

# Northfield 2045 title page

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

A comprehensive plan is built on an aspirational vision representing the community's shared values. It must balance interests and provide clear guidance for decisions to move the city towards its vision. The comprehensive plan acts as a guide to decision making when the city is faced with new challenges, opportunities and questions that were not originally anticipated. While by nature an overarching document, it is not everything to everyone.

The plan is centered around the values we heard that matter most to you in your community: **the economy**, including housing, **the environment**, and **equity**. The plan represents all of us, connected, in the community we share: each person, family, community, block, street, business, organization, and company. To make sure the city is resilient, we must attempt to tackle things we know and be prepared to adjust to the things we don't. This plan is designed to help us do that.

## How to Use the Plan

Read the **core principles** below. These three essential concepts are intended to be embedded in how the city operates, not simply what it decides to do.

Move to Chapter 2 to understand the **vision and guiding values**. Developed from expansive community engagement and refined by the community members on the Steering Committee and Planning Commission, these broadly shared statements guide all the strategies and actions described in the Plan.

Continue with Chapter 2's **decision-making framework**. The framework consists of examples of questions decision-makers can ask to ensure their choices move the city toward the vision. This framework should be supplemented by taking advantage of the four-year strategic planning process to set interim goals that can be measured to evaluate progress. Choose one of **the three policy chapters** (they can be read in any order): Access, Sustainable and secure economic future, and Infrastructure. Each chapter:

- Responds to what we heard from the community on this policy area.
- Develops strategies and actions to move the city forward.
- Includes detailed analyses supporting the strategies.

Finish with the **Implementation** chapter. Here is where metrics that measure what matters will help city officials and residents have a shared understanding of the progress being made toward the city's adopted goals and share in the accountability for the plan's successful implementation.

Also included are **Appendices** containing a summary of community engagement activities as well as background and technical information. References to these materials are included as links or cross-references in the plan text.

This Plan integrates policy areas across departments and disciplines to plan more holistically than prior plans. Some recommendations appear in more than one chapter; this is intentional. For example, planning for compact development is critical not only to land use, but to more and more affordable housing, meeting climate goals, providing effective transit, and managing infrastructure costs. Expanding employment opportunities and growing the tax base necessitates providing more housing affordable relevant to local wages, supporting small businesses, ensuring downtown thrives, and ensuring Northfield is a place employers want to locate. Streets are not just transportation engineering; streets key public space which provide

safe corridors for everyone to travel, can be designed to help reduce car travel, connect people to jobs, help manage stormwater, provide space for trees, and help kids get to school. This plan is intended to help break down departmental silos, encourage community partnerships, and foster creative problem solving for Northfield.

## Core principles: Economy, the environment, and equity

These three core principles define how the city plans, budgets, and makes decisions. Each of these easy to remember terms should be read broadly. Community conversations during the development of this plan reinforced the importance of these principles to everyone in Northfield. To accomplish what matters most to Northfield, these principles offer a way to strengthen or change how the City of Northfield conducts business.

City actions should consider the impact to the financial health of the city, how to ensure the benefits and burdens of actions are distributed equitably, and whether an action improves climate resilience and sustainability. There will always be tradeoffs: spending more money in the short term for future climate benefits or equity gains, for example, or not permitting types of businesses which would add valuable tax base but would negatively impact natural or human resources. The city will intentionally and transparently consider impacts and compromises for the best long-term outcomes.

### Economy

As the steward of taxpayer dollars, Northfield plans for the long-term economic health of the city and its residents. Northfield prioritizes growth in locations and patterns that pay for themselves; strategies related to land use patterns, growth areas, transportation, and infrastructure expansion prioritize balancing revenue generated and the costs to serve new development. Northfield plans for the lifecycle costs of all facilities; strategies related to infrastructure and city facilities emphasize seeking grants to offset capital costs, efficient operation and maintenance, and scheduled replacement. Northfield manages debt, utility rates, and project planning to minimize unexpected fluctuations in utility rates and property tax impacts. Northfield understands that new, data-supported information may lead to unanticipated needs which may cost more in the short term; similarly, not acting to address climate and equity may cost more in the long term.

### Environment

As a city concerned about the environment since the 1970s, Northfield plans to mitigate and become more resilient to a changing climate while protecting and managing its natural assets. This Plan builds on the 2019 Climate Action Plan, 2005 Natural Resources Inventory, and other planning related to protecting resources, infrastructure, and limiting or mitigating human impact. Northfield plans infrastructure, land use regulations, transportation, housing, and budgeting for long term sustainability. Northfield invests to protect people from extreme weather, shift travel patterns, and long-term energy savings.

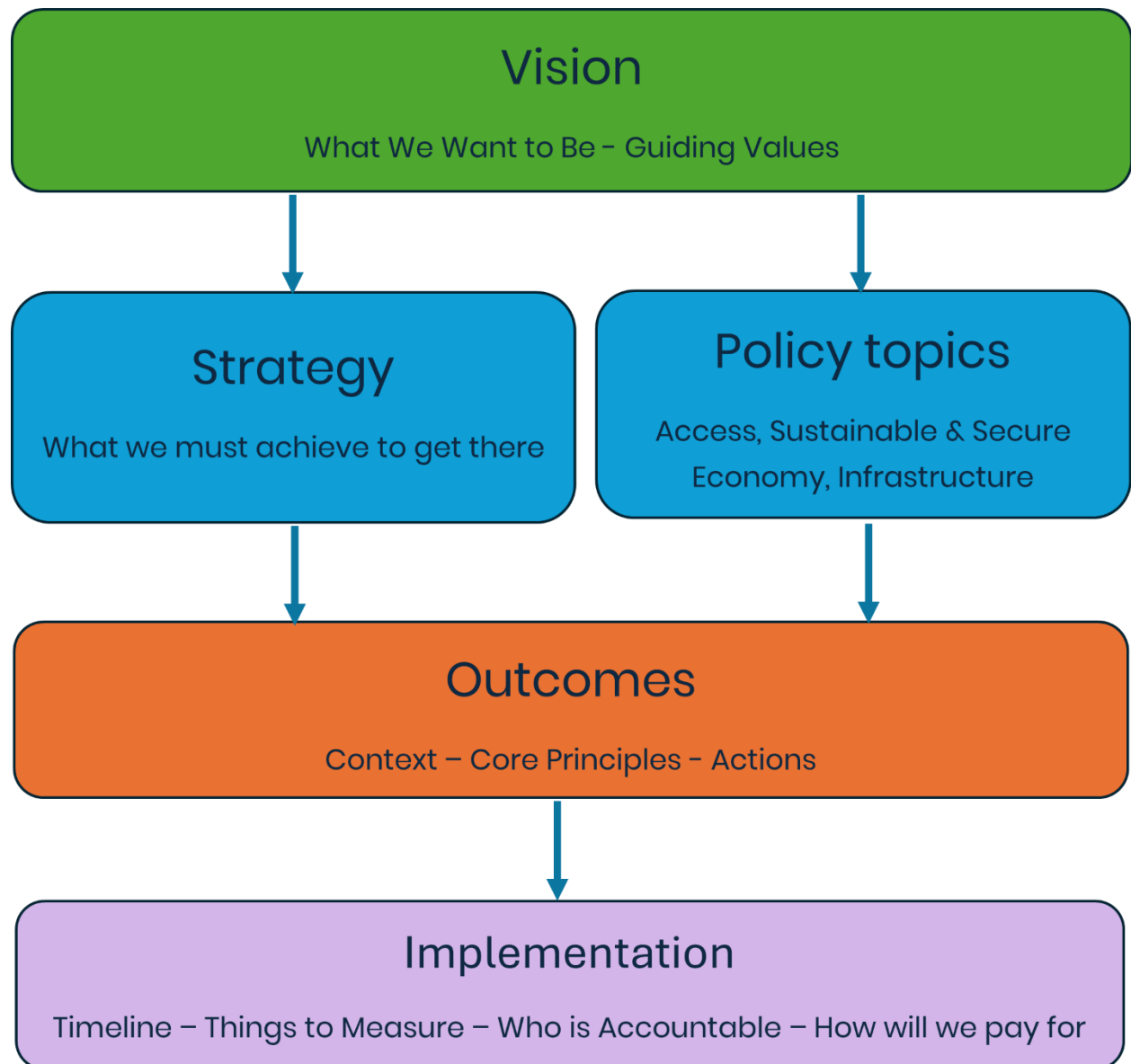
### Equity

As an increasingly diverse City, Northfield plans and acts equitably. Ensuring equitable outcomes requires the city to consider who benefits most from initiatives, who bears burdens, how a project contributes to the overall success of Northfield, and to consider how Northfield balances values in tension for any project. A comprehensive plan provides an opportunity to use its necessary breadth to speak to filling needs created by past City actions and seeking community input more broadly. It also offers an opportunity to implement policies that raise the

baseline quality of life for everyone and an invitation to develop goals and metrics to measure what matters.

For more information on community conversations, visit [\[link to Engagement Summary\]](#), and for information about equity within the plan, visit [\[link to Equity Policy Framework\]](#) and [\[link to Community Profile\]](#).

**FIGURE 1: HOW THE PARTS OF THE PLAN RELATE TO EACH OTHER**



## Chapter 2 - Vision & Guiding Values

This comprehensive plan starts with a vision that reflects ideas and priorities from community members. The purpose of the plan is to create a clear path to achieving that vision.

This chapter provides the vision, a set of community-based guiding values, and a decision-making framework to keep the principles of this comprehensive plan consistently in front of decision-makers. The vision and values were developed from extensive community engagement and refined by residents on the Steering Committee and Planning Commission.

### What we heard<sup>1</sup>

Below and beginning each chapter, we share the significant themes heard from residents, business owners, and other key stakeholders like educational institutions and the non-profit community.

#### Northfield

- The small-town feel is both an asset and a challenge
- Northfield can be a difficult place to find community and the community feels segregated
- Become more welcoming and inviting to all who live, work, and play here
- Retain unique identity: charming downtown, historic and natural resources, colleges
- Create a center of gravity in Northfield that leverages that unique identity and 'vibe'

#### Economic Sustainability

- Address the high tax rate for residents
- Recruit/expand businesses that offer living wage jobs and support environmental sustainability
- Collaborate with colleges to support fair taxation and economic development initiatives
- Build/enhance public-private partnerships to attract investment
- Historic preservation and the arts are important components of the city's economic success

#### Housing

- Homes are too expensive to buy, and many rental apartments are too small or too expensive
- Major employers want more housing opportunities built to retain/attract employees
- Not enough affordable housing is in the most walkable areas of the city
- More pathways to homeownership and generational wealth are needed
- More mixed income neighborhoods are desired

#### Climate change

- Climate and sustainability solutions must be affordable and accessible to residents
- Preservation of trees, wetlands and green spaces is important for the ecosystem and to make the community more welcoming
- Coordinate with neighboring farming communities in the discussion about climate change

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<sup>1</sup> For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive planning process, please refer to the [Engagement Summary](#).

- Do more to implement the Climate Action Plan
- New jobs must pay a living wage and be environmentally sustainable

## Mobility

- Residents do not feel safe crossing highways even with crossing lights which are not always respected
- Transit takes too long, is not direct, and does not operate at the hours needed
- Transportation limitations present a challenge for people with disabilities to find and maintain employment
- Improved infrastructure is needed for sidewalks, paths, and safe crossings
- Lighting along sidewalks and in parks is lacking in many areas across the city

## Equity

- Some neighborhoods do not see as much investment as others
- There are food deserts, lack of [relevant amenities in] parks, and limited transit and connections to the downtown core in the north and northwest neighborhoods
- Residents need access to good jobs, food, housing, and recreation to ensure economic stability and a good quality of life
- Equitable access to parks and recreational activities
- Address the needs of the most vulnerable and under-represented residents

## Human Connections

- Publicly accessible, free indoor and outdoor gathering and recreation spaces for youth and community are needed to facilitate community connections
- Continue to support entrepreneurs and small businesses
- The downtown historic district and related citywide gathering spaces are important
- Need for inclusive community engagement in city planning.
- Call for accountability and follow-through on community needs and desires.

## Vision

*Northfield is a welcoming city, providing equitable access to a high quality of life.*

We are a city with a strong identity rooted in history while growing as a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable place. We maintain our integrity as an independent and distinct city shaped by our historic and natural resources, the Cannon River, rural neighbors, and our colleges.

## Guiding Values Overview



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and have tools to implement best practices in their fields, and using consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield's capital planning and budgeting advances the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.



Northfield promotes **safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to accommodate residents in all stages of life, and addresses demand for homes for workers.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield works to provide a network of transportation **mobility options** that enable all Northfield residents and visitors to move throughout the community safely and conveniently



Northfield **emphasizes equity** to address disparities and to ensure equitable access to jobs, housing, education, essential services, retail, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive for all, independent of age, economic status, mobility, gender, or racial and ethnic background.

## Decision-Making Framework

When making decisions, including those suggested by the implementation section of this Plan, City of Northfield officials, staff, community partners, and residents will ask how the option chosen furthers at least one, if not several of the values, while not damaging the others. The framework provides a template leaders can use to frame discussions to ensure the values of this plan are clearly reflected in the work of the city. The **sample** questions are drawn from the Guiding Values.

The Outcomes, Strategies and Actions in later chapters describe how the Guiding Values are translated into the work of appointed and elected city officials and departmental staff.

This Framework should be supplemented by setting interim goals and appropriate metrics to measure success through the shorter, four-year horizon strategic planning process and for work planning purposes across departments, boards, and commissions.

## Find Creative Solutions to Local Challenges

Northfield will develop creative solutions to local challenges by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and have tools to implement best practices in their fields, and using consultants who understand Northfield and its values.

*Sample questions - How does this Action...*

- ... test ideas before committing to high-cost projects?
- ... balance professional expertise with lived experience?
- ... improve upon or take advantage of current best practice?
- ... consider multiple pathways to a desired outcome

## Emphasize Equity

Northfield emphasizes equity to address disparities and to ensure equitable access to jobs, housing, education, essential services, retail, mobility options, and open space for all.

*Sample questions - How does this Action...*

- ... improve access to services (City, healthcare, schools, etc.)?
- ... create or enhance parks and recreation opportunities in underserved neighborhoods?
- ... provide a service tailored to those who need it most?
- ... increase opportunities for homes, business, and/or social connections?

## Foster Resilience

Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to foster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change and our contributions to the sources of climate change.

*Sample questions - How does this Action...*

- ... reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and/or decrease reliance on non-renewable energy?

- ... preserve and conserve natural resources and habitat?
- ... design or implement infrastructure to effectively manage stormwater, protect people from heat, and reduce risks associated with flooding and other extreme weather events?
- ... develop policy and practice which incorporates resilience into all city actions?

## Be Economically Responsible and Sustainable

Northfield's capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in economically responsible and sustainable ways to ensure revenue sufficient to meet the City's long-term needs.

### *Sample questions - How does this Action...*

- ... impact the City's tax levy, debt level, and/or bond rating?
- ... affect the sewer, water, electricity, natural gas, and transportation systems?
- ... support local business development, expansion, and retention and/or increase the City's commercial/industrial tax base?
- ... respond to stated resident priorities and concerns and address known problems?

## Foster Human Connections

Northfield fosters human connections in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts. City services will be designed and delivered to meet the needs of all community members.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ... design for walkable and proximate parks and gathering spaces, accessible to all?
- ... create or enhance opportunities for human interactions (indoors or outdoors)?
- ... make City Hall and other City facilities inclusive, visitable, and welcoming?
- ... ensure City communication efforts are inclusive, appropriate, and effective for all audiences?

## Promote Safe and Stable Housing

Northfield promotes safe, stable housing in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support residents in all stages of life.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ... affirmatively further fair housing?
- ... ensure all housing is safe and secure in all weather conditions?
- ... address housing conditions and/or increase the supply, variety and affordability of housing types needed?
- ... promote inclusive neighborhoods?

## Provide Mobility Options

Northfield plans development and services for proximity so people are closer to where they need to go; Northfield designs streets for safe and convenient trips, however people choose to travel.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ... allocate public right of way to connect people to places?
- ... improve connections between neighborhoods?
- ... reduce demand for driving and parking?
- ... facilitate transit improvements?

