

# Chapter 1 - Introduction

A comprehensive plan is built on an aspirational vision that represents the community's shared values. It must strike a balance between interests and provides clear guidance for decisions that will move the city towards its vision. The comprehensive plan acts as a guide to decision making when the city is faced with new challenges, opportunities and questions that were not originally anticipated. While by nature an overarching document, it is not everything to everyone. To make sure the city is resilient, we must attempt to tackle things we know and be prepared to adjust to the things we don't.

The plan is centered around the things that matter most to you in your community: **equity, the environment, and the economy, including housing**. The plan represents all of us, connected, in the community we share: each person, family, community, block, street, business, organization, and company.

## How to Use the Plan

Start with the vision and guiding values. Developed based on community input, these are shared by the community and will guide all the strategies and actions described in the Plan.

Next, the decision-making framework shows how everyone can use the plan in making daily decisions that will move the city towards that shared vision and living our guiding values.

Each chapter of the plan connects to the vision and guiding values. Each chapter:

- Centers on what we heard from the community.
- Develops strategies and actions that move the city forward.
- Includes detailed analyses that support the strategies.

This Plan moves away from earlier plans which divided topics by chapter to plan more holistically. For example, providing more housing options is closely tied to land use policies. Developing in a compact manner is linked to meeting climate goals. Expanding employment opportunities and economic sustainability necessitates providing more workforce housing. Some recommendations appear in more than one chapter; this is intentional. We hope this Plan will help break down departmental silos, encourage community partnerships, and foster creative problem solving for Northfield.

The Plan also embeds these principles into how the city plans, budgets, and makes decisions. These are not extra topics, but an effort to sharpen the City's focus on what matters most to Northfield.

## Economic Sustainability

As a steward of taxpayer dollars, Northfield plans for the long-term economic health of the city and its residents. Northfield prioritizes growth in locations and patterns that pay for themselves. That means strategies related to land use patterns, growth areas, transportation, and infrastructure expansion prioritize balancing revenue generated and the costs of servicing new development.

## Equity

As an increasingly diverse City, Northfield plans and acts equitably. We conceive of equity broadly to encompass not only racial or social equity. Ensuring equitable outcomes asks the city to always consider who benefits most from initiatives, who bears burdens, how a project contributes to the overall success of Northfield, and to consider how Northfield balances values in tension for any project. A comprehensive plan provides an opportunity to use its necessary breadth to speak to filling needs created by past City actions and seeking community input more broadly. It also offers an opportunity to implement policies that raise the baseline quality of life for everyone and an invitation to develop goals and metrics to measure what matters.

Figure 1 on the following page shows an example of an equity indicator: households with no vehicle available. These neighborhoods (to the west of Highway 3, particularly north of 5th Street) have a higher need for transportation options and services close by so that they can safely and conveniently access what they need. For more information on equity within the plan, visit [\[Link to Equity Policy Framework\]](#) and [\[link to Community Profile\]](#).

## Environmental Sustainability

As a city which has planned for environmental sustainability since the 1970s with more recent emphasis on climate action, Northfield plans to mitigate and become more resilient to a changing climate. This Plan builds on the 2019 Climate Action Plan, incorporating it in its entirety as a component of this document, while building sustainability into our infrastructure, land use regulations, transportation, housing, and budgeting.

## Chapter 2 - Vision & Guiding Values

This comprehensive plan starts with a vision that reflects ideas and priorities from community members. The purpose of the plan is to create a clear path to achieving that vision.

This chapter provides the vision, a set of community-based guiding values, and a decision-making framework to keep the principles of this comprehensive plan consistently in front of decision-makers.

We begin by sharing the significant themes that we heard from residents, businesses, and other key stakeholders.

### General

- Small town feel is an asset and a challenge
- Address the needs of the most vulnerable residents
- Become more welcoming and inviting to all who live, work, and play here
- Retain unique identity - including charming downtown, historic and natural resources, and colleges

### Equity

- Some neighborhoods do not see as much investment as others
- There are food deserts and lack of parks, transit in the north and northwest neighborhoods
- Residents need access to good jobs, food, housing, and recreation to ensure economic stability and a good quality of life
- Equitable access to parks and recreational activities

### Climate change

- New jobs must be environmentally sustainable
- Climate and sustainability solutions must be affordable and accessible to residents
- Preservation of trees, wetlands and green spaces is important for the ecosystem and to make the community more welcoming

### Economic Sustainability

- Smart, sustainable, balanced growth
- Address the high tax rate for residents
- Create new businesses that offer living wage jobs and support environmental sustainability
- Collaborate with colleges to support fair taxation and economic development initiatives
- Public-private partnerships to attract investment
- Historic preservation and the arts are important components of the city's economic success

### Human Connections

- Publicly accessible, free indoor and outdoor gathering and recreation spaces for youth and community are needed
- Continue to support entrepreneurs and small businesses

- Improve public amenities to facilitate community connections
- The downtown historic district and related citywide gathering spaces are important

## Housing

- Affordable housing for all ages and types of families is needed
- Housing that is affordable to those who work in Northfield is needed
- Housing is important for major employers to retain/attract employees
- Not enough affordable housing is in the most walkable areas of the city
- Build pathways to homeownership and generational wealth
- The city’s history outside the district includes homes and other landmarks, including on the college campuses

## Mobility

- Residents do not feel safe crossing highways
- Distances to destinations (work, shopping, services) are too long to allow for walking or biking safely
- Transit takes too long, is not direct, and does not operate at hours needed
- Challenges for disabled individuals in accessing employment due to transportation limitations
- Improved infrastructure is needed for sidewalks, paths, and safe crossings

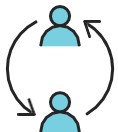
*For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive planning process, please refer to [Appendix X](#).*

## Vision

*Northfield is a welcoming city, providing equitable access to a high quality of life.*

We are a city with a strong identity rooted in history, while growing as a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable place. We maintain our integrity as an independent and distinct city shaped by our historic and natural resources, the Cannon River, rural neighbors, and our colleges.

## Guiding Values



Northfield **emphasizes equity** to remedy past decisions creating today’s disparities and to ensure access to housing, services, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and use tools to implement the best practices in their fields, and engaging consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience** and **mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield's capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.



Northfield **promotes safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support our workforce and accommodate residents in all stages of life.



Northfield works to **provide mobility options** so all Northfield residents can get where they need to go with or without a car.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive regardless of age, economic status, mobility, gender, or racial and ethnic background.

## Decision-Making Framework

When making decisions, including those suggested by the implementation section of this Plan, City of Northfield officials, staff, community partners, and residents will ask how the option chosen furthers at least one, if not several of the values, while not damaging the others.

### Emphasize Equity

Northfield emphasizes equity to remedy past decisions creating today's disparities and to ensure access to housing, services, mobility options, and open space for all.

#### Questions - How does this Action...

- ... improve access to services (City, healthcare, schools, etc.)?
- ... create or enhance parks or recreation opportunities in underserved neighborhoods?
- ... provide a service tailored to those who need it most?
- ... increase opportunities for homes, business, and/or social connections?

#### Outcomes

- Northfield supports broad and equitable public participation to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the policy requirements of the decision-making body.
- Highways 3 and 19 do not divide the city.
- Northfield prioritizes investment based on creating complete places, filling gaps and supplying missing assets, and ensuring equitable access to destinations.
- Northfield supports its local business community with abundant housing, access to high quality childcare, and comprehensive business development resources.

## Find Creative Solutions to Local Challenges

Northfield will find creative solutions to local challenges by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and use tools to implement the best practices in the field, and ensuring that consultants understand Northfield and its values.

### Questions - How does this Action...

- ... Test ideas before committing to high-cost projects?
- ... Balance professional expertise with lived experience?
- ... Improve upon or take advantage of current best practice?

### Outcomes

- The Community and Economic Development department leads the city in public engagement, integrating disciplines, and planning projects with and for the community.
- Board and commission expertise and experience are valued, encouraged and developed.
- Investments in built, cultural and natural environments and in historic and cultural resources reflect broader City priorities and are mindful of demographic, climate, investment and technological changes that impact Northfield's built and natural environments.
- Northfield and its community partners incorporate historic and cultural resources into cultural tourism and economic development initiatives.
- Northfield and its community partners are proactive in the identification, evaluation, survey and designation of historic and cultural resources, contexts, and landscapes to ensure a consistent and equitable approach to preservation that is time-sensitive and responsive to community needs.
- Northfield community partners – colleges, school district, Chamber, non-profits – continue to collaborate using the time-tested successful approaches of collective action and shared accountability models.

## Foster Resilience

Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to foster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change and our contributions to the sources of climate change.

### **Questions - How does this Action...**

... reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions?

... preserve and conserve natural resources and habitat?

... decrease reliance on non-renewable energy?

... reduce risks associated with flooding and other extreme weather events?

... develop policy and practice which incorporates resilience into all city actions?

### **Outcomes**

- Northfield grows compactly to conserve land, preserve natural resources, and connect people and places.
- The Cannon River dam is removed, river health improved, and flood prevention measures are taken.
- Infrastructure is designed to manage extreme weather and to build stormwater management into street corridors and parks
- The tree canopy is healthy and dense to provide shade, cleaner air, and stormwater treatment.
- Climate mitigation is managed at the watershed and regional level.
- All new buildings meet or exceed the requirement of the adopted sustainable building policy and/ or Minnesota Energy Code, including prioritizing electrification and use of passive solar design standards and/or renewable energy sources for heating and cooling.
- Existing buildings are retrofitted with energy efficiency upgrades.
- All housing is safe and secure in all weather.

## **Be Economically Responsible and Sustainable**

Northfield's capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in economically responsible and sustainable ways to ensure revenue sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.

### **Questions - Does this Action...**

... Impact the City's tax levy, debt level, and bond rating?

... Affect the sewer, water, electric, natural gas, and transportation systems?

... Increase the City's commercial/industrial tax base?

... Reduce surface parking, allocate public space for people, and manage stormwater inflow and infiltration?

... Negatively impact existing infrastructure?

... Support local business development, expansion, and retention?

... Respond to stated resident priorities and address known problems?

### **Outcomes**

- Planning, capital improvements, and public works are integrated for outcomes which meet multiple priorities.
- Northfield measures the fiscal impact of all large developments to determine which, if any, adopted metrics are met.
- Northfield prioritizes those developments and initiatives that meet or exceed adopted metrics, considering innovations not contemplated.
- There is broad stakeholder support for, understanding of and application of heritage and cultural preservation planning tools and resources.
- Short-term strategic planning outcomes clearly demonstrate how they advance the strategies in this Plan through quantifiable metrics.
- Northfield has established a clear and transparent method to determine when capital projects must be subject to a referendum.

## **Foster Human Connections**

Northfield fosters human connections in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts. City services will be designed and delivered to meet the needs of all community members.

### **Questions - How does this Action...**

- ... eliminate barriers for people with disabilities?
- ... improve services for all community members?
- ... design for walkable and proximate parks and gathering spaces?
- ... create opportunities for human interaction (indoors or outdoors)?
- ... make City Hall and other city facilities inclusive, visitable, and welcoming?

### **Outcomes**

- Northfield facilities and projects employ universal design principles.
- Northfield builds complete neighborhoods.
- Northfield's municipal buildings and infrastructure projects are supported by and support public art and placemaking.
- All City materials, web information, and signage are available in English and Spanish.
- City meetings and events welcome all people by providing translation, interpretation, childcare, convenient and accessible locations, and helpful staff.
- Northfield supports and sustains small business development by local entrepreneurs from start-up to expansion, and beyond.
- The rich artistic and cultural activities important to Northfield's identity are supported and expanded upon.



- Northfield is recognized as a leader in the use of best practices associated with an equitable and sustainable approach to the preservation, conservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of the city’s historic and cultural resources.
- The Cannon River riverfront is a connected, accessible space for the entire community with culturally relevant and appropriate facilities, a mix of activities, and great design.
- Northfield’s communications seek to reach everyone, bring all voices to the table, and are designed to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities, including decision makers.

## Promote Safe and Stable Housing

Northfield promotes safe, stable housing in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support residents in all stages of life.

### Questions - How does this Action...

- ... affirmatively further fair housing?
- ... increase the supply and variety of needed housing types?
- ... improve housing conditions?
- ... address housing affordability and supply?
- ... promote inclusive neighborhoods?

### Outcomes

- All residents in Northfield, especially those who are cost-burdened, live in safe, healthy, and affordable housing that meets their stated needs.
- Northfield’s existing and future workforce faces fewer barriers to moving to and living in Northfield to be close to their place of employment
- There is a healthy supply of housing at each price point to meet residents’ wide variety of needs and life stages.
- Residents can afford to own or rent a home in Northfield and stay in their housing through hardships.
- Local housing needs are met at a greater scale by leveraging existing public and private resources, partnerships and authorities.

## Provide Travel Options

Northfield designs streets and plans development for proximity so people can get where they need to go safely, however they choose to travel.

### Questions - How does this Action...

- ... allocate public right of way to connect people to places?
- ... improve connections between neighborhoods?

... reduce demand for driving and parking?

... facilitate transit improvements?

### **Outcomes**

- Northfield plans and measures access rather than mobility in all street projects including street connectivity.
- Northfield has planning and engineering staff who prioritize working together to use human-centered metrics, solve problems to connect people, and guide consultants to design for Northfield residents according to our values.
- All members of the community have equitable access to destinations however they choose to travel.
- The City, School District, and other educational partners collaborate so all children can get to and from school and activities safely and independently.
- Street rights of way are allocated and designed for the greatest public benefit through consideration of all users and modes of travel.
- Street rights of way are allocated and designed to be accessible, with shared, stacked-function green infrastructure, pedestrian scale lighting, and shade trees.
- The City and community partners collaborate to provide frequent and reliable transit services
- The City maintains its streets, sidewalks, bikeways, and trails for year-round safety in all neighborhoods.
- Highways 3 and 19 no longer create a safety hazard that divides the city.

