



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

From: Ben Martig, City Administrator  
Lynette Peterson, City Clerk  
Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator  
Michelle Mahowald, Communications & Human Resources Director  
Kurt Wolf, IT Manager  
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: September 26, 2025

RE: City Administrator Report for September 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*

No report

## Program Services

*Submitted by Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator*

### CERTs Seed Grant application

A grant application has been submitted to the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) Seed Grant Program for up to \$10,000 to support labor costs associated with the installation of EV charging stations at the Northfield Community Resource Center (NCRC) in 2026. The CERTs Seed Grant Program provides funding for innovative community based clean energy projects across Minnesota, with an emphasis on projects that advance efficiency, renewable energy, and electric vehicle adoption at the local level.

As part of the application, the Community Action Center provided a letter of support in partnership with the City, as their operations include plans to purchase electric vehicles for organizational use. The city's Carbon Reduction funds will cover the cost of the charging equipment itself, as CERTs Seed Grants may be applied only to labor and not to parts or materials.

To learn more about the CERTs Seed Grant Program, visit:

<https://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/certs-seed-grants>

### HVAC contractor training

The City is partnering with the Air Source Heat Pump Collaborative (ASHP) to host a training for local HVAC contractors. The session will provide participants with the skills and resources needed to design and install heat pumps.

The training, developed in collaboration with utilities, distributors, and manufacturers, will cover:

- Customer research and industry trends
- Sizing and design

- Incentives and financing

More local contractors trained in heat pump technology means Northfield residents and businesses will have access to efficient systems that lower utility bills while helping the City meet its climate action goals.

Contractors attending this in-person session meet the requirements to join the Preferred Contractor Network, which connects homeowners with trusted heat pump installers. The training will be held on Wednesday, October 22, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Northfield Public Library, Bunday Room.

<https://www.mnashp.org/>

## **Battery bank at NCRC**

Staff is preparing to submit a proposal to the Minnesota Department of Commerce to consider the Northfield Community Resource Center (NCRC) for the installation of a battery bank. The NCRC serves as a critical community lifeline, providing essential services such as senior programs, Head Start, a food pantry, and other social support programs.

During disruptive events—such as power outages, severe weather, or other emergencies—the NCRC is particularly vulnerable because it currently does not have a backup generator. Installing a battery bank would increase the facility’s resilience, ensuring continued operation of vital services when the community needs them most.

<https://mn.gov/commerce/business/rfp.jsp>

## **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

We are supporting and creating materials for current and upcoming projects and events:

- Human Rights Award
- Bridge Square visitor sign
- Neighborhood Flooding Improvements
- Best Downtown of 2025 campaign
- Short-term rental ordinance
- DEED grant recipients
- Factory-made housing
- Loon Liquor Company ribbon cutting celebration
- Connecting Business and Community
- Drinking water
- Housing inspections and follow-up

## Community events calendar

Localist analytics for the last month:

- 549 upcoming events
- 904 users total; (33 new users)
- 19 pending
- 474 events submitted in the last 3 months

[Events Calendar - Northfield, Minnesota](#)

## Community survey RFP

We received 16 responses to our request for proposals! We are seeking consultant services to conduct a community satisfaction survey in early 2026. This is the first survey for Northfield and a desired outcome in one of the four strategic priorities, Enhance Service Delivery, in the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan.

City staff will select a consultant by October 3, 2025.

# Information Technology (IT) Services Division

*Submitted by Kurt Wolf, IT Manager*

## Helpdesk tickets

- We are maintaining a 67.69% closure rate on tickets in less than 30 days.
- 74 new tickets have been opened in the last month.
- We successfully closed 75 tickets in the last month.

## Security awareness training

Our annual security awareness training has been sent to the City Council and all employees. Check your email for instructions on completing the training. Thank you to those who have completed the training (50%)!

# Finance Division

*Submitted by Brenda Angelstad, Finance Director*

## Budget

Work continues on the 2026–2027 budget planning process. The preliminary budget and levy were set at the September 23 City Council meeting. The overall city levy maximum was set at a 10.2% increase. The 10.2% increase is comprised of a 2.7% increase related to general operating activities and a 7.5% increase for construction of the new ice arena. This includes no increases in funding for parks, facilities, vehicle and equipment, EDA and HRA funds. The preliminary levy sets the maximum levy for 2026; the amount can go down but cannot go up. The 2026–2027 budget will again be discussed at the October work session. The final levy and 2026 budget will be set at the December 2 City Council meeting.