## Chapter 3 - Connecting people to places and opportunities

This Plan guides the city to rethink how we measure transportation and how we guide land use strategically to connect people to the places they need to go - homes, jobs, shopping, and services - through a place-based approach to transportation. In the past, Northfield has measured mobility and street congestion without always considering how streets connect people and places. This Plan asks the city to measure accessibility and to integrate land use, zoning, climate action, and transportation to provide equitable access throughout the city. The desired outcome is for Northfield to focus investments to improve connections in locations lacking adequate infrastructure, emphasizes affordable transportation, designs streets for people and connectivity, and efficiently plans for growth in areas served by appropriate infrastructure.

This chapter builds flexibility, sustainability, equity, and economic responsibility into policies. Driving will be the predominant way people travel in the foreseeable future because Northfield has been designed for easy access by car. In Northfield, what could be an easy walk, or ride has been made more difficult by the land use and transportation choices made over time. Shifting to planning for accessibility means asking what places can be reached safely and comfortably within a certain time, distance, or cost. Northfield 2045 guides the city to locate opportunities closer to where people live and work while ensuring a safe, low stress, people-centered transportation network. suitable for all users.

### What We Heard<sup>2</sup>

- “The northwest side of Northfield needs investment. We lack parks, transit, housing... even grocery stores.”
- “Having equitable access to parks and recreational activities will help facilitate greater community connections.”
- “There is not enough affordable housing in the most walkable areas of the city.”
- “Northfield is missing places to shop, entertainment options, and youth-friendly activities.”
- “The buses take too long and don’t get me where I want to go.”
- “I would like to see improved infrastructure for sidewalks, path sharing for pedestrians and bikers, and traffic management for safer crossing specifically across Highway 3.”

### Connecting Land Use and Transportation

Imagine you are at Bridge Square.

Bridge Square is in the middle of Northfield’s historic downtown. Two-, three-, and four-story buildings surround the park, each containing a mix of uses with retail and service spaces on the ground floor and homes or offices above. This pattern extends north and south from Bridge

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<sup>2</sup> For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive plan process, please refer to the [Engagement Summary](#)

Square along Division Street. Division Street, with parking on both sides, sidewalks and trees, and many stores, is a street which takes people to places downtown. Bridge Square itself feels like a place to linger with its “walls” from surrounding buildings and view of the river.

Compare Minnesota State Highway 3 running roughly parallel to Division Street with four lanes of traffic traveling generally faster than the posted 30 mile per hour speed limit. Highway 3 is good for driving through Northfield quickly or driving from downtown to Target, but reaching a store, school or office requires getting off the highway. It is unpleasant to walk along and unsafe to cross. Although there are painted bike lanes, these facilities are unsafe. Highway 3's fast traffic, noise, and lack of businesses or other destinations accessible from the street creates a hard edge on the west side of downtown.

From Bridge Square, the downtown shops, the river, and other services are most accessible by walking. On foot from Bridge Square, a 15-minute walk could cover a mile (at typical walking speeds) and you could buy groceries, vote at City Hall, borrow a library book, fish at the riverfront, eat at a restaurant, have a beer, check out both the historic Depot and the brand-new transit hub, and take in some educational or arts activities at Carleton College or Northfield High School.

Downtown's pattern of connected streets, mixed use development, public space, and walkable scale facilitates social interaction, generates more tax revenue than less dense areas, maximizes existing infrastructure, and is the core of Northfield's distinctive sense of place.

The community has continued to tell us over the last several comprehensive plans that they want to be able to go to the park, the store, and schools without driving; they care about reducing our dependence on non-renewable energy, getting more exercise and want more affordable options. Being able to bike and walk, plus better transit is a priority, especially for those without cars or who cannot or do not want to drive. Providing this kind of accessibility requires connecting places at a scale and proximity which makes walking, biking and transit safe, pleasant, and convenient.

If you rode a bike (and maybe an e-bike) you could reach destinations within about 3 miles in 15 minutes; it's less than 3 miles from Bridge Square to the edges of Northfield, so downtown is a reasonable distance to bike. Driving to and from downtown is how most people travel; this creates demand for more parking yet you'll still need to be a pedestrian to move from your car to the shops and services downtown.

People don't typically start in one place and walk in a straight line to a destination and return home. They make travel decisions based on convenience, ability, perceptions of safety, weather, how many destinations to be visited (home to downtown and then school and Target, for example), available parking, topography, and the quality of the facilities. A 15-minute walk or ride on safe, high-quality, well- connected facilities directly to and from a destination could be a convenient choice for many for most of the year.

A 15-minute ride requiring crossing Highway 19 and/or Highway 3, on rough or icy pavement, with several stops, train tracks, insufficient lighting, and no bike parking at the destination is unlikely to be chosen except by the most dedicated bike commuters. Riding near Northfield's schools is difficult because of the volume of car traffic (and car traffic is one reason parents give for driving their kids to school, creating still more traffic).

Highway 3, along with Highways 246 and 19 are designed for a “drive everywhere” model, rather than modeling great access to places. This model has been the norm in the United States for more than half a century, yet towns everywhere are realizing driving everywhere has environmental impacts, artificially limits the movements of people who do not or cannot drive, makes transportation more expensive, and creates more traffic at schools at the beginning and end of the day. Transit is much more difficult to provide when destinations are far apart, reducing a vital mode for people who cannot or choose not to drive, walk or bike

This Plan recognizes that driving is how most in Northfield get around now and in the foreseeable future while highlighting the costs associated with “drive everywhere” planning. These costs are in dollars (owning and operating a new vehicle is estimated to cost \$1,000 a month in 2024<sup>3</sup>), physical health, safety, environmental damage, and lack of human connections. This Plan will not make driving more difficult while also taking steady, incremental actions to reconnect both sides of Northfield by redesigning Highway 3, fostering affordable and sustainable forms of transportation, filling gaps in the bike/walk network, designing streets based on the land uses they serve, developing needed transit services, and rethinking using the public right of way to best manage stormwater, provide shade, and connect people to where they want to go safely.

This Plan also recognizes Northfield’s larger context where driving is required. Deliveries, freight, and emergency vehicles need safe and sufficient access to destinations. Northfield’s rural neighbors must drive to reach schools, stores, jobs, and businesses within Northfield and commuters to jobs out of town. Commuters into and out of Northfield also have no reliable alternatives to driving yet.

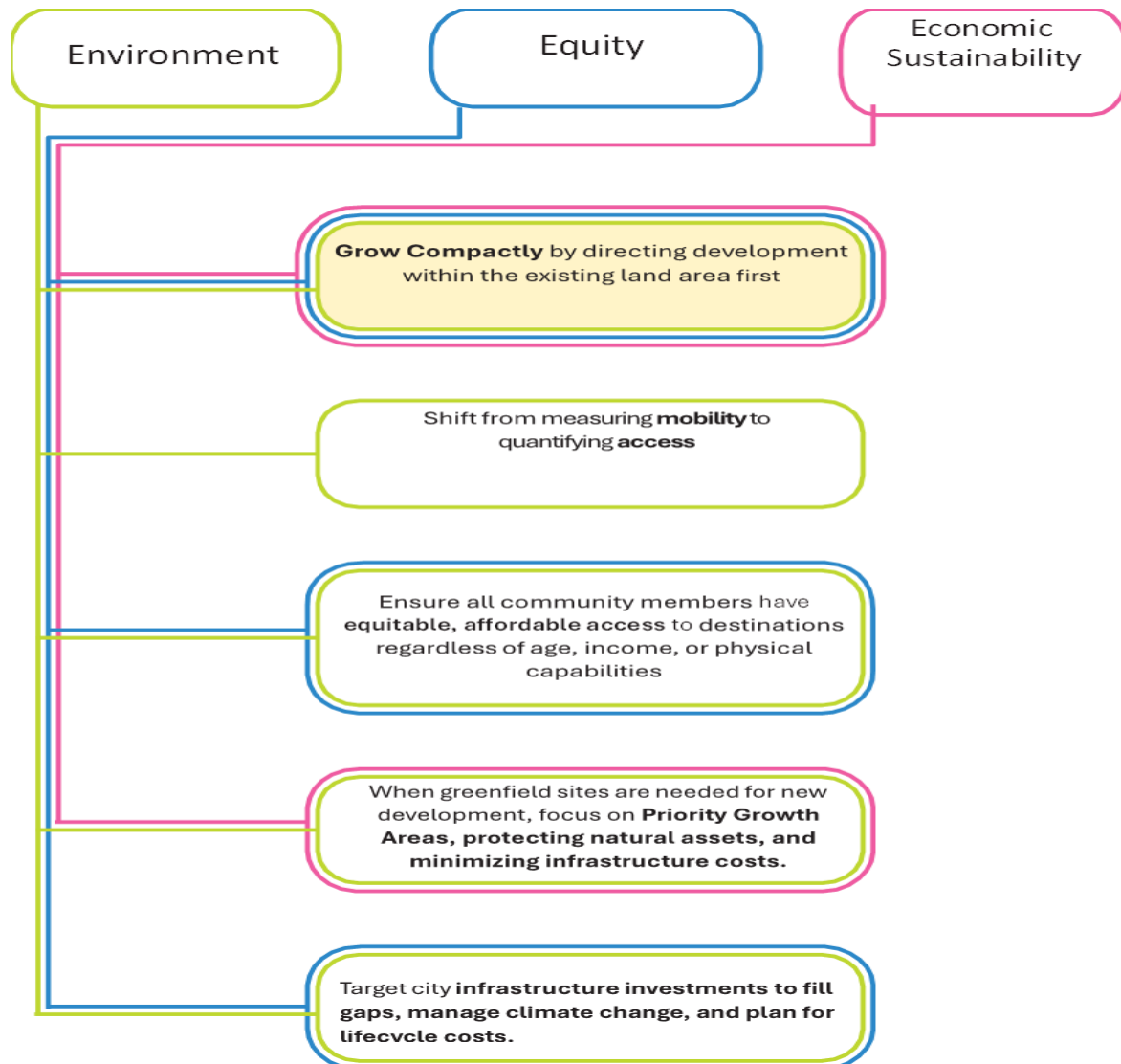
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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nerdwallet.com/article/loans/auto-loans/total-cost-owning-car>

## Core principles: Economy, Environment and Equity

Land use and transportation decisions have big consequences for Northfield's economy, environment, and equitable access. How access is created impacts the City's **economic sustainability** (developing appropriately scaled businesses near enough people to help them succeed), **environmental sustainability** (greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle trips), and **equity** (ensuring that people can access the things that contribute to a high quality of life from many modes of transportation).

**FIGURE 2** shows how the Core Principles interact with each other in this chapter.



## Definitions

The following terms are defined as they are used within this Chapter:

**Accessibility:** The ease of reaching goods, services, activities and destinations. “*Ease*” includes travel time, safety and comfort, and affordability. Improving accessibility by more affordable and sustainable modes like transit, walking and biking, and shorter vehicle trips is a goal of this Plan.

**Mobility:** How quickly people, goods, and services can be moved from one place to another. The degree of mobility depends on several factors, including the capacity of the roadway, and the operational level of service on the roadway system.

**Micro-mobility:** This term is a catch-all for walking and “small things with wheels<sup>4</sup>” – both human powered (such as bicycles, skateboards, hand-cycles), electric (motorized wheelchairs and mobility scooters, full power e-bikes), and those in between such as power assist e-bikes. Where relevant, different modes will be specified yet all ways of traveling share priorities about what’s needed for safe, convenient travel. Although rarely included in definitions, mobility devices like strollers and walkers, as well as bike trailers and wagons should also be considered.

**Transit:** Transportation options that don’t require the person traveling to drive or navigate such as: fixed-route bus service (Hiawatha Land Red and Blue Lines), dial-a-ride, taxis, and ride share (Lyft, Uber).

**Walkable:** Walkability reflects how safe, convenient and pleasant it is to walk to destinations. Walkable places have many destinations accessible within a quarter to half mile. Walking routes are direct and legible with short blocks, highly connected streets, convenient street crossings, and easy and safe access to buildings from the sidewalk. Walkable areas include safe, comfortable sidewalks or other facilities designed for the context (buffered from cars, trees, lighting, well-maintained). Walkability can be measured.

**All Ages & Abilities (AA&A) Design:** This industry term refers to designing streets and micro-mobility facilities to be safe, low stress, and equitable for everyone. For example, children, seniors, people of color, and women each have somewhat different needs for making biking feel safe and comfortable; street design which allows the broadest range of riders to feel safe and comfortable by reflecting the land use context and traffic character is AA&A design.

**Urban Expansion Area** – An area around the municipal boundary of an incorporated City/Village that is reserved for future residential and business growth. Defined by County partners.

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<sup>4</sup> NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

## Existing Conditions

The City of Northfield was planned by John North in the mid-19th century with a grid street pattern formed by 300 ft by 300 ft standard size blocks. At the time, Central Park was the designated community center and churches, schools, and parks were included in residential neighborhoods. This predictable pattern and mix of land uses creating walkable neighborhoods providing easy access to daily destinations persisted until the 1960s.

After Minnesota State Highway 3 was built in 1958, Northfield began to adopt policies and practices popular at the time. Churches and schools moved to the edges of the city on much larger parcels of land with large parking lots; commercial development began to stretch down the highway in a single-story, horizontal pattern. The regular street grid was replaced by roads with cul-de-sacs creating residential areas with little through traffic connected to the rest of the city by busier collector streets; this pattern pushed homes farther from other destinations accessible by routes designed for faster cars.

This land use pattern has continued with much more highway commercial development, large subdivisions with few connecting streets, and facilities like Northfield Hospital and Northfield's newer public schools being located at the fringe where larger parcels of land were more available and less expensive. Today it is more difficult to live in Northfield without reliable access to a car than it once was.

Retrofitting this land use and transportation pattern will take effort. The strategies and actions in this chapter begin to address these challenging issues by envisioning a future where everyone has the freedom to choose how to travel safely and affordably to their destination.

Driving a car, moving shipments of freight around, and emergency access will still be easy and the city will build more flexibility into street corridors, ensure availability of work opportunities closer to where people live, provide reliable transit, and is a good steward of the environment and taxpayer dollars.

This Plan identifies several key road corridors and places community members have identified as unsafe, uncomfortable, and limiting access to needed places; these areas require sustained effort, funding, and political will.

## Analytical Focus Areas

### *Safe, connected system for biking, walking and rolling.*

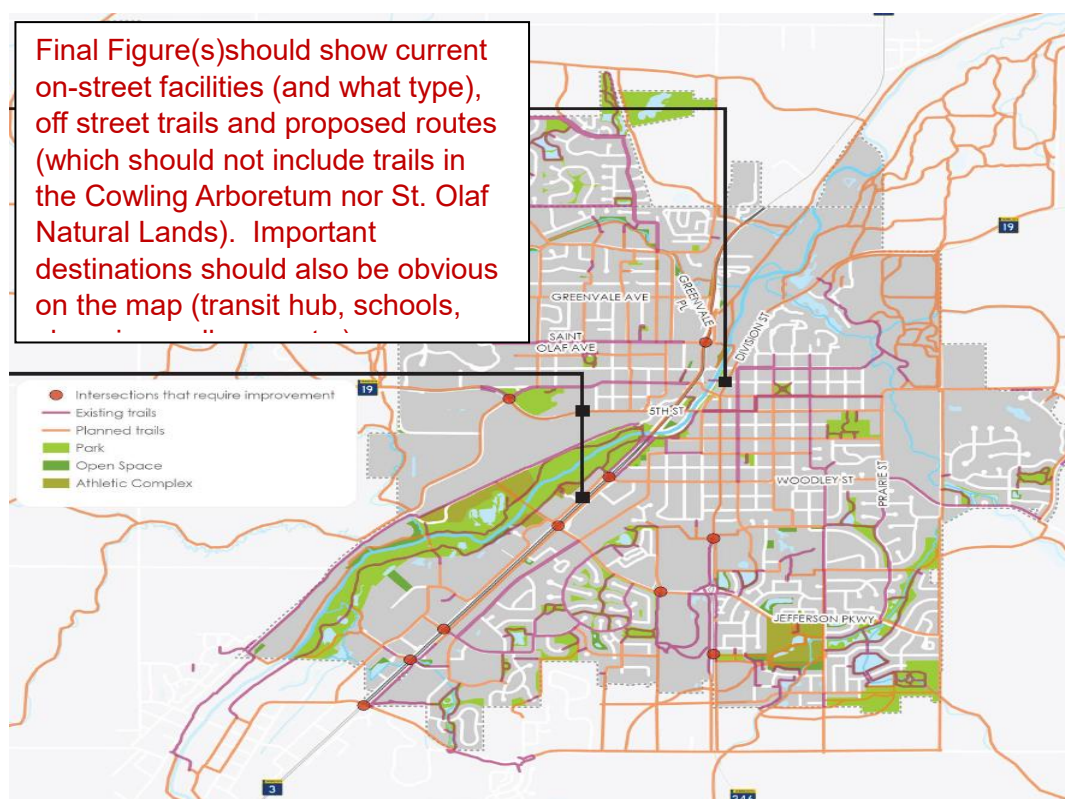
Northfield has been planning better biking, walking and rolling facilities for more than 20 years. Over time, facility design has improved, planning priorities have evolved, and the number and variety of small vehicles on the market and on Northfield streets has increased. This Plan renews the focus on a consistent, connected and comfortable bike network emphasizing connections to everyday destinations like grocery stores, schools, and the central business district. This means city officials will have to change the ways we evaluate and determine how the public right of way is used.

