
 - More clarification around “wrap-around support”
 - Improve transparency around customer would receive information about efficient fuel switching

Residential Programs – Easy Equipment



Easy Equipment: prescriptive rebates and direct installation of low-cost energy efficient equipment (ie lights, faucet aerator, showerhead, etc.)

- Proposed changes:

- Continued electrification incentives for outdoor equipment (pg. 79)
- Greater use of mailed self install kits (pg. 84)
- New residential e-bike rebate (pg. 79/80)
- Closing the online storefront (pg. 83)

Residential Programs –Easy Equipment



Easy Equipment: prescriptive rebates and direct installation of low-cost energy efficient equipment (ie lights, faucet aerator, showerhead, etc.)

- Support
 - Continue rebates for outdoor equipment
 - New e-bike rebate
 - Mailing self-install kits for participants in virtual home energy squad
- Clarifications/Recommendations
 - Is the Home Energy Squad the only way to access the easy equipment with online storefront sunsetting
 - Clarify on what programs are within the storefront
 - E-bike rebate may be limited but unclear what that limit is

Residential Programs – Home Equipment



Home Equipment: rebates for larger energy improvements (heat pumps, induction cooking, water heating etc.)

- Proposed changes:
 - Phasing out air conditioner rebates by 2029 → transition to heat pumps (pg. 98)
 - Reducing rebates for natural gas furnaces (pg. 98)
 - Adding mini-split heat pump rebate (pg. 98)
 - Additional air to water pump rebates (pg. 98)

Residential Programs –Home Equipment



Home Equipment: rebates for larger energy improvements (heat pumps, induction cooking, water heating etc.)

- Support
 - Bonus rebate for insulation + Air Source Heat Pump
 - Increased insulation rebates
 - Moving towards air source heat pumps instead of standalone AC units
- Clarifications/ Recommendations
 - Induction stoves mentioned in appendix but not in narrative
 - Reduce furnace rebates but the rebate amounts between current (2026) and 2027 remain the same



Questions on Residential?

Income Qualified Segment



Income Qualified: Provides energy efficiency programs and services tailored to income-qualified households, with updates to program design, eligibility, incentives, and customer support for the 2027–2029 plan.

Xcel defines income qualified as households is 80% of less of area median income

- IQ Home Energy Squad & Advisory
- IQ Easy Equipment
- IQ Home Equipment
- IQ Multifamily building efficiency

Income Qualified Segment



Income Qualified: Provides energy efficiency programs and services tailored to income-qualified households, with updates to program design, eligibility, incentives, and customer support for the 2027–2029 plan.

- Proposed changes:
 - Income verification pathway through an instant verification platform by entering household and income information (pg. 181)
 - Expanding engagement in Automatic Bill Credit census block areas (pg. 181)
- Recommendations/Clarifications
 - Request more information on the income verification pathway

Income Qualified– Home Energy Squad



Home Energy Squad: provides energy assessments to help residents identify opportunities to reduce energy use

- Proposed changes:
 - Combine low-income home energy squad & Home Energy Saving Program (pg. 195)
 - Expanded direct-install services (pg. 195)
 - Adding upfront advisory services (pg. 195)

Income Qualified– Home Energy Squad



Home Energy Squad: provides energy assessments to help residents identify opportunities to reduce energy use

- Support
 - Expanded direct-installed services
 - Continues self-attestation for income qualification
 - Consolidation of Home Energy Savings program and Home Energy Squad into one program into one visit
- Clarifications/ Recommendations
 - Proposed upfront advisory process (adds another step to the current customer experience)
 - New intake steps may unintentionally reduce participation

Income Qualified– Easy Equipment



Easy Equipment: prescriptive rebates and direct installation of low-cost energy efficient equipment (ie lights, faucet aerator, showerhead, etc.)

- Proposed changes:
 - Consolidated existing direct install, retail, recycling and community distribution offering into a single IQ (pg. 194)
 - Expand products mix: Outdoor LED, laundry dryer balls and window film (pg. 194)

Income Qualified –Easy Equipment



Easy Equipment: prescriptive rebates and direct installation of low-cost energy efficient equipment (ie lights, dryer balls, showerhead, etc.)