2026 utility rates for wastewater, stormwater and garbage were also approved at the September 23 City Council meeting. 2026 utility rates for water are scheduled to be approved at the October 7 City Council meeting.

## Motor Vehicle Division

*Submitted by Brenda Angelstad, Finance Director*

Congratulations to the DMV staff for getting an “Excellence in Customer Service” shoutout this year at the Annual Employee Recognition Picnic. They were recognized for their excellent customer service, tireless dedication and the crucial role they play in serving our community!

The Northfield Department of Motor Vehicles remains very busy. August statistics for the DMV:

- 1,321 registration renewals
- 280 title transfers
- 40 disability placards
- 779 Driver’s Licenses/ID Cards/Permits
  - 333 Real IDs
  - 171 Enhanced IDs
  - 275 Standard

## Northfield Liquor Store

*Submitted by Brian Whitt, Liquor Operations Manager*

### Events and promotions

For the month of August, the Northfield Liquor Store partnered with Molson Coors and the Minnesota Municipal Beverage Association to raise money in-store to donate to the Northfield Area Fire & Rescue Service. Donations were accepted through September 11. In addition, Molson Coors will donate a portion of every case of Coors Banquet sold to the organization Minnesota Firefighter Initiative (MnFire). This non-profit focuses on the three health problems most experienced by those in the fire service: cardiovascular disease, emotional trauma, and cancer. Thank you to all of our customers and community members that donated!



# Library Department

*Submitted by Natalie Draper, Director of Library Services*

## Social story

We are pleased to share our new social story with the world, a resource designed to make visits to the library more predictable and enjoyable for everyone.

What is a social story? First developed by Carol Gray, a social story is a social learning tool that uses descriptive and directive language with visual aids (like pictures) to help individuals, particularly those with autism or other developmental differences, understand expected behaviors and navigate social interactions more effectively.

Tonya Yarmakov is the inspiration behind the illustrated tour guide for the Library's new social story. We are grateful to the generous donors who supported this project in Tonya's memory, and the efforts of interns and staff who contributed to creating this social story. Illustrations were created by Rocky Casillas Aguirre. View the story in English and Spanish: <https://mynpl.org/socialstory>



# I can go to the library

A SOCIAL STORY FOR EVERYONE



## Community facility grant

Changes to library spaces are coming over the next few months thanks to grant funding through the Minnesota Department of Education. In addition to funding the site planning for the library's grounds, we will be adding quiet study and meeting pods, additional meeting room space, bigger teen space, and mobile shelving in our children's area to maximize use of program and community spaces. The work will be completed gradually over the next year, and we hope to minimize disruption while we enhance the library to increase collection space and meeting space.

## Programs

### Evening with Marcie R. Rendon

Join the Northfield Public Library and St. Olaf College at the Viking Theater on St. Olaf's campus on Wednesday, October 15 at 6 p.m. for an evening with acclaimed author and activist Marcie R. Rendon.

Marcie R. Rendon is an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation, author, playwright, poet, and freelance writer. As a community arts activist, Rendon supports other native artists, writers, and creators to pursue their art. She is a speaker for colleges and community groups on Native issues, leadership, and writing.

She is an award-winning author of a fresh new murder mystery series and also has an extensive body of fiction and nonfiction works.

The creative mind behind Raving Native Theater, Rendon has also curated community created performances such as Art Is... Creative Native Resilience, featuring three Anishinaabe performance artists, which premiered on TPT (Twin Cities Public Television) in June 2019.

Rendon was recognized as a 50 over 50 Change-maker by AARP Minnesota and Pollen in 2018. Rendon and Diego Vazquez received a 2017 Loft Spoken Word Immersion Fellowship for their work with women incarcerated in county jails. This program is made possible by the people of Minnesota through Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Library Legacy fund, in collaboration with our regional public library system, SELCO.

## **Aloha Storytime**

Aloha Storytime with Rose Oyamot at the Oasis, Wednesday, October 22 at 10:00 a.m.

Join us for a musical story time for littles featuring Hawaiian music on the ukulele. The event will be held at our satellite location at Northfield Library Oasis, 1651 Jefferson Parkway.

This program is made possible by the people of Minnesota through Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Library Legacy fund, in collaboration with our regional public library system, SELCO.