Northfield is not alone in that past choices about land uses and transportation infrastructure make developing a wonderful bike and walk network more challenging. Sixty years of separating land uses, moving schools and large, essential stores to the edges of the city, building schools on busy roadways, and allowing many dead ends or disconnected streets reduces options for

direct and clear routes to connect people to places they want to go. In some cases, earlier attempts at providing bike lanes and pedestrian facilities have proved to be unsafe or even unusable. Now that we know better, we can do better.

**Figure 3** proposes a bike/walk network intended to create a safe, comfortable, convenient, and consistent system for getting around Northfield by walking, biking and rolling. Northfield has planned bike and walk networks in the 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan; 2019 Pedestrian, Bike and Trail Plan update; and 2022 Pedestrian and Bikeway Analyzation. The proposed network builds on the 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan because of its attention to accessibility to important destinations including schools, parks and downtown. The proposed network features both principal routes providing connections between neighborhoods, generally on higher-volume roadways, and uses lower volume, lower speed roadways for connections within neighborhoods and to those principal routes.

**FIGURE 3. FUTURE BIKE/WALK NETWORK**



Ensuring that when recreational trails and facilities meet the street network they are connected safely and seamlessly is also a priority. The proposed system advocates designing facilities that serve the people using them and are appropriate for the roadway speed, volume and most likely destinations.

**Routes and types of facilities were selected using the following questions:**

**Access to what and by whom?** The 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan used access to schools, college campuses, downtown, and other public facilities to plan routes using main

streets as the most direct routes. In addition, access to shopping areas, the river, and connecting parks to neighborhoods and each other was considered. This Plan continues that focus and adds the “Who?” component to sharpen the focus on the types of people most likely to be traveling to a destination; kids need to bike to school, for example, so those routes should be safe and intuitive for children.

**How should access be provided/what kind of facility?** The suggested network is based on designing routes and types of infrastructure for the destinations served and the most likely users of different segments.

This proposed network anticipates that the land use context, the purpose of the street, speed and traffic volume, intersections, and the typical anticipated users will guide designers to an appropriate level of physical protection along with planning a corridor for stormwater management, shade, and access. While no specific design is suggested in advance, this plan incorporates and adopts guidance for planning bike routes established in the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, Third Edition (2025). However, design decisions may differ based on the width of available right of way, level of reconstruction anticipated and the cost effectiveness of implementation. This evaluation must be included in CIP planning efforts.

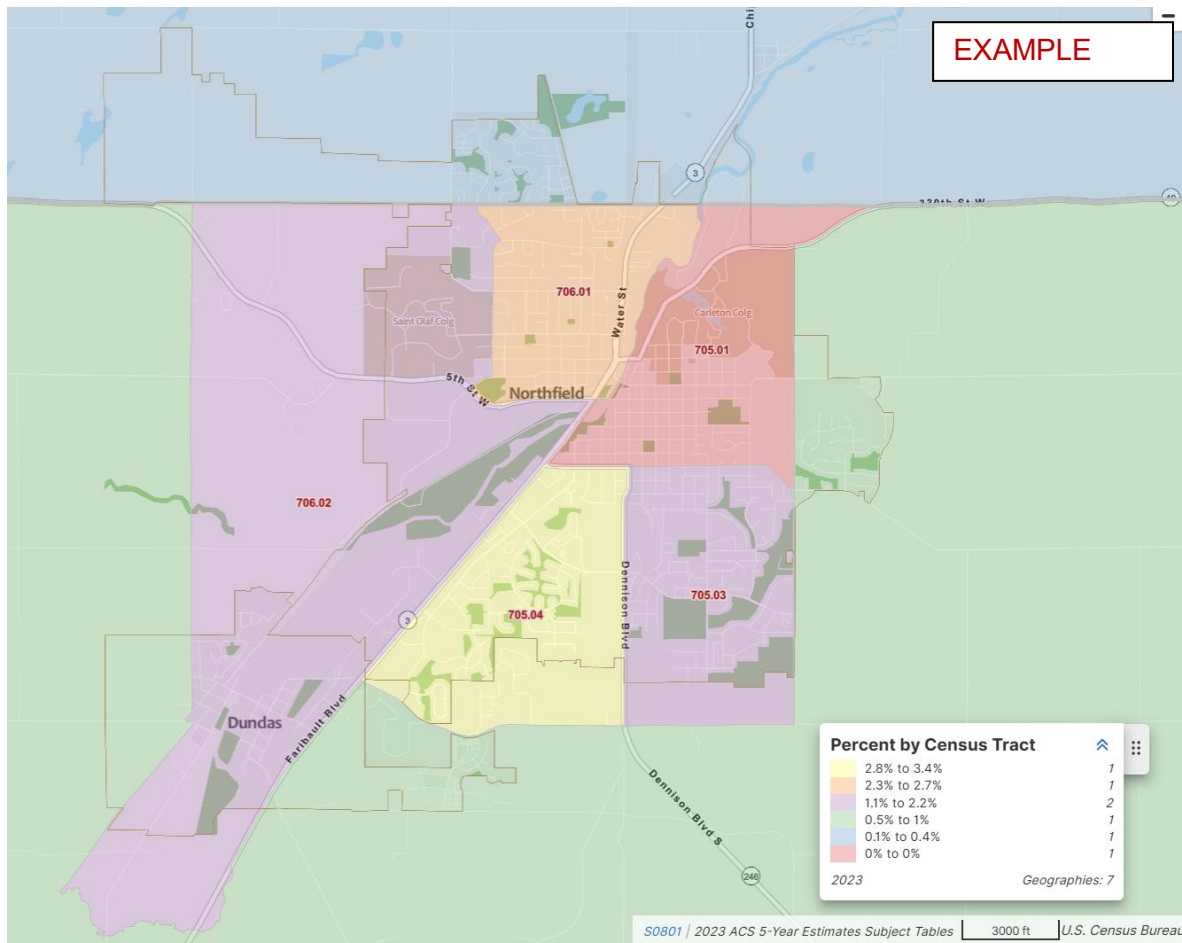
When evaluating capital improvements to roadways designated as principal routes (sometimes referred to as spines) the routes must be simple, legible and easy for residents and visitors alike to navigate. They must plan for safety by providing dedicated space for biking that is separated from fast-moving and turning vehicles and at the same time lower vehicle speeds by designing for and posting a lower speed limit. Principal routes must also be planned as direct routes to and from critical destinations. Neighborhood routes, also known as spurs or local routes, are intended to be useful for routine errands within and between neighborhoods. These routes must connect safely and seamlessly between other neighborhood routes and principal routes using thoughtful intersection designs and legible wayfinding. Finally, neighborhood routes must help build a coherent and cohesive network of great neighborhood streets that are planned and designed with the expectation that people will travel both walking and rolling. This means investing in traffic calming measures within the roadway and at intersections creating AA&A conditions for most, if not all streets within a neighborhood.

## Planning for Transit

Community engagement told us there is an unmet need for reliable transit. Hiawathaland Transit, created in 1998 by the non-profit Three Rivers Community Action to meet the transit needs in the region operates two fixed routes and on-demand Dial-A-Ride services in Northfield. Hiawathaland Transit also provides regional trips across its service area as demand arises and resources are available. There is also the Faribault and Northfield Connect route that operates every two hours, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. The two main routes begin and end at the Transit Hub.

Current routes and transfer locations have not been tailored to where there is the greatest need for transit services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the highest percentage of households with workers aged 16 and older with no vehicle available are located in two Census tracts.

**FIGURE 4** *Percentage of Households with Workers without a vehicle*



The routes need to include stops in the areas of greatest demand, such as retail and medical services. In addition to reliability problems, transit routes are neither frequent enough nor stop in enough places to provide useful access to destinations. The current fixed routes operate year-round during the day but only connect and overlap at the Transit Hub; the Blue Route only serves the northwest area while the Red Route serves the southern half of Northfield. Therefore, transit riders either must plan trips carefully to make transfers or they may have to wait extended amounts of time for the next bus. For riders who do not work 9-to-5 jobs, no service is available.

The limited service discourages people from using transit and overly burdens households that rely on transit to get to daily destinations, exacting high costs in terms of time and convenience. With major destinations located on extreme ends of the city - the hospital in the northwestern corner and major shopping destinations located in the southwestern quadrant of the city – transit trips to these destinations can be challenging for those living on opposite sides of the city.

Beyond the intracity transit routes, the City of Northfield was awarded \$1.75 million in state bonding funds in 2020 to complete the construction of the Transit Hub, co-located with the existing historic Northfield Depot to serve as a transfer center for local and regional buses and connect to future passenger rail routes. There is a stated need for transit between Northfield

and nearby communities like Faribault, as well as options to reach the Twin Cities and Rochester transit networks. The Transit Hub opens in 2025.

The Transit Hub is centrally located and provides a safe place to wait. However, it is located on the west side of Highway 3, so planning for safer crossings to help people get to and from downtown, schools and other east side destinations is required. Future transit planning should ensure connections to the Transit Hub and include the people who use or would like to use transit: older adults, youth, people with disabilities, and Carleton and St. Olaf students.

## Future land use and investment

Northfield's durability is a testament to the efforts of its stewards, efforts that have withstood the tests of generational change. However, Northfield – like all places – has made decisions in the past that are now seen as less successful.

Evaluating the future development and redevelopment potential in Northfield, that endurance must be considered and subsequently strengthened in the guidance, especially in the face of global climate change and Minnesota's status as both a place of refuge for those fleeing instability associated with coastal climate change and those leaving places where the socio-political or economic environment may be in conflict with personal needs or values.

To ensure the sustainable future of a likely more populous Northfield, the city must chart a course for what future development patterns will look like in various parts of the city. Based on both community conversations during this planning process and guidance in existing adopted policy documents, there is a need to encourage both more commercial and industrial development and more – and more diverse - housing opportunities, with preference for doing so within the existing urbanized core.

The next section outlines a set of future land use categories designed to meet those stated outcomes. Following the description of that future state, the subsequent section outlines the approach to enhancing and supporting the community's long-standing success to meet the desired future development pattern.

Northfield's Interventions Framework prioritizes growth in the following order:

### ***Within existing City limits***

- Intensification, infill and redevelopment opportunities in areas already served by infrastructure, and as outlined in the Interventions Framework.

### ***Key areas and/or intersections adjacent to existing city limits and infrastructure, referred to as Priority Growth Areas***

- New development in these areas should be mixed use and serve as neighborhood centers that offer commercial/services and amenities and have easy non-motorized access to all existing or new nearby residents. Expansion to the north might also include industrial uses.

### ***Northfield's orderly annexation areas***

- The City has established orderly annexation agreements with surrounding townships based on the County-determined urban expansion areas. Although the city does not have land use or zoning authority over those areas, it is important to work with township

neighbors to limit disconnected residential development using subsurface sewage treatments systems (septic systems) and it is important to guide development within the city boundary that can also support the neighboring township residents, businesses, and farm families.

## Future Land Use

This Plan contains a future land use map based on the community vision for the next 20 years. The future land use map guides development using very general categories: Mixed-Use Commercial, Mixed-Use Residential Neighborhood, Parks and Open Space, Industrial, and Rights of Way. Upon adopting this Plan, the official controls of the municipality such as the land development code and subdivision ordinance (often referred to as zoning regulations) and relevant regulatory guidance will be updated and revised to best implement the plan. The Interventions map identifies those areas anticipated to see more investment and potential change in the next 20 years, as well as showing those places where Northfield wants to continue what's working well and areas where lower cost, high-impact investments may be needed and anticipated.

## Future Land Use Categories

### *Mixed-use Commercial*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: Commercial, multi-family housing, office, public/institutional
- Densities: When contemplating multi-family housing projects, 15 units per acre should be the minimum outcome to facilitate the likelihood that transit to, from and through these important areas will improve.
- Transportation considerations: Improve walkability between and around businesses and connections to the river. Improve pedestrian and bicycle routes across major barriers including Highways 3 and 19, railroad tracks, and the Cannon River. Collaborate with MnDOT to redesign Highways 3 and 19, paying particular attention to improving safety and connectivity at major intersections.

#### *Description*

Mixed-use Commercial is based on the essential built form of the City's Downtown Historic District. The category includes the nationally designated historic district with historic buildings and landmarks, small scale retail, professional offices, short term rentals and higher density housing and the center of Northfield. The heart of downtown on the east side defines the grid street network and includes predominantly street-level commercial uses with commercial and residential uses on upper floors, some multifamily, multistory residential and public space. This pattern of mixed uses, sidewalks, and more than one story is the tax productive, compact pattern Northfield would like to see built in other areas, including to the east side of Washington Street and along Division and Washington to Woodley Street.

The area located west of Division Street and north of 5<sup>th</sup> Street/Highway 19 - today divided by Highway 3, the Cannon River, and the railroad tracks – has some buildings following the downtown pattern, with multistory hotel and condominiums along the river, and some highway commercial uses, the Northfield Depot and transit hub. This portion of the downtown business district is envisioned for transformational change in the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan.

This plan capitalizes on that concept and suggests expanding the compact mixed use development pattern to Fremouw Avenue to the north and Linden to the east. The goal is not to replicate downtown, but to create places that are similar in scale and use, which work well and pay for themselves.

The Highway 3 corridor south of the intersection with Woodley is also included in the Mixed-Use Commercial designation. These areas consist mostly of commercial, office and light industrial uses and do not include appropriate infrastructure for safely navigating without a car. Arcadia Charter School, the Northfield Police Department, existing and future Ice Arena sites, and access to the East Cannon River Trail, Babcock Park, and Compostela Park are nestled in this primarily low-density commercial area. While some of these areas include sidewalks, the auto-oriented nature of the area creates conflicts for pedestrians to safely navigate the area and make access to Arcadia School and the river more difficult.

### *Future State*

Future interventions in the historic district and nearby blocks include the preservation and maintenance of historic buildings and enhancing this compact mixed-use core of the city by supporting small businesses, offering incentives for interior and exterior rehabilitation, and adding more housing, office, retail, and gathering spaces.

The “South Highway 3” area is designated Transform in the interventions analysis, indicating a high level of investment/reinvestment leading to strategic infill and redevelopment, improving walkable and bikeable connections across the highway, river, and railroad tracks, and vertical mixed-use buildings that meet defined community needs.

Infill development in this area will be required to provide improved pedestrian infrastructure and, where available, connections to the river.

### *Mixed-use Residential Neighborhood*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: Residential, neighborhood scale commercial
- Densities: Residential infill projects will include a mix of single-family homes, smaller (2 to 8-unit) multifamily structures. Small scale mixed-use infill buildings of two to three stories are encouraged. Transit would be best supported by an overall residential density of 15 units per acre.
- Transportation considerations: Continue to plan for walking and biking, especially at the edges of this district where the grid pattern transitions to a curvilinear street pattern. Reconnect and redesign streets to facilitate safe connections for bike/walk facilities. Prioritize creating or improving connections to schools, parks and other daily destinations.

#### *Description*

All residential areas in Northfield are guided as Mixed-use Residential. As such, these areas range from the walkable pattern of the original town plat with diverse housing types to neighborhoods more suburban in character with prominent garages, more uniform home types within subdivisions, and larger homes and lots toward the edges of the city with fewer connecting streets. Street re-design in this district should focus on improving safe connections

to important daily destinations and allocating space in the rights of way for safe biking and walking, and sustainable storm water management facilities.

#### *Future state*

- Revisions to the Land Development Code will more easily allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and missing-middle-style housing by right in these high amenity neighborhoods.
- Land Development Code revisions will define a clear separation of land uses between the college campuses and adjacent neighborhoods to create a defined edge to both.
- Revisions to the Land Development Code will permit small-scale, neighborhood commercial nodes in all residential areas and may be incentivized in any projects where public funding is requested.
- Implement increased connectivity standards for all new development to promote greater connections to the existing grid structure and provide greater access to destinations across the city.
- Redesign streets to reduce speeds and reallocate space for bike/walk facilities, sustainable stormwater management, and denser tree canopy. Particular attention should be paid to connecting schools, parks and neighborhoods and building out the proposed bike network.

