

City of Northfield

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



Meeting Agenda

Monday, February 23, 2026

6:00 PM

Retreat

**ST. OLAF BUNTROCK COMMONS, 1521 ST. OLAF AVENUE,
ROOM 142**

Economic Development Authority

4:30PM REGULAR AGENDA

ST. OLAF BUNTROCK COMMONS, 1521 ST. OLAF AVENUE, ROOM 142

1. [26-102](#) Economic Development Authority (EDA) Strategy Session Retreat.

Attachments:

[1 - Strategic Plan \(1-pager EDA highlighted section\)](#)

[2 - Excerpt Comp Plan: Strategies for Sustainable Economic Future](#)

ADJOURNMENT



Legislation Text

File #: 26-102, Version: 1

Economic Development Authority Meeting Date: February 23, 2026

To: Members of the Economic Development Authority

From: Scott Wopata, Community Development Director
Emery John, Program Associate

Economic Development Authority (EDA) Strategy Session Retreat.

Action Requested:

Not applicable.

Summary Report:

The upcoming EDA Strategic Planning Retreat is intended to focus our efforts on a clear set of priority actions that will advance our economic development objectives in a focused and practical way. To ensure a productive discussion, members are asked to review Section 4 Sustainable Economic Future of the City's Comprehensive Plan in advance of the meeting. This chapter will serve as the primary background document for our conversations and will ground our brainstorming in adopted strategies and community-identified goals. While we will allow room for creative thinking, the emphasis will be on refining and focusing the actions already outlined in Chapter 4.

Our goal for the retreat is to identify a manageable number of high-impact priorities.

The following is the agenda for the strategy session retreat.

4:30-4:40 - Introduction and Framing (10 min)

- Welcome and opening question
- Expectations for outcomes
- Overview of retreat approach

4:40-4:55 - Comprehensive Plan Chapter 4 Overview (15 min)

- Summary of key themes, trends, and objectives

4:55-5:10 - Small Group Discussion (15 min)

- Chapter 4 takeaways: trends, reactions, and key insights

5:10-5:25 - Large Group Discussion (15 min)

- Share small group highlights
- Identify common themes

5:25-5:35 - Break (10 min)

5:35-5:50 - Strategic Plan Priority Tax Base Growth Goal and Chapter 4 EDA Strategies & Actions Overview (15 min)

- Review Strategies 1-10 and associated actions

5:50-6:05 - Small Group Discussion (15 min)

- Discuss which actions feel most relevant, timely, and impactful

6:05-6:15 - Large Group Discussion (10 min)

- Identify priority areas for further synthesis

6:15-6:45 - Dinner + HRA Tools Overview (30 min)

We look forward to a collaborative and strategic conversation that will sharpen our focus and position the EDA to advance meaningful economic development outcomes in the year ahead.

City Plans & Policies Relevance:

Not applicable.

Alternative Options:

Not applicable

Financial Impacts:

Not applicable.

Tentative Timelines:

Not applicable.

EDA Priority #1



STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY 2025-2028 City of Northfield

Strategic Priority	Desired Outcome	Key Outcome Indicator	Target	Strategic Initiatives
Improve Financial Strength <i>A financially responsible organization</i>	Increased Commercial-Industrial tax base	- Net new C/I Valuation - C/I Permit Valuation (new)	- \$50M net increase-C/I valuation 2025-2028 - \$50M net increase-C/I permit valuation 2025-2028	a) Develop and implement Northwest Area Shovel Ready and Recruitment Plan b) Strategies to develop high potential CI properties
	Increased revenue diversification	Change in \$ value of new non-tax/non-intergovernmental revenue	10% increase in non-tax/non-intergovernmental revenue 2025-2028	c) Create a Revenue Diversification Program (new & updates) d) Implement a coordinated 2-year Budget and Aligned Financial Management Plan
	Taxation responsive to community needs & expectations	- Annual tax levy - Annual tax rate	Annual Adoption of 5-Year Financial Plan	e) 5-year Financial Management Alignment with Service Level Strategy.