## **Leather Wallet Creation Workshop**

Leather Wallet Creation workshop on Saturday, October 25 at 1 p.m.

Leather Wallet Creation! Participants will learn to create a minimalist leather wallet. This class will be one session and take about 4 hours to complete. Learn about pattern making, cutting leather, applying a maker's mark and protective finish. Other

skills participants will learn are hand stitching, lacing techniques and edge finishing. All materials and tools will be provided. A fun class that demonstrates how to create something useful and durable.

Ages 11 to 14 must have an adult present to assist.

[Registration required.](#)

This program is made possible by the people of Minnesota through Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Library Legacy fund, in collaboration with our regional public library system, SELCO.

## Mini Golf

Mini Golf After Hours Friday, October 17 at 6 p.m.

Join us for a fun, free after-hours event at the library! We'll have 9 holes of mini golf set up throughout the building completely free to play. Challenge your friends, show off your putting skills, and enjoy a unique way to explore the library after hours.

For teens 12 to 18 years.

Register early—space is limited!

This event is proudly sponsored by SELS (Southeast Library System)



To view all of the Library's programs, visit the [library's calendar](#).

# Community Development Department

*Submitted by Mikayla Schmidt, Interim Community Development Director*

## General

- Mikayla Schmidt continues to operate as the interim community development director. The search for a full-time community development director is in process.

## Building and Inspections

- Building and Inspections staff continue to issue permits, complete permit review and answer customer service questions at the Information window.
- Code enforcement staff continue to work on solving nuisance issues at a couple commercial sites and a few individual households.
- Building inspections staff will be supporting the effort on short-term rentals and the related lodging tax remittance by providing information when rental inspections are completed.

## Economic Development Authority (EDA)

- Loon Liquors held their official ribbon cutting ceremony on September 25! The event included the City, Rice County, Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce, other community businesses and the Northfield community.
- During the September EDA meeting, two businesses will be considered for microgrants. Verbena Vinyl, LLC and Elsa Kraus, LLC doing business as Relationship Therapy and Consultation are two businesses in Northfield that are experiencing growth. Each will be reviewed to potentially receive \$5,000 from the EDA.

## Heritage Preservation

- The City received a Certified Local Government grant through the State Historic Preservation Office. The funds will be used to create a preservation plan for the city that is complementary to the Northfield 2045 Comprehensive Plan.
- Staff presented at the Annual PreserveMN Conference this September on the process of designating Central Park as a local heritage preservation site.

- The Heritage Preservation Commission submitted a letter requesting additional information from MNDOT about the impacts of the Highway 19 reconstruction project on several impacted and previously surveyed properties. These include “The Grove” wooded portion of Oddfellows Park, 204 W 5th Street, the Northfield Milk Products building, and 1400 & 1402 TH 19 (houses now demolished).

## Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA)

- The next HRA meeting will be on October 2, 2025.
- Sumner Street is moving forward with 2 administrative lot splits for a total of 4 lots – 2 twin homes. Staff recently received the new addresses for the properties and have drafted the corresponding purchase agreements. Staff and Rice County Habitat hosted a meeting on August 17 for local real estate agents regarding the Sumner project.
- HRA staff and Community Development staff are exploring partnerships with Minnesota Housing Partnership and Greater Minnesota Housing Fund for gap funding for the development of affordable housing in Northfield.
- A survey was completed for Meadows Park Outlot D. Geotechnical bids have been received. Staff is working also with Johnson-Reiland for geotechnical assistance for Phase 2 of Bluffview.
- Staff is working on a list of local banks with direct contact information to people who can assist manufactured home residents with the replacement of their existing manufactured home. Staff is also coordinating with property management on a cost sharing agreement for the removal of old homes.
- The HRA entered into a contract with Edina Realty for the sale of the last HRA-owned rental unit at 2330 Elianna Drive. Based on market analysis, the list price will start at \$315,000 with an anticipated net of \$248,769 once repairs, replacements, commissions and various fees.

## Planning and Zoning

- The search for a consultant to update the city’s zoning code is nearing completion! Six letters of interest (LOI) were received and all six were interviewed. Planning staff plan to complete a second interview with the top two candidates and will make the selection afterwards.