### *Parks and Open Space*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: parks and recreation, preservation areas, greenways
- Density: All residents and visitors can reach a park or open space within a 15 to 20-minute “walk.”
- Transportation considerations: sidewalk and trail connections to and from neighborhoods, seamless integration of recreational trails and street bike/walk facilities, and between indoor and outdoor recreation opportunities. Plan park improvements to put desired facilities close to the populations which use them.

#### *Description*

Areas dedicated to park and recreational opportunities, the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas, or the Greenway Corridor system.

#### *Future state*

- City initiatives should focus on providing equitable access to parks across the community, ensuring park facilities are appropriate for the neighborhood and making playgrounds and parks accessible to people with disabilities.
- Parks and open space should be treated as green infrastructure which is planned, planted and maintained to manage stormwater, mitigate flooding, improve habitat, and provide shade.
- Protecting and improving access to greenway corridors should be central to planning.

### *Public/Semi-Public*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: Schools, large institutional uses like churches, cemeteries, and hospitals, and semi-public uses like the college campuses and golf course;
- Density: Depends upon surrounding land uses. Generally, campus-like settings. Transportation considerations: sidewalk and trail connections to the downtown, job centers, and shopping destinations; reliable and effective transit to health care facilities, paratransit improvements for medical transportation, people with disabilities, etc. Emergency vehicles must also have safe and direct access.

#### *Description*

Areas dedicated to schools, including the two college campuses, other large institutional uses (churches, cemeteries) and semi-public uses such as golf courses. Some small uses of these types may be integrated into other land use categories.

#### *Future state*

- Particular attention should be given to the design of “edges” surrounding educational campuses including Northfield Public Schools and Carleton and St. Olaf colleges, to prevent further disconnectedness and/or encroachment into surrounding neighborhoods as applicable.
- Connections between and among these facilities and neighborhoods should be safe and convenient, with limited impact on the surrounding residential or agricultural uses. These properties are also job centers where reliable transit connects the campuses to most dense commercial and residential areas with service every 30 minutes or greater.
- Consider adopting performance and buffering standards, especially in areas of intensive outdoor recreation or parking

### *Industrial*

#### *Summary*

- Uses: Manufacturing, assembly, research and development, warehousing, distribution
- Density: Based on data for new construction industrial projects in the region, a reasonable assumption is for the employment density in Northfield’s industrial areas to be about 35 jobs per acre. This represents new construction built with a floor area ratio of .5 and an average of 1,200 square feet per industrial worker.
- Transportation considerations: Connections to transit, freight connections to rail, highways and major corridors. Ensuring those who work in industrial areas can get to and from work and home safely by any mode.

#### *Description*

Areas that offer employment opportunities at higher-intensity commercial and industrial establishments.

#### *Future state*

- Land Development Code performance standards for industrial uses will limit impacts such as noise, odors, water use and other non-renewable resource use.
- Enterprises offering family-sustaining wages (\$27/hour by 2024 standards) will be recruited and encouraged to locate and expand in Northfield.

- Enterprises that offer complementary goods and services to the greater Northfield economy will be recruited and encouraged to locate and expand in Northfield. Complementary industries include research and development for human and animal pharmaceuticals and agricultural products, limited production and processing of food, beverages, and other consumables; reclamation and recycling of information technology waste; renewable and sustainable green energy and energy efficiency in construction.

### *Rights-of-Way*

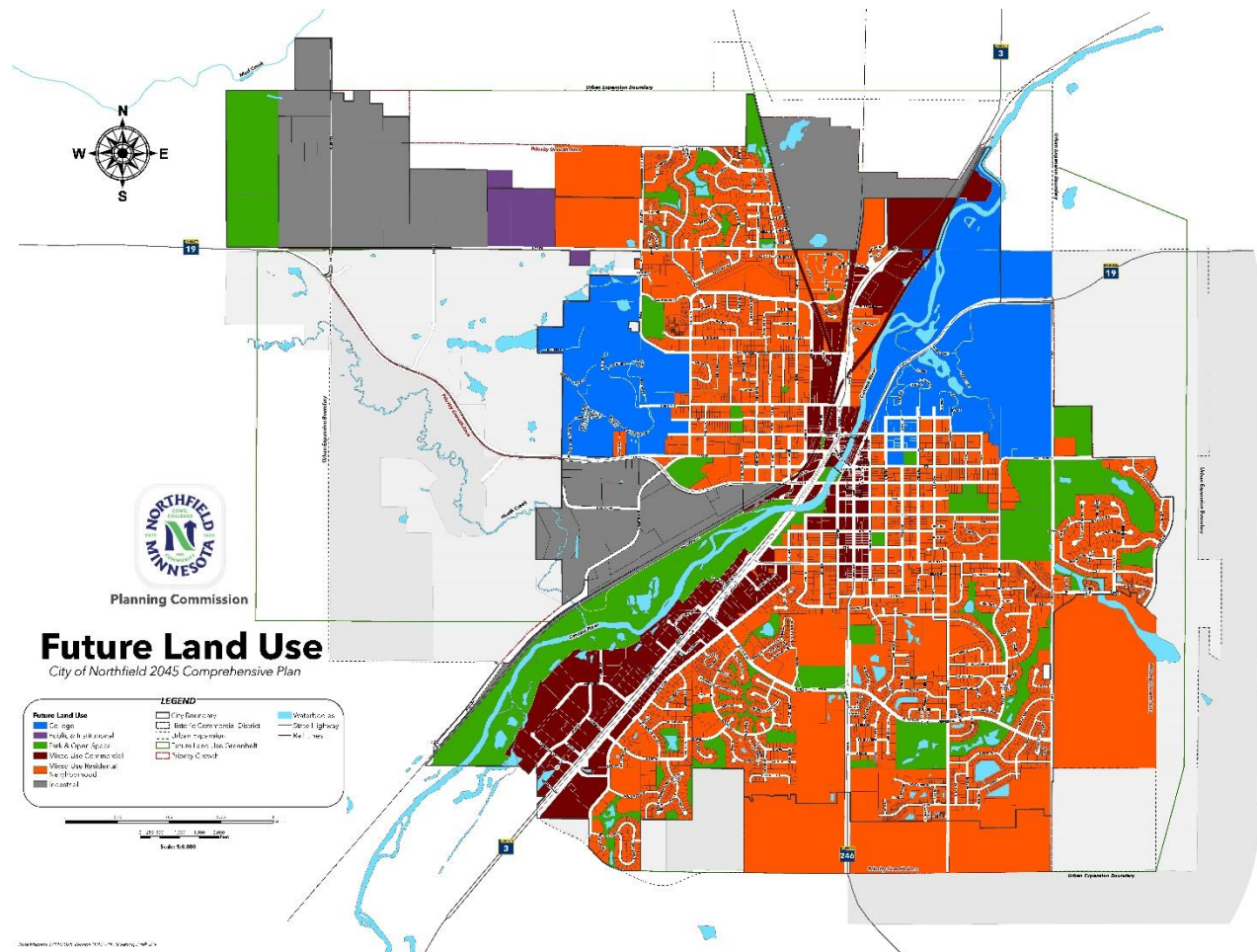
#### *Summary and Description*

- Uses: Transportation of people and goods, recreation, tree canopy, stormwater management, utilities
- Transportation considerations: How many and which modes can and should be accommodated. Determined by capital improvement budgeting process

#### *Future state*

- Reduce the citywide speed limit to increase safety for residents of all ages.
- New street and street reconstruction projects will be designed for safe and legible use by cars, pedestrians, cyclists, and other non-motorized users.
- Surface stormwater will be better managed in the rights of way.
- Budgeting for capital projects will include community member insights.

**Figure 4 Future Land Use**



The next section outlines the approach to interventions that enhance and support the community's long-standing success.

## Analysis and Interventions Framework

*The Interventions Framework designates areas and key properties in Northfield as opportunities to strengthen, transform, enhance, and preserve, each describing varying levels of anticipated intervention and change over time. It is based on an analysis of the existing state and what it would take to get to the future state.*

The Framework is used to make the critical connection between land use and transportation. Levels of intervention within this framework are classified as follows:

**Transform** areas represent the greatest opportunity for future development and redevelopment, to harness growing market demand and create walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income centers. These areas will include land use changes and/or intensification of uses to create lively places to live/work/play, primarily serving as neighborhood centers for residents and employees alike by allowing for:

- Diverse and abundant housing options
- A wider variety of jobs
- New amenities including services, retail, and restaurant options
- Constructing safe routes, paths and crossings for people walking, biking and rolling.

**Strengthen** areas are opportunities to make smaller scale, context-sensitive investments that prepare an area for future changes. Strengthening interventions may include:

- Improvements to the function, safety, and appearance of the neighborhood through upgrades to public open space, trail connections, or sidewalks
- Incentives to make improvements to private property
- City support to build neighborhood residents' capacity to accommodate change.
- Infill development that supports the surrounding uses.

These areas may see varying levels of regulatory intervention, as well as improvements to the built environment to reduce uncertainty about future development or redevelopment pressures or opportunities.

**Enhance** areas in Northfield 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 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 home prices

**Preserve** areas represent the areas least in need of significant intervention such as green spaces and historic places important in defining the city's character, historic form, and quality. There are opportunities to improve these areas, such as supporting rehabilitation of deteriorating historic buildings, and enhancing city parks, recreation spaces and passive open spaces. These areas will need to be maintained and supported for long-term health and longevity. These include the two college campuses, natural areas, parks, and other areas of the city that are well-served.

While access improvements have been suggested in all areas of the city, these interventions could have the most impact on Northfield's 'enhance' areas and established neighborhoods.

Full details of the interventions analysis can be found here [\[link to Interventions Analysis\]](#).

*The labels on **Figure 5** correspond to the text that follows. The numbers are for reference purposes and are not intended to prioritize these areas:*

## **T1** *Downtown River West*

Through transportation improvements to Highway 3 and redevelopment of properties west of the river and along the Highway 3 corridor, the liveliness of downtown Northfield will expand west, making the river the focal point and making the Transit Hub accessible and more convenient. Ames Park will be a year-round usable and active space.

## *T2 Highway 3 and Fremouw Ave*

This intersection can serve as a new mixed-use center with residential and neighborhood-serving commercial that is more easily accessible to the Viking Terrace neighborhood and beyond. This transformation would make this north/northwest neighborhood more connected, safe, and livable, by bringing goods and services to a previously isolated area.

## *T3 Target/Cub*

Anchored by these stores, this area is ripe for transformation into a denser, walkable, mixed-use area with opportunities to live, work, and play. New residential development includes a variety of medium-to-high density housing types. Reducing surface parking in favor of more productive uses is encouraged.

## *T4 Northwest Northfield/Hospital area*

While the preference is to focus on redevelopment close to the city's core, a basic urban design layout and concept should be prepared in anticipation of future annexation or growth, so the area develops in a thoughtful way and lives up to the expectations of the **Core Principles**.

## *T Individual Transform properties:*

- Riverpark Mall and adjacent blocks focusing on visual and physical access to Riverside Park and the Cannon River, bringing buildings closer to Water Street and continuing the multistory, mixed-use pattern of Division Street.
- State-owned property at the northeast corner of Woodley and Highway 3 focusing on anchoring this corner as a more urban, walkable place with beautiful connections to Lions Park and Riverside Park and the west side of the Cannon River. This intersection is crossed by the Mill Towns State Trail in two directions (across Highway 3 and across Woodley Street) and is also complicated by a poorly placed frontage road
- The city compost site should be considered as a possible site for expanding Sechler Park or appropriate infill.
- Property south of Northfield Cemetery (Festler Farm) is the only remaining undeveloped lot of any size within the core of the city. Planning street connections, especially access to Division Street/TH 246, and excellent bike/walk connections are a priority. Uses should complement Northfield High School, easy access to the Mill Towns State Trail along Jefferson Parkway, and proximity to downtown.

## *S1 The 6 blocks bounded by 8th St., Water St., Woodley St., and Poplar St*

The focus here is to protect the affordability of this neighborhood consisting of naturally occurring affordable ownership housing with excellent proximity to downtown, while ensuring the safety and stability of the neighborhood homes, streets and sidewalks.

## *S2 West side industrial area.*

This area, south of Trunk Highway 19, offers opportunities for expanded industrial development by encouraging development on vacant or underutilized parcels. Care must be taken to protect Heath Creek water quality and recreational value and connections to Sechler Park.

## *S3 Mixed Use Commercial area between Highway 3 and the Cannon River*

Infill and potential redevelopment of underutilized properties for more commercial and mixed uses is the focus of this area while increasing visual and physical access to the Cannon River while also linking Arcadia Charter School, Compostela Park, and East Cannon River Trail with the rest of the city through bike/walk connections along Cannon Road and across Highway 3

## *S4 Strengthen areas along the riverfront to correspond with Northfield's Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan:*

Complete the downtown riverwalk; implement flood wall improvements; work with Riverpark Mall managers, owners, and tenants to co-design minor enhancements to the back of the property; facilitate transfer of Carleton-owned Cannon River frontage to the City.

## *S Individual Strengthen Properties:*

NE corner (and potential expansion across the street to the west) of Division Street and Anderson Drive – existing commercial use here, but potential for intensification.

## *E1 Residential neighborhood west of the river*

This residential area lacks parks and could also benefit from enhanced non-motorized connections to improve access to services and commercial enterprises.

## *E2 Residential neighborhood adjacent to downtown*

This neighborhood could include gradual residential density increases, increasing the range of affordability and housing options while preserving the high quality of life offered by the connection to downtown.

## *E3 Southeast residential*

The existing small commercial node at Division and Anderson Drive could accommodate more neighborhood-scale commercial use. There is also one large undeveloped parcel across Division St from Northfield High School; small-scale commercial or mixed-use development could be considered here. Gradually increasing residential density or allowing for missing middle housing is also a priority in this area.

## *E4 Between Highway 3 and Northfield High School*

This area will benefit from improved access between residential and commercial uses along Highway 3, especially non-motorized connections.

## *E Individual Enhance properties:*

Use the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan as a guide to establish Northfield's "Cannon River Regional Park," a connected blue-green recreation destination featuring a reconstructed Ames Mill Dam and rock rapids that reinforces the health, continuity, and variety of the Cannon River State Water Trail and four enhanced, interconnected parks along a riverwalk loop that offer new recreation and relaxation opportunities, restore the ecological health of the river, and fill in missing sidewalk and trail segments.

Ames Park: A critical component of the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan and currently almost unreachable by any mode of travel, enhancement of this park requires redesigning Highway 3 to allow safe, convenient crossing and travel along the highway by walking and biking, providing limited parking and curb access for people with disabilities, and improved bike/walk connections from the east side of the river.

K-12 School campuses: Continue to pursue the turnback of Highway 246 from the state to local control and redesign the corridor between campuses to reduce school vehicle travel, safe and convenient facilities for young people to reach school

Ole Store – elevate this neighborhood dining institution to a neighborhood-serving commercial node when the market allows.