## Chapter 3 - Access

Providing a high quality of life is central to the vision for Northfield. This chapter's foundational premise is where people live should not determine where they can go, when they can go there, and how long it takes to get there – and back. To achieve this, we must approach land use and transportation decisions together. We must provide safe and comfortable connections throughout the community, whether motorized or not.

This integrated approach weaves together land use, transportation, and mobility to provide equitable access throughout the city. The desired outcome is that Northfield focus investments to improve connections in locations lacking adequate infrastructure, emphasize affordable transportation, design streets for people and connectivity, and efficiently plan for growth in areas served by appropriate infrastructure.

This chapter takes a BOTH/AND approach to planning for growth which acknowledges uncertainty and tries to build flexibility, sustainability, equity, and long-term cost into policies. Driving will be the predominant way people travel for the foreseeable future because we've built driving into the city. In Northfield, what could be an easy walk, or ride has been made more difficult by the land use and transportation choices made over time. Shifting to planning for access means asking what places can be reached safely and comfortably within a certain time, distance, or cost. Northfield 2045 guides the city to locate opportunities closer to where people live and work while ensuring a safe, low stress, people-centered network for all users.

### What We Heard

- “The northwest side of Northfield needs investment. We lack parks, transit, housing... even grocery stores.”
- “Having equitable access to parks and recreational activities will help facilitate greater community connections.”
- “There is not enough affordable housing in the most walkable areas of the city.”
- “Northfield's growth is guided by a reflective consideration of its past - Come to Northfield, history is our future.”
- “Northfield is missing places to shop, entertainment options, and youth-friendly activities.”
- “The buses take too long and don't get me where I want to go.”
- “I would like to see improved infrastructure for sidewalks, path sharing for pedestrians and bikers, and traffic management for safer crossing specifically across Highway 3.”
- “Create a center of gravity in Northfield that leverages the town's unique identity and vibe.”

*For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive planning process, please refer to [Appendix X](#).*

## Connecting Land Use and Transportation

Imagine you are at Bridge Square.

Bridge Square is in the middle of Northfield's historic downtown. Two-, three-, and four-story buildings surround the park, each containing a mix of uses with retail and service spaces on the ground floor and homes or offices above. This pattern extends north and south from Bridge Square along Division Street. Division Street, with parking on both sides, active sidewalks, and many stores, is street which takes people to places in downtown. Bridge Square itself feels like a place to linger with its "walls" from surrounding buildings and view of the river.

Compare Minnesota State Highway 3 which runs roughly parallel to Division Street with four lanes of traffic traveling generally faster than the posted 30 mile per hour speed limit. Highway 3 is good for getting through Northfield quickly or from downtown to Target, but reaching a store, school or office requires getting off the highway.

Going from Bridge Square, you could walk to your car and 15-minute drive allows you to reach all of Northfield: jobs, retail shops, service businesses, parks, schools and other important places.

Walking for the same 15 minutes, you could walk up to a mile and pick up groceries, vote at City Hall, borrow a book from the library, fish at the riverfront, eat at a restaurant, check out both the historic Depot and the brand-new transit hub, and take in some educational or arts activities at Carleton College or Northfield High School.

Bikes and increasingly e-bikes would let you reach destinations within about 3 miles in 15 minutes. Reliable and effective transit would add another affordable choice for travel.

People have told us they want to be able to go to the park, the store, and schools without driving; they care about reducing our dependence on non-renewable energy, getting more exercise and want more affordable options. Being able to bike and walk, plus better transit is a priority especially for those without cars or who cannot drive.

However, people make travel decisions based on convenience, perceptions of safety, weather, how many destinations they need to visit, available parking, topography, and the quality of the facilities. A 15-minute walk or ride on safe, high-quality, well-connected facilities directly to and from a destination could be a convenient choice for many for most of the year.

A 15-minute ride which requires crossing Highway 19 and/or Highway 3, on rough or icy pavement, with several stops, train tracks, insufficient lighting, and no bike parking at the destination is unlikely to be chosen except by the most dedicated bike commuters.

Highway 3, along with Highways 246 and 19 are designed for a "drive everywhere" model, rather than modeling great access to places. Driving everywhere has environmental impacts, disadvantages people who do not or cannot drive, and creates more traffic at schools at the beginning and end of the day. Transit is much more difficult to provide when destinations are widely dispersed.

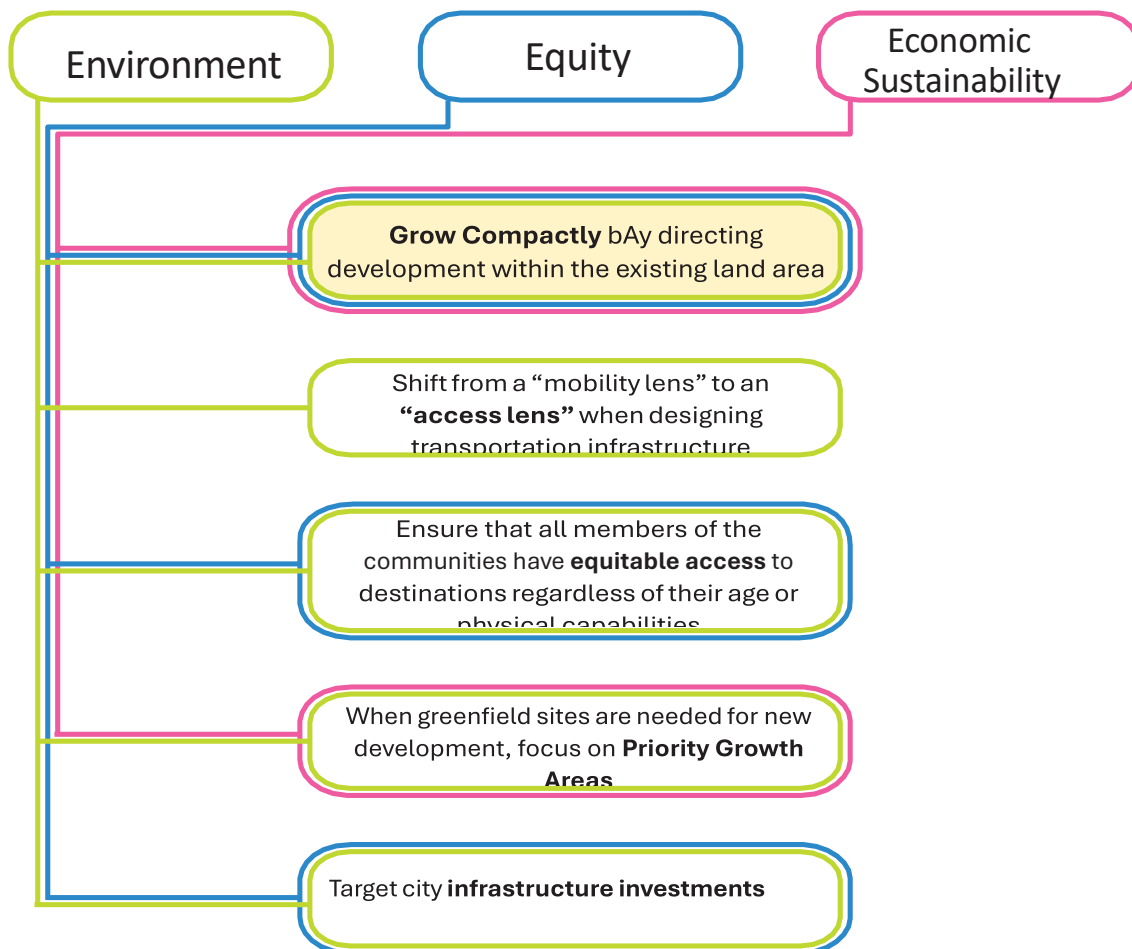
This Plan recognizes that driving is how most of us get around now and also the costs associated with "drive everywhere" planning. These costs are in dollars (owning and operating a new vehicle is

estimated to cost \$1000 a month in 2024<sup>1</sup>), physical health, safety, environmental damage, and lack of human connections. At the same time, this Plan recommends taking steady, incremental actions to reconnect both sides of Northfield by redesigning Highway 3, fostering affordable and sustainable forms of transportation, filling gaps in our bike/walk network, designing streets based on the land uses they serve, developing needed transit services, and using the public right of way more fully to manage stormwater, provide shade, and connect people to where they want to go safely.

## Economy, Environment and Equity

Land use and transportation decisions have big consequences for Northfield’s economy, environment, and equitable access. How access is created impacts the City’s equity (ensuring that people can access the things that contribute to a high quality of life from many modes of transportation), environmental sustainability (greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle trips), and economic sustainability (developing appropriately scaled businesses near enough people to help them succeed).

Figure 1 shows how the strategies in this chapter support these principles.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/loans/auto-loans/total-cost-owning-car>

## Definitions

The following terms are defined as they are used within this Plan:

**Access:** The ease of reaching goods, services, activities and destinations, regardless of the mode chosen to arrive, enter, and participate in the space or destination.

**Mobility:** The ability to move people, goods, and services from one place to another. The degree of mobility depends on several factors, including the capacity of the roadway, and the operational level of service on the roadway system.

**Micro-mobility:** This term is a catch-all for walking and “small things with wheels” – both human powered (such as bicycles, skateboards, hand-cycles), electric (motorized wheelchairs and mobility scooters, full power e-bikes), and those in between such as power assist e-bikes. Where relevant, different modes will be specified yet all these ways of traveling share priorities about what’s needed for safe, convenient travel in the current environment. Although rarely included in definitions, mobility devices like strollers and walkers, as well as bike trailers and wagons should also be considered.

**Transit:** Transportation options that don’t require the person traveling to drive or navigate such as: fixed-route service (Hiawatha Land Red and Blue Lines), dial-a-ride, taxis, ride share (Lyft, Uber).

**Walkable:** Walkability reflects how safe, convenient and pleasant it is to walk to destinations. Walkable places have many destinations accessible within a quarter to half mile. Walking routes are direct and legible with short blocks, highly connected streets, convenient street crossings, and easy and safe access to buildings from sidewalk. Walkable areas include safe, comfortable sidewalks or other facilities designed for the context (buffered from cars, trees, lighting, well-maintained). Walkability can be measured.

**All Ages & Abilities Design:** This industry term (AAA) refers to designing streets and micro-mobility facilities to be safe, low stress, and equitable for everyone. For example, children, seniors, people of color, and women each have somewhat different needs for making biking feel safe and comfortable; street design which allows the broadest range of riders to feel safe and comfortable by reflecting the land use context and traffic character is AAA design.

## Existing Conditions and Improving Access

The City of Northfield was platted in the mid-19th century with a grid street pattern formed by 300 ft by 300 ft standard size blocks. Bridge Square was the central hub of the commercial district and churches, schools, and parks were included in residential neighborhoods. This predictable street pattern and mix of land uses creating walkable neighborhoods with easy access to daily needs persisted until the 1960s.

After Highway 3 was built in 1958, Northfield began to adopt policies and practices popular at the time. Churches and schools moved to the edges of the city on much larger parcels of land with large parking lots; commercial development began to stretch down the highway also in a single-story, horizontal pattern. The street grid was abandoned to create residential areas with little

through traffic connected by busier collector streets; this pattern pushed homes farther from other destinations accessible by routes designed for faster cars.

This land use pattern has continued with much more highway commercial development, large subdivisions with few connecting streets, and facilities like Northfield Hospital and several of Northfield's newer public schools being located at the fringes where larger parcels of land were more available and less expensive. Today it is more difficult to live in Northfield without reliable access to a car than it once was.

These policies resulted in entire neighborhoods of single-family homes on curvilinear streets disconnected from services and routine destinations like school, places of worship, work, and places to shop. This physical separation of uses, as well as the disconnected transportation system, created an environment where daily needs require use of a vehicle.

Retrofitting this land use and transportation pattern will take concerted effort by the city. The strategies and actions in this Access chapter begin to address these challenging issues by envisioning a future where everyone has the freedom to choose how to travel safely and affordably to their destination, but important destinations are located to be more accessible more ways.

Driving a car, moving shipments of freight around, and emergency-related access will still be easy while the city allocates right of way to build more flexibility into street corridors, puts more work opportunities closer to where people live, provides reliable transit, and is a good steward of the environment and taxpayer dollars.

This Plan identifies several key road corridors and important places which community members have identified as unsafe, uncomfortable, and impeding access to needed places; these areas require sustained effort, funding, and political will.

## Analytical Focus Areas

### Planning for safe and efficient bicycling, walking/rolling, and micro-mobility opportunities.

Northfield has been planning better biking, walking and rolling facilities for more than 20 years. In the last few years, however, the number and variety of small vehicles on the market and on Northfield streets has increased; our planning needs to change accordingly: A renewed focus on how people get around and where they need to go is required. Decisions should frame projects by asking, "how does Northfield allocate public space to affordably realize its vision?"

### Planning for Micro-Mobility

Northfield's past choices make developing a wonderful network for small vehicles more challenging. Fifty years of separating land uses, moving schools and stores to the edges of the city, building schools on busy roadways, and allowing many dead end or disconnected streets reduces options for direct and coherent routes to connect people to places they want to go. Earlier thinking



also attempted to move bikes to lower volume, lower speed roadways regardless of the need for detours rather than designing collector and arterial streets to include all modes safely.

The proposed network references the 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan for its origin. Neither the 2019 Pedestrian, Bike and Trail update nor the 2022 Analyzation provided a people-focused, access- based rationale for the routes selected. As the 2008 Plan was focused on trails and more recreational riding, the proposed network adds connections to get around town.

Figure 2.



*Routes and types of facilities were selected using the following questions:*

**Access to what and by whom?** The 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan used access to schools, college campuses, downtown, and other public facilities to select destinations and planned routes using main streets as the most direct routes. In addition, access to shopping areas, the river, and connecting parks to neighborhoods and each other was considered. Adding the “Who?” component sharpens focus on ensuring kids can get to school, families can get downtown, and college students and faculty can reach campuses, for a few examples.