- Planning staff continue to review building permit applications for zoning compliance, site plan reviews, zoning applications, and minor certificate of appropriateness applications.
- Cedar Meadows development is working to finalize their financing and hope to begin construction this year. Partners on the project include Ims Construction, Gracewin (a senior housing cooperative), and Johnson-Reiland Builders and Remodelers.
- Staff continue to work with Post Consumer Brands on the Ames Mill Dam. The main discussion includes timeline of transferring ownership of the dam. The dam is part of our Downtown Historic District, so a certificate of appropriateness and Section 106 review will be required.

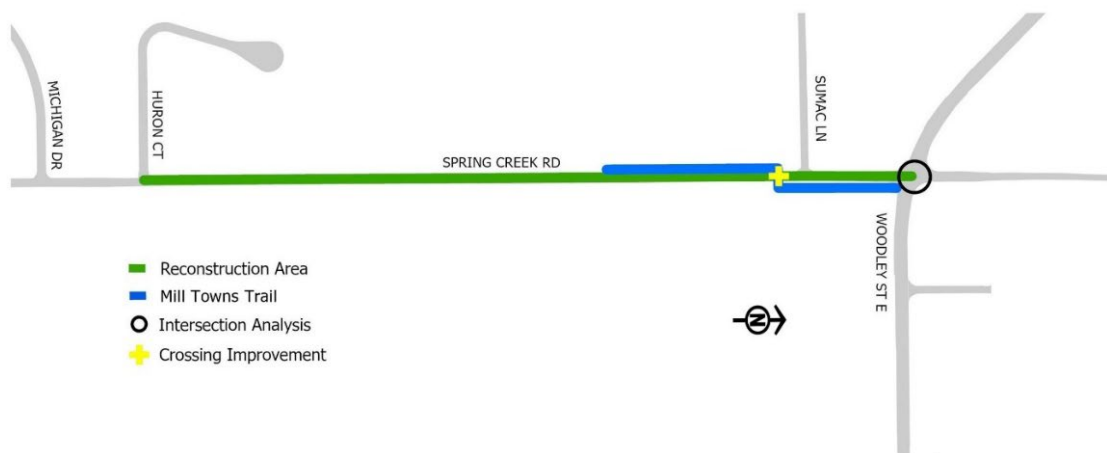
## Public Works Department

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

### Engineering Division

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

Design engineers are busy working on the final design for the project. Staff has begun contacting adjoining property owners to begin easement discussions along the project corridor. Final design approval is scheduled for early 2026.



For additional information, visit the project webpage:

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

## 2026 Mill and Overlay & Mill Towns State Trail Improvements

Design engineers are busy working on the final design for the project. Final design approval is scheduled for early 2026. The next project milestone will be Neighborhood Meeting #3, which will share the proposed final design, which is scheduled for early January 2026.



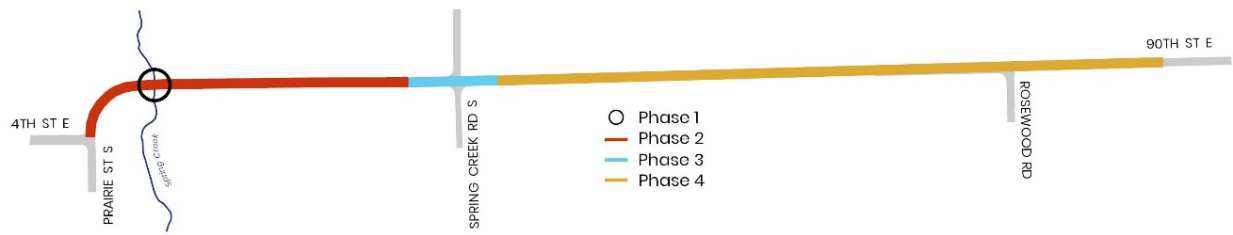
For additional information, visit the project webpage:

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

## Wall Street Road Improvements Project

Paving crews installed the first two lifts of asphalt last week on Phase 4. Paving crews were also onsite this week to pave the new trail on Phase 4 as well. Restoration crews were onsite this week as well working on final grading and restoring the entire project corridor. Next week, landscaping crews are expected to be onsite to plant the remaining trees and plantings throughout the project corridor. Seeding and sodding crews are also expected to be onsite to complete the remaining seeding and sodding on the entire project. The road is expected to be fully open by the end of next week.