Strategy 1: Strengthen Northfield's Downtown core

Continue to strengthen the coalitions, regulations, and investments that keep Northfield's downtown strong.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Downtown Northfield grows as the river-focused anchor of the city and key component of its sense of place.
2. Downtown is the hub of Northfield's small business community, locus of valuable tax base, a residential neighborhood, a welcoming and accessible public space, and location of city services on the banks of the Cannon River.

Actions

1. Identify opportunities and provide support for improved business mix, marketing, events, and physical improvements.
2. Promote new and rehabilitated housing in and near downtown to increase housing supply, increase tax productivity, and support local business by putting more people near downtown retail, services, and the river.
3. Implement the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan to improve access to the river and build on Northfield's quality of place.
4. Redesign Highway 3 from Fremouw Avenue to Woodley Street to slow traffic and make it easier to access the Transit Hub, Riverfront, parks, and downtown businesses.
5. Proactively identify, evaluate, and survey historic and cultural resources with the Heritage Preservation Commission to ensure a consistent approach to preservation. Consider local, state, and/or national designation as appropriate, after study.
6. Prioritize adaptive reuse and reinvestment in existing buildings.
7. Consider creating a special service district to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach to refuse and recycling collection, snow and ice removal, street trees and municipal landscaping, parks and parklets, and on- and off-street public parking.



Strategy 2: Develop Carleton and St. Olaf relationships

Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges are key parts of Northfield’s distinctive character as well as important employers, home to 25% of Northfield’s population, and a significant factor in how Northfield can grow; Northfield needs to more actively develop college relationships and guide their physical growth.

Guiding values



Outcome

The City will work with Carleton and St. Olaf to plan physical development and increase their economic contributions; the city will benefit from college leadership on climate and collaborating with students.

Actions

1. Identify opportunities to increase the colleges’ economic contributions to the city to reflect use of city services and resources through increased cash donation and/ or in-kind support to mutual programs such as increased transit or pedestrian improvements.
2. Work with colleges to evaluate district energy feasibility, improve river health, and learn from their climate approach.
3. Guide college land-use planning to eliminate surface parking visible to the community and increase access to the Cannon River.
4. Plan development with the colleges to contain it within the set boundary.
5. Develop a clear and consistent approach to working with college students and faculty on municipal initiatives for mutual benefit.



Strategy 3: Small business development

Build a supportive and culturally competent environment for local businesses to thrive by connecting business owners to the resources from which they can benefit.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Local small business owners know about and use technical and financial resources available to them.
2. Regulations, policies and programs are designed to make small business development easier.

Actions

1. Partner with existing local business support organizations and evaluate other support opportunities to establish public and private local funding resources for small businesses.
2. Work with existing and potential partners to ensure current and future business owners can easily locate city-related support information for business resources.
3. Work with existing and potential partners to provide culturally and linguistically competent and context-sensitive business advisory services for existing and future entrepreneurs.
4. Review regulations and policies to reduce or eliminate barriers to new business creation.
5. City staff in all departments provide effective and culturally competent assistance.



Strategy 4: Support the local workforce

Support local businesses in recruiting and retaining their workers through supporting efforts addressing housing, childcare and training.

Guiding values



Outcome

Northfield's existing and future workforce faces fewer barriers to moving to Northfield and living close to their place of employment.

Actions

1. Support housing development that increases the supply and variety of housing that meets the needs of Northfield's workforce.
2. Prioritize building new housing in places with convenient access to jobs and services.
3. Facilitate development of transit and other affordable transportation to jobs in and out of Northfield.
4. Promote strategies and partnerships for increasing high-quality affordable childcare and other needed services for working families in Northfield.



Strategy 5: Diversify Northfield’s tax base

Northfield has a sufficiently diverse tax base so that higher value properties carry the greater share of the tax.