## *P Preserve properties/areas:*

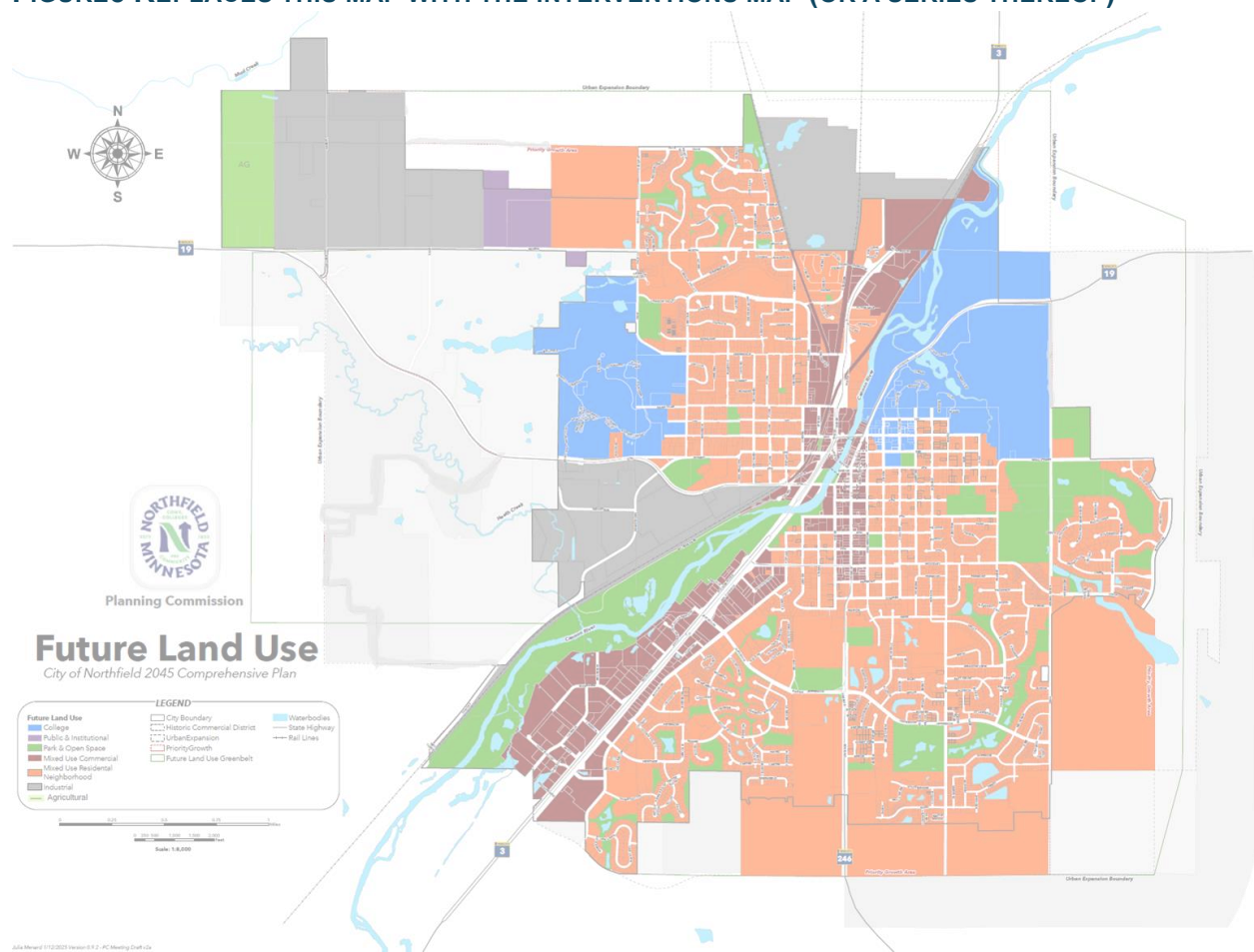
Northfield's Nationally Designated Downtown Historic District. Representing valued historic and cultural landmarks and resources, this area must be maintained with attention paid to repair and preserve the Historic District building exteriors while encouraging creative reuse of interior spaces, adding housing and additional commercial space through thoughtful redevelopment and reduction in surface parking. Carleton and St. Olaf campuses.

Opportunities to improve these areas include working with the colleges to create legible boundaries between college property and surrounding neighborhoods and prohibit campus parking adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Private recreation areas such as the Northfield Golf Club, Cowling Arboretum, St. Olaf Natural Lands

As part of a renewed approach to preservation in the City of Northfield, landmarks such as Central Park, locally designated, should be considered for National Register of Historic Landmarks designation.

**FIGURE 5 REPLACES THIS MAP WITH THE INTERVENTIONS MAP (OR A SERIES THEREOF)**



## Priority Growth Areas

The previous Northfield Comprehensive Plan (2008) identified Priority Growth areas within the County-designated Urban Expansion areas. The Urban Expansion areas are established by Rice and Dakota counties' comprehensive plans to reserve land for future residential and business growth. It is unrealistic to expect the entire Urban Expansion area to be needed to accommodate growth through 2045 based on current population projections and demand for commercial and industrial development. As a result, within the county Urban Expansion Area, the City has established Priority Growth Areas to mark the locations the City intends to develop first.

These locations have been selected using several criteria. First, areas which are more readily connected by streets, trails, and infrastructure are the highest priority. Second, clustering development around major transportation corridors, including proposed road extensions such as Jefferson Parkway on the east side of the city. Third, the city has steered development away from high quality farmland and other natural resources.

New development in these areas should be mixed use and serve as neighborhood centers that offer commercial/services and amenities and have safe, convenient bike/walk/roll access to all existing or new nearby residents. Expansion to the north might also include industrial uses.

- *Southwest corner of Falk Ave/Eveleth Ave and North Ave*

To complement the anticipated residential growth at Cedar Meadows, this intersection is a clear opportunity for mixed use development that might include higher density residential and smaller scale/neighborhood-serving commercial in an area of the city that currently lacks such amenities.

- *Between Dresden Ave and Highway 3 north*

With somewhat limited industrial growth opportunities within city limits, this area adjacent to existing transportation and city infrastructure has been identified as a potential industrial growth area and an opportunity to work with Waterford Township to create shared control and benefits.

- *Highway 246 south*

This area presents a growth opportunity for being along a major transportation route, and near three schools and existing residential areas. The city is pursuing a turnback of the state highway to local control to facilitate better local access, lower speeds, and better connections to schools and downtown. This area is has a strongly interconnected street network with excellent bike/walk/roll facilities to schools and Highway 3 commercial areas; it is an excellent opportunity to add neighborhood-serving commercial and welcoming gateway into Northfield.

- *Urban Expansion Area outside Priority Growth Areas*

These areas should be considered last for redevelopment and be prioritized for additional housing to serve demand, along with neighborhood serving small-scale commercial/services and amenities with safe and convenient access to existing and new nearby residents, ideally within a 10-minute walk or roll at average pace.

## FIGURE 6 SHOW PRIORITY GROWTH AREAS

***Northfield's orderly annexation areas*** The City has established orderly annexation agreements with surrounding townships based on the County-determined urban expansion areas. Although the city does not have land use or zoning authority over those areas, it is important to work with township neighbors to limit disconnected residential development using subsurface sewage treatments systems (septic systems) and it is important to guide development within the city boundary that can also support the neighboring township residents, businesses, and farm families.

In 1959, Minnesota became the first state in the country to create a commission to hear and decide local incorporation and boundary adjustment matters. Before 1959, the Minnesota Legislature was confronted with municipal boundary chaos. The post-World War II growth in large urban centers marked a distinct departure from the previous patterns of a predominantly agricultural age. Provisions and procedures for incorporation and boundary changes were haphazard, with no public body to provide order and an overview. This proliferation of uneconomic villages placed additional burdens on counties and surrounding areas.<sup>5</sup>

To ensure orderly and economic growth in cities, towns and counties, state statute Chapter 414<sup>6</sup> establishes procedures for orderly annexation. Both Dakota and Rice Counties have identified “Urban Expansion” areas, an area around the municipal boundary of an incorporated City that is reserved for future orderly development of commercial and residential property. It also constrains that development, generally to protect high-value natural or agricultural resources. Northfield typically updates orderly annexation agreements with the surrounding townships every three to four years.

Within the Urban Expansion Area, the city has historically described a “priority growth area,” to help identify for and with policymakers where greenfield development is preferred. The policy has been and continues to be to prioritize infill development over greenfield development.

## FIGURE 7 GOES HERE AND SHOWS MAP OF ORDERLY ANNEXATION AREAS

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<sup>5</sup> [History of Municipal Boundary Adjustments in Minnesota | Municipal Boundary Adjustment](#)

<sup>6</sup> Minnesota State Statutes [Chapter 414](#)

## Strategies and Actions

Guiding how Northfield makes decisions about land development and transportation projects will affect taxes, health, traffic, climate, equity, economic growth and how we carry out our daily lives for a generation or more.

Uniting transportation and land use will help Northfield grow more equitably, more sustainably, and more focused on bringing the community together.

Past land development and transportation practices worked to separate land uses putting homes further from stores, schools, and jobs and design streets to allow connections only by driving and driving farther. This pattern has created places where walking to school is unsafe, daily errands require more driving, streets are disconnected, and homes are more expensive. Further, the impact of those places on the environment is a large component of the global climate crisis and addressed in the 2019 Climate Action Plan

This Comprehensive Plan reiterates the City's policy commitment to 100% carbon-free electricity by 2030 and being a 100% carbon-free community by 2040. This Plan incorporates CAP strategies to enhance the resilience of the community through cultivating and supporting a resilient population, forward-looking stormwater management and infrastructure planning, 21st century electric grid updates, and supporting local food efforts.

Northfield's vision of growing as a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable place requires that we do things differently, starting with the larger picture of equitable access and connections – both physical and human – as guides for future development.

## Guiding Values Overview



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and have tools to implement best practices in their fields, and using consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield's capital planning and budgeting advances the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.



Northfield promotes **safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to accommodate residents in all stages of life , and addresses demand for homes for workers.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience** and **mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield works to provide a network of transportation and **mobility options** that enable all Northfield residents and visitors to move throughout the community safely and conveniently..



Northfield **emphasizes equity** to address disparities and to ensure equitable access to jobs, housing, education, essential services, retail, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive for all, independent of age, economic status, mobility, gender, or racial and ethnic background.

## Strategy 1: Plan for Accessibility



*Increasing access connects people to where they want to go and supports Northfield's vision of values of promoting sustainability, increasing equity, and creating a thriving community.*

**Outcome:** Northfield has established interim goals for connectivity, land development, and transportation and adopted relevant metrics to measure progress.

**Outcome:** Northfield's capital investments and other funded projects are based on creating complete places, filling gaps, supplying missing assets, and ensuring equitable access to destinations.

**Outcome:** Northfield has updated planning documents to reflect the goals of this Plan including the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Safe Routes to School Plan, Complete Streets Policy, Pedestrian, Bike and Trail Plan update, and Bike and Pedestrian Analyzation.

### Strategy 1 Actions:

- 1 Adopt a modal hierarchy prioritizing walking, transit, and biking above motor vehicles and parking to establish the order in which Northfield accommodates various street users and uses by default across the street network to translate values into design decisions.
- 2 Structure the relationship between the community development and public works departments to require joint planning and more effective community engagement.
- 3 Update or replace the Complete Streets Policy, Safe Routes to School, and other relevant plans to prioritize safety, comfort, access to destinations for people of all ages, incomes and abilities in accordance with the goals of this plan.
- 4 Update or replace the Comprehensive Transportation Plan and other relevant plans to plan for accessibility rather than mobility, build on the modal hierarchy and adopt relevant metrics to measure progress.
- 5 Advocate with MnDOT to redesign Highway 3 from Fremouw Road to Jefferson Parkway for safe, pleasant travel along and across the highway prioritizing slower speeds, local access, safe intersections, and connections to the Mill Towns State Trail, Transit Hub, and the riverfront.
- 6 Plan with the Northfield School District and other community partners to increase students' walking, biking, and bus access to schools to reduce school car traffic.
- 7 Plan land use to locate housing, services, and shopping areas close to one another for improved accessibility.
- 8 Analyze and measure access to opportunities across the community including proximity and access by transit and active transportation to establish baseline conditions
- 9 Use short-term strategic planning and capital improvement program to set interim goals and adopt quantifiable metrics to measure progress including measuring fiscal impact, advancing equity, and climate action progress through quantifiable metrics.

- 10 Develop and adopt an official map in accordance with MN. Stat. 462.359 Procedure to Effect Plan: Official Maps <link to revisor> to identify and establish future street connection, parks and other public infrastructure.

## Strategy 2: Develop in a Compact, Sustainable, and Fiscally Responsible Pattern



*Growing compactly by prioritizing infill and redevelopment before annexing additional land advances Northfield's vision by preserving Northfield as a free-standing city, making development more cost effective, connecting people more equitably, and preserving valuable land and natural resources.*

**Outcome:** Short-term strategic planning sets interim goals and adopts quantifiable metrics to measure progress including measuring fiscal impact, advancing equity, and climate action progress.

**Outcome:** The city increases overall density, has fewer underutilized and unprofitable properties and a wider range of housing types, connected by multiple transportation options reducing vehicles miles traveled, improving transit, and meeting climate goals.

**Outcome:** The city supports farmland preservation in surrounding townships, reducing climate impact, encouraging food production, and maintaining Northfield's rural edge.

**Outcome:** Northfield maximizes the value of existing infrastructure and extends infrastructure conservatively in a fiscally responsible and sustainable way.

### Strategy 2 Actions:

- 1 Use the Future Land Use Map to guide short-term strategic planning efforts.
- 2 Revise zoning and other regulations immediately to implement this plan:
  - a. Ensure zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development to advance this plan.
  - b. Encourage infill and intensification in both commercial and residential areas.
  - c. Encourage Accessory Dwelling Units and missing middle housing in all residential neighborhoods to add more housing in existing neighborhoods, add housing types, and put people closer to parks, schools, shopping and jobs.
  - d. Eliminate regulatory definitions of family and increase allowable dwelling types to reflect how people want to live while meeting fair housing requirements.
  - e. Include standards to facilitate neighborhood-scale commercial uses (including multi-unit housing) in all residential zones which advances this plan's goals of greater accessibility, more housing, and reducing reliance on vehicle trips. These uses should be concentrated on vacant sites, and/or sites where the building to land value ratio is low (indicating the site is ripe for redevelopment).
  - f. Include tools to incentivize building more housing and more affordable housing such as density and/or height bonuses, development fee reductions or deferments, inclusionary zoning requirements and related tools.

- 3 Direct development first to infill on existing vacant land, then by intensifying uses and redeveloping property, then by developing in the identified Priority Growth areas, and orderly annexation areas beyond the priority growth areas if other locations have been exhausted as described on pp. \_\_\_\_ above.
- 4 Manage parking, including pricing parking, to ensure efficient use of existing parking facilities, reduce demand for surface parking, and require structured parking to be able to be converted to other uses with a positive return on investment.
- 5 Northfield measures the fiscal impact of all large developments to determine if adopted metrics are met.
- 6 Northfield seeks grants to reduce capital costs of projects while also budgeting for the additional costs of operations and maintenance over the life cycle of the project.
- 7 Northfield establishes a clear and transparent method to determine when capital projects must be subject to a referendum.
- 8 Northfield prioritizes those developments and initiatives that meet or exceed adopted metrics, considering innovations not previously contemplated.

### Strategy 3: Target Areas of Under Investment



*Improve the stability and health of all communities by implementing placed-based investments, such as public infrastructure, improvements and maintenance in parks, open spaces, culturally appropriate community spaces, active transportation facilities, and infrastructure, to areas of concentrated disadvantage such as in and around neighborhoods where housing costs are lower.*

**Outcome:** City infrastructure, such as roads, water, sewer and storm water facilities, and tree canopy are of the same quality across the city.

**Outcome:** Northfield's capital investments and other funded projects are based on creating complete places, filling gaps, supplying missing assets, and ensuring equitable access to destinations.

#### Strategy 3 Actions:

- 1 Establish criteria for identifying underinvestment, map these areas, and plan for improvements using the strategic plan, capital improvement plan and budget.
- 2 Include specific improvements for parks, infrastructure, and other identified needs in currently underserved neighborhoods and prioritize in the Capital Improvement Program and Park and Recreation Capital Investment Plan.
- 3 Partner with Northfield Public Schools, Northfield Community Education, and private partners to consider youth of-of-school time programming to fill needs not currently being met.

- 4 Prioritize transportation infrastructure connections between underserved residential neighborhoods and desired destinations such as downtown, educational facilities, highway-oriented job centers. Prioritize affordable transportation and safe access to desired destinations regardless of age, ability, or income.

## Strategy 4: Equitable Access



*Ensure that all community members are free to choose how they travel to destinations regardless of their age, income, or physical capabilities.*

**Outcome:** The biking, walking and rolling network is complete, safe, and consistent.

**Outcome:** State highways 3 and 19 have been redesigned to no longer limit freedom to travel by reducing speed, noise, pollution, and adding facilities for safe travel along and across the highway.

**Outcome:** The Cannon River riverfront is a connected, accessible space for the entire community with culturally relevant and appropriate facilities, a mix of activities, and great design.

