

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION 2025-010

RECOMMENDATION DENYING THE ANNEXATION OF PID 0432375001 TO CITY
COUNCIL

WHEREAS, the applicant, Baja3, LLC (the “applicant”), seeks Annexation, pursuant to Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, 8.5.15, to annex PID 0432375001, 49.5 acres into Northfield city limits; and

WHEREAS, Baja3, LLC is the owner of the above-referenced property; and

WHEREAS, the above-referenced property is legally described on Exhibit A, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference; and

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

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on June 16, 2025, and received public testimony regarding the proposed Annexation; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission found that the application does not meet the standards in Northfield City Code, Chapter 34, the Land Development Code, for annexation; and

PASSED by the Planning Commission of the City of Northfield on this 16th day of June 2025.

Chair

Member

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

EXHIBIT A

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

The Southeast Quarter of the Southwest Quarter; and the East 9 1/2 acres of the Southwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter; all in Section 32, Township 112 North, Range 19 West of the Fifth Principal Meridian, Rice County, Minnesota.

EXHIBIT B

PLANNING COMMISSION FINDINGS

Per Section 8.5.15 Annexation of Chapter 34: Land Development Code, the planning commission and city council shall review the necessary submittal requirements, facts, and circumstances of the proposed annexation and make a recommendation and decision on the application based on the city's annexation policy and applicable state statutes.

The 2045 Comprehensive Plan has several strategies in the Access, Sustainable Economic Future, and Resilient Infrastructure chapters which support denial of this annexation. The planning commission recommends denial based on the strategies, annexation policy and strategic plan.

The annexation does not comply with the City's adopted *Northfield 2045* comprehensive plan, which has an overall vision of creating a place where all can thrive, including having safe and secure housing and economic opportunities, and sustainable, resilient, and economical infrastructure investments. The policy direction of the city's comprehensive plan is to focus on development and redevelopment opportunities that are connected to existing infrastructure and within the priority growth area within the city limits. This application does not address the following comprehensive plan strategies:

- Access Strategy 2: Develop in a compact, sustainable, and fiscally responsible pattern
- Access Strategy 6: Design for resiliency and sustainability
- Housing and Economic Security Strategy 6: Grow in a compact, sustainable development pattern
- Resilient Infrastructure Strategy 2: Plan water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure to be resilient
- Resilient Infrastructure Strategy 3: Plan streets for safety and stormwater management

City staff have analyzed and worked with the applicant to show where potential streets, sidewalks, sewer and water infrastructure, stormwater ponding, greenway corridor paths and park space would all be potentially located. The topography of the property poses challenges to build out the sewer infrastructure. Wall Street Rd. now has sewer infrastructure up to the southwest corner of the property. The elevation of this sewer line would allow for the entire site to be served, but with multiple lengths being at a depth of 30 to 40 feet. Typical depth for sewer infrastructure ranges from approx. 10 to 20 feet. The other option would be to serve the property with a lift station on the north side and split the flow of the sewer infrastructure. Then the lift station would be removed when/if a trunk sewer line could be constructed through the Carleton Arboretum and around the north side of Oaklawn Cemetery. Given the depth of the new infrastructure in Wall Street Rd., the elevations of the property, and the cost of maintaining a lift station it would be a greater financial risk to install sewer infrastructure, to that depth, long term, for the city after the developer installed the street infrastructure and lift station.

Professional expertise could be argued to support or deny this annexation. While some of the infrastructure would be difficult, it is not impossible, and a design could be engineered to support

it. Lived experience and professional expertise would tell us infrastructure can and will deteriorate or break, which brings financial risk.

Current best practice is to annex land directly adjacent to city limits. This property is located adjacent to the city on the east side of town and on the north side of Wall Street Rd. The comprehensive plan does not include this land within the priority grown area, which means it is a less desirable property to annex. The comprehensive plan emphasizes land within city limits be developed first.

Additional pathways have been considered, including annexing the south half of the property first, which could be served more easily by the sewer infrastructure. While this is an option, it may be worth waiting to annex the entire parcel when the market is able to absorb more land for residential homes and/or the infill residential locations are building out at a faster rate.

The location of this property would allow for access to multiple locations in the city. Within approximately 1.5 miles, residents would have access to city hall, Carleton College, Laura Baker Services Association, downtown and downtown businesses, Family Fare, Memorial Park, Central Park, access to Mill Towns Trail, the Northfield Golf Club, and much more. The high school is approximately 2 miles away. An inverse of this scenario would be the Bluff View development and Southbridge HRA land.

Strategic Plan

The 2025-2028 Strategic Plan identifies the creation of at least 100 units of housing each year (50 units of single family and 50 units of multi-family) between 2026 and 2028.

Below is a summary of potential single family and multifamily housing units within city limits:

1. Kraewood Final Plat: 22 single family units, one tri-plex, and two duplexes
2. Completion of the Bluff View housing development: approx. 55 single family homes
3. Cedar Meadows (entire property): 44 single family lots, 41 detached villa style lots (single family), 14 twin homes (28 units), 12 triplex lots (36 units), senior co-op building (~ 60 units)
4. Meadows Park/Fargaze Meadows: will allow for the potential of 141 units, for a general approx. staff used 71 single family lots and 70 multifamily units
5. Harvest Hills: approx. 20 single family lots, 10 multifamily units
6. Festler Farms site on Division: approx. 66 apartment units, four quad homes (16 units), seven twin homes (14 units), with a daycare and specialized care facility for rehab, hospice or similar
7. Heritage Lofts: approx. 170 apartment units
8. Southbridge HRA property: approx. 65 single family lots

Total single family lots: ~318 units / 50 units per year = ~6.25 years' worth of available property within city limits.

Total multifamily units: ~445 units / 50 units per year = approx. 9 years' worth of available property within city limits.

Given the approximate single family lots and multifamily units, annexation of this parcel is not necessary to annex this property to meet the housing goals of the strategic plan. The cost to construct the infrastructure is high long term for the city.

The property could potentially increase the supply, variety and affordability of housing types needed, but at this time, there is enough property within city limits to support additional housing of all types with more opportunity to offer affordable housing for residents. This would be through the Meadows Park property and the Southbridge HRA land.

Subdivision requirements will allocate public right-of-way to connect people to places and neighborhoods but would likely add to greenhouse gas emissions given the need to drive to other commercial centers. The path along Wall Street Rd. will be a connector to the Mill Towns Trail and connects to existing bike infrastructure leading to downtown.