For additional information, visit the project webpage:

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

## 2025 Reclamation and Overlay Project

Paving crews installed the new bituminous overlay on the remaining portions of the project in early September. Paving crews also completed the remaining trail paving areas on the project as well in the past two weeks. Construction crews will still be



onsite periodically in the coming weeks completing minor restoration and repair work throughout the entire project corridor.



For additional information, visit the project webpage:

<https://www.northfieldmn.gov/1631/2025-Reclamation-and-Overlay-Project>

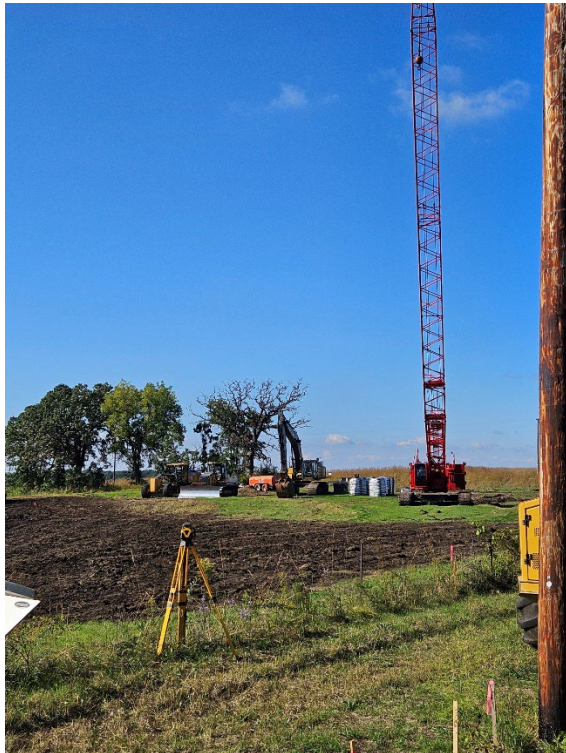
### **Mill Towns State Trail Project – Woodley Street to Waterford Bridge**

Crews have been busy working on cable relocations for the past few weeks around the proposed underpass location at the intersection of TH 19 and Spring Creek Road. Grading crews arrived onsite this week to begin excavating for the under pass. The closure of TH 19 has been scheduled to begin on Monday, October 4 to allow the installation of the trail underpass. This closure is expected to be completed by November 3.

See MnDOT's site for the proposed detour route during construction:

<https://511mn.org/map/event/CARSx-28047/@-93.13247,44.46452,13?show=metroTrafficMap.roadReports.weatherWarningsAreaEvents.stationsAlert.otherStateInfo>

Next week, grading crews are expected to begin trail grading operations on the trail segment on Spring Creek Road between Woodley Street and Wall Street as well. Erosion control crews are also expected to be onsite to install the necessary erosion control features in this area as well.



## **County Road 78/Armstrong Road Bridge Replacement – Rice County Highway Department**

The Rice County Highway Department completed the new box culvert project this week. Paving crews were onsite to pave the road and trail where the box culvert work was completed. The road was opened to traffic at the end of the day Friday, September 26 ending the detour to the Northfield Compost Site in time for a busy fall cleanup season!





For additional information, visit the Rice County Highway Department project website:

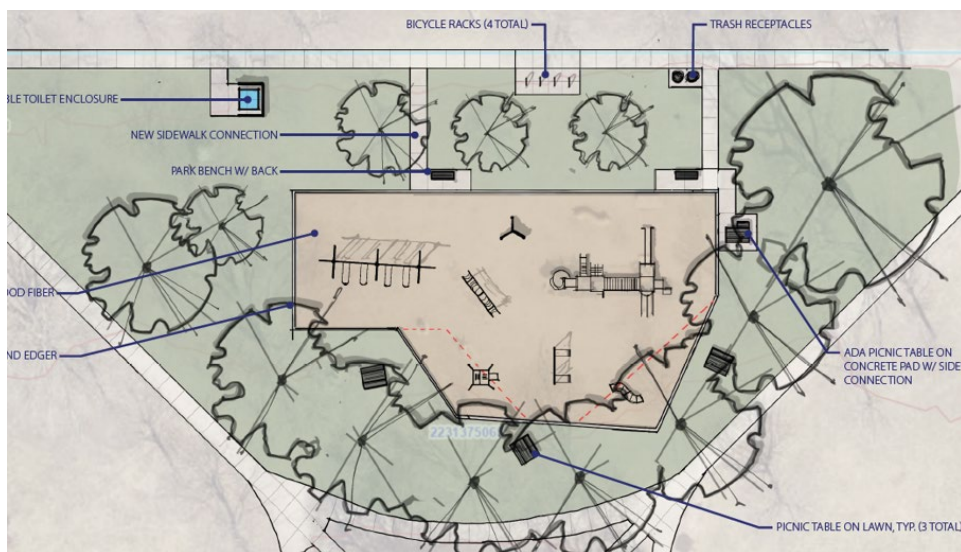
<https://www.ricecountymn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10405/Rice-County-Hwy-project-CR78Armstrong-Road>