**How should access be provided/what kind of facility?** The suggested network returns to designing routes and type of infrastructure for the land uses served and the most likely users of different segments.



The preferred two-way bikeway facility strategy has advantages of simplifying the design process and ensuring a coherent network but is ill-suited to locations where street crossing is common or where complex intersections occur. While two-way facilities use less space, they may also persist in perpetuating the perception that bikeways “take” space rightfully belonging to motor vehicles. Two-way facilities also tend to create non-intuitive traffic patterns with bikes moving against motor vehicle traffic.

This proposed network anticipates that the land use context, the purpose of the street, speed and traffic volume, and the typical anticipated users will guide designers to an appropriate level of physical protection along with planning a corridor for stormwater, shade, and access. No specific design is suggested in advance. However, design decisions may differ based on the level of reconstruction anticipated and the cost effectiveness of implementation. one This evaluation must be included in CIP planning efforts.

## Planning for Transit

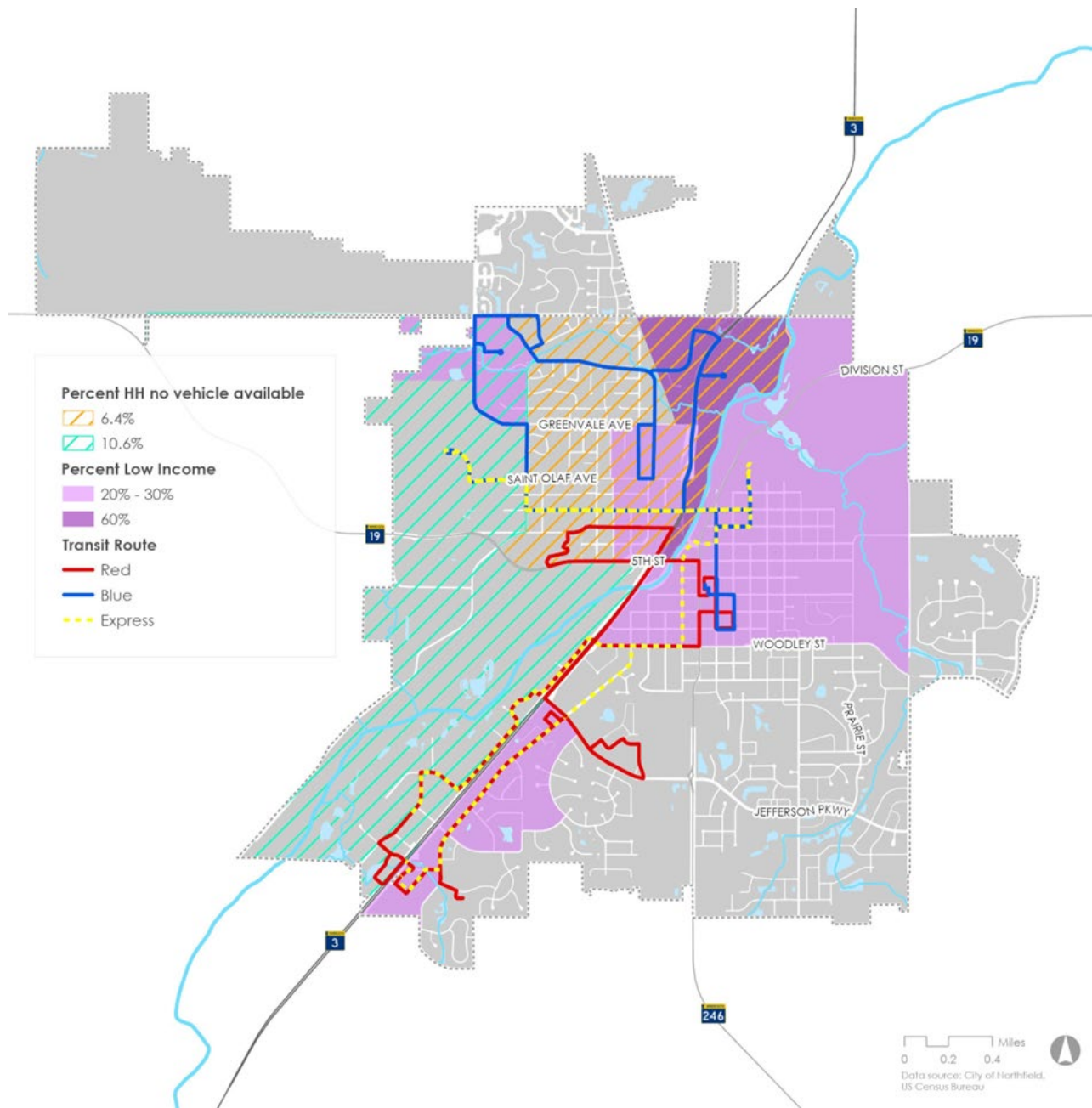
Hiawathaland Transit, a local non-profit transit provider, operates three fixed routes and a dial-a-ride service. The two main routes intersect at the Transit Hub in downtown, making transfers to other parts of the city less convenient for riders. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data, neighborhoods with the highest percentage of households with no vehicle available are located west of MN Highway 3.

Figure 3 maps the three fixed transit routes and the percentage of households with no access to a vehicle.

It is difficult to rely on Northfield’s transit services at the present time. The routes need better service coverage throughout the city. In addition to coverage, transit routes also lack frequency and reliability, limiting access to destinations and daily needs. The current fixed routes operate year-round, but only connect and overlap in the city center and neither of them extend further south or north; for example, the Blue Route only services the northwest area while the Red Route services the southern half of Northfield. Therefore, transit riders either must plan their trips accurately to make their transfers or they may have to wait extended amounts of time for the next bus if they miss their transfers.

This level of planning often discourages people from using transit and puts a significant burden on households that rely on transit to meet their daily needs. Especially with major destinations located on extreme ends of the city - the hospital on the northwestern corner and major shopping destinations located in the southwestern quadrant of the city - trip planning to these destinations can be challenging for those living on opposite sides of the city.

Beyond the intracity transit routes, the City of Northfield was awarded \$1.75 million in state bonding fund in 2020 to complete the construction of the Transit Hub. The Transit Hub will be connected to the existing Northfield Depot and serve as a transfer center for local and regional buses and may connect to passenger rail routes in the future. The need for transit between Northfield and nearby communities, principally Faribault, is also needed as well as options to reach the Twin Cities transit networks. The Transit Hub is anticipated to open in 2025.



**Figure 3:** Transit routes, low-income neighborhoods, and households with no car

The Transit Hub’s location on the west side of Highway 3 will also require planning to help people cross the highway to downtown, schools and other east side destinations.

In Northfield, an appropriate quote regarding the long history of a successful community is one by Jazz great Miles Davis, “If anybody wants to keep creating they have to be about change.” — Miles Davis. Northfield’s durability is a testament to the efforts of generations of its stewards, efforts that have withstood the tests of generational change. However, Northfield – like all places – has made decisions in the past that are now seen as less successful. After all, hindsight is 20/20.

Therefore, in evaluating the future development and redevelopment potential in Northfield that endurance must be considered and subsequently strengthened in the guidance, especially in the face of global climate change and Minnesota’s status as both a place of refuge for those fleeing instability associated with coastal climate change and those leaving places where the socio-political or economic environment may be in conflict with personal needs or values. The next section outlines the approach to enhancing and supporting the community’s long-standing success.

## STEP Analysis

*The STEP Framework designates areas and key properties in Northfield as opportunities to strengthen, transform, enhance, and preserve, each describing varying levels of anticipated intervention and change over time.*

The STEP Framework is used to make the critical connection between land use and transportation. Within this framework, **transformation** areas represent the greatest opportunity for future development and redevelopment within the 20-year time horizon of the Comprehensive Plan, followed by **strengthen**.

Both areas may see varying levels of regulatory intervention, as well as improvements to the built environment to accommodate development or redevelopment opportunities. These areas have been selected with an equity lens, to support Northfield neighborhoods and cultural communities that have experienced disinvestment.

**Enhance** areas in Northfield are primarily located in residential neighborhoods and represent areas needing smaller-scale interventions, such as accessibility and associated public realm and mobility enhancements.

**Preserve** areas represent the areas least in need of intervention. These include the two college campuses, natural areas, parks, and other areas of the city that are well-served. While access improvements have been suggested in all areas of the city, these interventions could be most impactful in Northfield’s enhance areas and established neighborhoods.

Full details of the STEP analysis can be found here [\[link to full STEP Analysis\]](#).

**Transform** areas represent the greatest opportunity for future development and redevelopment, to harness growing market demand, and create renewed walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income centers. These areas will include land use changes and/or intensification of uses to create lively places to live/work/play, primarily serving as neighborhood centers for residents and employees alike by allowing for:

- Diverse housing options

- A wide variety of jobs
- New amenities including services, retail, and restaurant options
- Public realm interventions for safe routes, paths and crossings
- A range of mobility options and programmed activities.

**Strengthen** areas are opportunities to make smaller scale, context- sensitive investments that prepare an area for future changes. Strengthening interventions may include:

- Improvements to the appearance of the neighborhood through upgrades to public open space, trail connections, or sidewalks
- Incentives to make improvements to private property, buildings, and residences
- City support to build neighborhood structure and capacity
- Improving sense of place through public and private interventions (placemaking, public art etc.)
- Infill development that supports the surrounding uses

**Enhance** areas call for minor interventions that may include:

- Traffic calming measures on roadways
- New active transportation connections to nearby, mixed-use centers
- New roadway connections to improve the ability of residents to move between neighborhoods
- Improved bicycle and/or pedestrian infrastructure
- Opportunities for new parks, open space, and tree canopy
- Small-scale, context-sensitive infill that complements neighborhood character
- Infill and redevelopment that increases the range of housing types

**Preserve** areas represent green spaces and historic places important in defining the city’s character and quality. There are opportunities to improve preserve areas, especially city parks, recreation spaces and open spaces.

*The labels on Figure 10 correspond to the text that follows:*

### **T1** *Downtown River West*

Through transportation improvements to Highway 3 and redevelopment of properties west of the river and along the Highway 3 corridor, the liveliness of downtown Northfield will expand west, making the river the focal point.

### **T2** *Highway 3 and Fremouw Ave*

This intersection can serve as a new mixed-use center for both residential and neighborhood serving commercial that is more easily accessible to the Viking Terrace neighborhood and beyond. This transformation would make this north/ northwest neighborhood more connected, safe, and livable, by bringing goods and services to a previously isolated area to those without a car.

### *T3 Target/Cub*

Anchored by these stores, this area is ripe for transformation into a walkable, mixed-use area with opportunities to live, work, and play. New residential development includes a variety of medium-to-high density housing types.

### *T4 Northwest Northfield/Hospital area*

While the preference is to focus on redevelopment close to the city's core, a basic urban design layout and concept should be prepared for this area, so the area develops in a thoughtful way and lives up to the expectations of The Three E's.

#### **Individual Transform properties:**

- Riverpark Mall and adjacent blocks
- Woodley and Highway 3
- City compost site
- Property south of Northfield Cemetery – Festler Farm

### *S1 The 6 blocks bounded by 8th St., Water St., Woodley St., and Poplar St*

The focus here is to preserve the naturally occurring affordable housing with excellent proximity to downtown.

### *S2 West side industrial area.*

There are opportunities for expanded industrial development in this area, which would increase availability of industrial land within City limits.

### *S3 Industrial/commercial area between Highway 3 and river.*

Infill industrial and potential redevelopment of underutilized properties is the focus of this area.

### *S4 Strengthen areas along the riverfront to correspond with Northfield's Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan.*

#### **Individual Strengthen Properties:**

- NE corner (and potential expansion across the street to the west) of Division Street and Anderson Drive – existing commercial use here (florist), but potential for intensification.

### *E1 Residential neighborhood west of the river*

This residential area lacks parks and could also benefit from enhanced non-motorized connections with access to services/commercial.

## *E2 Residential neighborhood adjacent to downtown*

This neighborhood could include gradual residential density increases, increasing the range of affordability and housing options while preserving the high quality of life offered by the connection to downtown.

## *E3 Southeast residential*

The existing small commercial node at Division and Anderson Drive could accommodate more neighborhood-scale commercial use. There is also one large undeveloped parcel across Division St from Northfield High School; small-scale commercial or mixed-use development could be considered here. Gradually increasing residential density or allowing for missing middle housing is also a priority in this area.

## *E4 Between Highway 3 and Northfield High School*

This area will benefit from improved access between residential and commercial uses along Highway 3, especially non-motorized connections.

