



To: Honorable Mayor & City Council
All city employees; city attorney; board and commission members

From: City of Northfield Leadership Team:

Ben Martig, City Administrator
Lynette Peterson, City Clerk
Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator
Michelle Mahowald, Communications & Human Resources Director
Brenda Angelstad, Finance Director
Jake Reilly, Community Planning & Development Director
Natalie Draper, Director of Library Services
Jeff Schroepfer, Police Chief
Dave Bennett, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Date: March 21, 2025

RE: City Administrator Report for March 2025

Background

Northfield is an open, safe, and welcoming community, recognized for its world-class colleges and historic riverfront downtown, and is dedicated to sustainably enhancing and preserving its vibrant culture, celebrated arts, strong economy, and an excellent quality of life where all can thrive.

This memo is intended to provide a range of City operational reports from employee activity, project updates, community events, meetings and more.

Administrative Services Department

Submitted by Ben Martig, City Administrator

Strategic Planning

Craig Rapp will facilitate our next strategic planning session on Saturday, April 5, 2025, starting at 7:30 a.m. in the second floor training room at City Hall.

Program Services

Submitted by Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator

Solar rooftop project: Northfield Community Resource Center

The project was initially put on hold due to pending grid congestion issues with Xcel Energy. However, that issue has since been resolved. Despite this, the City decided to pause construction due to uncertainty regarding state funding and federal tax credit disbursements. Specifically, the City was awaiting clarification on the disbursement of funds from Minnesota's Solar Rooftop on Public Facilities Grant, as well as the status of tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Federal agencies had been directed to halt disbursement of funds allocated under both the IRA and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, creating additional funding uncertainty.

The funding structure for the NCRC solar project is as follows:

- 60% from state funding (Secured \$72,000)
- 10% local / domestic material match IRA (unsecured)
- 30% from federal tax credits under the IRA (unsecured)

Since the last update, the state confirmed on February 25 that it has secured and will release \$72,000 in grant funds to the City. However, it remains unclear whether federal tax credits are still being challenged or if the federal government has resumed disbursing these funds.

With state funds secured the City will be moving forward with the projects. The City would need to cover the 40% funding gap, which amounts to \$48,000. The Carbon Reduction Fund will be used to offset some of this potential shortfall.

Climate Champion Program

The City of Northfield is excited to launch the Climate Champion Program on April 1! This initiative empowers local businesses to reduce energy consumption, cut costs, and lead the way in climate action.

Through a partnership with Energy Smart, participating businesses will receive a professional energy audit, identify energy-saving opportunities, and implement efficiency upgrades. Qualifying improvements may even be eligible for rebates through the City, making sustainability more accessible and impactful.

Join us in building a greener future! Learn more at northfieldmn.gov/ClimateChampions (page not active until April 1)

City Clerk

Submitted by Lynette Peterson, City Clerk

No report.

Communications & Human Resources Division

Submitted by Michelle Mahowald, Communications & Human Resources Director

Supporting city departments

Here are some of the current and upcoming projects and events we are supporting and creating materials.

- Community Market Fair tabling coordination (March 29).
- Spanish translation and proofing of translated city documents.
- Technical review of draft Comp Plan.
- Webpage, order form and flyer for tree sale.
- Updated materials and new videos for all rebates programs.
- Video of EDA assistance with KYMN Radio interview

Community Events Calendar

The Community Events Calendar has 391 upcoming events, there are 748 registered users, The Audience Geography includes 3 users from three other countries Canada, Ecuador and Germany. Our domestic audience geography includes 2 users from

Washington state, 1 from Oregon, 13 users from Kansas, 1 user from Colorado, 1 from Boston, 1 from Michigan, 1 from Chicago, 6 from Miami and 25 from Minnesota.

If that sparked your curiosity, make sure to take a look at the Community Events Calendar and peak all the events happening right here in our town!

[Events Calendar - Northfield, Minnesota](#)

Northfield Public Broadcasting (NPB)

Submitted by Sam Temple, Northfield Public Broadcasting station manager

I'm excited to share that real progress is underway at the State Capitol to support community television and expand access to broadband across Minnesota.