## Streets and Parks Division

### Dresden Hill Park & Central Park Improvements (2026)

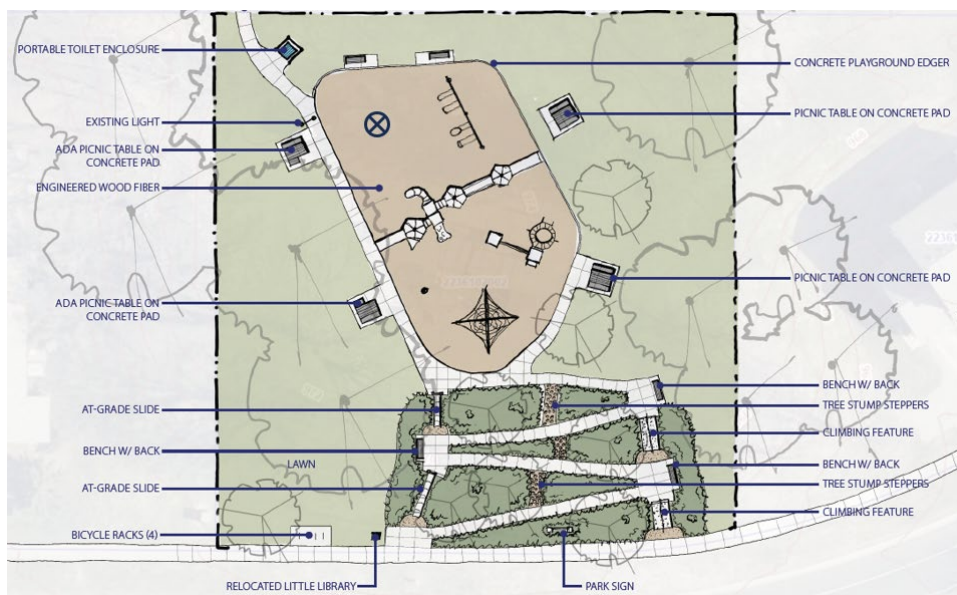
Concepts for Dresden Hill and Central Park playground improvements were presented at the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in September; some slight modifications will be made before finalizing the plans and presenting them to council.

#### Central Park





## Dresden Hill Park



### DJJD assistance

Streets and Parks Operators were hard at work during the Defeat of Jesse James Days (DJJD) celebration, assisting with various tasks. Many operators began their shifts at 4:00 a.m., and sometimes as early as 2:00 a.m., to ensure the downtown area was ready for each day's events. Tasks included street sweeping, setting up bleachers for the reenactment, installing barricades for traffic control, relocating furniture from the Riverwalk, adjusting the dog park for horse use, and many other

critical duties. Their dedication and hard work played a key role in the smooth execution of this important community event!

## Compost Site

Streets and Parks operators, with support from contractors, have been preparing the Compost Site for the fall season. Each year, composted material from the previous year is sifted; fully composted soil is added to the stockpile, while material that hasn't fully decomposed is either mixed back into the composting piles or, if non-compostable, hauled to the landfill. The rows of material brought in throughout the year are then moved to make room for the leaves that residents will bring in during the fall. Additionally, trees and branches are processed through a woodchipper, and the resulting wood chips are hauled off-site, typically dried, and later repurposed as landscaping mulch.

