

NORTHFIELD PLANNING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION #2022-001

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND CONSIDERATION OF ADDITIONS OR
AMENDMENTS TO CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN PEDESTRIAN AND BIKEWAY
IMPROVEMENTS AND CONSIDERATION OF OTHER RELATED AMENDMENTS TO
RELEVANT POLICY AND CODE DOCUMENTS

WHEREAS, the City of Northfield Land Development Code (LDC), found in chapter 34 of the City Code, authorizes the Planning Commission to advise the City Council on matters regarding implementation of the Comprehensive Plan (Plan); and

WHEREAS, Section 7.4.4 (c) of the LDC authorizes the Planning Commission to initiate and make recommendations to city council regarding proposed amendments, supplements and enactments to this LDC and changes to the zoning map, or changes to the Land Development Code text; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission, pursuant to Minn. Stat. ch. 429, and Sec. 66-16 of the City code also advises the City Council on matters related to public improvements to be paid by assessment; and

WHEREAS, the City Code states that the council will refer the proposed improvement to the planning commission for review under Minn. Stat. § 462.356, subd. 2; and

WHEREAS, the City's five-year Capital Improvement Plan is focused on public improvements to the City's transportation infrastructure, including for bicycling, walking, and other non-motorized transportation options; and

WHEREAS, the Northfield Comprehensive Plan includes the following policies about walking and biking:

- LU9.4 – Improve walking and biking travel patterns through improving connections to the Northfield trail system, improved street crossings and foot-bridges.
- TR1.1 – Develop and implement corridor design guidelines that enable safe and efficient travel for all modes of transportation
- TR1.5 – Establish bicycling as a sustainable, safe, and convenient year-round mode of transportation in Northfield.
- TR2.4 – Establish a pedestrian walkway system connecting residential, educational, commercial/retail, employment and recreational destinations throughout the city.
- TR2.5 – Establish trails and on-street routes for the use of bicycles as a year-round mode of transportation; and

WHEREAS, Northfield's Complete Streets policy helps implement Plan policies with its policy vision to, "Create a balanced, highly interconnected and attractive surface transportation network which is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and

Transportation Plan and other relevant policies of the City,” using the latest and best design standards; and

WHEREAS, the Complete Streets policy also calls for streets to serve important climate action functions with its policy to, “Manage stormwater and improve Cannon River water quality by reducing impervious surfaces, narrowing street widths where suitable to the context, planting street trees, and, where appropriate, increasing stormwater infiltration along streets through the design of the public right-of-way;” and

WHEREAS, Northfield’s Safe Routes to School policy was adopted to increase the safety and convenience for walking and biking to school as a public health issue. The policy notes parent concerns about the speed of traffic and lack of safe crossings as deterrents to kids walking and biking to school; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Action Plan recommends updating the policies above as well as budgeting to, “Incorporate additional transportation modes (such as bike infrastructure, wide sidewalks) and green stormwater infrastructure systems (such as rain gardens) into street maintenance and reconstruction projects;” and

WHEREAS, death and injury to people walking and biking are increasing at local, county, and state levels as identified in Minnesota State Department of Public Safety records, and nationally according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS); and

WHEREAS, that data demonstrates that between 2013 and 2020 there were more than 530 vehicle crashes with pedestrians and cyclists resulting in injury or death, statewide, including seven in Rice County in 2020 and 76 in Dakota County in 2020 and that there were 57 individuals killed in a vehicle-pedestrian-related crashes in Minnesota in 2021, and that the first quarter of 2022 saw an increase of 7% over the number of fatalities in the first quarter of 2022 in the midwest region, including Minnesota; and that while 19 states nationwide saw a decrease in the number of vehicle-related death and injury, Minnesota was not one of them; and

WHEREAS, two individuals have been struck and killed while bicycling in Northfield since the beginning of the year; and

WHEREAS, Street design helps determine speed and safety, and a top, “contributing factor in Minnesota 2020 traffic fatalities,” was related to “Speed;” and

WHEREAS, current City general practice of undertaking safety projects only during CIP-programmed street projects may delay improvements not linked to street projects which are critical links in Northfield’s bike/walk network; and

WHEREAS, the Commission therefore finds that more must be done to remove various barriers to safe, accessible, non-motorized transportation options, potentially

through supportive regulation and consciously developing and specifically applying equitable, climate-conscious, and human-centered policies that prioritize safety and comfort for all ages and abilities as population growth and real estate investment occurs; and

WHEREAS, staff commissioned Alta Planning + Design, an internationally recognized active transportation design firm to analyze and make recommendations on bike/walk improvements for current CIP projects and more generally; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has reviewed the report and recommendations and is carrying out its statutory duties to make recommendations to the City Council related to the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Commission strongly supports the City Council initiative to plan for and fund safe, comfortable places to walk, bike, and roll to implement the Comprehensive Plan and Complete Streets Policy using active transportation experts; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission strongly supports Recommendation No. 1 to revise CIP categories to add Sidewalk Construction, All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Bikeways, and Pedestrian Crossing Improvements; and

WHEREAS, the Commission strongly supports Recommendation No. 3 to employ a quick build approach to improve areas which are not presently programmed in the CIP which helps prioritize non-motorized transportation as safe and legitimate modes of transportation independent of car infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission strongly supports the use of guides published - and freely available to planners, engineers, and policy makers in the motorized and non-motorized transportation realm – by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), an association of 91 major North American cities and transit agencies formed to exchange transportation ideas, insights, and practices and cooperatively approach national transportation issues; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission respectfully requests that the City Council in 2022, and if not, in 2023, allocate funding and staff oversight to support additional work by a consultant to enhance and ensure understanding by the general public of the intent and purpose of the proposed preferred bikeway types related to land use, roadway type, roadway context, roadway improvement/enhancement/maintenance schedule, and roadway user(s), including, but not limited to: integrating the three types of changes in the draft: bike facilities, pedestrian improvements, and green infrastructure which are currently treated separately to make recommendations for all three elements in each design; presenting further design work for intersections, street crossings and green infrastructure on the planned routes; recommend green infrastructure improvements to be included in quick-build scenarios; make recommendations for how to update the City's Complete Streets policy and Climate Action Plan to reflect currently accepted national and regional policy and

practice related to non-motorized transportation and climate change/climate adaptation; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the current analysis, the Commission finds that the analysis would benefit from additional community engagement in order to provide a more organic understanding of how people of all ages and abilities perceive the safety of bicycling, walking, rolling, and driving in Northfield; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northfield Planning Commission, under the authority of the City's Land Development Code, recommends further study of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvement recommendations, and respectfully requests that the City of Northfield dedicate staff resources and identify and prioritize any available funding source(s) for additional study, as well as consider any related zoning text amendments to the Land Development Code, as well as consider any related updates to existing policy documents including, but not limited to, the Comprehensive Plan, the Climate Action Plan, the Complete Streets Policy, Safe Routes to School initiatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Northfield Planning Commission recommends the City consider allocating financial resources for the City to become a NACTO affiliate member in order to avail itself of the full offering from this forum of valuable resources to learn best street design and transportation practices from around the US and for peer-to-peer exchange of innovative policies and ideas.

PASSED by the Planning Commission of the City of Northfield this 15th day of September 2022.

Chair

Member

VOTE: ___BUCKHEIT ___HEISLER ___KUHLMANN
 ___MENARD ___NOWAK ___SCHROEER ___SOKUP

EXHIBIT A

City of Northfield Pedestrian + Bikeway Analyzation by Alta Planning + Design
Draft: August 2022