- Clarifications/Recommendations
 - Concerned about the effectiveness of some of the measures as distributed energy saving products (ie dryer balls)

Income Qualified–Home Equipment



Home Equipment: rebates for larger energy improvements (heat pumps, induction cooking, water heating etc.)

- Proposed changes
 - Addition of new measures for insulation
 - Expansion of efficient fuel switching measures. Ex. Heat Pumps (pg. 200)

Income Qualified–Home Equipment



Home Equipment: rebates for larger energy improvements (heat pumps, induction cooking, water heating etc.)

- Support
 - No resident co-pay for weatherization measures
 - Expansion of insulation and air sealing measures
 - Added electric bike eligibility
- Clarifications/ Recommendations
 - Will IQ customers face additional barriers than market rate customers – e-bike example (pg. 199)



Questions on Income Qualified Segment?

New Construction Segment



Docket E.G999/CI-21-565

Requires all gas utilities to file an ECO modification mid-January 2027 to modify Single Family New Construction programs

Given this ruling, Northfield will provide comments on the new construction filing in January 2027



Commercial Customers

Business Energy Assessments



Business Energy Assessments: Evaluate buildings current energy use and identify opportunities for equipment upgrades or operational improvements

- Proposed changes:
 - Bundling projects: combines short- and long-term payback measures, allowing projects that would not qualify on their own to receive rebates (pg. 115)
 - Eliminating commercial streamlined assessments (pg. 116)

Business – Energy Assessment



Business Energy Assessments: Evaluate buildings current energy se and identify opportunities for equipment upgrades or operational improvements

- Support
 - Subsidizing assessments for large customers
- Clarifications/Recommendations
 - What are the copays for the business energy assessment?
 - Clarity around the difference between Commercial Streamlines Assessments vs ASHRAE Level 2 assessments (proposed replacement)

Business – New Construction



New construction: Consulting services and financial incentives for energy efficiency and electrifications.

- Energy Design assistances
- Energy efficient buildings
- Codes and Standards
- Proposed changes:
 - None
- Comments
 - Support and encourage more collaboration with Cities who manage development approvals

Commercial Electrification



Several commercial program provide incentives for replacing older equipment with high efficiency models

- Proposed Changes
 - New rebates for commercial users (pg. 139-140)
 - Heat pump rooftop units
 - Advance rooftop controls
 - Walk-in Freezers/coolers
 - Expanded rebates on food service equipment (pg. 139-140)

Commercial Electrification



Several commercial program provide incentives for replacing older equipment with high efficiency models

- Support

- Adding heat pump rooftop unit rebate
- Adding more foodservice equipment's rebates

- Clarifications/Recommendations

- Ensure businesses understand available incentives through a single customer pathway
- Continue prioritizing electrification technologies that replace fossil fuel equipment

Sara Pabich

Sustainability Coordinator



July 27, 2026

Dr. Sydnie Lieb
Assistant Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East Suite 500
Saint Paul, MN 55101-2198

DRAFT Re: Comments on Xcel Energy's 2027–2029 Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Triennial Plan (Docket No. E,G002/CIP-26-110)

Dear Assistant Commissioner Lieb:

The City of Northfield appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on Xcel Energy's proposed 2027–2029 Energy Conservation and Optimization (ECO) Triennial Plan.

Northfield evaluates policy decisions through the guiding principles of its 2045 Comprehensive Plan: economy, environment, and equity. These principles emphasize investments that support long-term financial sustainability, equitable access to opportunities, and climate resilience while recognizing the tradeoffs among these goals. The proposed ECO Triennial Plan advances all three priorities.

