

## Northfield Focus Group Facilitation Guide

### **Purpose:**

This interview guide is intended to help engage local people, businesses, and organizations in order to develop a community vision for the Comprehensive Plan. The questions are designed to help all participants consider perspectives on Northfield today and to imagine how Northfield will grow and change in the future.

Duration of Activity: 30-60 minutes (flexible to meet group needs)

### **Tentative list of planned conversations:**

**January 2024:** Environmental Quality Commission; Housing and Redevelopment Authority

**February 2024:** Park and Recreation Advisory Board; Economic Development Authority; Heritage Preservation Commission; Human Rights Commission; Northfield Youth Commission

**March/April 2024:** Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee;

**Location:** During existing board/commission meetings; existing community groups; Zoom

### **Priority Stakeholder Groups:**

School District representatives, including education, administrative and support staff, students, and parents; 50North; Age-Friendly Northfield; City staff; Rice County Neighbors United; Northfield Union of Youth/The Key, Chamber and Convention & Visitor's bureau, college campus communities, HealthFinders Collaborative, Northfield Hospital and Clinics board and staff, multi-family residents, managers, and owners; artists, cottage industry businesses, developers/builders, renters, surrounding communities including township and county officials; the agricultural community, faith-based communities.

### **Questions:**

#### **Opening question (optional):**

Please tell us a little about yourself and your connections to Northfield.

#### **Transition questions:**

##### **Vision Guiding Questions:**

1. If you could create a newspaper headline to describe your pie-in-the-sky vision for the City of Northfield, what would it be? Alternatives: Describe a reality TV show concept for Northfield in 2045; What would you hope would show up in your social media related to Northfield in 2045?
2. The Comprehensive Plan shapes where and how the City will grow and change. How Northfield grows and plans for people housing, business, and streets determines how

we can live our lives for at least a generation. The adopted (2008) plan emphasizes growing more densely; making streets safer and more accessible for everyone, and focusing attention and investment on the historic downtown and Cannon River. What are the major areas you would like the City to invest in? Why?

3. Northfield has been working to make streets safer and easier to walk and bike for 20 years – especially downtown, for older adults and kids going to school, and building the Mill Towns State Trail. Yet, in much of the city driving is still the most convenient – and only – way to reach some places in town. How do you currently navigate around the City of Northfield for work, school, shopping and play? How do you think your transportation needs will change in 20 years? How do you think transportation itself will change in 20 years (for example EVs, self-driving vehicles, transit options, e-bikes, flying cars [Jetsons!], hoverboards)? How would you like to see the City of Northfield respond to those potential changes?
4. The City has heard many people say they want to be able to do daily activities within walking or biking distance of their homes, like going to the park or picking up a few groceries or a coffee. Can you do this in your neighborhood? If not, what's missing? How do you want to be able to do these things when you're 20 years older? Do you think your experience is typical, or do other people/neighborhoods experience the city differently? How about your parents or children or others in your network/communities?
5. Do you work in Northfield? How about your spouse or family members? Are there missing job opportunities you need to help you feel financially stable and secure? How will your employment needs change between now and 2045? Will there be opportunities for young people, including local high school students, college students, and new/young families?
6. Housing in Northfield is pretty expensive; the City has been working to expand housing options to include more duplex to fourplex options, townhouses, and accessory dwelling units to make better use of existing infrastructure. How will your housing needs change between now and 2040, if at all? Does Northfield have housing that will meet those needs? Will there be housing opportunities for young people, including local high school graduates, college graduates and new/young families? Do you think the City is doing enough to meet the existing needs of the entire community? Do you think the City is doing enough to meet the future needs of the community? What could/should be done differently/better?
7. Northfield adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2019 which sets goals for reducing carbon emissions, mitigating flooding and extreme weather events, saving energy, preserving natural resources, and growing in a more sustainable way. Is Northfield doing enough to make the city sustainable? What else would you do? Has your life (or home and property) been affected by climate change? What have you done personally?

What do you think others could do? How, if at all, do you think the City could or should help/facilitate actions for individuals? What do you think or hope the City could/would do to implement the CAP for City facilities and/or City-led initiatives?

8. What's most important to you about Northfield? What do you want more of? Less of?

## Additional Supplemental Questions

*These questions will be asked based on the interest/expertise of the stakeholder group (Categories: Housing, Transportation, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Environment/sustainability)*

9. Are the community's existing housing needs met with the options that are currently available? If not, what options would you like to see added or more investment in?
10. Are the community's existing transportation needs met with the options that are available? Are you and your friends/family members able to go where you need to go safely, or as safely as you would like? If not, what options would you like to see added or more investment in?
11. How do you feel when in the City of Northfield? How would you like to feel? Do you feel the public spaces/infrastructure around you and your neighborhood amenities serve you well (including parks, open spaces, walkways, grocery shops, restaurants, environmental quality, safety, and health)? What are the potential areas to focus on and improve?
12. Are you able to find your ideal employment in Northfield? If you are self-employed or a small business owner, what is your greatest need (employees, customers, access to .....)?
13. Youth/school district: Do you find all the required resources in Northfield in terms of education, parks and recreation, transportation, community areas, livability, shopping, housing (dorms, etc.), health care, personal services, ? If not, what needs to be added?
14. Seniors: Do you find all the required resources in Northfield in terms of housing, accessibility, amenities, community areas, shopping, transportation, health care? If not, what is missing?

### Closing Questions:

15. Do you have any final thoughts to add to our conversation?

### Contact Information:

Thank you for your time and participation, [provide contact information as appropriate for future questions for the engagement team].