

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN  
CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2026-062

RESOLUTION DENYING CITIZEN PETITION FOR PREPARATION OF AN  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET FOR THE PROPOSED HARVEST HILLS  
SECOND ADDITION DEVELOPMENT

- WHEREAS, by letter provided via email, dated May 29, 2026, from Sarah Lerohl, Environmental Review Program Administrator with the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (“EQB”), the City of Northfield (“City”) received a petition requesting that the City Council require an environmental assessment worksheet (“EAW”), received by the EQB on May 28, 2026 (the “Petition”), for the proposed project known as the Harvest Hills Second Addition Development, to be located at Parcel ID - 2212426022, Northfield, MN 55057 (the “Project”); and
- WHEREAS, the Petition was signed by approximately 107 individuals; and
- WHEREAS, the EQB has designated the City as the responsible governmental unit (“RGU”) for the Project; and
- WHEREAS, the Petition has been submitted pursuant to Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1100, which requires, within fifteen (15) working days of receipt of the Petition from the EQB, the City to review the evidence presented by the petitioners, evidence provided by the Project proposer, and other evidence otherwise known to the City and determine whether, because of the nature or location of the Project, the Project may have the potential for significant environmental effects; and
- WHEREAS, Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1100, Subp. 2, requires in part that the Petition contain: “E. material evidence indicating that, because of the nature or location of the proposed project, there may be potential for significant environmental effects. The material evidence must physically accompany the petition. It is not sufficient to merely provide a reference or citation to where the evidence may be found.”; and
- WHEREAS, Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1100, Subp. 6, states that: “The RGU shall order the preparation of an EAW if the evidence presented by the petitioners, proposers, and other persons or otherwise known to the RGU demonstrates that, because of the nature or location of the proposed project, the project may have the potential for significant environmental effects. The RGU shall deny the petition if the evidence presented fails to demonstrate the project may have the potential for significant environmental effects. In considering the evidence, the RGU must take into account the factors listed in part 4410.1700, subpart 7. The RGU shall maintain, either as a separate document or contained within the records of the RGU, a record, including specific findings of fact, of its decision on the need for an EAW”; and
- WHEREAS, in deciding whether the Project may have the potential for significant environmental effects, Minnesota Rules, part 4410.1700, subp. 7, requires the City Council to consider the following criteria:

- A. The type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects;
- B. The cumulative potential effects, including the following factors: whether the cumulative potential effect is significant; whether the contribution from the Project is significant when viewed in connection with other contributions to the cumulative potential effect; the degree to which the project complies with approved mitigation measures specifically designed to address the cumulative potential effect; and the efforts of the proposer to minimize the contributions from the Project;
- C. The extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority. The RGU may rely on mitigation measures that are specific and that can be reasonably expected to effectively mitigate the identified environmental impacts of the Project; and
- D. The extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other available environmental studies undertaken by public agencies or the project proposer, including other environmental impact statements (“EIS”).

WHEREAS, the City Council considered the Petition for an EAW at its meeting on June 16, 2026. The petitioners and the Project proposer were provided the opportunity to present information and comment. The City Council considered all of the evidence and information presented as well as the staff report, which are incorporated herein by reference into this Resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL THAT:

1. The City Council hereby incorporates the above recitals as Findings of Fact and further hereby makes and adopts the Findings of Fact, which are attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as Exhibit A; and
2. Based upon the attached Findings of Fact, the City Council hereby concludes that the evidence presented fails to demonstrate that the Project, based on its nature or location, may have the potential for significant environmental effects. The Petition for preparation of an EAW for the Project is therefore denied and dismissed in its entirety, and City staff are authorized and directed, within five days of this decision, to notify, in writing, the Project proposer, the EQB staff, and the petitioner's representative of this decision.