As buildings represent one of Northfield's largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions, utility conservation and electrification programs are essential to achieving the City's Carbon-Free Community by 2040 goal while improving affordability for residents and businesses. The City offers the following comments for the Department's consideration:

1. Expand Access for Income-Qualified Households

The City supports the proposed increase in funding for income-qualified programs and the continued emphasis on reducing energy burdens for Minnesota households. To ensure these investments translate into greater participation, the final Plan should provide additional detail regarding program implementation. Specifically, the filing should explain how the proposed income-verification platform will operate, how customer privacy and data security will be protected, and what alternatives will be available for customers who lack reliable internet access or digital literacy, as well as customers who may be hesitant to provide personal information due to privacy concerns, immigration status considerations, or other barriers to participation.

2. Strengthen Building Decarbonization Strategies

The City supports the Plan's continued investment in building energy efficiency, heat pumps, beneficial electrification, and bonus rebates that pair insulation improvements

with air-source heat pumps. These comprehensive projects reduce customer energy costs while advancing Northfield's climate goals.

The proposed incentives, however, should better align with the Plan's stated policy direction. While the filing indicates that incentives for natural gas furnaces will decline as the market transitions toward electrification, the proposed rebate schedule does not reflect that transition between 2026 and 2027. The rebate schedule should clearly phase down conventional furnace incentives while continuing to support dual-fuel systems where appropriate during the transition.

The Plan identifies residential induction ranges and electrical panel upgrades as eligible home equipment measures but does not specify rebate amounts. To address electrical panel capacity barriers to residential electrification, the final Plan should clearly identify incentives, rebate levels, and eligibility requirements for these measures.

3. Improve Program Transparency and Customer Navigation

The Home Energy Squad program should more clearly describe how customers move from an initial assessment to project implementation. Terms such as "wrap-around support" and "when appropriate" are too vague for customers and local partners to understand how the program will function. The filing should define these services, explain when efficient fuel switching is presented as an option, and describe how advisors connect customers with rebates, financing opportunities, and follow-up services.

The filing also indicates that the residential online storefront will be discontinued. The final Plan should explain how customers will continue to access and purchase simple energy-saving equipment, such as LED lighting and water-saving devices, and how the replacement approach will improve customer participation. Clear customer pathways throughout the ECO portfolio will reduce confusion, improve participation, and maximize the value of Minnesota's conservation investments.

4. Provide Greater Certainty for Business and Industrial Customers

The City supports continued investment in decarbonization and electrification programs for commercial and industrial customers but recommends greater certainty regarding several proposed program changes. The final Plan should clearly identify customer copays associated with business advisory services so businesses can better understand the costs of participation.

The proposed elimination of Commercial Sustainability Assessments (CSA) also creates uncertainty. Although the filing states that alternative services will be available, it does not identify those services, explain who will provide them, or describe how the transition will occur. The final Plan should identify the replacement program and demonstrate that businesses will continue to receive comparable technical assistance without interruption.

507-645-8833
northfieldmn.gov



801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments. The City appreciates the Department's thoughtful review of Xcel Energy's proposed Triennial Plan and looks forward to continued collaboration to ensure Minnesota's ECO programs remain effective, equitable, customer-focused, and well aligned with both statewide policy objectives and locally adopted community goals.

Sincerely,

Ben Martig
City Administrator
City of Northfield



Legislation Text

File #: 26-379, **Version:** 1

Environmental Quality Commission Meeting Date: July 15, 2026

To: Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

From: Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator

Action Requested:

EQC members provide work plan updates and progress. The 2026-2027 EQC work plan is attached for reference.

Summary Report:

EQC members provide work plan updates and progress. The 2026-2027 EQC work plan is attached for reference.

Beginning in September, the Environmental Quality Commission will transition away from standing subcommittees, with current subcommittee work concluding in August. Going forward, Commission discussions will take place during regular EQC meetings, allowing more business to be conducted in public meetings and giving all commissioners the opportunity to participate in key discussions. This approach also aligns Commission discussions with City Council priorities and staff work plans while respecting the time and capacity of volunteer commissioners by reducing the need for meetings outside of the regular EQC schedule.

City Plans & Policies Relevance:

N/A

Alternative Options:

N/A

Financial Impacts:

N/A

Tentative Timelines:

August: Standing subcommittees will sunset. Beginning in September, discussions will take place during regular EQC meetings.

