

(reserved for recording information)

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS RESOLUTION ZBA #2025-001

A RESOLUTION BY THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS OF THE CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA, APPROVING A VARIANCE REQUEST AT 203 MAPLE ST. S.

WHEREAS, Matthew Olson and Maureen Looby (the “Applicants”) are the owners of a parcel of land located at 203 Maple St. S. in the City of Northfield; and

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

WHEREAS, Northfield City Code, Chapter 34, Section 3.2, Table 3.2-9: Minimum Dimensional Standards for the R1 District, of the Land Development Code (“LDC”), sets the rear yard setback at 30 feet for an attached garage; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant desires to and has requested a variance to construct an addition, including an attached garage, that encroaches 25 feet into the 30-foot rear yard setback; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes, section 462.357, and Northfield City Code, section 8.5.15, establish the procedures and criteria for consideration by the Zoning Board of Appeals of a requested variance to the LDC and shall be subject to the Type 6 review procedure as established in Northfield City Code, section 8.4.9, Type 6 Review Procedure (Quasi-Judicial Decision by the Zoning Board of Appeals); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 462.357, subd. 6, and Northfield City Code, section 8.5.16, the Zoning Board of Appeals may only grant applications

for variances where practical difficulties in complying with the LDC exist and each of the following criteria are satisfied:

- (a) The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of this LDC;
- (b) The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan;
- (c) The property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by this LDC;
- (d) The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner; and
- (e) The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality; and

WHEREAS, the Zoning Board of Appeals held a public hearing, following required public notice thereof, on July 17, 2025, and has reviewed the requested variance and has considered the required statutory variance criteria identified in the Staff report and proposed findings with respect to such criteria.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS OF THE CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA, that the Northfield Zoning Board of Appeals has duly considered the required criteria contained in state law and the LDC as applicable to the above-requested variance regarding the property legally described in Exhibit A, and hereby adopts the findings of fact contained in the staff report regarding the same, which is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference as Exhibit B.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the requested variance is hereby approved and granted, based upon the above-referenced adopted findings, to allow an addition to encroach 25 feet into the 30-foot rear yard setback.

PASSED by the Zoning Board of Appeals of the City of Northfield this 17th day of July, 2025.

Chair

Member

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

EXHIBIT A

PROPERTY LEGAL DESCRIPTION

The North 99 feet of the West 165 feet of Block 3, in Wheaton's Addition to Northfield, the City of Northfield, Rice County, Minnesota

EXHIBIT B

FINDINGS OF FACT

Findings of Fact:

Northfield Land Development Code Table 3.2-9: Minimum Dimensional Standards for the I1 District sets the minimum rear yard setback for attached garages in the R1-B Zoning District at 30 feet. The applicant requests a variance to encroach 25 feet in the 30-foot rear setback to construct an addition. Analysis of the variance request is addressed below.

Criterion (a) The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the LDC.

Finding:

The project is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the LDC. The applicants propose to construct an addition that replaces their aging detached garage with an attached garage in a similar location, utilizing the existing driveway to provide access. The proposed addition increases the interior side yard setback and reduces the total impervious surface on the lot by 462 square feet. The variance would allow for the continued reasonable use of the property as a single-family residence, consistent with the purpose of the R1-B zoning district. The variance would protect and enhance the unique character of the historic neighborhood and would not unduly affect the development or use of nearby property.

Purpose statement of the R1-B District: Residential District:

- (1) The R1 district should generally apply to those areas designated as "Neighborhood Central" on the framework map of the comprehensive plan.
- (2) The Residential (R1) district generally includes the established neighborhoods surrounding downtown Northfield that are characterized by traditional urban development qualities such as a grid pattern street network, sidewalks, and a range of single-family, two-family, and some multi-family dwellings on smaller lots. The purpose of the R-1B district is to continue to support single-family, two-family, and three-family attached and detached dwellings within the existing character of the city's older neighborhoods. The essential, existing character of the R1 district should be reinforced with any infill or redevelopment of properties. The primary intent of this zone is to strengthen the character of existing historic neighborhoods within Northfield and to protect and enhance the unique character of those existing neighborhoods, particularly in locations where this character may be most susceptible to change.