This week, two important bills had their first committee hearings:

- **The Equal Access to Broadband Act** (HF974 / SF2045) – Championed by the League of Minnesota Cities, this bill would help ensure equitable broadband access in communities across the state and grant franchising authority to local municipalities.
- **Stopgap Funding for Community Television Stations** (HF1740 / SF2289) – Led by the Minnesota Association of Community Telecommunications Administrators (MACTA), this bill would provide crucial short-term funding to keep our community media stations strong and serving the public.

We're proud to have bipartisan support for both efforts. These bills represent an important investment in local connection, transparency, and access to information—and we'll keep you updated as they move through the legislative process.

Check out coverage of MACTA's hearing here:

<https://www.house.mn.gov/SessionDaily/Story/18622>

Employment opportunities

We're hiring! Join the Northfield team with the best Cows, Colleges, and Co-workers!

Summer seasonal opportunities are now open.

Sign up to automatically receive job opportunities via text or email when posted on the city website: northfieldmn.gov/notify

More information: northfieldmn.gov/jobs

Information Technology (IT) Services Division

Submitted by Kurt Wolf, IT Manager

Helpdesk tickets

- We are maintaining a 65.71% closure rate on tickets in less than 30 days.
- 71 new tickets have been opened in the last month.
- We successfully closed 90 tickets in the last month.

Computer replacements

City administrator and utilities manager received new devices.

Finance Division

Submitted by Brenda Angelstad, Finance Director

Year End

It's that time of year again, Finance remains focused on year-end activities and audit. Abdo, the city's auditor, will be onsite the week of April 7 conducting the audit fieldwork. They will continue to work on the audit remotely later in April and May and will present to Council at the work session in June.

Motor Vehicle Division

Submitted by Brenda Angelstad, Finance Director

No report.

Northfield Liquor Store

Submitted by Brian Whitt, Liquor Operations Manager

Community value projects

Throughout the month of April, the Northfield Liquor Store is partnering with Molson Coors for yet another community value project, supporting local animal shelters in

Minnesota. Locally, we are raising money in the month of April for a local organization called Believet!

Believet Canine Service Partners is a non-profit based out of Northfield, and provides highly skilled service dogs, free of charge, to disabled Veterans. You can read all about the great things that they do at believet.org.

In addition, anyone who adopts an animal from a shelter this month can receive a \$100 rebate check from the Minnesota Municipal Beverage Association by filling out a simple form that we have in-store. Cash donations will be accepted in-store through April 30, and 100% will go to the Believet organization.



Library Department

Submitted by Natalie Draper, Director of Library Services

Programs, outreach, collections and services

- April 6 to 12 is National Library Week. Listen to the Director of Library Services on KYMN on April 4 at 8:40 a.m. to find out how we're celebrating.

- Database upgrade. After more than 20 years, SELCO is upgrading the shared database (ILS). Patrons can look forward to an improved user experience once all data is migrated. We hope to minimize disruptions during this time:
 - Help the Library get our patron records updated as we prepare to migrate to a new database (ILS). During the month of April (through April 27), library card replacements are free to patrons who come in to update their accounts. Northfield patrons may choose from 4 card designs, each featuring artwork by Minnesota artists: Rocky Casillas, John Maakestad, Paula Rojas, and Michael Sweere.
 - Patrons can also help us out as we complete the database migration by holding onto their books between April 27 and May 1. No books will be due during that time.
 - Patrons may notice delays in new materials as we work to catalog new books that arrive during the downtime. No new materials will be cataloged between April 14 and May 1.
 - Overdrive (Libby), Kanopy, Hoopla, and library computers will be available during the migration.
 - The library will be closed for training on April 27 and 28.
- April is National Poetry Month as well. To see all poetry month activities in addition to those listed below, check the calendar at <https://mynpl.libcal.com/calendar>
- Upcoming programs:
- Kickoff Poetry Month with Winona poet, James Armstrong, who will read from his latest book of poems, *Empire* on April 1 at 6:30 p.m.
 - James Armstrong is the author of three poetry books: *Monument in a Summer Hat* (New Issues Press), *Blue Lash* (Milkweed Editions) and, most recently, *Empire* (Shipwreckt Books). He is also the co-author with Kim Chapman of a book of essays, *Nature, Culture and Two Friends Talking* (North Star Press). His work has appeared in many journals and anthologies, including *Where Once Voice Ends Another Begins: 150 Years of Minnesota Poetry*; *Undocumented: Great Lakes Poets Laureate on Social Justice*; *Amethyst and Agate: Poems of Lake Superior*; *Rewilding: Poems for the Environment*; and *The Wonder of Small Things: Poems of Peace and Renewal*. A professor of English at Winona State University for