### *Individual Enhance properties:*

- Ames Park: Village Green on the Water concept.
- Northfield Middle and Bridgewater Elementary Schools.
- Northfield High School - expand existing campus on site or to adjacent properties such as the funeral home/other residential homes.
- Ole Store – neighborhood commercial node

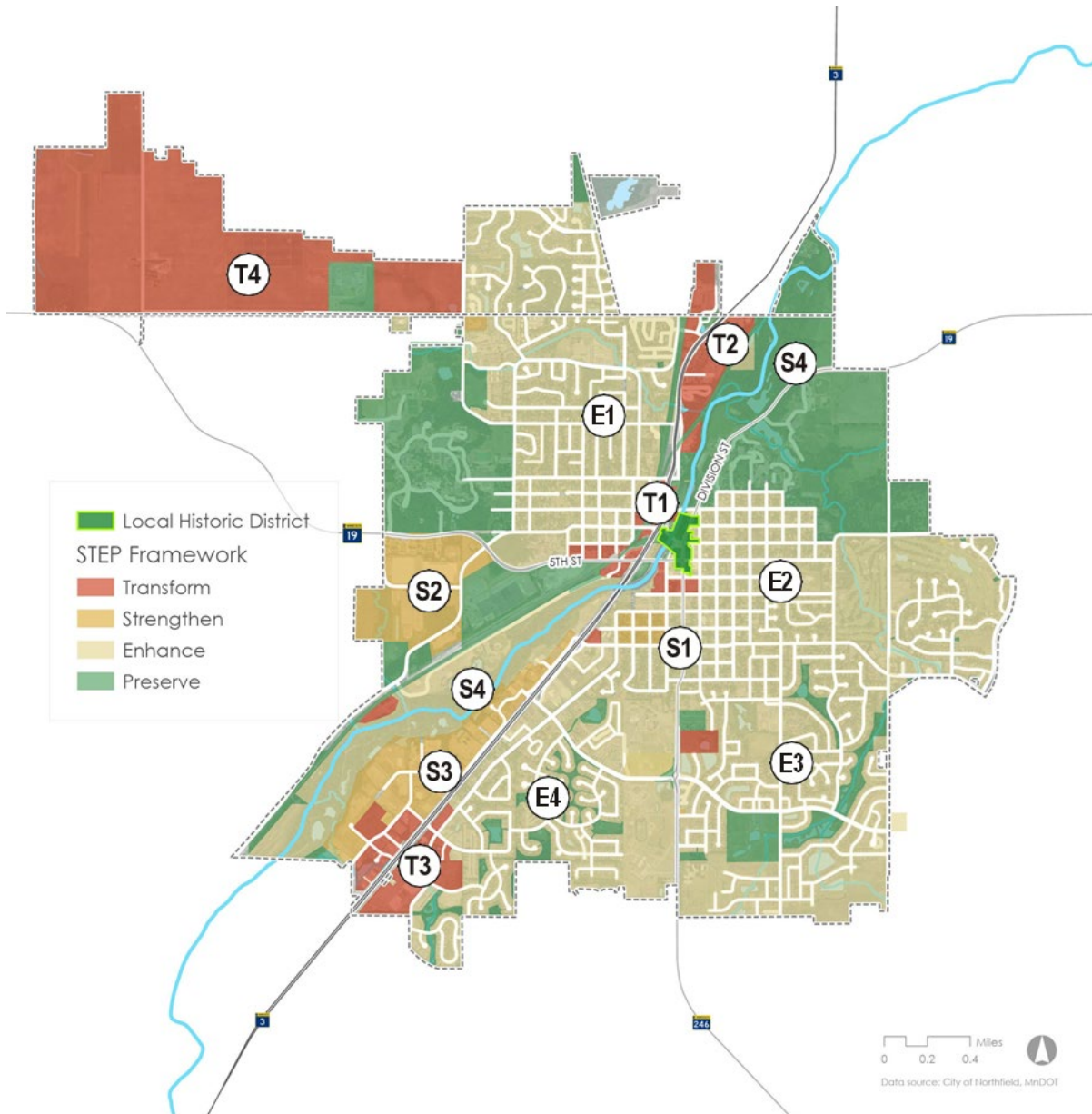
### *Preserve properties/areas:*

- Northfield's Downtown Historic District, which represents valued historic and cultural landmarks and resources
- Carleton and St. Olaf campuses
- City parks, recreation areas, and open spaces along the river
- Private recreation areas – Northfield Golf Club

### *Individual Preserve properties:*

*Carleton and St. Olaf campuses.* Opportunities to improve these areas include working with the colleges to create smooth, context-sensitive transitions between college property and surrounding neighborhoods.





**Figure 4: DRAFT STEP Framework map**

## Priority Growth Areas

The previous Northfield Comprehensive Plan (2008) identified Priority Growth and Urban Expansion areas, also shown in the Rice County Comprehensive Plan and Dakota County Comprehensive Plan. Based on current population projections and demand for commercial and industrial development, it is unrealistic to expect the entire Urban Expansion area is needed to accommodate growth through 2045. However, the city should plan thoughtfully about where and when to accommodate potential growth in business/industry and population. If and when demand for housing growth exceeds what is projected, some of these expansion areas could create that opportunity.

The STEP Framework sets the foundation for infill and redevelopment opportunities in areas already served by infrastructure and establishes a framework for orderly and economic growth in areas within existing city limits that can be applied to those areas in the adjacent priority growth area and sets the stage for limiting growth into high-value agricultural lands in the county-defined “urban growth area.”

In accordance with the STEP Framework, Northfield should prioritize growth in the following order:

### ***Within existing City limits***

- Intensification, infill and redevelopment opportunities in areas already served by infrastructure, and as outlined in the STEP framework.
- **Key areas and/or intersections adjacent to existing city limits and infrastructure, referred to as Priority Growth Areas**

- New development in these areas should be mixed use and serve as neighborhood centers that offer commercial/services and amenities and have easy non-motorized access to all existing or new nearby residents. Expansion to the north might also include industrial uses.

- *Southwest corner of Falk Ave/Eveleth Ave and North Ave*

To complement the anticipated residential growth to the north, this intersection is a clear opportunity for mixed use development that might include higher density residential and smaller scale/neighborhood-serving commercial in an area of the city that currently lacks such amenities.

- *Dresden Ave and Highway 3 north*

With somewhat limited industrial growth opportunities within city limits, this area adjacent to existing transportation and city infrastructure has been identified as a potential industrial growth area.

- *Highway 246 south*

This area presents a growth opportunity for being along a major transportation route, and near a school and existing residential. Additionally, the southeast part of the city entirely lacks neighborhood-serving commercial.



Adjacent to existing city infrastructure, this could be a new mixed-use node and gateway opportunity to welcome people into Northfield from this southern route.

- *Urban Expansion Area / Northfield's orderly annexation areas*

These areas should be prioritized for additional housing to serve pent-up demand, along with neighborhood serving small-scale commercial/services and amenities with safe and convenient access to existing and new nearby residents, ideally within a 10-minute walk or roll at average pace.

These Priority Growth areas are shown on the City's Future Land Use map and guided based on their preferred development.

## Future Land Use

The city has developed a future land use map based on the STEP Analysis which considers the community vision for the next 20 years. The Future Land Use Map in Figure X shows how the vision will be achieved by showing preferred locations for change as well as where Northfield wants to continue what's working well. Areas anticipated for the most intervention are designated as Transform in the STEP analysis and on the Future Land Use map. The following future land use categories describe the intent of each district and types of development and access improvements that can help to realize the vision.

Future land use categories are outlined on the following pages.

## Future Land Use Categories

### *Historic Downtown*

#### *Summary*

- Density: 8 to 15 units/acre
- Uses: Commercial, high-density housing, office, public/institutional
- Scale/Intensity: medium (up to 4 stories)
- Transportation considerations: Continue to enhance walkability and connectivity to the river.

#### *Description*

The heart of the City's mixed-use core, this area consists of the locally designated historic district with historic buildings and landmarks, small scale retail, professional offices, short term rentals and higher density housing.

#### *Future Interventions*

- Future interventions in this area include the preservation and maintenance of historic buildings and the character of this area as a compact mixed-use core of the city.

- Any infill development in this area should enhance walkability and connectivity to the river. Enhancements and interventions in this area should be consistent with the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan.
- Infill and rehabilitation efforts in this area should support neighborhood revitalization and reinvestment and incorporate city historic, heritage and cultural preservation goals as part of planning, development and design processes, regardless of department.
- Adding housing.

### *Mixed-Use Core*

#### *Summary*

- Density: 8 to 15 units/acre
- Uses: Commercial, medium-high density residential, office, public/institutional
- Scale/Intensity: medium (up to 4 stories)
- Transportation considerations: Improve pedestrian and bicycle routes across major barriers: Highway 3, railroad tracks, Cannon River.

#### *Description*

Located in the center of the original Northfield plat surrounding the Historic Core, the Mixed- Use Core includes a mix of uses and building patterns. The portion on the east side maintains the grid street network and includes predominantly commercial uses with some multifamily residential in a generally multistory urban pattern. West of Division Street the area is divided by Highway 3, the Cannon River, and the railroad tracks with some buildings following the downtown pattern, multistory hotel and condominiums along the river, some highway commercial uses, the Northfield Depot and transit hub and substantial parts of the Riverfront Enhancement areas.

#### *Future Interventions*

- Much of this area is designated Transform in the STEP analysis, indicating a high level of intervention. Future land use interventions in this area should include strategic infill and redevelopment, implementing the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan, improving walkable and bikeable connections across the highway, river, and railroad tracks, and vertical mixed use.
- This area could also be extended and redeveloped to expand the downtown commercial area to the west and south as opportunities occur.
- In anticipation of development and redevelopment around the Historic District, develop new and expand existing historic themes and contexts to allow for the continual identification of historic and cultural resources that is time-sensitive and responsive to community needs.
- Interventions in this area should also focus on improvements on Highway 3 to slow speeds and improve safety and connectivity of this segment.

### *Core Neighborhood*

#### *Summary*

- Density: 8 to 15 units/acre

- Uses: Medium density residential, commercial
- Scale/Intensity: medium (up to 4 stories)
- Transportation considerations: Continue to plan for walking and biking, especially at the edges of this district where the grid pattern transitions to a curvilinear street pattern.

#### *Description*

Characterized by traditional, walkable urban development consisting of predominantly residential uses. The area includes a range of housing types including historic homes, single-unit homes on smaller lots (4,000 to 14,000 square feet) to multi-unit and mixed-use developments along key corridors or corners.

#### *Future Interventions*

- Like the core, this area is appropriate for infill and redevelopment, especially adding ADUs and missing-middle-type housing in this highly connected, high amenity neighborhood.
- Defining the edge between college campuses and these neighborhoods is critically important.
- Small-scale, neighborhood commercial nodes should be considered when redevelopment occurs.

#### *Mixed-Use Neighborhood*

##### *Summary*

- Density: 3 to 8 units/acre
- Uses: Residential uses with small-scale neighborhood serving commercial
- Scale/Intensity: small-medium (up to 30 ft)
- Transportation considerations: Reconnect and redesign streets to facilitate safe connections for bike/walk facilities. Focus on creating or improving connections to schools, parks and other daily needs.

#### *Description*

Found outside the historic plat of Northfield, this area is characterized by mostly single-use residential areas. Zoning districts within the Mixed- Use Neighborhood category allow a mixture of detached and attached housing types. Lots here are generally larger than those found in the Core Neighborhood, garages become more prominent, and sidewalks are still being retrofitted. Street design in this district is far less connected with low traffic residential streets and cul-de-sacs connecting to higher speed collectors.

#### *Future Interventions*

- Future change in the Mixed-Use Neighborhood area should proceed with the goal of making these neighborhoods more like the Core Neighborhoods, with the understanding that they are starting from a different physical structure.
- Interventions should consist of retrofitting these areas by reconnecting streets and creating bike/walk connections, redesigning streets to reduce speeds and provide more space for

bike/walk facilities and using infill opportunities to create neighborhood-scale commercial nodes.

- Particular attention should be paid to connecting schools, parks and neighborhoods and completing the trail network.

### *Highway Mixed-Use*

#### *Summary*

- Density: 15 to 25 units/acre
- Uses: High density residential, commercial, light industrial/flex, office, civic, parks and open space
- Scale/Intensity: medium-large (up to 6 stories)
- Transportation considerations: Pursue opportunities to work with MnDOT on a redesign for Highway 3.

#### *Description*

The corridor mixed use designation includes areas along Highway 3. These areas currently consist of commercial, office and light industrial uses and do not include appropriate infrastructure for navigating without a car. While some of these areas may include sidewalks, the auto-oriented nature of the area creates conflicts for pedestrians to safely navigate the area.

#### *Future Interventions*

- While the entire corridor is unlikely to redevelop, this area is designated either transform or strengthen in the STEP analysis to indicate a high level of intervention as opportunities arise.
- Future redevelopment or infill development should take on greater intensity, mix of uses and pedestrian accommodations.
- Additionally, infill and redevelopment should also be guided by basic design guidelines, encouraging high quality uses and urban design, as well as a reduction in impervious surface where possible.
- Finally, the city should pursue opportunities to work with MnDOT to redesign Highway 3 to address this major barrier and facilitate easier pedestrian crossing

### *Parks and Open Space*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: parks and recreation, preservation areas, greenways
- Scale: small
- Intensity: low
- Transportation considerations: sidewalk and trail connections to neighborhoods

#### *Description*

Areas dedicated to park and recreational opportunities, the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas, or the Greenway Corridor system.

### *Future Interventions*

- Future interventions should focus on providing equitable access to parks across the community and ensuring playgrounds and parks are accessible to people with disabilities.

### *Colleges*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges
- Scale/intensity: Medium to large – typical mixed-use campus setting
- Transportation considerations: sidewalk and trail connections to the downtown and shopping destinations; lower cost travel to the metropolitan area

#### *Description*

Areas dedicated to St. Olaf and Carleton Colleges.

#### *Future Interventions*

- Particular attention should be given to the design of “edges” surrounding the campuses, to prevent further encroachment into surrounding neighborhoods.

### *Industrial and Employment*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: Manufacturing and factories, light industrial, warehousing, distribution, flex spaces
- Scale/Intensity: medium to large (up to 4 stories)
- Transportation considerations: Connections to transit, freight connections to rail, highways and major corridors.

#### *Description*

Areas that offer employment opportunities and include the city’s industrial uses.

#### *Future Interventions*

- New or redevelopment in these areas should also be guided by basic design guidelines, encouraging high quality uses and urban design, as well as a reduction in impervious surface where possible.

## **Right-of-Way (ROW)**

#### *Summary*

- Uses: Transportation of people and goods, recreation, tree canopy, stormwater management, utilities
- Scale/Intensity: May be determined by traffic speed and volume
- Transportation considerations: What modes can be accommodated within the ROW

#### *Description*

Road and railroad right-of-way.

### *Future Interventions*

- Future interventions within the ROW should be coordinated with the Capital Improvement Plan.
- Interventions should focus on improving pedestrian and bicycle access and facility type should be dictated by the context of the area.
- Interventions should also strive to reallocate space in the public ROW for green infrastructure, bike/walk facilities and safe vehicle travel.

## Strategies and Actions

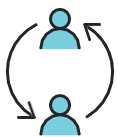
Guiding how Northfield makes decisions about land development and transportation projects will affect taxes, health, traffic, climate, equity, economic growth and how we carry out our daily lives for a generation.