Guiding values

Outcome

Northfield will intentionally build a more sustainable local economy to maintain and expand city services and infrastructure.

Actions

1. Prioritize development in *Transform* area in the interventions analysis to ensure an adequate supply of commercially zoned land to provide for ongoing business growth in ways which minimize infrastructure costs, preserve natural resources, and ensure equitable access. [[Capital Improvement Program](#) and [budget](#)]
2. Pursue intensified infill development and business expansions in highway-oriented commercial areas, particularly on Highway 3 between Woodley Street and County Road 1 to increase density, right-size parking, improve accessibility for nonmotorized travel, and diversify the range of uses.
3. Focus recruitment, retention, and expansion investments that support, complement and enhance the existing retail, commercial, industrial, and service industries. Do so while recognizing that the community’s largest local employers are Carleton and St. Olaf colleges, Northfield Hospital and Clinics, and Post Consumer Brands and the region benefits from safe, convenient, and affordable access to jobs in Northfield, Faribault, and Rice County.



Strategy 6: Grow in a compact, sustainable development pattern

Northfield grows in a compact pattern that is financially and environmentally sustainable.

Guiding values



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 assesses the fiscal impact of the development or redevelopment project.

Actions

1. Develop an accessible and approachable process that evaluates the benefits, costs, opportunities, and potential negative externalities of larger-scale development projects related to the economic sustainability and health of the overall Northfield community.
2. Concentrate on the needs of existing businesses to grow in Northfield and attract compatible and complementary industries.
3. Ensure zoning and other regulations guide all development and redevelopment to increase tax productivity, enhance access and connectivity, address climate, reduce vehicle trips, and include requiring fiscal impact analysis.
4. Lead actions to support the reuse and redevelopment of underutilized properties that are already served by local infrastructure. Specific actions can be found in the access chapter of this plan.
5. Require infill developments to complement existing neighborhoods while incrementally intensifying uses, improving connectivity to the rest of the city and allowing innovation and considering market needs, climate impact, economic feasibility and sustainable affordability.



Strategy 7: Maintain Northfield's existing housing stock
 Existing housing is safe and healthy.

Guiding values

CREATIVITY ECONOMY HOMES RESILIENCE

MOBILITY EQUITY CONNECT

Outcome

All residents in Northfield live in safe and healthy housing.

Actions

1. Develop programs and partnerships to support manufactured home communities and preserve this form of housing.
2. Establish a survey program to evaluate housing conditions citywide and connect owners with resources to improve unsafe conditions.
3. Develop programs in partnership with affordable housing and educational institutions to ensure housing stability in all neighborhoods and communities.
4. Develop programs and partnerships to assist those who are cost-burdened to live in safe, healthy and affordable housing that is connected to basic needs.
5. Create incentives for landlords to reduce energy costs.
6. Support housing near necessary goods and services and which promotes active living and community connectivity.



Strategy 8: Build more housing

New housing development meets defined community needs and diversifies the housing options available to residents by being complementary to existing housing.

Guiding values



Outcome

There will be a sufficient supply of housing at each price point and stage of life for existing and future residents. All types of homes, including subsidized and unsubsidized construction and rehabilitation, owner-occupied and rental, single- and multi-family are needed to ensure lifecycle choices.

Actions

1. Prioritize building new housing in walkable areas of the city and guide new development to areas most connected to the existing street system and water infrastructure.
2. Complete and regularly update an analysis of market conditions and regulatory approaches that support the development of affordable housing in Northfield.
3. Adopt an inclusionary housing ordinance that reflects market conditions and offers a flexible approach to support the development of affordable units.
4. Prioritize developing infill sites through direct property acquisition, site preparation for redevelopment, and actively soliciting development proposals targeted to identified needs.
5. Partner with local home builders, employers, financial institutions, and other regional nonprofit entities to evaluate and develop an inclusive strategy that results in financial and other tools to accelerate the development of home affordable to working families.
6. Revise and regularly update the Land Development Code to remove barriers and reduce costs to housing and economic development.
7. Include housing needs in strategic planning efforts to ensure that short-term goals meet local market needs and address potential local market failures.
8. Encourage visit-ability to make homes accessible to all residents.
9. Support township and county efforts to build new housing within the Northfield school district.