24 years, Armstrong was the city of Winona's first Poet Laureate, during which time he helped found the Maria W. Faust Sonnet Contest.

(<http://sonnetcontest.org/>). You can read more about him at <https://jamesarmstrongpoet.com/>

- Turn Your Memories into Memoirs: A Writing Workshop (in Spanish). April 3 at 6:30 p.m.
- Join Anna De Santis, author of “Historias Tragicómicas de una Soltera en la América Profunda” (2023), for a memoir writing workshop in Spanish, taking place over two sessions: Thursday, April 3 and 10, from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Share your stories, whether for family or the world. Write about any aspect of your life and bring it to the meeting. Newcomers are welcome without bringing any writing. No prior experience required. Registration required.
- Saturday, April 26 at 11 a.m. Celebrate National Poetry Month this April with the Northfield Poet Laureate Russ Paladin, and the Minnesota Poet Laureate Gwen Nell Westerman! Russ and Gwen will come together for an interactive event that includes poetry readings, a conversation on craft and inspiration, and writing – with a focus on the poetic form of tanka. Participants will have the chance to dive deeper into the art of tanka with a short, guided writing activity—an opportunity to create your own verse, no matter your level of experience. We'll also have light refreshments and each participant will receive a complimentary copy of “Songs, Blood Deep” to take home. Whether you're a seasoned poetry lover or simply curious about exploring this unique art form, come celebrate the power of words with the laureates!
 - Gwen Nell Westerman is a poet, visual artist, and scholar. Her roots are deep in the landscape of the tallgrass prairie and reveal themselves in her art and writing. She is an enrolled citizen of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, and her father's family is from the Heipa District. Her mother's family is from the Flint District of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma. Neither of her parents spoke English when they were sent as small children to boarding schools in Oklahoma and South Dakota. Singing and writing for as long as she can remember, Gwen understands from experience

the important ways language and the land shape who we are. She was appointed as the Poet Laureate of Minnesota by Governor Tim Walz in 2021.

- This event is free to attend, however registration is required. Light refreshments will be provided. Space is limited so register soon! Registration Questions: registrations@mnhum.org.
<https://www.mnhum.org/event/northfield-threads-of-tanka-a-reading-and-poetry-writing-event/>

Library Board & Friends of the Library (FFNPL) and Arts & Culture Commission (ACC)

- The Arts and Culture Commission and Culuture Crew are pleased to announce Bob Gregory-Bjorklund has been named Northfield's Living Treasure for 2025. A celebration will be held at The Grand Event Center on April 28 at 7:00 p.m.
- The Library Board has approved the library's 2024 annual report to the state and all data has been submitted.

Community Development Department

Submitted by Jake Reilly, Community Development Director

General

- Emery John started as the new Program Associate (also a new title for the Department) on March 3. She will support programs administered by the HRA and EDA.
- Twenty-five people from both private colleges applied for four internship postings. Internships are expected to begin in June.

Building and Inspections

- The building official and ordinance enforcement staff continue to work to ensure safe and sanitary housing conditions at Riverside Manufactured Home Park.
- The building official is working toward a successful receipt of institutional delegation. This will allow the City to charge and receive the fees associated with school, hospital and other institutional building projects.