Uniting transportation and land use under the heading of access is an important step in this plan to help Northfield grow more equitably, more sustainably, and more focused on bringing the community together. Past land development and transportation practices worked to separate land uses which put homes further from stores, schools, and jobs and then design streets to allow connections only by driving and driving farther.

This pattern has created places where walking to school is unsafe, daily errands require more driving, streets are disconnected, and homes are more expensive.

Northfield’s vision of growing as a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable place requires that we do things differently, starting with the larger picture of equitable access and connections – both physical and human – as guides for future development.

## Guiding Values



Northfield **emphasizes equity** to remedy past decisions creating today’s disparities and to ensure access to housing, services, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and use tools to implement the best practices in their fields, and engaging consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience** and **mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield’s capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City’s needs for the long term.



Northfield **promotes safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support our workforce and accommodate residents in all stages of life.



Northfield works to **provide mobility options** so all Northfield residents can get where they need to go with or without a car.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive regardless of age, economic status, mobility, gender, or racial and ethnic background.

## Strategies and Actions

### Strategy 1: Plan for Access



*Increasing access connects people to where they want to go and supports Northfield’s vision of values of promoting sustainability, increasing equity, and creating a thriving community.*

**Outcome:** Northfield will plan land use, transportation, and public spending to connect people to opportunities and develop the tools to carry this out.

#### *Strategy 1 Actions:*

- 1** Analyze access to opportunities across the community including proximity to destinations and access by transit and active transportation.
- 2** Plan street rights of way to advance city goals of access, sustainability, equity, and long-term costs.
- 3** Integrate public works and Community Development/Economic Development departmental planning and budgeting.
- 4** Plan with the Northfield School District and other community partners to increase school access and reduce school vehicle traffic.

- 5 Work with MnDOT to redesign the center section of Highway 3 for safe, pleasant travel along and across the highway

## Strategy 2: Compact Development



*Growing more compactly advances Northfield’s vision by preserving Northfield as a free-standing city, making development more cost effective, connecting people more equitably, and preserving valuable land and natural resources.*

**Outcome:** Northfield prioritizes infill development and redevelopment by directing development first to vacant land, then by intensifying uses and redeveloping property, then by developing in the identified Priority Growth areas.

**Outcome:** The city has fewer underutilized properties and a wider mix of complementary uses including a range of housing types, connected by multiple transportation options. A more compact development pattern in the city allows for more open space and farmland preservation in surrounding townships, reducing climate impact, and maximizing value of existing infrastructure.

### Strategy 2 Actions:

- 1 Adopt a Future Land Use Map (Figure X).
- 2 Revise regulations to:
  - a. Ensure zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development.
  - b. Encourage infill and intensification in both commercial and residential areas.
  - c. Encourage creativity in building design and site layout to encourage Accessory Dwelling Units and missing middle housing in all residential neighborhoods.
  - d. Ensure the regulatory definitions of family and allowable dwelling types meet the needs of residents and reflect how people want to live, while meeting fair housing requirements.
  - e. Include design standards to ensure the form and scale of neighborhood-scale commercial uses (including multi-unit housing) in all residential zones is appropriate to adjacent neighborhoods. These uses should be concentrated on vacant sites, and/or sites where the building to land value ratio is low (indicating the site is ripe for redevelopment).
- 3 Develop a design manual for streets that pairs street design with land use and sustainability, focusing on safety, and creating places more conducive to walking, biking, and transit.
- 4 Target public investment in transform areas of the STEP analysis. Public investment could include investment in active transportation and placemaking, improving transit routes or costs for riders, assistance with parcel assembly, site clean-up, flexible development

FUTURE LAND USE MAP WILL BE FORTHCOMING AND FOCUS OF CONVERSATION 12/19.



standards (lot size, setbacks, parking), reduced or deferred infrastructure fees, tax abatement or TIF.

- 5 Ensure surface parking uses are limited and that structured parking is mixed-use and/or convertible to other uses.
- 6 When greenfield sites are needed for new development, focus on vacant land within a half mile of the city center, and then Priority Growth Areas to minimize infrastructure costs, preserve high quality farmland and natural resources, create mixed use areas, and ensure well-connected development.
- 7 New, appropriately scaled and designed mixed- use nodes are created at the priority growth areas. These nodes include pedestrian and bicycle facilities that connect to nearby neighborhoods.
- 8 Develop an official map in accordance with MN. Stat. 462.359 Procedure to Effect Plan: Official Maps <[link to revisor](#)>

If priority growth areas have been developed and no feasible site within the city is available for infill or redevelopment, Figure X also shows Northfield’s planned orderly annexation areas, identified in the Rice County Land Use Plan as the future limit to the City’s urbanized area. These areas are the lowest priority growth areas but could provide additional space for housing to serve pent-up demand.

### Strategy 3: Target Areas of Under Investment



*Improve the stability and health of all communities by implementing placed-based investments, such as public infrastructure, improvements and maintenance in parks, open spaces, culturally appropriate community spaces, active transportation facilities, and infrastructure, to areas of concentrated disadvantage such as in and around neighborhoods where housing costs are lower.*

**Outcome:** Residents of all neighborhoods can get to work, school, shopping, services and parks safely however they choose to travel. City infrastructure, such as roads, water, sewer and storm water facilities, are of the same quality across the city.

#### *Strategy 3 Actions:*

- 1 Commit to funding and improving existing transit services and ridesharing options.
  - a. Implement a community-based Evaluation of the existing transit routes –either to expand or reroute existing services— for better connectivity and coverage.
  - b. Increase the number of stops served by more than one route for better connectivity for transit transfers.
  - c. Implement a diverse and flexible payment system to enhance and increase ridership (i.e., online transit app). Provide more locations where tokens/ passes could be purchased.

- d. Encourage partnership between Hiawathaland Transit, healthcare providers, rideshare companies, or other private/public entities for paratransit services and/or providing last-mile connections from transit stops.
- 2** Include specific park improvements and investment for additional park land in currently underserved neighborhoods (include map here) in the Park and Recreation Capital Investment Plan.
- 3** Evaluate introducing youth out-of-school-time programs in coordination with the schools and Healthy Community Initiative, and small-business-led concessions or restaurants in city parks when/where appropriate.
- 4** Prioritize transportation infrastructure connections between residential neighborhoods and desired destinations such as downtown, educational facilities, highway-oriented job centers, seeking to remove barriers to accessing those places safely, regardless of age or ability, without a vehicle.
- 5** Include perceived safety, comfort, and access/equity benefits for those traveling by foot or bike in transportation project evaluation and prioritization in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- 6** Ensure that the bicycle and trail networks are well-connected and complementary to provide continuity for cyclists but also access to parks, open spaces, and other recreational facilities within the city boundary.

## Strategy 4: Equitable Access



*Ensure that all members of the communities have equitable access to destinations regardless of their age or physical capabilities.*

**Outcomes:** New active transportation facilities create safe and convenient pathways for residents to get to their daily or weekly destinations. When using these facilities, residents will not encounter gaps in the network. They are able to cross the major barriers of the river and Highways 3 and 19 safely and conveniently.

Based on the STEP Framework and Future Land Use map, the city has developed a Future Access map to guide high-level needed connections in the city’s priority areas (Transform areas). This map is intended to show locations of future access interventions, which could help to connect transform areas with the rest of the city, help connect residents to parks and open spaces, and address major barriers highlighted earlier in this chapter.

### *Strategy 4 Actions:*

- 1** Prioritize safety and equity benefits in transportation project selection.

- 2 Ensure that the bicycle facilities and trail networks are well- connected and complementary to provide continuity for cyclists but also access to parks, open spaces, and other recreational facilities within the city boundary.
- 3 Develop a Future Access Map (Figure 11).
  - a. Based on the STEP Framework and Future Land Use map, the city has developed a Future Access map to guide high-level needed connections in the city’s priority areas (Transform areas). This map is intended to show locations of future access interventions, which could help to connect transform areas with the rest of the city, help connect residents to parks and open spaces, and address major barriers highlighted earlier in this chapter. This action is directly related to creating an Official Map.
  - b. Use the future access map as a guide to capital improvement planning.
- 4 Evaluate the Highway 3 corridor within the City of Northfield and work with MnDOT to redesign this highway into a thoroughfare which enables access to places along and across it for local residents. This should include active transportation facilities along the highway as well as safe, convenient crossings, reduced speeds, and implementing Complete Streets principles of the highway.
- 5 Eliminate gaps within the active transportation network.
  - a. Prioritize completing the existing sidewalk, trail, and bikeway network as shown in Figure 4 and Table 2.
  - b. Prioritize safety, beyond separation from cars, and equity when filling gaps in the trail and bikeway system to ensure seamless connections throughout the city for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities.
  - c. Plan updates to existing active transportation facilities/infrastructure to ensure a safe, consistent, predictable network appropriate to the transportation and land use contexts.
  - d. Plan all street right of way to include context appropriate active transportation facilities, stormwater management as well as vehicle travel when projects are considered for inclusion in the CIP.
  - e. Ensure new developments encompass multimodal features that connect to existing or future networks.
  - f. Implement pilot programs and short-term solutions (i.e. striping, signage, concrete bikeway buffers, etc.) to enhance active transportation connectivity while waiting for full road reconstructions, new or infill development to occur.
- 6 Update the ADA Transition Plan regularly as improvements are completed. Encourage private and public partners that provide surface transportation services to accommodate people of all ages and physical capabilities when possible.



## Strategy 5: Design for Access

*When making transportation decisions, focus on the land use context and building streets which harmoniously fit this context.*

**Outcomes:** There are clear, safe pathways for walkers, rollers, bikers, and drivers to access destinations within the city. Programmed road projects will be designed to complete or extend the traditional grid system that was the foundation for the city.

*Strategy 5 Actions:*

- 1** Ensure that CIP projects are prioritized based on community engagement and transparent decision-making. Evaluate projects based on stated needs as well as consistent with the vision and guiding values of the Comprehensive Plan. When determining facility type, focus on access improvements that consider land use context, community priorities, and cost.
- 2** Revise, update, and coordinate all city standards dealing with right-of-way design, intersection safety, and streetscape.
- 3** Create a connected grid system with new development. Northfield will revisit its roadway network to ensure new roadways or extension of existing roadways continue or re-establish the grid pattern, improving mobility and accessibility for existing and future roadway users.
- 4** Design intersections with active transportation facilities so that they are intuitive to cross and navigate on foot or by bike.
- 5** Evaluate and revise, as necessary, posted speed limits considering All Ages and Abilities (AAA) standards.
- 6** Develop appropriate metrics for measuring access in addition to mobility

## Strategy 6: Design for Resiliency and Sustainability



*Protect Northfield families from the effects of climate change. This includes evaluating green building standards, designing multimodal streets, and reducing the city’s carbon footprint through energy and resource efficiencies.*

**Outcomes:** All residents have more personal and community resources to overcome vulnerabilities to social, environmental, and economic conditions. The City as a municipal entity and its residents and businesses have collectively decreased our greenhouse gas emissions through mitigation strategies.

*Strategy 6 Actions:*

- 1** The strategies and actions of the city’s Climate Action Plan (2019) are incorporated by reference. Actions associated with the priorities are also incorporated herein.
- 2** Promote human-centered urban design and an appropriately intense diversity of uses when designing new and retrofitting existing neighborhoods to enhance sustainability and resiliency in Northfield’s communities. These actions reduce vehicle trips, and the length of trips, resulting in progress toward the city’s climate goals.

- 3** Require electric vehicle-charging-ready infrastructure be installed with new developments or public projects. Class II charger (or greater) readiness preferred.
- 4** Create design standards for connecting new development or redevelopment to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and require them in City Code.
- 5** Encourage the use of energy efficient mechanical systems and building products in rehabilitation and new construction to decrease building operation costs and impacts on the environment.
- 6** Seek opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of rights-of-way in the city, such as through shared, stacked-function green infrastructure and planting trees to reduce the urban heat island effect.
- 7** Explore and support the implementation of green infrastructure practices to increase resiliency to flooding, drought, and climate change.
- 8** Maintain response readiness for emergencies related to water supply contamination or interruption and for damage to treatment and distribution infrastructure.
- 9** Ensure best practices are implemented in public and private practices related to stormwater runoff and inflow/infiltration into the wastewater system
  - a. Collaborate with partner agencies on water quality improvement efforts, including capital projects and programming. For example:
  - b. Prioritize and pursue funding to replace the Ames Mill Dam with a high-quality recreation and river-ecological health solution.
  - c. Evaluate potential partnerships with groups such as Clean Water Partners and educational institutions to measure, evaluate, and enhance the health of the Cannon River.
- 10** Consider the potential greenhouse gas emissions impacts of transportation citywide in alignment with state legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. For new projects, use MnDOT's Minnesota Infrastructure Carbon Estimator (MICE) tool to estimate GHG emissions.

## Chapter 4 – Sustainable Economy

Where a person lives should not determine or predict that person's future outcomes. This Plan prioritizes City investments and actions which create complete places, fill gaps, provide needed assets currently missing in neighborhoods, and meeting Northfield residents' needs. Realizing this vision of a deeply equitable Northfield requires a thriving and sustainable economy, safe and secure housing, high quality jobs, and growing in ways which increase resilience and mitigate the effects of a changing climate.

This chapter provides information about the current and projected housing, economic development, and community development situation in Northfield based on previously completed studies and reports. It links study data to the concerns and ideas from the community related to housing and economic development. The strategies and actions respond to both community concerns and existing challenges to housing, family-sustaining wages, and related transportation needs and focus on how the city can provide support, funding or partnerships to support the most vulnerable populations.

### What We Heard -

#### Equity issues

- “Northfield has the potential to be a great city but isn't there yet because it hasn't addressed the needs of its most vulnerable residents.”
- “Equity, inclusivity, and housing are needed for all income levels to make this a community people want to live in.”