PASSED by the City Council of the City of Northfield on this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

VOTE:     \_\_\_ ZWEIFEL \_\_\_ BEUMER \_\_\_ DAHLEN \_\_\_ HOLMES  
          \_\_\_ NESS \_\_\_ PETERSON WHITE \_\_\_ SOKUP

## EXHIBIT A

### FINDINGS OF FACT

#### Nature, Location and Zoning of the Project

1. Schrom Construction, Inc. has applied for a preliminary plat for Parcel ID – 2212426022 (Outlot A, Harvest Hills Addition) located in Rice County. Harvest Hills Second Addition is a two-phase, 71-unit market rate rental townhome development on a 10.30-acre parcel situated on the south side of Northfield and west of the Northfield Middle School. Total Project unit creation is 71 – this equates to a gross property density of 6.89 units per acre.
2. The current land use on the site includes some agricultural use for row crops and the rest is remnant land from the development of the Harvest Hills Addition. There is stock piles of dirt, debris and volunteer trees.
3. There are no mapped floodplains on the property. The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) maps do not identify potential wetlands on the subject property.
4. Adjacent land uses to the Project site include a public middle school site to the northeast, with established residential neighborhoods to the north and east comprised primarily of single family detached homes. To the south is agricultural fields used for row crop farming and such land is outside the Project area and outside City limits.
5. The proposed Project is a subdivision that has been reviewed for conformance with Northfield 2045, the City’s comprehensive plan, and has been found to be in alignment the three core principles of Economy, Environment and Equality along with its Guiding Values. These principles are to be evaluated to weigh the impacts of the proposed project to consider what compromises are to be considered to find the best long-term outcomes.
  - **Economy** – In planning for long-term economic health for the community and weighing the needs to serve new development, this housing development will fill a parcel within city limits and zoned N2-B: Neighborhood 2. This supports the economic feasibility of the project because it is adjacent to existing roads, water and sewer connections, and trails/sidewalks. The cost of the city to serve this development are low. It also supports housing near the Northfield schools, supporting families and students who could work or attend there. The developer has also applied for Tax Increment Financing which has been shown to be a need to assist with gap financing to make the development viable.
  - **Environment** – This development assists in provided a more sustainable Northfield by providing 71 housing units within city limits and adjacent to many amenities like trails, sidewalks, parks and the Northfield school campus. Being walkable to the Northfield school system campus for students and potential employees creates a greater ability to walk, bike or roll to that campus and other destinations thus creating the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Equality** – This development creates market rate rental units with 20% of the units rented at 50% area median income to allow for more residents the opportunity to live in Northfield. The development will create an attractive public realm and exceptional place for people as the streets will have sidewalks on both sides of the streets, a trail to the Northfield Middle School and path along Fillmore St. and trees every 40 feet. Creating housing units of these types offers market rates options for people to reside in Northfield.

6. In addition, the future land use map denotes the area as Mixed Use Residential Neighborhood and Enhance as part of the Intervention Map. The Mixed Use Residential Neighborhood is defined as a residential neighborhood, with neighborhood scale or incidental commercial. The density of this area is planned to include a mix of single-family homes and smaller (2 to 12-unit) multifamily structures. Small scale mixed-use infill buildings of two to three stories are also encouraged. Transit would be best supported by an overall citywide residential density of 15 units per acre and excellent connectivity.

Transportation considerations for this future land use continue to plan for active transportation, especially at the edges of this district where the grid pattern transitions to a curvilinear street pattern. Reconnecting and redesigning streets to facilitate safe connections for bike/walk facilities and prioritizing, creating or improving connections to schools, parks and other daily destinations.

This development supports the type of residential housing, density and connectivity as defined by the future land use Mixed Use Residential Neighborhood.

7. From the Interventions map, Enhance areas are primarily located in residential neighborhoods and represent areas needing smaller-scale interventions, such as accessibility and associated public realm and mobility enhancements. Appropriate interventions may include:
  - Traffic calming measures on roadways, especially higher volume collector streets
  - New active transportation connections and improved facilities for people of all ages and abilities biking, walking, and/or rolling to nearby, mixed-use centers, parks and open space, and schools.
  - Creation of new active parks, passive open space, and denser tree canopy
  - Infill and redevelopment that increases the range of available housing types.