Economic Development Authority (EDA)

- One qualified response was received from a developer group for the 5th and Washington liquor store development project. The proposal is for a market-rate condo project with retail and parking. The EDA will provide guidance on the process.
- Fifty-three Connecting Business and Community (CBC) interviews were sent to University of Minnesota Extension. This is the highest response rate in five years and one of the highest in the last decade. The next steps in the first phase of the process will begin in April.
- The next EDA board meeting is March 24 and will include information about the Comprehensive Plan draft, rental license ordinance updates, additional loan request for the Loon Liquor/Northfield News building reuse and redevelopment project, and information about the ice arena.

Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC)

- The HPC and Park and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) recommended that Central Park be locally designated as a historic site. The City Council will consider the application at an upcoming meeting.

Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)

- The last HRA board meeting was March 6. The board supported a staff recommendation to address the limitation on rental units in R1 and R2 zoning districts and establish a short-term-rental license process.
- HRA staff submitted a letter of intent to apply for local housing vouchers through Minnesota Housing. Minnesota Housing has not yet responded.
- HRA staff applied for \$125,000 in matching funds from Minnesota Housing for the local housing trust fund on March 19, 2025.

Planning and Zoning

- Planning staff are busy working on code revisions, the Comprehensive Plan, applications for site plan review, sign review, and other development related initiatives.
- The Planning Commission meeting on March 20 addressed the 2045-horizon comprehensive plan document. The text is substantially complete. Graphics

and print-friendly and digital versions are in process and will be part of the package of items that are recommended to the City Council this spring.

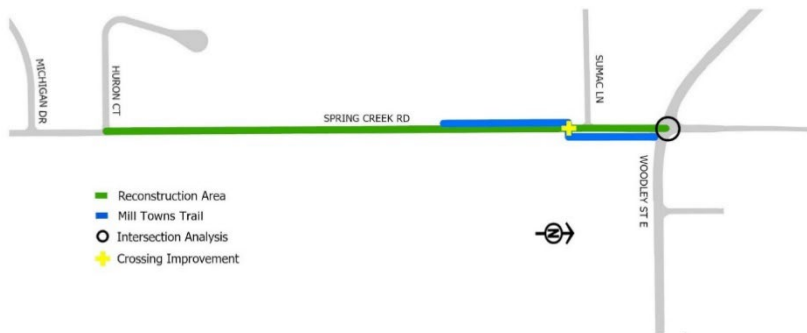
Public Works Department

Submitted by David Bennett, PE, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Engineering Division

2026 Spring Creek Road Reconstruction and Mill Towns State Trail Improvements Project

Staff has been meeting with the design Engineer and Rice County officials, continuing discussions on the Woodley Street and Spring Creek Road intersection. Staff is scheduled to discuss design options with City Council at the May 13, 2025 City Council meeting.



For additional information, visit the project website:

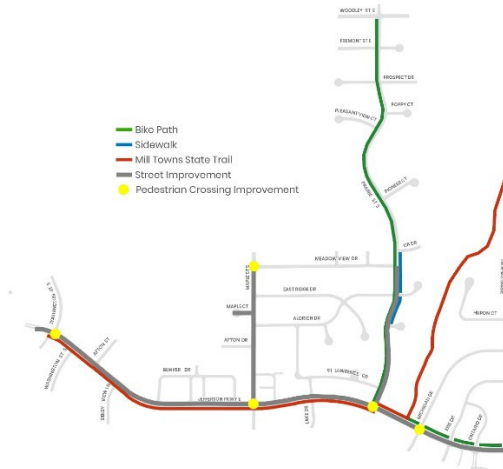
<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/1640/Spring-Creek-Road-Reconstruction-Mill-To>

2026 Mill and Overlay & Mill Towns State Trail Improvements

Staff is busy working on the feasibility study portion of this project. The project includes the following proposed improvements:

- Maple Street from Meadow View Drive to Jefferson Parkway (mill and overlay)
- Maple Court (mill and overlay)
- Prairie Street from Meadow View Drive to Jefferson Parkway (mill and overlay)
- Jefferson Parkway from Division Street to Spring Creek Road (mill and overlay)