#### Housing and jobs

- “Many employers can't retain employees because it's difficult for their employees to find affordable housing.”
- “The new affordable housing is far from the grocery store and other resources.”
- “There is not enough affordable housing in the most walkable areas of the city.”
- “More pathways to housing ownership are needed to build generational wealth.”
- “Northfield should develop mixed-income communities.”
- “Invest in preserving the existing housing stock.”
- “There should be sufficient housing options available for community members in all stages of life.”
- “Solving issues about providing jobs and building housing to support employees are challenging plans to put into action but it needs to be done.”
- “Strategies at the intersection of workforce development and housing are needed.”

## Business development

- “Create a center of gravity in Northfield that leverages the town’s unique identity and vibe.”
- “The City needs to find a way to increase the number of businesses here and provide incentives.”
- “Bringing new industry into Northfield for better jobs for a growing local economy.”
- “More collaboration between the city and colleges.”
- “The city should increase support for small businesses and invest in facade improvement programs to help businesses improve their buildings.”
- “Ensure jobs can allow residents to have economic stability.”

## Future Northfield

- “Northfield is a thriving place where businesses succeed.”
- “The growth of industry in Northfield eases the tax burden on residents.”
- “Northfield thrives as a cultural mecca thanks to affordable housing, great jobs, sustainable infrastructure, and continuing investment in cultural assets.”
- “Northfield is a place where everyone is ‘okay’ and has a chance to flourish.”
- *For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive planning process, please refer to [Appendix X](#)*

## Economy, Environment and Equity

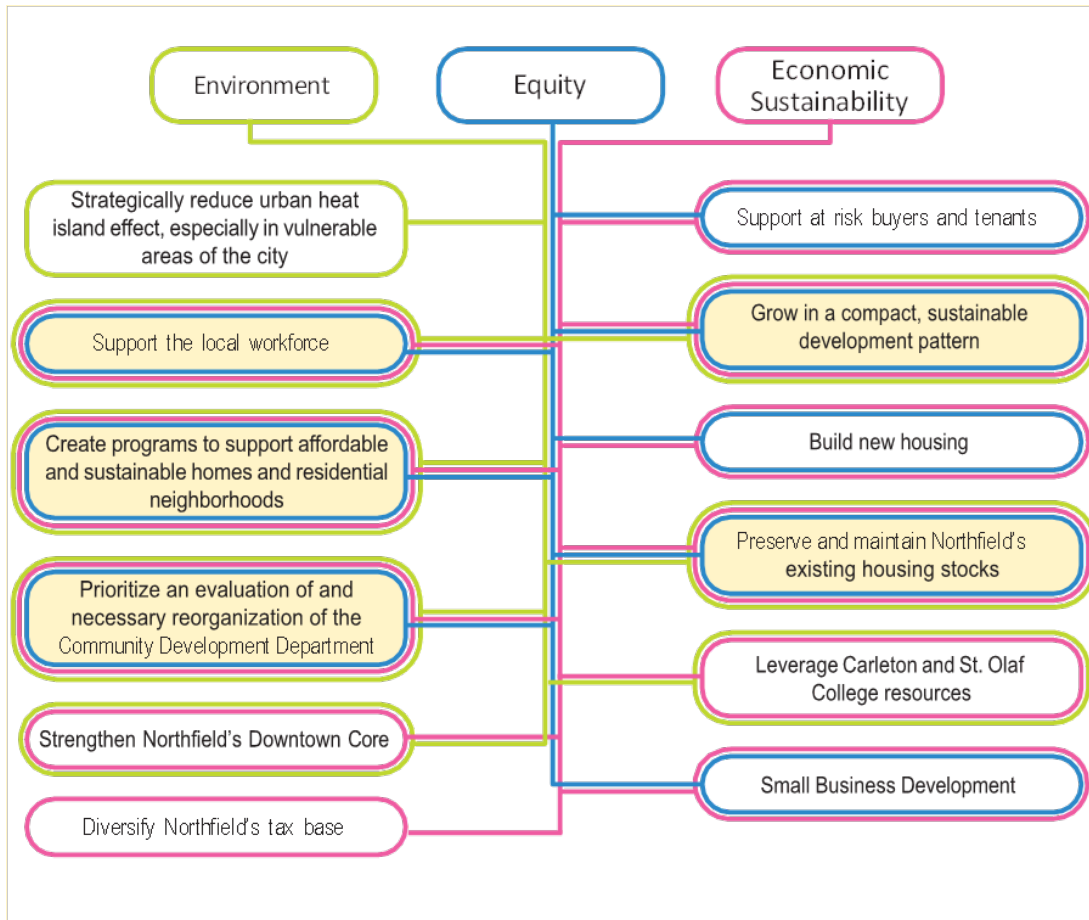
A sustainable and secure economic future for Northfield and its residents has three components. Northfield must have abundant housing to meet the needs of people at all income levels and stages of life. The city must develop a more diverse and robust tax base to support the City’s needs. Finally, Northfield must ensure these first two components are secure in a changing climate, protect the area’s resources, and the pattern of growth supports our stated values.

The economy-related strategies focus on retaining, maintaining, and expanding the high-quality downtown retail environment, leveraging existing commercial and industrial properties to maximize tax capacity per acre, and connecting relevant strategies from this chapter with those in the Access Chapter. Community engagement told us Northfield cares about the environmental character of the development: sustainable industries, physical development to preserve resources, and recruiting businesses related to agriculture.

The housing-related strategies and actions focus on providing affordable, safe and healthy housing for all residents. How housing is created impacts the city’s equity (ensuring that residents can find safe, accessible and affordable housing), environmental sustainability (ensuring that new housing is healthy and meets energy codes), and economic sustainability (everyone who wants to can live and work in Northfield).

How City’s economic development investments impact equity (which businesses the city chooses to support with limited resources), economic sustainability (how the City chooses to grow both physically and financially), and environment (where the City chooses to grow and maximizes use of existing infrastructure). Developing housing which is not supplied by the marketplace is a core economic development activity.

Figure X shows how strategies implement core principles.



## Definitions

*The following terms are defined as they are used within this Plan:*

**Affordable Housing:** The general definition of affordability as established by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is for a household to pay no more than 30% of their income for housing. For this study, we define affordable housing that is income-restricted to households earning at or below 80% area median income (AMI), though individual properties can have income restrictions set at 30%, 40%, 50%, 60% or 80% AMI. Rent is not based on income but instead is a contract amount that is affordable to households within the specific income restriction segment. It is essentially housing affordable to low or very low-income tenants.



**Area Median Income (“AMI”):** AMI is the midpoint in the income distribution within a specific geographic area. By definition, 50% of households earn less than the median income and 50% earn more. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculates AMI annually, adjusted for household size. (In 2024, the median household income in Rice County for a household of four is \$100,900—equivalent to an hourly wage of around \$50 per hour.)

**Economic Mobility:** The ability of a person or family to improve their economic status over time.

**Extremely Low-Income:** Person or household with incomes below 30% of area median income, adjusted for respective household size.

**Fair Market Rent:** Estimates established by HUD of the Gross Rents needed to obtain modest rental units in acceptable conditions in a specific geographic area. The amount of rental income a given property would command if it were open for leasing at any given moment and/or the amount derived based on market conditions that is needed to pay gross monthly rent at modest rental housing in each area. This figure is used as a basis for determining the payment standard amount used to calculate the maximum monthly subsidy for families on financially assisted housing.

**Household:** All persons who occupy a housing unit, including occupants of a single-family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements.

**Housing Choice Voucher Program:** The federal government’s primary program for assisting very low- income families, the elderly and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. A family that is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of the family’s choice where the owner agrees to rent under the program.

Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies. They receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the public housing agency on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

**Market Rate Rental Housing:** Housing that does not have any income restrictions. Some properties will have income guidelines, which are minimum annual incomes required in order to reside at the property.

**Moderate Income:** Person or household with gross household income between 80% and 120% of the area median income, adjusted for household size.

**Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing:** Although affordable housing is typically associated with an income- restricted property, there are other housing units in communities that indirectly provide affordable housing.

Housing units that were not developed or designated with income guidelines (i.e. assisted) yet are more affordable than other units in a community are considered “naturally occurring” or “unsubsidized affordable” units. This rental supply is available through the private market, versus assisted housing programs through various governmental agencies. Property values on these units

are lower based on a combination of factors, such as: age of structure/ housing stock, location, condition, size, functionally obsolete, school district, etc.

**Subsidized Housing:** Housing that is income-restricted to households earning at or below 30% AMI. Rent is generally based on income, with the household contributing 30% of their adjusted gross income toward rent. Also referred to as extremely low-income housing.

**Subsidy:** Monthly income received by a tenant or by an owner on behalf of a tenant to pay the difference between the apartment's contract or market rate rent and the amount paid by the tenant toward rent.

**Workforce Housing:** Housing that is income-restricted to households earning between 80% and 120% AMI; however, some government agencies define workforce housing from 50% to 120% AMI. Also referred to as moderate-income housing.

## Existing Conditions

In its commitment to understanding the needs of Northfield residents and employers, Northfield invested in analyses of its tax base and housing needs. Housing needs analysis was done by [Maxfield Research](#) and a two-phase community-led project facilitated by Enterprise Community Partners and Healthy Community Initiative studied housing and education outcomes to help Northfield build effective partnerships across public and private agencies to address housing as a major contributor to educational success and upward mobility. Northfield also commissioned an infill and tax base needs study by Visible City, is participating in the University of Minnesota Extension's Connecting Businesses and Community program and participates in the Minnesota Main Streets by RETHOS with the Friends of Downtown Northfield, and Northfield Chamber of Commerce.

This Plan incorporates the research from these studies and programs to develop its strategies and actions.

Northfield's demand for housing is driven by both population growth and job growth. Demographic shifts, and the character of its workforce, play a role in the types of housing that are demanded. The following summarize key takeaways from the report which impact housing in Northfield.

## Demographics

- The population is growing. It is projected to grow by 5.2% from 2020 to 2028.
- The population is aging. The 65- to 74-year-old age cohort grew 73% between 2010 and 2020.
- Household sizes are shrinking. In 2024, the most common household type in Northfield was people living alone, representing 31.4% of all households in the city, followed by married couples without children at 30.4%.

- Homeowners' incomes outpace renters' incomes. The median income for owner households in Northfield is estimated at \$109,853 as of 2024, 60% greater than the median income for renter households at \$43,467.
- The population is more diverse. The percent of people who identify as Hispanic or Latino has increased over that same decade from less than 6 percent in 2011 to approximately 10 percent in 2021. [insert Table 2 fr community profile]
- The predominant household type in Northfield is people living alone, representing 31% of households in 2024. The proportion of people living alone increased modestly since 2010, from 30%. Larger increases were observed among the "Other Family" and Married Couples without Children categories.

## Economics

- Northfield's strong economy and number of jobs generates demand for housing. Employment increased by almost 5% between 2010 and 2020, and by an additional 4% by 2023.
- More people come into Northfield to work, than leave the city for work.
- Base industries in Northfield, such as manufacturing and higher education, tend to pay higher wages than average for rural communities.
- Hourly wages in Northfield generally start at \$11 to \$16 per hour for retail and entry-level work at major employers. Retail managers and entry-level manufacturing jobs start at \$20 per hour. A family-sustaining wage for the state of Minnesota (2024) is \$26 per hour for a family of four with at least one working adult.
- The unemployment rate in Rice County decreased rapidly in the post-pandemic recovery from 5.4% in 2020 to 2.7% in 2023. Similarly, Northfield's unemployment rate decreased from 6.5% in 2020 to 2.7% in 2023. In 2024 Northfield was cited as the place with the lowest unemployment in the Nation in an article in *The Economist*.
- An estimated 21% of owner households and 35% of renter householders pay more than 30% of their income for housing in Northfield.

## Housing Supply and Demand

- An entry-level single-family home in Northfield could expect to be sold for \$250,000. At this price point, given the down payment and mortgage rates noted above, a household would need an income of estimated at \$72,600 to spend no more than 30% on their housing costs. An estimated 51% of Northfield Households could afford an entry-level single-family home.
- In total, Maxfield Research 1,181 market rate and 453 affordable/subsidized general occupancy rental units in Northfield across 31 multifamily properties. Three properties offer market rate and affordable units. Vacancy rates were 0.7% for affordable units and 0.7% for market rate units. Typically, a healthy rental market maintains a vacancy rate of at or near 5%, which promotes competitive rates, ensures adequate consumer choice and allows for sufficient unit turnover. The exceptionally low vacancy rates indicate pent-up demand for additional rental housing.

- The median year built of owned housing in Northfield is 1989 compared to 1983 for the remainder of the Market Area. The median year built for rental units is 1975.
- Maxfield identified a total of 925 senior units among 15 properties. These properties include active adult rental and ownership (market rate and affordable/subsidized), independent living with some services, standard and enhanced assisted living and memory care.
- The median sales price of single-family homes in Northfield rose from \$242,000 in 2016 to \$365,000 by the end of 2023, an increase of 51%, according to data gathered from the Greater Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors.
- The general conclusions included in the 2024 housing demand study suggests demand exists for the following general occupancy product types between 2024 and 2035:
  - Market rate rental 445 units
  - Affordable rental 163 units
  - Subsidized rental 102 units
  - For-sale single-family 412 units
  - For-sale multifamily 222 units

## Analytical Focus Areas

Two topical focus areas were further analyzed to develop this plan— **small business support** and **fiscal impact of development**.

### Small business support and entrepreneurship, BIPOC owned businesses

The planning process included research and analysis of the Northfield small business context, with an emphasis on Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) owned businesses. This focus on BIPOC businesses is reflective of one of the guiding values of this plan to “emphasize equity to remedy past disparities.” The research included listening sessions with minority and immigrant business owners, who identified critical barriers and needs within the local business ecosystem. This growing subset of business owners were interested in entrepreneurship and small business development resources.