### Strategy 4 Actions:

- 1 Prioritize safety and equity benefits in transportation project selection.
- 2 Implement a community-based evaluation of the existing transit routes –either to expand or reroute existing services— for better connectivity, coverage and ease of use
- 3 Commit to funding and improving transit services and ridesharing options. Encourage partnership between Hiawathaland Transit, healthcare providers, rideshare companies, or other private/public entities for paratransit services and/or providing last-mile connections from transit stops.
- 4 Complete the bike network with safe and convenient transitions between off street trails and on-street facilities for continuity and easy, affordable access to parks, open spaces, and other recreational facilities
- 5 Guide home construction, job development and services close to each other and to other destinations such as parks, schools, and shopping to increase affordable access by biking, walking, and transit.
- 6 Work with MnDOT to redesign Highway 3 from Fremouw Road to Jefferson Parkway to ensure safe access to the Transit Hub, facilitate transit operations, increase safe travel along and across the highway. and reduce noise and pollution for neighborhoods adjacent to the highway.
- 7 Update the ADA Transition Plan regularly as improvements are completed. Encourage private and public partners that provide surface transportation services to accommodate people of all ages and physical capabilities when possible.

## Strategy 5: Design for Safe Access



*When making transportation decisions, focus on the land use context and building streets which promote safe, low stress travel.*

**Outcomes:** There are clear, safe pathways for walkers, rollers, bikers, and drivers to access destinations within the city on highly interconnected streets. Programmed road projects will be designed to complete or extend a modified 300 ft. x 600 ft. version of the traditional 300 ft. x 300 ft. grid system that was the foundation for the city.

**Outcome:** Street rights of way are allocated and designed for all users and modes of travel appropriate to the surrounding land use including access for people with disabilities, pedestrian scale lighting, green infrastructure, and shade trees.

### Strategy 5 Actions:

- 1 Ensure that CIP projects are prioritized based on community engagement and transparent decision-making. Evaluate projects based on stated needs consistent with the vision and guiding values of the Comprehensive Plan. When determining facility type, focus on improvements that consider land use context, community priorities, equity, increased accessibility and affordability and cost.
- 2 Require a highly connected street system with new development. Northfield will revisit its roadway network to ensure new roadways or extension of existing roadways are highly connected with a high number of street connections (intersection density) to create multiple route options, shorter blocks and support active transportation.
- 3 Identify and adopt appropriate metrics for measuring access in addition to mobility.
- 4 Update the Land Development Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability to build safe, comfortable places for walking, biking, transit, and stormwater management. These regulations will apply to all street projects.
  - a. Complete the active transportation network shown in Figure 6 prioritizing connections to schools and parks
  - b. Update or replace the Complete Streets Policy, Safe Routes to School Plan, Comprehensive Transportation Plan and other relevant plans and standards to meet the goals of this Comprehensive Plan
  - c. Plan updates to existing active transportation facilities/infrastructure to ensure a consistent, predictable, and safe network appropriate to the transportation and land use contexts. Early bike lane projects, for example, do not meet current safety recommendations (such as “door zone” painted lanes, very narrow bike lanes) and the variety of facilities creates unnecessary confusion.
  - d. Revise posted speed limits to slower speeds citywide.
  - e. Design intersections with active transportation facilities so that they are safe and intuitive to cross and navigate for all users regardless of mode, age, or ability.

## Strategy 6: Design for Resiliency and Sustainability



*Work to mitigate the effects of climate change and increase resilience of all City systems. This includes evaluating green building standards, upgrading infrastructure to meet climate hazards, designing multimodal streets, and reducing the city's carbon footprint through energy and resource efficiencies.*

**Outcome:** The City as a municipal entity and its residents and businesses have collectively decreased our greenhouse gas emissions through mitigation strategies.

Outcome: The City has taken action to ensure climate resilient infrastructure and facilities

### Strategy 6 Actions:

- 1 The following strategies and actions of the city's 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP) are incorporated:
  - a. 26% reduction in overall emissions through commercial and industrial building efficiency, such as net-zero energy new construction and energy efficiency retrofits
  - b. 4% reduction in overall emissions through residential building efficiency, such as net-zero energy new construction and energy efficiency retrofits
  - c. 7% reduction in overall emissions through community-supported renewable energy
  - d. 8% reduction in overall emissions through fuel switching from natural gas to electricity in homes and businesses
  - e. 6% reduction in overall emissions through travel strategies such as mode shift and electric vehicles
  - f. 2% reduction in overall emissions through strategies that eliminate waste emissions by 2030
  - g. Establish an in-boundary goal to generate the equivalent of 10% of the City's electricity from rooftop and ground-mount solar installations by 2030
  - h. Identify opportunities to expand renewable energy in or near Northfield; coordinate with Carleton, St. Olaf, Post Consumer Brands (formerly Malt-O-Meal), and Xcel Energy
  - i. Encourage rooftop solar on commercial buildings where there is an economically viable solar resource (i.e. available space with adequate sunlight, and a structurally sound roof)
  - j. Promote Renewable\*Connect or other green power purchase programs for businesses and residences
  - k. Promote community solar garden subscriptions; identify opportunities for low-income access to subscriptions
  - l. Work with Hiawathaland transit and other partners to explore a subsidized bus pass program and/or
  - m. simplify the payment method to increase ridership on the existing transit system

- n. Develop a zero-waste packaging ordinance and support local businesses to transition
  - o. Coordinate with local waste and recycling haulers to offer curbside compost pick-up for residents and businesses that will be delivered to a local waste processing facility
- 2 Promote human-centered urban design and an appropriately intense diversity of uses when designing new and retrofitting existing neighborhoods to enhance sustainability and resiliency in Northfield's communities. These actions reduce vehicle trips, and the length of trips, resulting in progress toward the city's climate goals.
- 3 Require electric vehicle-charging-ready infrastructure (electrical conduit or raceway connection to electrical service with sufficient panel space reserved that is capable of operating at Level 2 (two hundred eight (208) Volts) or greater power) be installed with new developments and public projects.
- 4 Encourage the use of energy efficient mechanical systems and building products in rehabilitation and new construction to decrease building operation costs and impacts on the environment.
- 5 Seek opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of rights-of-way in the city, such as through shared, stacked-function green infrastructure and planting trees to reduce the urban heat island effect.
- 6 Explore and support the implementation of best management practices to increase the city's overall resiliency to flooding, drought, and climate change.
- 7 Plan parks and public rights of way to help manage stormwater, flooding, extreme weather, and heat.
- 8 Maintain response readiness for emergencies related to water supply contamination or interruption and for damage to treatment and distribution infrastructure.
- 9 Ensure Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) and sustainable stormwater management practices are implemented in public and private projects related to stormwater runoff and inflow/infiltration into the wastewater system
  - a. Collaborate with partner agencies on water quality improvement efforts, including capital projects and programming. For example:
    - i. Prioritize and pursue funding to replace the Ames Mill Dam with a high-quality recreation and river-ecological health solution.
    - ii. Strengthen partnerships with groups such as Clean Water Partners and educational institutions to measure, evaluate, and enhance the health of the Cannon River.
- 10 Consider the potential greenhouse gas emissions impacts of transportation citywide in alignment with state legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. For new projects, use MnDOT's Minnesota Infrastructure Carbon Estimator (MICE) tool to estimate GHG emissions.
- 11 Analyze and map the city's land surface temperature to establish a baseline heat map for the City.
- 12 Consider creating a natural asset management plan and blue green infrastructure plan.

- 13 Infrastructure is designed to effectively manage extreme weather and to build stormwater management into street corridors and parks
- 14 Northfield manages both above and below ground utilities to improve the health of the tree canopy in public spaces and rights of way.
- 15 The tree canopy is comprehensively maintained to be healthy and dense to provide shade, clean air, and stormwater treatment.
- 16 All new buildings meet or exceed the requirement of the adopted sustainable building policy and/or Minnesota Energy Code, including prioritizing electrification and use of passive solar design standards and/or renewable energy sources for heating and cooling.
- 17 Existing buildings are retrofitted with energy efficiency upgrades.
- 18 Manage flood mitigation at the watershed level with regional partners.

# Chapter 4 – Housing and Economic Development

A sustainable and secure economic future for Northfield and its residents has three components: 1. Northfield must have abundant housing to meet the needs of people at all income levels and stages of life; 2. The city must develop a more diverse and robust tax base to support the City's needs; 3. Northfield must ensure that these first two components are secure in a changing climate, protect the area's resources, and the pattern of growth supports our stated values.

As in the previous chapter, this chapter works to integrate policy pieces which are interrelated but have not been considered together in the past. This chapter describes the current housing stock and economic development landscape, then projects future housing needs and priorities for public spending on economic development based on previously completed studies and reports. The strategies and actions draw on the study data and respond to community concerns regarding housing, family-sustaining wages, and related transportation needs to focus on how the city can provide support, funding, or partnerships to provide abundant housing and a thriving economy for the long term.

## What We Heard -

### Housing and jobs

- "Many employers can't retain employees because it's difficult for their employees to find affordable housing."
- "The new affordable housing is far from the grocery store and other daily resources."
- "There is not enough affordable housing in the most walkable areas of the city."
- "More pathways to housing ownership are needed to build generational wealth."
- "Northfield would benefit from mixed-income neighborhoods ."
- "Invest in preserving the existing housing stock."
- "There should be sufficient housing options available for community members in all stages of life."
- "Solving issues about providing jobs and building housing to support employees are challenging plans to put into action but it needs to be done."

### Business development

- "Create a center of gravity in Northfield that leverages the town's unique identity and vibe."
- "The city needs to find a way to increase the number of businesses here and provide incentives."
- "Bringing new industry into Northfield for better jobs for a growing local economy."
- "More collaboration between the city and colleges."
- "The city should increase support for small businesses and invest in facade improvement programs to help businesses improve their buildings."

- “Investigate why some claim it’s harder to work with the City of Northfield to do business than in other cities and make changes to improve that.”

## Equity issues

- “Northfield has the potential to be a great city but isn’t there yet because it hasn’t addressed the needs of its most vulnerable residents.”
- “Equity, inclusivity, and housing are needed for all socioeconomic levels to make this a community people want to live in.”

## Future Northfield

- “Northfield is a thriving place where businesses succeed.”
- “The growth of industry in Northfield eases the tax burden on residents.”
- “Northfield thrives as a cultural Mecca thanks to , great jobs, sustainable infrastructure, and continuing investment in cultural assets.”
- “Northfield is a place where everyone is ‘okay’ and has a chance to flourish.”

*For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive planning process, please refer to [the Engagement Summary](#)*

## Connecting Housing and Economic Security

In 2019, the City of Northfield hired a private firm to complete a housing study to better understand local housing market dynamics. That study, adopted in March 2021, formed part of the basis of a technical assistance report from Enterprise Community Partners exploring the relationship between education outcomes, housing, and economic mobility and success. Enterprise identifies five housing components that can be essential to upward mobility leading to economic success. They are:

- Housing stability: a person’s ability to stay in their home without unplanned or unwanted disruptions or moves.
- Housing quality: the condition of the unit and its ability to protect and promote the physical and mental health of those who live there.
- Housing affordability: the ability of a household to pay for adequate housing without a significant financial burden (spending not more than 30% of income on housing, including utilities is a typical benchmark)
- Neighborhood context: considers that housing is more than unit. The set of resources, opportunities, and characteristics of the neighborhood can all help either boost or inhibit economic (upward) mobility.
- Housing builds assets and wealth: the way homeownership can provide pathways to upward mobility through home equity, credit, and asset-building.

The technical assistance report facilitated by Enterprise with the members of the Northfield Promise Council of Champions and the Northfield Racial and Ethnic Equity Collaborative was completed in 2022 and it, along with the result of a 2024 Housing Solutions planning initiative also led by Enterprise and a commercial/industrial tax base analysis from VisibleCity provide the

foundation for the rest of the chapter. Those supplementary background materials are available in the [Appendix](#).

## Core principles: Economy, Environment, and Equity

A secure and sustainable economic future requires attention to what housing and business activities are supplied by the market, and what desired outcomes require public spending to ensure safe and healthy homes for Northfield's workforce, encourage needed business activity, and build in a pattern which is affordable and sustainable. Safe and secure housing for Northfield's workforce requires also prioritizing recruitment of firms that pay living wages, and a more diverse tax base to reduce the burden on residential taxpayers.

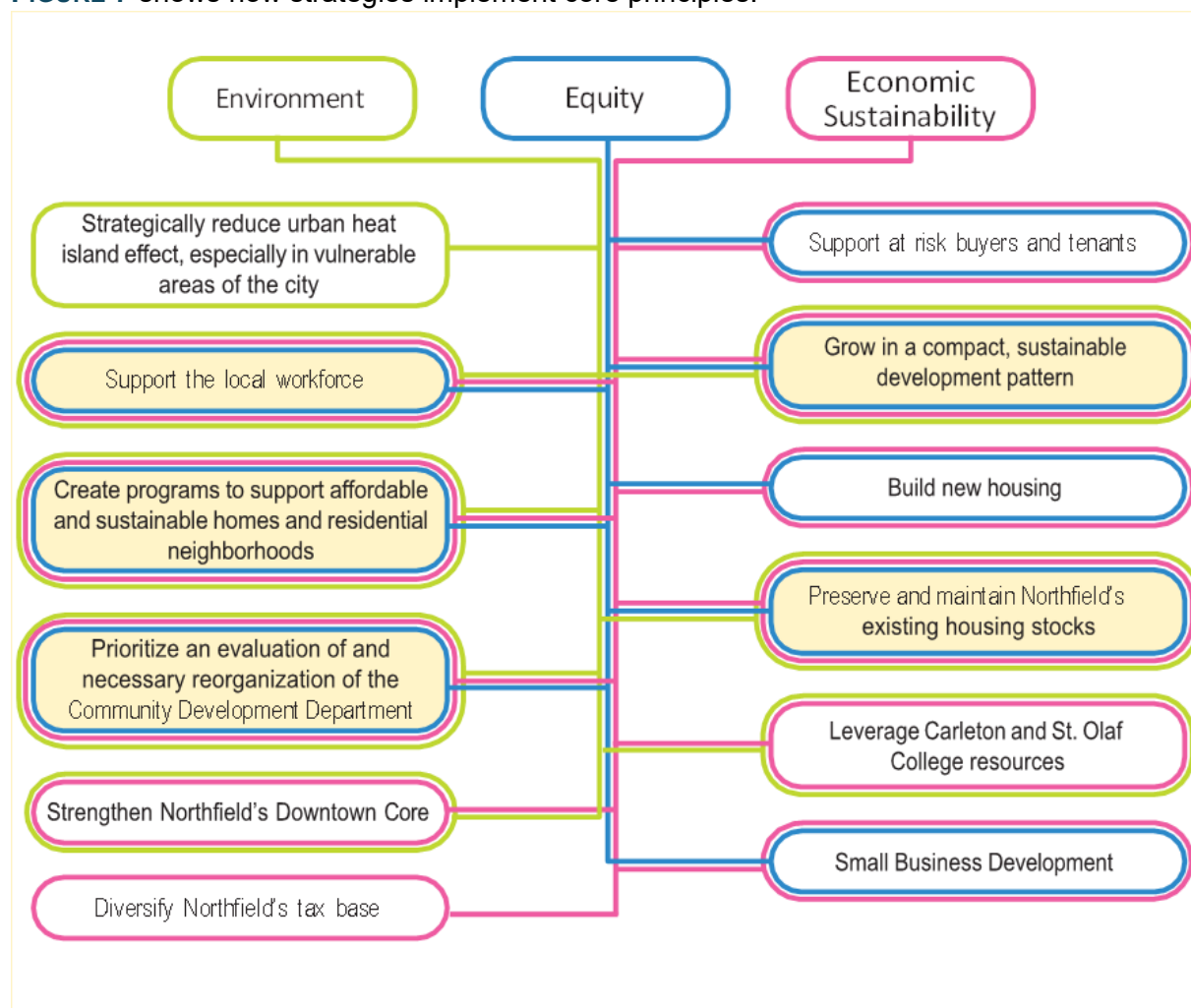
The housing-related strategies and actions focus on providing safe and affordable housing for all residents, with particular emphasis on supplying homes for Northfield's workforce. The type of housing, its location, and energy efficiency all matter to concerns of affordability (both the home and transportation costs), accessibility (connections to opportunities), and sustainability. This Plan recommends putting housing close to where people need to go, creating mixed-income neighborhoods, and ensuring homes are safe in all seasons and weather.

The economic development strategies focus on housing *not* supplied by the marketplace as a core economic development activity, as well as more typical strategies to retain and expand existing businesses and attract new businesses to diversify the tax base to support the goals of this Plan. Northfield will work to retain and develop its high-quality downtown retail environment; its mixed-use pattern is very productive in tax terms, provides higher density housing, and the historic downtown is a key part of Northfield's attractiveness as a community. Larger-scale commercial and industrial development is also needed, and the city has recently rezoned a substantial amount of land for this purpose. However, the city must also use existing economic impact analysis tools to ensure extension of infrastructure and other costs do not adversely affect the City's long-term fiscal health.