The streets in this development support the traffic calming measures with a continued 60 foot right of way for the construction of the street, sidewalk and path along Fillmore St. as a minor collector street. A path to connect to Tyler Park and a trail to connect to the Northfield Middle School will continue to enhance and add active transportation to the community. The trail connection to the middle school will have a connection directly into the subdivision creating a further active and passive space. This also supports infill within city limits and increases the range of housing types available.

8. The site is zoned N2-B: Neighborhood General 2. The land development code states the purpose of the district – see excerpt below:

The N2 district should generally apply to those areas intended for residential neighborhoods designated as "Pipeline" and "Managed Growth" on the

conservation and development map of the comprehensive plan, and those areas designated as "Neighborhood General 1" on the framework map of the comprehensive plan and Neighborhood General 2 on the Zoning Map. The Neighborhood General 2 (N2) district is applied to residential neighborhoods of the city that may include larger vacant areas within the current city limits and areas that will be within city limits through future annexations. The N2 district will create a pedestrian-friendly environment, such as found in the R1 district, with strong neighborhood qualities, such as a grid-like street pattern, consistent block size, compact development, a range of housing types and architectural styles, street connectivity, sidewalks, and homes located in close relationship to the street. In addition, the N2 district will include greenways and natural areas, and options for neighborhood-serving commercial. This development pattern is the preferred future pattern for the city, as expressed in the comprehensive plan.

9. The development property is currently zoned to permit the proposed Project, and the Project has already received preliminary plat approval in City Council Resolution No. 2026-050, dated May 5, 2026.

### **Petition Topics**

10. The citizen petition for a discretionary EAW alleges that:

The specific environmental effect being addressed in this petition is safety, primarily of pedestrians but also of motor traffic itself. Increased traffic has the potential to impact pedestrian safety adversely, and current traffic control may not be adequate to maintain pedestrian safety with increased traffic resulting from Harvest Hills Second Addition. Traffic calming and other mitigation efforts may therefore be required. An EAW is therefore requested.

### **Traffic Impacts**

11. The Petition identifies concerns with increased traffic and safety for pedestrians and children with only two motor vehicle outlets from the neighborhood. The Petition identifies a significant increase in motor traffic intersecting pedestrian and bicycle paths near schools and parks.

### **Type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects**

12. The proposed 71 unit residential mixed use development, will generate approximately 497 trips per day. The streets within the development are extensions of three existing roadways: Fillmore St., Greenfield Dr. West, and Greenfield Dr. East. The proposed development will construct a new east-west public street (Wheatland Ln). All proposed roadways are local streets except for Fillmore Street, which is a minor collector. Fillmore Street will extend to the south and will connect to a future east-west collector (Ford Street) and eventually County State-Aid Highway 1. Fillmore Street connects north to Roosevelt Drive as an existing collector roadway. The street extensions and Wheatland Ln. were developed to construct a street grid design to the greatest extent possible addressing directly both generally accepted traffic flow as

well as access for public safety vehicles.