They highlighted several needs, including the following:

#### *Access to Capital*

- A significant number of minority-owned businesses reported challenges in accessing capital. Around 50% of participants cited access to funding as their biggest hurdle, with many relying on personal savings. The businesses expressed a need for micro-grants, loans, and alternative financing, particularly for physical improvements and operational expenses like marketing.

#### *Communication and Awareness of City Resources*

- Many business owners were unaware of the resources and services available to them from the city. The great majority of participants stated they did not feel well-informed about how the City of Northfield could assist their business. Language barriers, especially a lack of translation and interpretation services, further compounded their difficulties in navigating city resources.

### *Mentorship, Networking, and Technical Assistance*

- Minority business owners emphasized the need for mentorship and technical support, especially in areas like marketing, accounting, and legal counsel. All of the participants said access to a mentor or networking opportunities with other minority business owners would be beneficial.
- There was also a noted interest in workshops to aid in navigating business development processes and city services.

### *Fiscal Impact of Development*

A priority consideration in the Comprehensive Plan is the impact of different factors on the city's budget.

Chapter 3 and the guiding value to “design infrastructure, policies, and practices to foster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change” guide the city to develop compactly, focusing on infill before expanding city infrastructure. This development pattern has positive impacts on budget and capital planning, preserving natural resources, and connecting people more effectively.

New development generates revenue for cities by adding to the property tax base, yet it also increases city operating costs because the associated households or workforce must be supported by city services such as road and utility infrastructure, fire and police protection, parks and recreational programming development outside the city increases greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging longer daily vehicle trips and consumes land that could be used for natural resource protection or agriculture. Northfield's vision and values ask the City to investigate the costs and benefits of new development broadly and make wise decisions for the long term. Considerations related to fiscal impacts were discussed in the Economic Analysis memo located in [Appendix X](#).

Key factors to consider:

- **Differential property tax rates** In Minnesota the class rate for commercial and industrial property is up to twice as high as the class rate for residential property, yielding greater property tax revenues for equally valued properties.
- **Development intensity** A higher density development generates greater property value and higher property tax revenues than a lower density development, for developments on equally sized properties.
- **Cost of services by development type** The service burden (cost of providing public services) of commercial development is generally lower than the service burden of residential development—whether measured by land area, floor area or value. That's because residential buildings are occupied for more hours of the day, and some city services are targeted to city residents.
- **Cost by land area/development intensity** The cost of providing some city services are more correlated with the land area of development than the size of the population being served. Examples include snow plowing services, or street and utility reconstruction. Land intensive and low- density development can be fiscally challenging, especially over the long run.

- **Average cost vs. marginal costs** The marginal cost of providing city services to new development is typically lower than the existing per capita cost of the service because a level of physical and administrative infrastructure has already been established. This is particularly true in redevelopment situations.
- **Redevelopment** Several of these factors—including increased development intensity and lower marginal cost of services—make redevelopment (development in previously development locations that have preexisting street and utility infrastructure) fiscally beneficial in comparison to development on previously undeveloped land.
  - A site-specific economic analysis was done recently for scenarios related to Northfield’s 528-acre growth area in northwest Northfield, near the new hospital complex. The estimated cost for trunk utilities to the area ranged from \$3.7 million to \$7.5 million depending on the development scenario. Estimated property tax revenues ranged from \$2,400 to \$2,800 per acre for industrial development scenarios, and \$17,000 per acre for a residential development scenario averaging 8 units per acre.
  - As the City considers future growth, these fiscal impacts and the negative impact of sprawl should be weighed as factors along with the positive impact of the potential tax revenue from development of this area.

## Infill Opportunities

Based on the STEP framework and Future Land Use map, the City has developed a Future Infill map (Figure X) to guide needed community development investments associated with commercial/industrial infill, housing infill, and projects and programs associated with business retention, recruitment and expansion; tax-base diversification; and housing supply needs with an aim toward economic mobility, supported by environmentally sustainable outcomes.

The map is intended to show where the most “bang for the buck” regarding infill efforts can be achieved and capitalizes on those initiatives begun or referenced in previous plans that have generated the most success; while introducing new ideas based on current technologies, trends, financial markets, and other external factors outside the city’s control. It offers a mechanism to identify where interventions in market forces may be best focused.

### *Industrial Infill Opportunity*

- **Northwest Industrial Park:** While the preference is to focus on redevelopment close to the core of the City over greenfield development, this area is designated for an industrial park or industrial user. Annexed in 2009, the area is zoned for industrial uses only and specifically to diversify the city’s tax base. For economic sustainability purposes, planning for this area must also include analysis of the costs of extending infrastructure relative to potential tax revenue.
- **Riteway site:** This area has potential for industrial infill development, with the caution that the Heath Creek and other streams need protection to the west and connections into and out of Northfield still need consideration. For infill development to be successful at this site, Armstrong Road needs to be rethought.

### *Downtown Core Expansion Opportunity*

- **Byzantine /SMSQ/Q block (Highway 3 between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets):** These sites provide an opportunity for an expansion of the downtown core, and a strong reason to slow Highway 3 and make it into more of a main street than a border vacuum. The Byzantine/SMSQ site is also critical for defining the west side of the river as beautiful and walkable as the east.
- **MnDOT site (NE corner, Highway 3 and Woodley):** Another opportunity to extend downtown, reinvent the highway, and a key component to making the Riverfront Enhancement and Mill Towns Trail plans work well.

### *Mixed-Use Infill Opportunity*

- **Small steps toward the big picture:** Reimagining Highway 3 from Fremouw to CSAH 1 is a high-level goal. Intersection improvements should be focused first on 2nd/3rd Street & Highway 3, then the Woodley intersection, then intensifying intersections along the corridor and nearby parcels. Because Northfield has a bikeway on Heritage/Lincoln/Roosevelt as the only connecting segment south of Jefferson, this intersection needs high priority attention to connect the trail across the highway.
- **Highway 3 Development:** This area continues to grow as the place to focus apart from the NW appendage, including the highway frontage, the land between the highway and the river, and the land between the highway to Jefferson Road Past plans have emphasized capitalizing on the river with better connections to a high-quality mixed-use environment.
- **Festler Farm:** Across from the high school is a prominent and relatively large redevelopment site that will require improvements to access. The city should begin to plan desired street, bike/walk, and driveway connections, and anticipate the types of uses.
- **Bluff View, Fargaze Meadows, and Southbridge (Remaining Parcels):** Previous planning efforts for these two areas should set the expectation for a mix of housing types that includes market-rate and subsidized ownership opportunities that are well-connected to destinations like schools, shops, and parks.

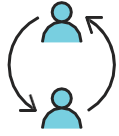
### *Residential Mixed-Use Infill Opportunity*

- **Jefferson Parkway East:** The city is constructing a water treatment plant in this area. The city should further evaluate the feasibility and cost of serving this area with infrastructure before actively pursuing development.
- **South end of town east of 246 and just west of Middle School:** This area would require new road construction and should prioritize connections to 246 and Ford Street.

## Strategies and Actions

**Overarching strategy for a sustainable economy:** Use public resources to mitigate market failures and continuously improve public regulations to prevent or limit likely negative externalities.

## Guiding Values Overview



Northfield **emphasizes equity** to remedy past disparities and to ensure access to housing, services, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and use tools to implement the best practices in their fields, and engaging consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield's capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.



Northfield promotes **safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support our workforce and accommodate residents in all stages of life.



Northfield works to **provide mobility options** so all Northfield residents can get where they need to go with or without a car.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive regardless of age, economic status, mobility, gender, race, or ethnic background.



## Strategies and Actions

### Strategy 1: Evaluate and Reorganize the Community Development Department



*Prioritize an evaluation of and necessary reorganization of the Community Development Department to ensure the very public-facing and community focused work needed to carry out this plan successfully, is achievable.*

#### *Strategy 1 Actions:*

- 1** Create a department that can fully realize:
  - Desired business creation, attraction, retention and expansion outcomes.
  - Directing new development to high- priority geographies, such as Transform sites identified in the STEP Analysis.
  - Successful cultural and arts-based businesses citywide.
  - Preservation planning that protects, maintains, enhances and sustains historic and cultural structures, landscapes, contexts, and features when appropriate.
  - Culturally competent approaches to business recruitment, retention and expansion for the region’s Latine, Southeast Asian and African communities.
  - Supporting business, real estate and financial models that keep more money locally.
  - Building and expanding neighborhood economic and cultural assets through the development of the local micro-economies.
  - Enhancing our vibrant downtown neighborhoods and connecting them to and across the Cannon River.
  - Developing programs and funding sources for site acquisition and parcel assembly.
  - Planning with public works and other departments to ensure coherent and sustainable development.
  - Reviewing and updating policies and regulations to carry out this plan and other policies
  - Robust, equitable, creative, and culturally competent and appropriate community engagement and communications

## Strategy 2: Strengthen Northfield's Downtown Core



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

**Outcome:** Downtown Northfield grows as the river-focused anchor of Northfield's small business community, locus of valuable tax base, welcoming and accessible public space, river access, and location of city services.

### *Strategy 2 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** Reimagine Highway 3 through downtown to facilitate access to the Transit Hub, Riverfront, parks, and downtown businesses.
- 5** Proactively identify, evaluate, survey and designate historic and cultural resources with the Heritage Preservation Commission to ensure a consistent and equitable approach to preservation.
- 6** Provide organizational support to aid in the restoration and long-term economic vitality of the National Register-listed Northfield Historic District and its components.
- 7** Prioritize reinvestment in existing buildings, including for adaptive reuse. If appropriate after evaluation and survey, work with community partners to establish 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 3: Leverage Carleton and St. Olaf Resources



*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 leverage colleges' resources and guide their physical growth.*

**Outcome:** Carleton and St Olaf will plan physical development with the city and increase their economic contributions; the city will benefit from college leadership on climate and tapping student work as appropriate.

*Strategy 3 Actions:*

- 1** Identify partnership opportunities to increase 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, work on river health, and tap climate leadership.
- 3** Guide college land use planning to eliminate surface parking visible to the community, increase access to the Cannon River, and prevent further encroachment into neighborhoods and downtown.
- 4** Leverage the “Academic Civic Engagement” programs at each college to better connect college students and faculty with municipal initiatives for mutual benefit.

## Strategy 4: 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.*

**Outcome:** Local small business owners know about and use technical and financial resources that are available to them.

*Strategy 4 Actions:*

- 1** Partner with existing local business support organizations and evaluate other support opportunities to leverage public and private local funding resources for small businesses
- 2** Leverage existing and potential partners to ensure current and future business owners can easily locate city-related support information for business resources.
- 3** Leverage existing and potential partners to provide culturally and linguistically competent and context-sensitive business advisory services for all existing and future entrepreneurs.

## Strategy 5: Support the Local Workforce



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

**Outcome:** Northfield’s existing and future workforce faces fewer barriers to moving to Northfield and living close to their place of employment.

*Strategy 5 Actions:*

- 1** Support housing development that increases the supply and variety of affordably priced housing that meets the needs of Northfield’s workforce.
- 2** Prioritize building new housing in places with convenient access to jobs and needed 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 services in Northfield.

## Strategy 6: Diversify Northfield’s Tax Base



**Outcome:** Northfield will intentionally build a more sustainable local economy and maintain and expand city services, amenities and infrastructure.

*Strategy 6 Actions:*

- 1** Prioritize development in T4 area in the STEP 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. [\[Link to Capital Improvement Program and budget\]](#)
- 2** In highway-oriented commercial uses, particularly on Highway 3 between Woodley Street and County Road 1, prioritize infill development and business expansions that increase floor area ratios and diversify the range of commercial/industrial uses.
- 3** Focus recruitment, retention and expansion investments that support, complement and enhance the existing retail, commercial, industrial, and service industries, recognizing that the community’s largest local employers are Carleton and St Olaf colleges, Northfield Hospital and Clinics, and Post Consumer Brands and that the region benefits from safe, convenient, and affordable access to jobs in Northfield, Faribault, and Rice County.
- 4** Ensure that surface parking uses are limited, and that structured parking is mixed-use and/or convertible to other uses.

## Strategy 7: Grow in a Compact, Sustainable Development Pattern



**Outcome:** Northfield grows in a pattern which increases tax productivity, preserves natural resources, limits climate impacts, improves access to jobs and services, and assesses fiscal impact of development.

### *Strategy 7 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 reduce regulatory burdens including 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** Residential infill developments should complement the pattern and scale of existing neighborhoods, improve connectivity to the rest of the city and allow for innovation and consideration of market needs, climate impact, economic feasibility and sustainable affordability.

## Strategy 8: Preserve and Maintain Northfield’s Existing Housing Stock



**Outcome:** All residents in Northfield, especially renters, live in safe, healthy and affordable housing.

### *Strategy 8 Actions:*

- 1** Develop programs and partnerships to support manufactured home communities and preserve this form of housing.
- 2** Develop programs in partnership with affordable housing and educational institutions to ensure housing stability in all neighborhoods and communities.
- 3** 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.
- 4** Create incentives for landlords to reduce energy costs.

- 5 Support housing near necessary goods and services and promotes active living and community connectivity.

## Strategy 9: Build New Housing



*New housing development meets defined community needs and diversifies the housing options available to residents.*

**Outcomes:** There is enough supply of housing at each price point and stage of life for existing and future residents. Decisions should be data driven. All types of homes, including subsidized and unsubsidized owner-occupied and rental housing to ensure lifecycle choices.

### *Strategy 9 Actions:*

- 1 Prioritize building new housing in walkable areas of the city
- 2 Include affordable housing units in all development by pairing inclusionary housing requirements with resources to support affordable units.
- 3 Prioritize developing infill sites through direct property acquisition, site preparation for redevelopment, and actively soliciting development proposals targeted to identified needs.
- 4 Support efforts to create and support cooperative ownership opportunities for homeowners in manufactured home parks, multi-family properties, and commercial endeavors in the Northfield area.
- 5 Partner with local home builders, employers, and other regional non-profit 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 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 universal design to make homes accessible to all residents.