Planning for climate resilience and mitigation, and protecting environmental resources, are also key to this plan. Extreme events such as the 2024 record-breaking flood caused damage to both private and public assets and required repairs and inventory replacement. Planning to manage stormwater, flooding, increased heat and cold, as well as reducing the City's carbon footprint, are all ways to reduce the costs of climate change. This Plan contains multiple recommendations to address these issues including development pattern, street design, economic development choices, and housing improvements.

Economic development investments (including housing) impact equity (which businesses the city chooses to support with finite resources), economic sustainability (how the city chooses to grow both physically and financially), and environment (where the city chooses to grow, and maximizes use of existing infrastructure).

**FIGURE 7** shows how strategies implement core principles.



## Definitions

*The following terms are defined as they are used within this Chapter:*

**Affordable Housing:** The general definition of affordability as established by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is for a household to pay no more than 30% of their income for housing. For this study, we define affordable housing as income-restricted to households earning at or below 80% area median income (AMI), though individual properties can have income restrictions set at 30%, 40%, 50%, 60% or 80% AMI. Rent is not based on income but instead is a contract amount that is affordable to households within the specific income restriction segment. It is essentially housing affordable to low or very low-income tenants.

**Area Median Income ("AMI"):** AMI is the midpoint in the income distribution within a specific geographic area: 50% of households earn less than the median income and 50% earn more. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculates AMI annually, adjusted for household size. (In 2024, the median household income in Rice County is

\$100,900—equivalent to an hourly wage of around \$50 per hour. For Dakota County the number is \$123,700 – equivalent to an hourly wage of around \$59 per hour.)

**Economic Mobility:** The ability of a person or family to improve their economic status over time.

**Extremely Low-Income:** Person or household with incomes below 30% of area median income, adjusted for respective household size.

**Fair Market Rent:** Estimates established by HUD of the Gross Rents needed to obtain modest rental units in acceptable conditions in a specific geographic area. The amount of rental income a given property would command if it were open for leasing at any given moment and/or the amount derived based on market conditions that is needed to pay gross monthly rent at modest rental housing in each area. This number is used as a basis for determining the payment standard amount used to calculate the maximum monthly subsidy for families on financially assisted housing.

**Household:** All people who occupy a housing unit, including occupants of a single-family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated people who share living arrangements.

**Housing Choice Voucher Program:** The federal government's primary program for assisting very low- income families, the elderly and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. A family that is issued a housing voucher is responsible for finding a suitable housing unit of the family's choice where the owner agrees to rent under the program.

Housing choice vouchers are administered locally by public housing agencies. They receive federal funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to administer the voucher program. A housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the public housing agency on behalf of the participating family. The family then pays the difference between the actual rent charged by the landlord and the amount subsidized by the program.

**Market Rate Rental Housing:** Housing that does not have any income restrictions. Some properties will have income guidelines, which are minimum annual incomes required to live there.

**Moderate Income:** Person or household with gross household income between 80% and 120% of the area median income, adjusted for household size.

**Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing:** Although affordable housing is typically associated with an income- restricted property, there are other housing units in communities that indirectly provide affordable housing. Housing units that were not developed or designated with income guidelines (i.e. assisted) yet are more affordable than other units in a community are considered "naturally occurring" or "unsubsidized affordable" units. This rental supply is available through the private market, versus assisted housing programs through various governmental agencies. Property values on these units are lower based on a combination of factors, such as: age of structure/ housing stock, location, condition, size, functionally obsolete, school district, etc.

**Subsidized Housing:** Housing that is income-restricted to households earning at or below 30% AMI. Rent is generally based on income, with the household contributing 30% of their adjusted gross income toward rent. Also referred to as extremely low-income housing.

**Subsidy:** Monthly income received by a tenant or by an owner on behalf of a tenant to pay the difference between the apartment's contract or market rate rent and the amount paid by the tenant toward rent.

**Workforce Housing:** Housing that is income-restricted to households earning between 80% and 120% AMI; however, some government agencies define workforce housing from 50% to 120% AMI. Also referred to as moderate-income housing.

## Existing Conditions

In its commitment to understanding the needs of Northfield residents and employers, the City of Northfield and community housing and economic development partners invested in professional analyses of its tax base and housing needs. Maxfield Research conducted an analysis of the housing market and related supply and demand. This work also analyzed the city's future need for different housing types. A community-based project facilitated by Enterprise Community Partners and Healthy Community Initiative studied housing and education outcomes to help Northfield build effective partnerships to address housing as a major contributor to educational success and upward mobility. Northfield also commissioned an infill and tax base needs study by Visible City and is participating in the University of Minnesota Extension's Connecting Businesses and Community program. This Plan incorporates this research to develop outcomes, strategies, and actions.

Northfield's demand for housing is driven by both population growth and job growth. Demographic shifts and the character of the workforce play a role in the types of housing that are demanded. The following data from the Maxfield report form the basis of the recommendations in this Plan.

## Demographics

- The population is growing. It is projected to grow by 5.2% from 2020 to 2028.
- The population is aging. The 65- to 74-year-old age cohort grew 73% between 2010 and 2020.
- Household sizes are shrinking. In 2024, the most common household type in Northfield was people living alone, representing 31.4% of all households in the city, followed by married couples without children at 30.4%.
- Homeowners' incomes outpace renters' incomes. The median income for owner households in Northfield is estimated at \$109,853 as of 2024, 60% greater than the median income for renter households at \$43,467.
- The population is more diverse. The percent of people who identify as Hispanic or Latino has increased over that same decade from less than 6 percent in 2011 to approximately 10 percent in 2021.
- The predominant household type in Northfield is people living alone, representing 31% of households in 2024. The proportion of people living alone increased modestly since 2010, from 30%. Larger increases were observed among the "Other Family" and Married Couples without Children categories.

## Economy

- Northfield's strong economy and number of jobs generates demand for housing. Employment increased by almost 5% between 2010 and 2020, and by an additional 4% by 2023.
- More people come into Northfield to work than leave the city for work.
- Base industries in Northfield, such as manufacturing and higher education, tend to pay higher wages than average for rural communities.
- Hourly wages in Northfield generally start at \$11 to \$16 per hour for retail and entry-level work at major employers. Retail managers and entry-level manufacturing jobs start at \$20 per hour. A family-sustaining wage for the state of Minnesota (2024) is \$26 per hour for a family of four with at least one working adult. For a single person that wage is just over \$21 per hour.
- Northfield households are cost burdened.
- Northfield's unemployment rate decreased from 6.5% in 2020 to 2.7% in 2023.

## Housing Supply and Demand

- An entry-level single-family home in Northfield could expect to be sold for \$250,000 in 2025. At this price point, given typical 2025 downpayment and mortgage rates, a household would need an estimated income of \$72,600 to spend no more than 30% on their housing costs. An estimated 51% of Northfield households could afford an entry-level single-family home without exceeding the 30% threshold. There just are not any being offered on the market at that price point.
- Entry level homes for purchase are few and far between.
- The median sales price of single-family homes in Northfield rose from \$242,000 in 2016 to \$365,000 by the end of 2023, an increase of 51%, according to data gathered from the Greater Minneapolis Area Association of Realtors.
- **Current rental property supply:**
  - There are 1,181 market rate and 453 affordable/subsidized general occupancy rental units in Northfield in 2025 across 31 multifamily properties (three properties offer both market rate and affordable units).
  - Vacancy rates were 0.7% for affordable units and 0.7% for market rate units compared to a healthy rental market which maintains a vacancy rate of at or near 5%, which promotes competitive rates, ensures adequate consumer choice and allows for sufficient unit turnover. The exceptionally low vacancy rates indicate strong demand for additional rental housing.
- Rental rates: An estimated 21% of household owners and 35% of renter householders pay more than 30% of their income for housing in Northfield
- Senior housing: 925 senior units among 15 properties. These properties include active adult rental and ownership (market rate and affordable/subsidized), independent living with some services, standard and enhanced assisted living and memory care.
- Ten-year projected demand: Demand exists for the following general occupancy housing types between 2024 and 2035:
  - Market rate rental: 445 units
  - Affordable rental: 163 units
  - Subsidized rental: 102 units

- For-sale single-family: 412 units
- For-sale multifamily: 222 units

## Analysis

Two topical focus areas were further analyzed to develop this plan — **small business support** and the **fiscal impact of development**.

### Small business support and entrepreneurship

The planning process included research and analysis of the Northfield small business environment. Multiple listening sessions, primarily with downtown business owners identified critical barriers and needs within the local business ecosystem. Conversations with minority entrepreneurs highlighted issues not faced by other entrepreneurs. This growing subset of business owners are interested in entrepreneurship and small business development resources; supporting these programs would advance Northfield's vision of a more equitable city and more vibrant economy.

The group highlighted several needs, including:

#### *Access to Capital*

- Small business owners reported challenges in accessing capital. Around 50% of participants cited access to funding as their biggest hurdle. Businesses expressed a need for micro-grants, loans, and alternative financing, particularly for physical improvements and operational expenses like marketing.

#### *Communication and Awareness of City Resources*

- The great majority of participants stated they did not feel well-informed about how the City of Northfield could assist their business. Language barriers, especially a lack of translation and interpretation services, further compounded difficulties in navigating city resources.

#### *Mentorship, Networking, and Technical Assistance*

- Minority business owners emphasized the need for mentorship and technical support, especially in areas like marketing, accounting, and legal counsel. All the participants said access to a mentor or networking opportunities with other minority business owners would be beneficial.
- There was also a noted interest in workshops to aid in navigating business development processes and city services.

## Fiscal Impact of Development

Chapter 3 and the guiding value to “design infrastructure, policies, and practices to foster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change” guide the city to develop compactly, focusing on infill before expanding city infrastructure. This development pattern has positive impacts on budget and capital planning, preserving natural resources, and connecting people more effectively.

New development generates revenue for cities by adding to the property tax base, yet it also increases city operating costs because the associated households or workforce must be supported by city services such as road and utility infrastructure, fire and police protection,

parks and recreational programming. Development outside the city increases greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging longer daily vehicle trips and consumes land that could be used for natural resource protection or agriculture. Northfield's vision and values ask the City to assess the costs and benefits of new development broadly and make wise decisions for the long term. Considerations related to fiscal impacts were discussed in the Economic Analysis memo located in [Appendix X](#).

Key factors to consider:

- **Differential property tax rates.** In Minnesota the class rate for commercial and industrial property is up to twice as high as the class rate for residential property, yielding greater property tax revenues for equally valued properties.
- **Development intensity.** More intensive development generates greater property value and higher property tax revenues than a lower density development for developments on equally sized properties.
- **Cost of services by development type.** The service burden (cost of providing public services) of commercial development is generally lower than the service burden of residential development—whether measured by land area, floor area or value. That's because residential buildings are occupied for more hours of the day, and many city services are targeted to residents.
- **Cost by land area/development intensity.** The cost of providing some city services are more correlated with the land area of development than the size of the population being served. Examples include snow plowing services, or street and utility reconstruction. Land intensive and low- density development can be fiscally challenging, especially over the long run.
- **Average cost vs. marginal costs.** The marginal cost of providing city services to new developments is typically lower than the existing per capita cost of the service, because a level of physical and administrative infrastructure has already been established. This is particularly true in redevelopment situations.
- **Redevelopment.** Several of these factors—including increased development intensity and lower marginal cost of services—make redevelopment (development in previously development locations that have preexisting street and utility infrastructure) fiscally beneficial in comparison to development on previously undeveloped land.

### *Infill Opportunities*

The city has created Future Infill maps (Figures 8-?) to guide community development investments in three key areas:

- Commercial and industrial development
- Housing development
- Business growth and retention

These maps, based on the Interventions framework and Future Land Use map, aim to diversify the tax base, address housing needs, and promote economic mobility while ensuring environmental sustainability

The map is intended to show where the most “bang for the buck” infill efforts can be achieved and capitalizes on those initiatives begun or referenced in previous plans that have generated the most success; while introducing new ideas based on current technologies, trends, financial

markets, and other external factors outside the city's control. It offers a mechanism to identify where interventions in market forces may be best focused.

#### *Industrial Infill Opportunity*

- **Northwest Industrial Park:** While the preference is to focus on redevelopment close to the core of the city over greenfield development, this area is designated for an industrial park or industrial user. Annexed in 2009, the area is zoned for industrial uses only, specifically to diversify the city's tax base. For economic sustainability purposes, planning for this area must also include analysis of the costs of extending infrastructure relative to potential tax revenue.
- **Former Riteway site, Armstrong Road:** This area has potential for industrial infill development, with the caution that the Heath Creek and other streams need protection to the west, and connections into and out of Northfield still need consideration. For infill development to be successful at this site, Armstrong Road needs to be rethought.

#### *Downtown Core Expansion Opportunity*

- **Highway 3 between 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Streets:** These sites provide an opportunity for an expansion of the downtown core, and a strong reason to redesign Highway 3 to slow traffic through downtown. The Byzantine/SMSQ site is also critical for defining the west side of the river as beautiful and walkable as the east.
- **MnDOT site (NE corner, Highway 3 and Woodley):** Another opportunity to extend downtown, reinvent the highway, and is a key component to making the Riverfront Enhancement and Mill Towns Trail plans work well.

#### *Mixed-Use Infill Opportunity*

- **Small steps toward the big picture:** Reimagining Highway 3 from Fremouw to Jefferson Parkway is a high-level goal. Intersection improvements should be focused first on 2nd/3rd Street & Highway 3, then the Woodley intersection, then intensifying intersections along the corridor and nearby parcels. Because Northfield has a bikeway on Heritage/Lincoln/Roosevelt as the only connecting segment south of Jefferson, this intersection needs high priority attention to connect the trail across the highway.
- **Highway 3:** This area continues to grow as the place to focus apart from the northwest area, including the highway frontage, the land between the highway and the river, and the land between the highway to Jefferson Road. Past plans have emphasized capitalizing on the river with better connections to a high-quality mixed-use environment.
- **Festler Farm:** This is a prominent and relatively large redevelopment site across from the high school which will require improvements to access. The city should begin to plan desired street, bike/walk, and driveway connections.
- **Bluff View, Fargaze Meadows, and Southbridge subdivisions (Remaining Parcels):** Previous planning efforts for these two areas set the expectation for a mix of housing types that includes market-rate and subsidized ownership opportunities that are well-connected to destinations like schools, shops, and parks.

#### *Residential Mixed-Use Infill Opportunity*

- **Jefferson Parkway East:** The city is constructing a water treatment plant in this area. The city should further evaluate the feasibility and cost of serving this area with infrastructure before actively pursuing development.

- **South end of town east of 246 and just west of Middle School:** This area would require new road construction and should prioritize connections to 246 and Ford Street.

**FIGURES 8 -? THIS SERIES OF MAPS WILL SHOW THE INFILL AREAS**

## Strategies and Actions

**Overarching strategy for a sustainable economy:** Prioritize using public resources in situations when the private market fails to meet stated community needs. Continuously improve public regulations for ease of use and to prevent undesired outcomes.

### Guiding Values Overview



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and have tools to implement best practices in their fields, and using consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield's capital planning and budgeting advances the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.



Northfield promotes **safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to accommodate residents in all stages of life, and address demand for homes for workers.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience** and **mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield works to provide a network of transportation **mobility options** that enable all Northfield residents and visitors to move throughout the community safely and conveniently..



Northfield **emphasizes equity in order** to address disparities, and to ensure equitable access to jobs, housing, education, essential services, retail, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive for all, independent of age, economic status, mobility, gender, or racial and ethnic background.

## Strategy 1: Strengthen Northfield's Downtown Core



*Continue to strengthen the coalitions, regulations, and investments that keep Northfield's downtown strong.*

**Outcome:** Downtown Northfield grows as the river-focused anchor of Northfield's small business community, locus of valuable tax base, residential neighborhoods, welcoming and accessible public space, river access, and location of city services.

### *Strategy 1 Actions:*

- 1 Identify opportunities and provide support for improved business mix, marketing, events, and physical improvements.
- 2 Promote new and rehabilitated housing near downtown to increase housing supply, increase tax productivity, and support local business by putting more people near downtown retail, services, and the river.
- 3 Implement the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan to improve access to the river and build on Northfield's quality of place
- 4 Reimagine Highway 3 through downtown to facilitate access to the Transit Hub, Riverfront, parks, and downtown businesses.
- 5 Proactively identify, evaluate, survey and designate historic and cultural resources with the Heritage Preservation Commission to ensure a consistent and equitable approach to preservation. Prioritize reinvestment in existing buildings, including adaptive reuse.
- 6 Consider establishing a special service district to support a comprehensive and coordinated approach to refuse and recycling collection, snow and ice removal, street trees and municipal landscaping, parks and parklets, and on- and off-street public parking.