- Prairie Street from Woodley Street to Jefferson Parkway (bikeway improvements)
- Prairie Street from Lia Drive to Prairie View Court (new sidewalk on east side)
- Jefferson Parkway from Prairie Street to Spring Creek Road (new trail on north side)
- Mill Towns Trail from Division Street to Spring Creek Road (south side of Jefferson Parkway until Prairie Street then north through Spring Creek Park)
- Jefferson Parkway and Washington Street (intersection improvements)
- Jefferson Parkway and Maple Street (intersection improvements)
- Jefferson Parkway and Prairie Street (intersection improvements)
- Jefferson Parkway and Michigan Drive (intersection improvements)



Staff will be hosting Neighborhood Meeting #1 for this project on April 16, 2025, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Training Room at City Hall. Staff will be mailing out notices to a 350' radius of the project corridor in early April.

For additional information, visit the project website:

<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/1638/2026-Mill-and-Overlay-Mill-Towns-State-T>

Wall Street Road Improvements Project

Tree removal crews removed the remainder of the trees in the approved easement areas late last week on the entire project corridor. Due to the snow last week, bridge crews decided to hold off on any major work to allow the site to sufficiently dry out.

This week, bridge crews were onsite to begin preparing for the box culvert replacement on Spring Creek. Crews shut down the water early in the week to remove the existing water main in the area of the new box culverts. Removal crews worked the rest of the week getting the remaining removals completed, and setting up the creek bypass in anticipation of excavating for the new box culvert next week.

For additional information, visit the project website:

<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/1568/Wall-Street-Road-Improvements-Project>



Streets and Parks Division

No report.

Utilities Division

Northfield Wastewater Treatment Plant receives Certificate of Commendation

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency presented the City of Northfield's Wastewater Treatment Plant with a Certificate of Commendation for exceptional compliance with its NPDES/SDS wastewater permit during the 2024 review period. To receive the certificate, the facility must demonstrate consistent compliance with monitoring, operation, and maintenance requirements; submit accurate, on-time reports to the MPCA; and employ staff certified by the MPCA in wastewater operations.

Northfield's Wastewater Treatment Plant is one of 235 wastewater plants that received this award for 2024. Congratulations to the Wastewater staff on their excellence in achieving this award!



Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Project

The contractor has recently replaced one of the influent lift pumps and is in the process of replacing the last lift pump. The variable frequency drive for the lift pump is being installed as well.



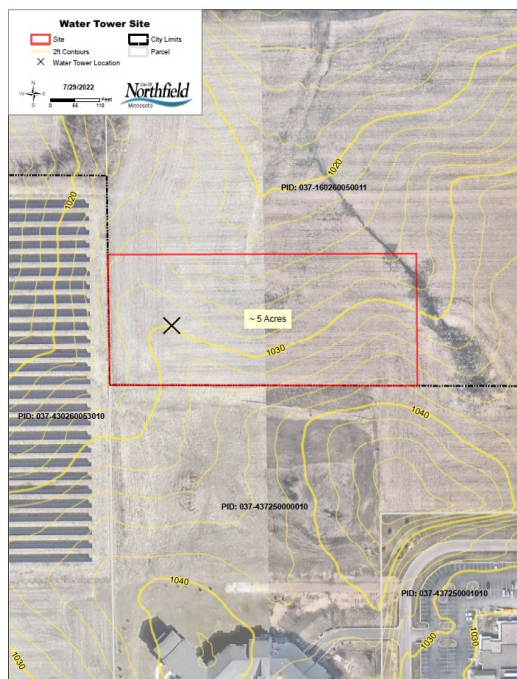
The UV roof has been replaced as well as hand railings have been installed.



Contractors are installing card access to all buildings at the wastewater plant. Additionally, programmable logic controllers (PLCs) are being installed in all the buildings at the wastewater plant. The project punch list is currently being developed, and the contractor is preparing for project completion this summer.

Northwest Water Tower

The City Council approved moving federal funds from the water treatment plant to construction of a water tower in the northwest area that will help industrial growth. Staff is developing a request for proposals to seek professional design services that will be approved by City Council in May. The water tower will be a 750,000-gallon tower.