Commission: Environmental Quality Commission 2026 Annual Work Plan

Initiative # 1	Initiative Type ☒ Project ☒ Ongoing / Annual ☐ Event		
Initiative Title: Energy Efficiency Education for Residents		Commissioners: Petri Podracky	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March: Planning to table at Riverwalk Series			
Progress Q2 April-June: Plan to reach out to Rotary Climate Action			
Progress Q3 July-September:			
Progress Q4 October-December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

Initiative # 2	Initiative Type ☐ Project ☐ Ongoing / Annual ☒ Event		
Initiative Title: Electric Vehicle Community Showcase		Commissioners: Hason Halverson	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March: Meeting at the end of March			
Progress Q2 April-June: Met with ReCharge America – Working to finalize date and location for the event. - Shared the event date will be September 26, 2026.			
Progress Q3 July- September:			
Progress Q4 October -December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

--

Initiative # 3	Initiative Type ☒ Project ☐ Ongoing / Annual ☐ Event		
Initiative Title: Active Transportation Awareness Campaign		Commissioners: Hason Provancha Podracky	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March: No Update.			
Progress Q2 April-June: Met the past month to discuss pedestrian and biker visibility.			
Progress Q3 July- September:			
Progress Q4 October -December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

Initiative # 4	Initiative Type ☒ Project ☐ Ongoing / Annual ☐ Event		
Initiative Title: Landscaping & Native Planting Research		Commissioners: Petri Haverson Shmurak	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March: No Update.			
Progress Q2 April-June: Subcommittee meet and discussed education materials that might be shared with the public.			
Progress Q3 July- September:			
Progress Q4 October -December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

Initiative # 5	Initiative Type ☒ Project ☐ Ongoing / Annual ☐ Event		
Initiative Title: Waste Reduction Library Research		Commissioners: Shmurak Haroldson Provancha	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March: Meeting with the Library about Toy library.			
Progress Q2 April-June: Met with Library. - Learned the Library does not have the capacity to support a toy library at this time			
Progress Q3 July-September:			
Progress Q4 October-December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

Initiative # 6	Initiative Type ☒ Project ☐ Ongoing / Annual ☐ Event		
Zero Waste: Recycling and Compost Education Toolkit		Commissioners: Haroldson	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March: Recycling education toolkit almost ready			
Progress Q2 April-June: Working on refining education toolkit.			
Progress Q3 July-September:			
Progress Q4 October-December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

Parking Lot: (These items have been considered by the Commission, but not proposed as part of this year’s work plan. If the Commission decides they would like to work on them in the current year, it would need to be approved by a Majority vote of the Commission.)

1. Energy Efficiency Education for Residents

Goal: Help residents understand cost savings and energy-efficient HVAC practices.

- Collaborate with partners to coordinate educational outreach and materials.
- Research and summarize current incentives, rebates, and best practices.
- Develop a short handout highlighting cost savings and upgrades.

2. Electric Vehicle Community Showcase

Goal: Educate the public about EV adoption, charging infrastructure, and cost savings.

- Organize a showcase event featuring local EV owners, dealerships, and informational displays.
- Prepare a one-page summary or talking points outlining EV adoption, available rebates, and charging options.
- Provide volunteer support to assist with event coordination and engagement on the day of the event.

3. Active Transportation Awareness Campaign

Goal: Increase safety and visibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Create a public education campaign promoting active transportation.
- Support and promote initiatives such as Bike to School Day through volunteering to encourage safe, active travel among youth and families.
- Educate community stakeholders on upcoming and ongoing pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements to support and promote active transportation.
- Focus on low-cost awareness strategies: social media posts, flyers, and research of low cost solutions such as visibility (lights, reflective vests).

4. Landscaping & Native Planting Research

Goal: Promote better use of city parks and private lands through native planting.