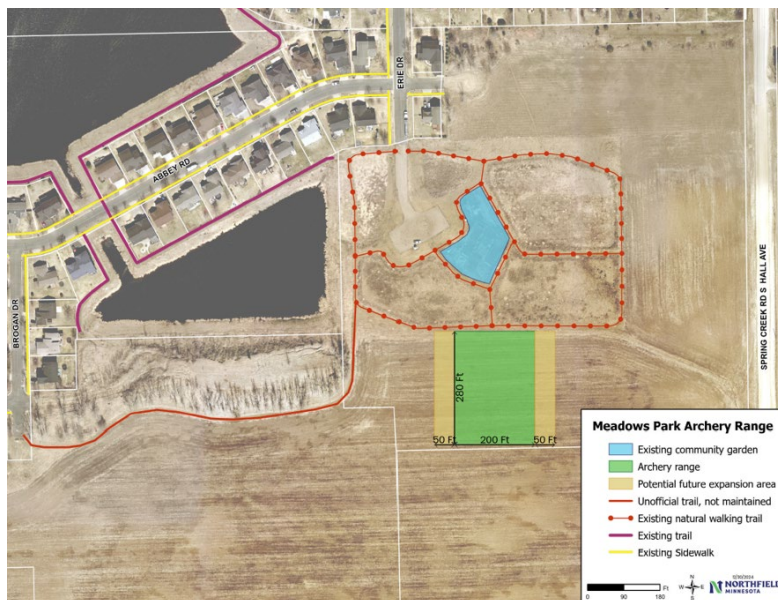






## Archery range

City Council approved moving the archery range from the water tower site on Hall Avenue to Meadows Park. The range will be closed early November. Items will be moved from the current site, repaired if needed, and placed into its new home in Meadows Park.



## Utilities Division

### Jefferson Parkway Extension, Sandstone Street Construction and Utility Improvements Project

Crews have been busy mobilizing and preparing for installation of raw watermain. Crews began removing bituminous, curb and sidewalk at College Street and Fremont Street for the connection from well 2 to the raw water system. Piping crews will begin fusing watermain this week and installing them over the next week. Temporary road closures will take place over the next few months near the project area.



For additional information, visit the project webpage.

<https://northfieldmn.gov/1699/Jefferson-Parkway-Extension-Sandstone-St>

### Hydrant flushing

Staff flushed fire hydrants throughout town this past week. Hydrants are flushed to remove sediment in the piping as well as ensure proper operation of fire hydrants throughout the city. Staff has identified hydrants needing repair and are working towards getting all hydrants operational.



## Facilities Division

### Police Department

Contractors completed a tile installation project in the patrol area. The walls were getting regularly damaged by the duty belts of the officers. The tile on the walls will save a lot of time and labor in damage repair. The costs were kept low by using the leftover material from the City Hall remodel project.

### New ice arena

Construction is progressing very well. The wall panels will be going up in the next couple weeks. See progress photos:

Backfill for team rooms



Team room concrete block wall erection



Stadia concrete blocks wall erection



Backfill and compaction for footings



Light pole base



Concrete blocks for elevator pit



Concrete stoops





## Transformer pad grading



## Library

Staff is working with Library staff to plan for the installation of the new study pods.

## Liquor Store

Staff coordinated replacing fluorescent lamps to LED lamps. The new LED lamps give a much better distribution of light over the sales floor and are far more energy efficient. The rebates from Xcel are really high right now and the simple payback on the retrofit is around 5 months. The Carbon Reduction Fund provided the funds for the project.

## Old Memorial Pool

The pool has closed for the season. Considering the delay caused by the broken pipes, the season was successful. We stayed open longer than we have in a very long time. The pool was open until the end of August! The dog swim was a success once again this year. We had nearly 100 dogs participate this year. Staff is now planning for the replacement of the main pool pump and other post-season repairs.

# Police Department

*Submitted by Jeff Schroepfer, Chief of Police*

## **Defeat of Jesse James Days**

This past month has been especially busy for the Police Department. Much of our attention and staffing resources were dedicated to Defeat of Jesse James Days, which once again brought large crowds, multiple events, and significant public safety needs. The planning, coordination, and on-the-groundwork for DJJD required extensive staff time and effort, and our team responded with professionalism and flexibility throughout.

## **Major events**

The department managed a number of other major events and community gatherings during September, each requiring varying levels of traffic control, security presence, and coordination with organizers and partner agencies. These events, coupled with ongoing day-to-day operations, added to a very high call volume for service this month.

Despite the workload, staff maintained strong service levels and handled numerous complex and demanding calls with dedication. I continue to be impressed by the commitment of our officers, support staff, and supervisors to balancing scheduled events with the unpredictable nature of police response.