13. Walkability & Bikeability: The proposed development will include sidewalks on both sides of the proposed streets, this will separate the motor vehicles and pedestrians. The sidewalks will be extended north on the west side of Fillmore Street to connect to the existing sidewalk. The proposed development will include a trail on the east side of Fillmore Street that will be extended on Fillmore Street north outside of the proposed development to Carter Drive. Fillmore Street extends to Roosevelt Drive where a two-way all ages and ability protected bikeway exists. The proposed development plan provides adequate features for the safe and efficient travel of vehicles, bikes and pedestrians.
14. The development will include a trail on the east side of the development in coordination with the Northfield School District to connect into the Middle School property walking and biking network. This trail will be constructed on the west side of middle school campus and will connect to the existing trail network on the west side. The proposed development plan adequate features for the safe and efficient travel of vehicles, bikes and pedestrians.
15. Fillmore Street is designated as “collector” street and the Comprehensive Transportation Plan anticipates growth in traffic as development continues to the south. The current traffic volume on Fillmore Street is 710 vehicles per day and with the proposed development traffic volume, Fillmore Street is well below the volume of a typical collector roadway in Northfield and can support this growth in traffic. Roosevelt Drive, a collector roadway that Fillmore Street connects to has an average daily traffic volume of 1,458 vehicles. This is considered low traffic volume on a collector roadway and can support the proposed traffic from the development. Typical capacity of a two-lane urban collector is up to 10,000 vehicles per day. Other similar collector roadways in Northfield include Cannon Valley Drive (2,400 vehicles per day), Linden Street north of Lincoln Parkway (1,400 vehicles per day), 7<sup>th</sup> Street (1,400 vehicles per day), and St. Olaf Avenue (2,100 vehicles per day).
16. A Petition is required to contain: “E. material evidence indicating that, because of the nature or location of the proposed project, there may be potential for significant environmental effects. The material evidence must physically accompany the petition. It is not sufficient to merely provide a reference or citation to where the evidence may be found.”
17. The courts have interpreted “material evidence” to mean that the evidence filed with the EAW petition must be evidence that is “admissible, relevant, and consequential to determine whether the project may have the potential for significant environmental effects.” “Allegations of vague or generalized fears and concerns are therefore not sufficient under the statute.” “Moreover, in determining whether an EAW is warranted, an RGU properly considers “the extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority.” The material evidence must also physically accompany the petition. It is not sufficient to merely provide a reference or citation to where the evidence may be found.

18. In this case the evidence provided with the Petition does not meet the standard for materiality since the Petition does not present evidence of effects other than generalized concerns and to the extent concerns have been raised they will be adequately addressed through other ongoing regulatory processes and in the development plan.
19. Considering all these factors collectively, there is no potential for significant environmental effects related to traffic, safety, noise, or air pollution as a result of the Project.

#### Cumulative potential effects

20. The Project is a typical, moderately sized City townhome development on land already planned and zoned for such residential uses.
21. The Project will assist in the process of alleviating the significant need for residential development in the City by providing work force and affordable housing.
22. The Project is further proposed to be developed in a similar urban manner as other development that has already occurred in the area.
23. There is no evidence of significant cumulative potential effects relating to traffic and safety as a result of the Project.

#### Mitigation by ongoing regulatory authority

24. Roadway safety, intersection design, and sightline requirements will be approved through City's platting and permitting process and will meet all City Code requirements and applicable engineering standards.
25. The City's regulatory requirements for new development require integration of pedestrian and non-motorized facilities for new roadways including design and safety and the Project's transportation plan meets these requirements, which will be further addressed in the final plat review process.
26. The City is coordinating with the School District to determine the best location for the trail on the west side of the middle school campus.

#### Extent Anticipated or Controlled, or Other studies

27. City Engineering staff reviewed the proposed traffic impacts anticipated from the Project the proposed traffic, safety, and mitigation.

#### **Summary**

28. The evidence presented to and considered by the Council does not demonstrate that, because of the nature or location of the Project, the Project may have the potential for

significant environmental effects. Any environmental effects that may result from the Project are not significant. Areas of potential concern will be monitored and negative effects mitigated through other ongoing regulatory processes.

29. Any cumulative potential effects of the Project are not significant as demonstrated in these findings of fact. The potential effects of the Project when reviewed in connection with the other potential effects in the environmentally relevant area that might reasonably be expected to affect the same environmental resources are not significant. The developer of the Project will be required to obtain and comply with all necessary permitting and approval processes required by the City and other state agencies having jurisdiction and that will address mitigation measures as appropriate. The Project minimizes potential effects by preserving natural resources areas in areas proposed for wooded open space and tree preservation. Further, the City's policies related to tree replacement, planting and landscaping will result in new plantings that could introduce new biodiversity into the project. Additionally, City and State requirements for stormwater management will be applied to this Project, and the Wetland Conservation Act and Endangered Species Act have existing regulation, management and permitting requirements that the Project developer is subject to complying with, should they apply.