## Strategy 10: Support at Risk Buyers and Tenants



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

**Outcomes:** Residents can afford to own or rent a home in Northfield and stay in their homes through hardships.

*Strategy 10 Actions:*

- 1** Partner with local organizations working on housing support, such as Community Action Center, Healthy Community Initiative, Three Rivers Community Action, and Rice County Habitat for Humanity to support first-time homebuyers with education and down payment related assistance and homeowners at risk of foreclosure.
- 2** Coordinate with Healthy Community Initiative, and other non-profit partners, to ensure the greatest return on investment of City, EDA and HRA-levied funds and those funds are used in ways that most closely align with the directions set through the Comprehensive and Strategic Plans.
- 3** Pursue mechanisms to enhance and improve the use of Rice County-administered Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) within the Northfield City limits. For example:
  - a. Pursue use of Small Area Fair Market Rents in order to increase use of vouchers in Northfield.
  - b. Renegotiate agreement with Rice County for HCV use in Northfield.
  - c. Explore policies and communication strategies to encourage acceptance of Housing Choice Vouchers.
- 4** Partner with community organizations to support first-time homebuyers with education and down payment related assistance.
- 5** Partner with community organizations to support homeowners at risk of foreclosure.
- 6** Develop an eviction prevention program.
- 7** Adopt a tenant notification requirement related to the sale of properties.
- 8** Partner in creating a fund to support the replacement of manufactured homes as they reach the end of their useful life.
- 9** Partner in providing temporary relocation support for manufactured home residents when the homes are being repaired or rehabbed.
- 10** 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.
- 11** Implement place-based investments to enhance and improve upon local parks, public transportation, water, and wastewater infrastructure, people-first safety improvements and fiscally responsible and effective regular maintenance.

## Strategy 11: Create programs to support affordable and sustainable homes and residential neighborhoods



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

**Outcome:** Local housing needs are met at a greater scale through the use of existing public resources and authorities.

### *Strategy 11 Actions:*

- 1** Incentivize energy efficiency in building materials and design, heating/cooling infrastructure, and electrification to reduce lifetime costs of housing
- 2** 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.
- 3** Work to improve sustainability of new and existing housing. All new housing developers comply with Minnesota Energy Code and are encouraged to construct Net-Zero housing. Existing housing is retrofitted with energy efficiency upgrades.
- 4** Continue to provide incentives for landlords and homeowners alike to reduce their energy costs.
- 5** Support all household types, including co- housing, intergenerational housing, intentional communities or other shared-living models that allow residents to “age in community.”
- 6** Use public financial resources to develop the types of housing that are needed and are not being built organically.
- 7** Play an active role in developing existing city/ housing or economic development-authority owned land or through land acquisition in order to have more say relative to the mix of housing that is being built.
- 8** Explore fee waivers/reductions for development that addresses city goals (sustainability, affordability, compact development, etc).
- 9** Revise the zoning code to ensure denser development in neighborhoods dominated by single-family development can occur.



## Strategy 12: Strategically Reduce Urban Heat Island Effect



**Outcome:** Northfield is resilient to climate change community wide.

### *Strategy 12 Actions:*

- 1** Using remote sensing and satellite imagery, map the city's land surface temperature to establish a baseline heat map for the municipality.
- 2** Prioritize preservation and enhancement of the overall tree canopy in decision making.
- 3** Increase and encourage tree planting in vulnerable areas of the city.
- 4** Construct stormwater infrastructure for climate resilience.
- 5** Provide education to residents on sustainable water use.
- 6** Encourage compact development to leverage existing infrastructure.

## Chapter 5 – Infrastructure

The City has adopted plans to guide current and future planning for city utilities including water, stormwater and sanitary sewer. Additionally, these plans aim to protect important natural resources such as the city’s rivers and lakes.

The public works department is generally responsible for this work including planning, programming, design, construction and maintenance of this important infrastructure. The department is also responsible for planning and maintenance of city streets and associated infrastructure such as sidewalks and streetlights, which are discussed further in the Access chapter of this plan.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide high-level strategies and actions to guide future planning for utilities, which align with the overall vision and guiding values of this plan. The city should continue to rely on utility system plans for day-to-day planning and, when appropriate, update plans (water system, wastewater, stormwater, etc.) to align with the high-level strategies and actions in this plan.

### What We Heard

- Northfield should develop in a manner that is fiscally and environmentally sustainable.
- Northfield needs to broaden its tax base to reduce the burden on residential property owners.
- Plans for investment from the city for balanced, smart, and sustainable growth are needed.
- The city should balance growth with the preservation of open space, natural resources and agricultural land.

*For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive planning process, please refer to [Appendix X](#).*

## Strategies and Actions

*The strategies and actions in this chapter focus on the utilities over which the city has direct control (water, stormwater, wastewater). Other infrastructure elements such as roads and trails are discussed in the Access chapter of this plan.*

### Strategy 1: Wastewater Infrastructure

*Continue to plan for wastewater infrastructure and ensure that extension of these services is fiscally and environmentally responsible.*

**Outcomes:** All new development will include an analysis weighing the cost to serve and the potential tax base benefits to the city.

#### *Strategy 1 Actions:*

- 1 Update the Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan for Northfield (dated October 2007)

- 2 With each new development, conduct a high-level cost benefit analysis of the costs to serve new development, including long-term maintenance costs, versus the benefits to the city.

## Strategy 2: Water Infrastructure

*Continue to plan for water infrastructure and ensure that extension of these services is fiscally and environmentally responsible.*

**Outcomes:** All new development will include an analysis weighing the cost to serve and the potential tax base benefits to the city.

### *Strategy 2 Actions:*

- 1 Update the Comprehensive Water Plan for Northfield (dated March 2006)
- 2 With each new development, conduct a high-level cost benefit analysis of the costs to serve new development, including long-term maintenance costs, versus the benefits to the city.
- 3 Provide education to residents on sustainable water use.

## Strategy 3: Climate Resilience in Water Management

*Ensure that surface water and stormwater management incorporate planning for climate resilience.*

**Outcomes:** New and retrofitted stormwater infrastructure can manage larger storm events and provide an amenity for the neighborhoods in which they are constructed.

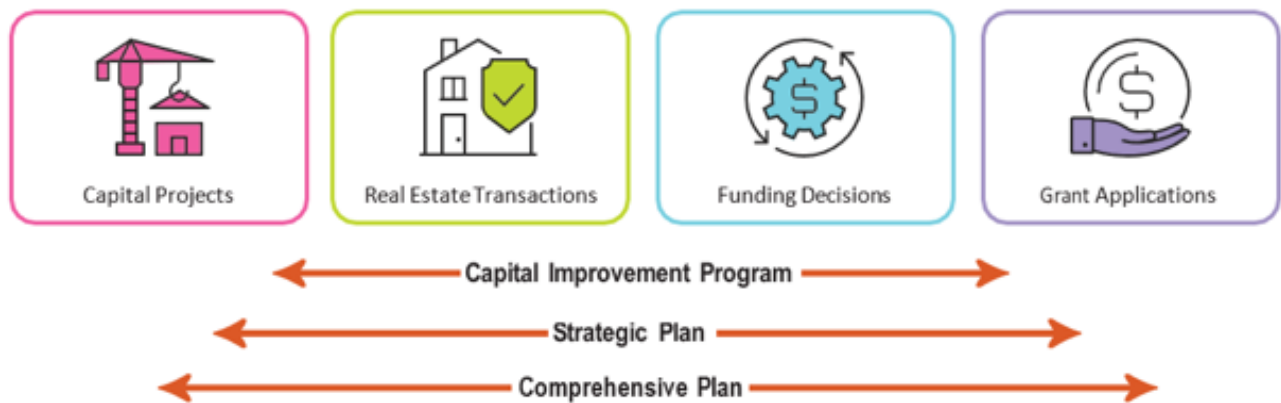
### *Strategy 3 Actions:*

- 1 Continue to update the Surface Water Management Plan at regular intervals (current plan dated November 2020).
- 2 Seek opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of city owned land and rights-of-way through green infrastructure.
- 3 Explore and support the implementation of green infrastructure practices to increase resiliency to flooding, drought and climate change.

# Chapter 6 – Implementation

## Connections to Guiding Values

Guiding city planning, budgeting and decision-making: At its core, the Northfield Comprehensive Plan sets a policy direction for decisions made day-to-day by the City Council, Planning Commission, other boards and commissions, and City staff. The Plan itself does not have regulatory authority but instead offers the policy foundation for other official controls, like the zoning and building codes, subdivision regulations, City budget, Capital Improvement Plan and other tools, as seen in Figure .



Fostering strong partnerships: Beyond these key tools, partnerships with other agencies and institutions will also be critical to realizing the full vision of this plan. The City is committed to working with organizations and agencies who share our values; this plan articulates those values for potential partners. Our partners should come from within the Southeastern Minnesota “ecosystem” whenever possible.

Pursuing outside funding: This plan establishes priorities and strategies which communicate the City’s values to County, State, and Federal agencies that have their own funding priorities. Many non-profits and higher educational institutions have already built programs and partnerships that need to be perpetuated with further funding and staff participation from the City of Northfield.

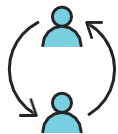
The following matrix shows how the implementation strategies located in the preceding chapters relate to the Guiding Values established in Chapter 2. Most of the strategies support more than one of the Guiding Values. Looking at them all together in this way also highlights overlap between the strategies in each chapter.

|  | Equity | Creative Solutions | Resilience | Economically Responsible and Sustainable | Human Connections | Housing | Travel Options |
|--|--------|--------------------|------------|--|-------------------|---------|----------------|
| <b>Access</b>                              |        |                    |            |  |                   |         |                |
| Plan for Access                            | X      |                    | X          | X  | X                 |         | X              |
| Compact Development                        | X      |                    | X          | X  | X                 | X       | X              |
| Target Areas of Underinvestment            | X      | X                  |            | X  |                   | X       | X              |
| Equitable Access                           | X      | X                  | X          | X  | X                 |         | X              |
| Design for Access                          | X      | X                  |            | X  |                   |         | X              |
| Design for Resilience and Sustainability   | X      | X                  | X          | X  |                   |         | X              |
| <b>Sustainable Economy</b>                 |        |                    |            |  |                   |         |                |
| Community Development Department Education |        | X                  |            | X  | X                 |         |                |
| Strengthen Downtown Core                   |        |                    |            |  | X                 | X       |                |
| Leverage Carlton and St Olaf Resources     |        | X                  | X          |  |                   |         |                |
| Small Business Development                 | X      | X                  |            |  | X                 |         |                |
| Support Local Workforce                    | X      |                    |            |  |                   | X       |                |
| Diversify Tax Base                         | X      | X                  | X          | X  |                   |         |                |
| Grow in a Compact, Sustainable Pattern     | X      | X                  | X          | X  | X                 | X       | X              |
| Preserve Housing Stock                     | X      |                    | X          |  | X                 | X       |                |
| Build New Housing                          | X      | X                  | X          | X  |                   | X       |                |
| Support At-Risk Buyers and Tenants         | X      | X                  |            |  |                   | X       |                |
| Support Affordable and Sustainable Homes   | X      | X                  | X          |  |                   | X       |                |
| Reduce Urban Heat Island Effect            | X      |                    | X          | X  |                   |         |                |

## How Northfield will Implement Its Values

In addition to the strategies and actions contained in the plan chapters [\[link to the Guiding Values in Table XX\]](#), Northfield is committed to ways of doing business which will move the City toward its Vision and Guiding Values.

### Guiding Values



Northfield **emphasizes equity** to remedy past decisions creating today’s disparities and to ensure access to housing, services, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and use tools to implement the best practices in their fields, and engaging consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience** and **mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield's capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.



Northfield **promotes safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support our workforce and accommodate residents in all stages of life.



Northfield works to **provide mobility options** so all Northfield residents can get where they need to go with or without a car.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive regardless of age, economic status, mobility, gender, race or ethnicity.

#### *Equitable, transparent and accountable public process*

- Northfield will review and revise its event and meeting practices to include everyone. The City will improve all communications channels, ensure meetings and events are easily accessible by considering location, scheduling, and providing support such as childcare and food.
- Review and reorganize departments with public facing duties including Communications, Community Development and Public Works.
- Northfield will ensure communications practices, including online tools and in-person engagement to welcome all voices, respond to concerns, and develop shared solutions.
- Northfield will hire staff who demonstrate an interest in or experience with finding, creating or implementing creative solutions to meet Northfield's challenges.

#### *Collaboration*

- Northfield will work with MnDOT to redesign the center section of Highway 3 for safe, pleasant travel along and across the highway.
- Northfield will continue to build productive relationships with community partners to deliver better services and fulfill needs. The City will continue working with housing and ED

partners, it will develop joint land use, transportation, and service planning with schools, colleges, and hospital.

- Northfield will work with residents and private partners to implement the Riverfront Action Plan and other public spaces to ensure they are sustainable, welcoming, inclusive and serve the community.

#### *Economic stewardship*

- Northfield will use low-cost demonstration projects whenever possible to test ideas before implementing new infrastructure types.
- The city will create or adopt a clear, consistent, and transparent budgeting mechanism and related process that incorporates best practices for budget-related community engagement, performance measures, and accountability following adoption of this plan.
- Spending policies will align with and advance the goals of this plan.
- The City will consider a fiscal impact tool based on known best practices related to government finance such as those developed by the Government Finance Officers Association.

### Connections to Other Plans

The comprehensive plan is intended to function as an “umbrella” document under which more specialized plans fit. Northfield has undertaken many topical plans in the years between comprehensive plans. Depending on the age and subject matter of these other plans, some of the recommendations may not align with the vision and guiding values of this comprehensive plan. The following matrix identifies each plan, the overall purpose and key policies in each. It also indicates whether each plan should be fully or partially incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan or should be discontinued to assist staff and decision makers in determining which policies to follow and which are outdated.

<Revised table of related plans goes here>