Strategy 9: Support at-risk sellers, buyers and tenants

Provide support and funding for vulnerable populations in the housing market.

Guiding values



CREATIVITY



ECONOMY



HOMES



RESILIENCE



MOBILITY



EQUITY



CONNECT

Outcomes

1. Residents can afford to own or rent a home in Northfield and stay in their homes through hardships.
2. Northfield will ensure strong protection for residential tenants.

Actions

1. Partner with local organizations working on housing support, such as Community Action Center, Healthy Community Initiative, Rice County Habitat for Humanity, and Three Rivers Community Action to support first-time homebuyers with education and down payment-related assistance and homeowners at risk of foreclosure.
2. Coordinate with nonprofit partners to ensure municipal, EDA and HRA-levied funds are used in ways that most closely align with the direction set through the citywide comprehensive and strategic plan documents and offer the greatest return on investment.

3. Pursue mechanisms to enhance and improve the use of Rice County-administered Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) within the Northfield city limits.
4. Build a coalition of partners to create a fund to support replacement of manufactured homes as they reach the end of their useful life and provide temporary relocation support for manufactured home residents when the homes are being repaired or rehabbed.
5. Build a coalition of partners to create, fund, and administer a housing legacy program that capitalizes on the Local Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) and Minnesota State Housing Tax Credit (SHTC) programs. A housing legacy program facilitates the donation or bequest of homes by homeowners wishing to leave a legacy of affordable homeownership for future generations.¹
6. Develop clear, comprehensive, and accessible policies and practices relating to tenant and landlord rights, responsibilities, best practices, and resources to decrease conflicts that could lead to evictions. For example:
 - a. Enact a tenant right to counsel ordinance.
 - b. Enact a time of sale inspection ordinance for mobile and manufactured homes.
 - c. Work with community partners to adequately fund the identification and mitigation of tenant-landlord conflicts.
 - d. Adopt a tenant notification requirement related to the sale of rental properties.

¹ [City of Boulder Colorado - Housing Legacy Program](#)



Strategy 10: Create programs to support affordable and sustainable homes and neighborhoods

Assertively use city resources and authorities to support the production and preservation of needed housing.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. All residents in Northfield live in safe and stable housing and neighborhoods.
2. Local housing needs are met at a greater scale than market forces can provide using existing public resources, authorities and community partners.

Actions

1. Revise the zoning code to permit denser development by right in neighborhoods dominated by single-family development.
2. Incentivize energy efficiency in building materials and design, heating/cooling infrastructure, and electrification to reduce lifetime costs of housing.
3. Work with housing partners to preserve and maintain affordable housing through strategies such as low-interest home improvement loans, a naturally occurring affordable housing preservation fund and other existing or future opportunities to reduce the cost burden of rehabilitating housing.
4. Work to improve sustainability of new and existing housing. All new housing developers are encouraged to construct Net-Zero-ready housing.
5. Continue to provide incentives for landlords and homeowners to reduce energy costs.
6. Use public financial resources to develop the types of housing that are needed and are not being supplied by the market, including through strategic purchase of available property.
7. Develop existing city/housing or economic development authority-owned land to increase the types and range of affordability of housing being built.
8. Explore fee waivers, reductions and other incentives for development that addresses city goals (sustainability, affordability, compact development, etc.).
9. Support housing near necessary goods and services to increase affordable access, reduce the need to drive, and community connectivity.
10. Encourage mixed income neighborhoods, through targeted investment and planning.