- Support and promote native planting initiatives through programs like Lawns to Legumes, increasing pollinator-friendly plants, and encouraging community gardens with partner organizations.
- Research best practices for native planting and community gardens, including pollinator gardens, rain gardens, native grasses and flowers, and shared food-growing spaces.
- Develop resources for residents, including one-pagers on invasive species and recommended native plants, to encourage native gardening and biodiversity.

5. Waste Reduction Library Research

Goal: Explore opportunities for community lending libraries for sustainable items.

- Research what current waste reduction spaces exist in the community (i.e. Carleton Maker Space, Library Repair desk, Swap events happening, etc.)
- Research models like toy libraries, tool libraries, diaper banks, and other reusable item programs.
- Analyze potential benefits and challenges for the community.
- Written summary documenting current community initiatives, ongoing research efforts, and identified best practices to support continued waste reduction (2 pages max)

6. Zero Waste: Recycling and Compost Education Toolkit

Goal: Provide resources to improve household recycling and organics management.

- Develop a draft educational toolkit for recycling and organics outreach, including short handouts, example visuals, and a basic presentation.
- Conduct an internal pilot with City staff or volunteers to gather feedback and identify gaps.
- Finalize the toolkit and produce a brief summary report with findings, lessons learned, and recommendations for potential future expansion or implementation.



Legislation Text

File #: 26-380, Version: 1

EQC Meeting Date: July 15, 2026

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator

Staff Update

Action Requested:

The EQC receives an update regarding staff activities.

Summary Report:

This update includes items not included as agenda items for this meeting.

Upcoming EQC Meeting -August: Mathias, City Planner, will attend and provide an update on where the Zoning Code update process is at and provide EQC an opportunity to make comments/suggestions. If there are specific areas of the Zoning Code you have an interest learning about, please email Sara by July 27th so she can work with Mathias to try to incorporate those.

Budget Townhall: Northfield invites all community members to a town hall on Wednesday, July 29, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Northfield Middle School to learn about and provide feedback on the city's proposed 2027 budget and 2027-2031 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The event will include brief presentations on the budget process and the five-year plan for investments in parks, streets, city facilities, and bike and pedestrian improvements, followed by opportunities to ask questions, review project information, and share feedback with city staff. Input from the meeting will be presented to the City Council during its August 18 work session and will help inform upcoming budget, tax levy, and utility rate decisions.

Parks: In June, City Council adopted a resolution establishing the Cannon River Regional Park as a unifying regional park designation for Northfield's parks, trails, open spaces, and natural areas along the Cannon River. The designation advances the City's Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan and 2045 Comprehensive Plan by promoting improved river access, connected recreation, environmental stewardship, and coordinated planning while preserving the existing names, ownership, and management of individual parks and facilities. The resolution also supports continued collaboration with the City of Dundas and other regional partners to strengthen regional identity, expand recreation and tourism opportunities, improve eligibility for grant funding, and advance long-term protection and enhancement of the Cannon River corridor.

Composting: On July 7, City Council reviewed composting service options and provided initial feedback. There appeared to be general consensus in support of moving toward a universal composting contract, with the primary discussion focused on the implementation timeline. Staff anticipates returning to City Council within the next month for formal direction; a tentative date of July 21 was discussed but has not been finalized. Commissioners interested in the discussion can watch the July 7 City Council meeting recording, where

composting is the final agenda item and begins at approximately the 2 hour, 15 minute mark.

Ames Mill Dam: The project is currently focused on developing a transfer agreement with Post Holdings for ownership of the Ames Mill Dam. Once finalized, the agreement will require additional review and approvals, including by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the state Legislature.

Riverwalk: Environmental Quality Commission members are scheduled to table at Riverwalk on July 18, 2025. Staff will have outreach materials prepared for distribution at the July 15 EQC meeting and is hoping that a commissioner attending the morning session can transport the materials to the event. For the July 18 event, the EQC has been assigned Space #62. As a reminder, Riverwalk will provide a tent;

however, EQC members are responsible for bringing their own table and chairs.



Alternative Options:

NA

Financial Impacts:

NA

Tentative Timelines:

NA