The Land Development Code was adopted to protect and promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the city. More specifically, the purpose of these regulations is to:

- 1.1.1 Maintain and enhance the community's distinct small town character.

- 1.1.2 Preserve and protect the area's natural, historic, and cultural resources while providing for improved methods of integrating these resources in the community.
- 1.1.3 Encourage growth in infill locations as the desired location of development with expansion on the edge of the city a secondary priority.
- 1.1.4 Create residential community areas with strong neighborhood qualities including pedestrian-friendly streets, community gathering spaces, and basic commercial needs within walking distance.
- 1.1.5 Encourage the development of neighborhoods that incorporate a variety of housing types to serve the needs of a diverse population.
- 1.1.6 Allow for places with a mixture of uses that are distinctive and contribute to the city's overall vitality.
- 1.1.7 Provide standards and guidelines for continuing strategic growth and sustainable development.
- 1.1.8 Provide for the expansion and diversification of the economic base to assure a strong economy.
- 1.1.9 Promote an ethic of sustainability in all activities to ensure that proposed development and redevelopment will, at a minimum, conserve energy and natural resources.
- 1.1.10 Improve and promote connectivity to better serve residents and to improve the function of the overall street network.
- 1.1.11 Ensure that proposed development is of human scale, primarily pedestrian-oriented to the extent appropriate, and designed to create exceptional streetscapes and pedestrian spaces.
- 1.1.12 Minimize vehicle traffic by providing for a mixture of land uses, pedestrian-oriented development, compact community form, safe and effective multi-modal traffic circulation (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular), and adequate on- and off-street parking facilities.
- 1.1.13 Protect the rural character of certain areas of the community as identified in the comprehensive plan.
- 1.1.14 Encourage vibrancy in the downtown core and fringe areas.
- 1.1.15 Ensure compatibility between different types of development and land uses.
- 1.1.16 Create a comprehensive and stable pattern of land uses upon which to plan transportation, water supply, sewerage, energy, and other public facilities and utilities.

The proposal is not in conflict with any LDC goals and it meets the following purposes:

- 1.1.1 Maintain and enhance the community's distinct small town character.

1.1.2 Preserve and protect the area's natural, historic, and cultural resources while providing for improved methods of integrating these resources in the community.

1.1.4 Create residential community areas with strong neighborhood qualities including pedestrian-friendly streets, community gathering spaces, and basic commercial needs within walking distance.

Criterion (b) The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Finding:

The variance is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, it does not conflict with any strategies or outcomes identified in Chapter 3 - Access, Chapter 4 – Sustainable Economic Future, or Chapter 5 – Resilient Infrastructure. The property is located in an area identified as “Enhance” by the STEP Framework Map, meaning the area “need[s] minor improvement, with interventions dependent on the land use and neighborhood context... This category does not anticipate any major change to existing land uses... Interventions in “enhance” areas may include the following strategies:

f. Infill and redevelopment that increases the range of housing types.

While not adding additional units, the proposed project does slightly intensify the land use by adding habitable space above and adjacent to the garage, while reducing impermeable surface by reducing the driveway footprint.

Criterion (c) Property Owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the LDC.

Finding:

The requested variance will result in a reasonable use of the property. There is an existing, deteriorated two-car detached carriage house style garage located in approximately the same location as the proposed addition. The proposed addition adds habitable space above the vehicle parking and an enclosed connection to the principal structure, resulting in minimal changes to the existing conditions.

Criterion (d) The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.

Finding:

The plight of the landowner is due to past decisions to build the principal structure with a front setback greater than 50 feet. This reduces the rear yard to 42 feet, making the placement of an attached garage in the rear yard without a variance impossible, despite the location being preferred for promoting a vibrant pedestrian experience, and consistent with the existing garage placement.

Criterion (e) The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.

Finding:

Granting the variance will not alter the essential character of the locality. The current use of the property is a single-family residence with a detached, one-and-a-half (1 ½) story garage located in approximately the same location, accessed by an existing driveway. The proposed addition adds an enclosed connection to the principal structure, and constructs a garage with finished, habitable space above, of a similar size. The proposed addition moves the garage away from the interior side property line, reducing the length of the driveway and overall impervious surface, but the structure will remain clearly secondary to the principal structure.