Water Treatment Plant

Currently, the water treatment plant project is on hold. The City advises residents who have infants under one year old that they should not drink tap water or mix it with formula without further treatment. The treatment needed to lower the level of manganese at your home is an under-the-sink reverse osmosis system or a water softener that supplies your drinking water tap (most are not plumbed this way) or purchase bottled water. Staff will be working on a communication plan for informing the public on how to protect their children from the effects of manganese. More

information on manganese can be found at.

<https://northfieldmn.gov/1293/Manganese-in-Drinking-Water>

Ultra Violet (UV) Disinfection Season

The UV system has been put back in operation for the wastewater treatment plant. The system is required to run from April 1 to October 31 annually. Staff maintained the system during its off-season and has put it back into operation to ensure proper functionality.



Ford Lightning

A Ford Lightning electric truck was purchased for the Utilities Department. As part of the electric vehicle fleet study, an electric truck was recommended for the water meter vehicle. The truck was up for replacement this year and a Ford Lightning was purchased. Staff is working on outfitting the truck.



Facilities Division

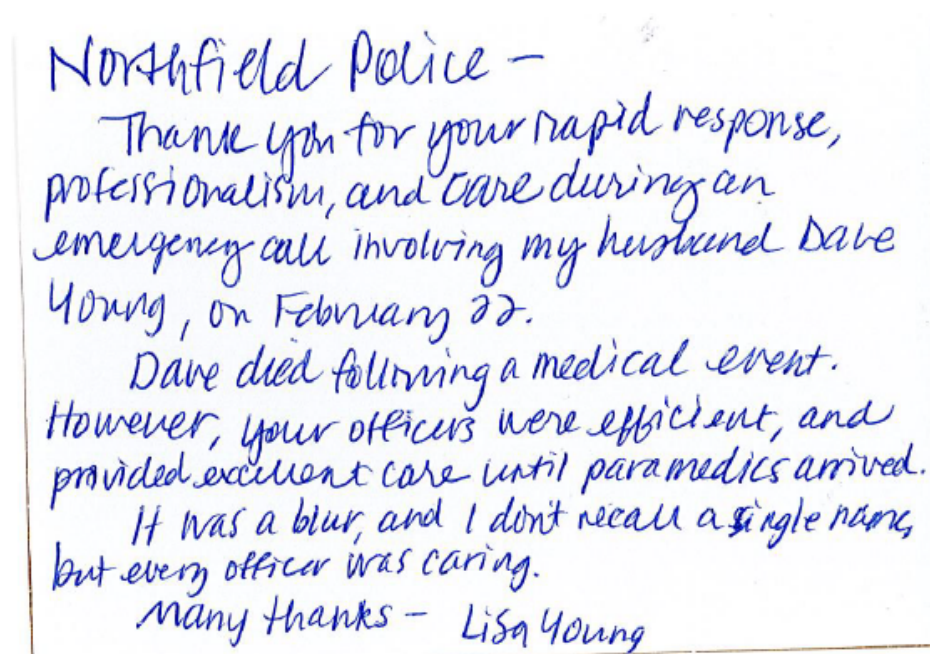
No report.

Police Department

Submitted by Jeff Schroepfer, Chief of Police

Thank you

Officers Kelling, Klobe, Murphy-Smith and Eschenbach received a thank you note following a medical they responded to. Unfortunately the person didn't make it, but his wife wanted to thank the officers for their care.



Donation

The police department accepted the donation of 10 first suppression tools (FSTs) from the Northfield Masons. These tools will be placed in each frontline squad car for quick deployment for fires. Thank you to the Northfield Masons!



New officer

Officer Kenna Eschenbach was officially sworn in at the March 18 City Council meeting. She will begin solo patrol the end of March. Welcome Officer Eschenbach!



Meals on Wheels

During the last week of March, the Police Department staff delivered Meals on Wheels on 3 separate days. Hilary, Annie, Lynn, Michelle, Deputy Chief Haider and Chief Schroepfer all delivered meals.