## Strategy 2: Develop Carleton and St. Olaf Relationships



*Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges are key parts of Northfield's distinctive character as well as important employers, home to 25% of Northfield's population, and a significant factor in how Northfield can grow; Northfield needs to more actively develop college relationships and guide their physical growth.*

**Outcome:** The City will work with Carleton and St Olaf to plan physical development and increase their economic contributions; the city will benefit from college leadership on climate and collaborating with students as appropriate.

### Strategy 2 Actions:

- 1 Identify partnership opportunities to increase colleges economic contributions to the city to reflect use of city services and resources through increased cash donation and/or in-kind support to mutual programs such as increased transit or pedestrian improvements.
- 2 Work with colleges to evaluate district energy feasibility, work on river health, and learn from climate leadership.
- 3 Guide college land-use planning to eliminate surface parking visible to the community and increase access to the Cannon River.
- 4 The City and Colleges responsibly plan development together and contain it within the set boundary.
- 5 The City and Colleges develop a clear and consistent approach to working with college students and faculty on municipal initiatives for mutual benefit.

### Strategy 3: Small Business Development



*Build a supportive and culturally competent environment for local businesses to thrive by connecting business owners to the resources from which they can benefit.*

**Outcome:** Local small business owners know about and use technical and financial resources that are available to them.

**Outcome:** Regulations, policies and programs are designed to make small business development easier.

### Strategy 3 Actions:

- 1 Partner with existing local business support organizations and evaluate other support opportunities to establish public and private local funding resources for small businesses.
- 2 Work with existing and potential partners to ensure current and future business owners can easily locate city-related support information for business resources.
- 3 Work with existing and potential partners to provide culturally and linguistically competent and context-sensitive business advisory services for existing and future entrepreneurs.
- 4 Review regulations and policies to reduce or eliminate barriers to new business creation.
- 5 City staff in all departments provide effective and culturally competent assistance.

## Strategy 4: Support the Local Workforce



*Support local businesses in recruiting and retaining their workers through supporting efforts addressing housing, childcare and training.*

**Outcome:** Northfield's existing and future workforce faces fewer barriers to moving to Northfield and living close to their place of employment.

### *Strategy 4 Actions:*

- 1 Support housing development that increases the supply and variety of housing that meets the needs of Northfield's workforce.
- 2 Prioritize building new housing in places with convenient access to jobs and services.
- 3 Facilitate development of transit and other affordable transportation to jobs in and out of Northfield.
- 4 Promote strategies and partnerships for increasing high-quality affordable childcare and other needed workforce services in Northfield.

## Strategy 5: Diversify Northfield's Tax Base



**Outcome:** Northfield will intentionally build a more sustainable local economy and maintain and expand city services, amenities and infrastructure.

### *Strategy 5 Actions:*

- 1 Prioritize development in T4 area in the Interventions analysis to ensure an adequate supply of commercially zoned land to provide for ongoing business growth in ways which minimize infrastructure costs, preserve natural resources, and ensure equitable access.  
[\[Link to Capital Improvement Program and budget\]](#)
- 2 In highway-oriented commercial uses, particularly on Highway 3 between Woodley Street and County Road 1, prioritize infill development and business expansions that increase floor area ratios, right-size parking, improve accessibility for non-car travel, and diversify the range of commercial/industrial uses.
- 3 Focus recruitment, retention and expansion investments that support, complement and enhance the existing retail, commercial, industrial, and service industries, recognizing that the community's largest local employers are Carleton and St Olaf colleges, Northfield Hospital and Clinics, and Post Consumer Brands and that the region benefits from safe, convenient, and affordable access to jobs in Northfield, Faribault, and Rice County.

## Strategy 6: Grow in a Compact, Sustainable Development Pattern



**Outcome:** Northfield grows in a pattern which increases tax productivity, preserves natural resources, limits climate impacts, improves access to jobs and services, and assesses fiscal impact of development.

### *Strategy 6 Actions:*

- 1 Develop an accessible and approachable process that evaluates the benefits, costs, opportunities, and potential negative externalities of larger-scale development projects related to the economic sustainability and health of the overall Northfield community.
- 2 Concentrate on the needs of existing businesses to grow in Northfield and attract compatible and complementary industries.
- 3 Ensure zoning and other regulations guide all development and redevelopment to increase tax productivity, enhance access, address climate and including requiring fiscal impact analysis.
- 4 Lead actions to support the reuse and redevelopment of underutilized properties that are already served by local infrastructure. Specific actions can be found in the access chapter of this plan.
- 5 Residential infill developments should complement the pattern and scale of existing neighborhoods, improve connectivity to the rest of the city and allow for innovation and consideration of market needs, climate impact, economic feasibility and sustainable affordability.

## Strategy 7: Maintain Northfield's Existing Housing Stock



**Outcome:** All residents in Northfield live in safe and healthy housing.

### *Strategy 7 Actions:*

- 1 Develop programs and partnerships to support manufactured home communities and preserve this form of housing.
- 2 Develop programs in partnership with affordable housing and educational institutions to ensure housing stability in all neighborhoods and communities.
- 3 Develop programs and partnerships to assist those who are cost-burdened to live in safe, healthy and affordable housing that is connected to basic needs.
- 4 Create incentives for landlords to reduce energy costs.
- 5 Support housing near necessary goods and services and which promotes active living and community connectivity.

## Strategy 8: Build More Housing



*New housing development meets defined community needs and diversifies the housing options available to residents.*

**Outcomes:** There will be a sufficient supply of housing at each price point and stage of life for existing and future residents. All types of homes, including subsidized and unsubsidized, owner-occupied and rental, single- and multi-family sufficient to ensure lifecycle choices.

### *Strategy 8 Actions:*

- 1 Prioritize building new housing in walkable areas of the city
- 2 Include affordable housing units in all development by pairing inclusionary housing requirements with resources to support affordable units.
- 3 Complete an analysis of market conditions that could support the development of affordable housing in Northfield using inclusionary zoning.
- 4 The City will amend the Land Development Code to allow for increased housing choice and potential reduction of costs through examining the definition of family, housing-related uses, zoning district standards, and rezoning of property.
- 5 Prioritize developing infill sites through direct property acquisition, site preparation for redevelopment, and actively soliciting development proposals targeted to identified needs.
- 6 Support efforts to create and support cooperative ownership opportunities for homeowners in manufactured home parks, multi-family properties, and commercial endeavors in the Northfield area.
- 7 Partner with local home builders, employers, and other regional non-profit entities to evaluate and develop an inclusive strategy that results in financial and other tools to accelerate the development of home affordable to working families.
- 8 Revise and regularly update the Land Development Code to remove barriers and reduce costs to housing and economic development
- 9 Include housing needs in strategic planning efforts to ensure that short-term goals meet local market needs and address potential local market failures.
- 10 Encourage universal design to make homes accessible to all residents.
- 11 Support township and county efforts to build new housing within the Northfield school district.

## Strategy 9: Support At-risk Buyers and Tenants



*Provide support and funding for vulnerable populations in the housing market.*

**Outcomes:** Residents can afford to own or rent a home in Northfield and stay in their homes through hardships.

Outcome: Northfield will ensure strong protection for tenants' rights.

### *Strategy 9 Actions:*

- 1 Partner with local organizations working on housing support, such as Community Action Center, Healthy Community Initiative, Three Rivers Community Action, and Rice County Habitat for Humanity to support first-time homebuyers with education and down payment related assistance and homeowners at risk of foreclosure.
- 2 Coordinate with Healthy Community Initiative, and other non-profit partners, to ensure the greatest return on investment of City, EDA and HRA-levied funds and those funds are used in ways that most closely align with the directions set through the Comprehensive and Strategic Plans.
- 3 Pursue mechanisms to enhance and improve the use of Rice County-administered Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) within the Northfield City limits. For example:
  - a. Pursue use of Small Area Fair Market Rents in order to increase use of vouchers in Northfield.
  - b. Renegotiate agreement with Rice County for HCV use in Northfield.
  - c. Explore policies and communication strategies to encourage acceptance of Housing Choice Vouchers.
- 4 Partner in creating a fund to support the replacement of manufactured homes as they reach the end of their useful life and providing temporary relocation support for manufactured home residents when the homes are being repaired or rehabbed.
- 5 Develop clear, comprehensive, and accessible policies and practices relating to tenant and landlord rights, responsibilities, best practices, and resources to decrease conflicts that could lead to evictions. For example:
  - a. Enact a tenant right to counsel ordinance.
  - b. Enact a time of sale inspection ordinance for mobile and manufactured homes.
  - c. Work with community partners to adequately fund the identification and mitigation of tenant-landlord conflicts.
  - d. Adopt a tenant notification requirement related to the sale of properties,

## Strategy 10: Create programs to support affordable and sustainable homes and neighborhoods



*Assertively use City resources and authorities to support the production and preservation of needed housing.*

**Outcome:** All residents in Northfield live in safe and stable housing and neighborhoods.

**Outcome:** Local housing needs are met at a greater scale using existing public resources and authorities and community partners.

### *Strategy 10 Actions:*

- 1 Incentivize energy efficiency in building materials and design, heating/cooling infrastructure, and electrification to reduce lifetime costs of housing
- 2 Work with housing partners to preserve and maintain affordable housing through strategies such as low-interest home improvement loans, a naturally occurring affordable housing preservation fund and other existing or future opportunities to reduce the cost burden of rehabilitating housing.
- 3 Work to improve sustainability of new and existing housing. All new housing developers comply with Minnesota Energy Code and are encouraged to construct Net-Zero housing. Existing housing is retrofitted with energy efficiency upgrades.
- 4 Continue to provide incentives for landlords and homeowners alike to reduce their energy costs.
- 5 Support all household types, including co- housing, intergenerational housing, intentional communities or other shared-living models that allow residents to “age in community.”
- 6 Use public financial resources to develop the types of housing that are needed and are not being built organically.
- 7 Play an active role in developing existing city/ housing or economic development- authority owned land or through land acquisition in order to have more say relative to the mix of housing that is being built.
- 8 Explore fee waivers/reductions and other incentives for development that addresses city goals (sustainability, affordability, compact development, etc).
- 9 Revise the zoning code to ensure denser development in neighborhoods dominated by single-family development can occur.
- 6 Develop programs and partnerships to support manufactured home communities and preserve this form of housing.
- 7 Support housing near necessary goods and services to increase affordable access, reduce the need to drive, and community connectivity.
- 8 Encourage mixed income neighborhoods

## Chapter 5 – Infrastructure

How Northfield plans, builds, operates, and maintains infrastructure and facilities is a core municipal function and where the city can most directly implement many goals of this Plan, especially climate and economic sustainability goals.

This chapter addresses the utilities over which the city has direct operational and financial control (water, stormwater, solid waste, and wastewater) and other key infrastructure especially streets, trails, and infrastructure contained in street rights of way such as street lighting and boulevard trees. The chapter recommends actions for traditional gray infrastructure and adds blue-green infrastructure and natural asset management as infrastructure to be planned as a key part of Northfield's climate action.

This Plan requires the city to manage, repair and develop its infrastructure to advance the values the community identified; this approach requires broader thinking and collaboration among departments and with governmental partners as well as improved public process and related communication and education initiatives.

The Public Works department is generally responsible for much of the work surrounding infrastructure including planning, programming, design, construction and maintenance. The department is also responsible for planning and maintenance of city parks, streets and associated infrastructure such as bike/walk facilities, street trees and streetlights which figure prominently in other chapters of this Plan. Implementing public works projects must be informed by the broader planning and development work in the Community and Development Department, environmental quality and climate action work, and leverage the expertise and community connections of public engagement and communications staff.

### What We Heard

- Northfield should develop in a manner that is fiscally and environmentally sustainable.
- Northfield needs to broaden its tax base to reduce the share of the property tax burden on residential property owners.
- Plans for investment from the city for balanced, smart, and sustainable growth are needed.
- The city should balance growth with the preservation of open space, natural resources and agricultural land.
- Tree preservation, wetland protection and sufficient green spaces (active and passive) is important for the ecosystem, mitigating the effects of climate change, to make the community feel more welcoming, and to offer outdoor recreation opportunities

### Connecting Essential Municipal Services with Sustainability

Municipal services like safe drinking water, fire and police operations, wastewater treatment, trash and recycling, and city street maintenance are key to the City's duty to protect the health,

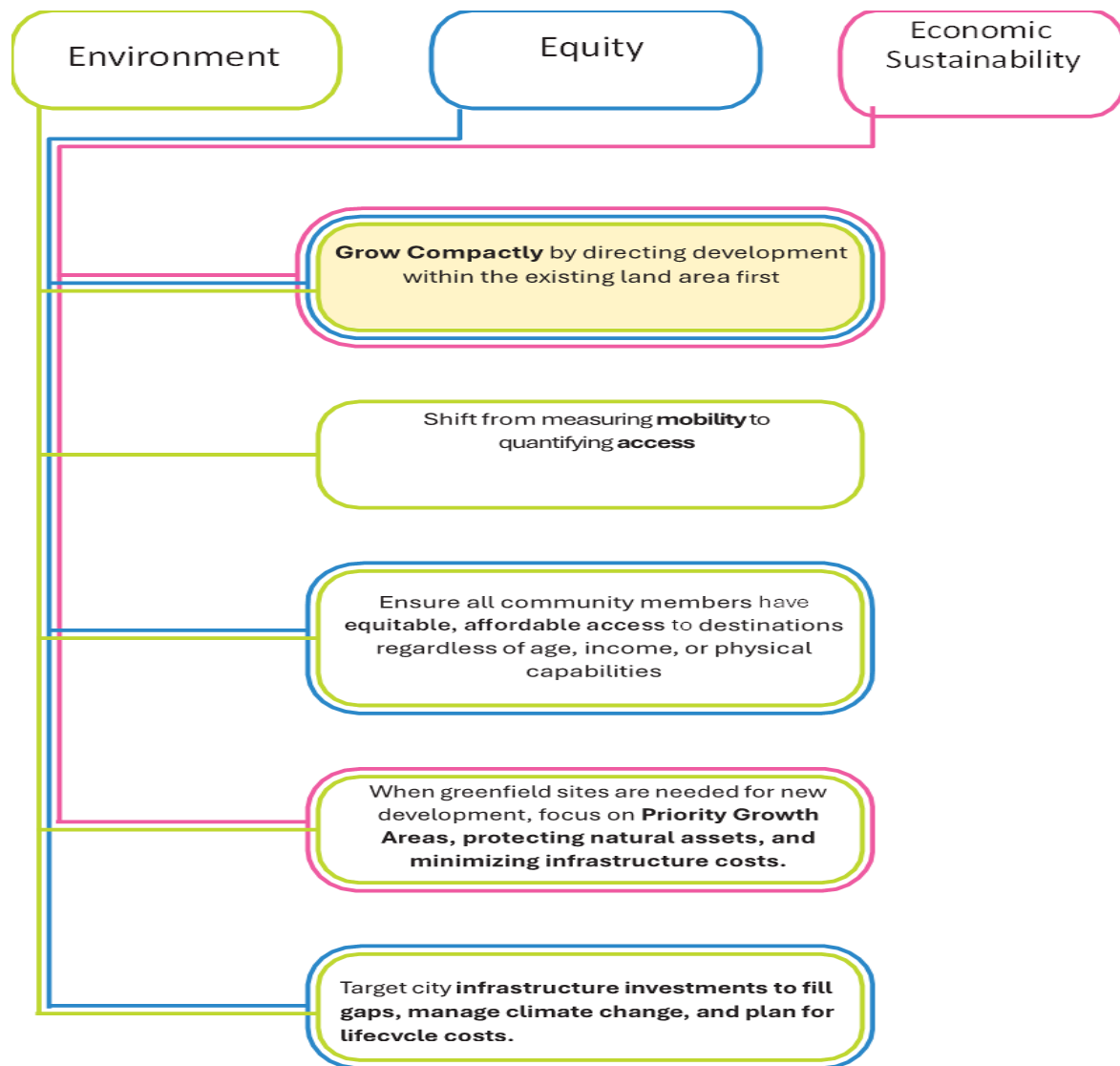
safety, and welfare of residents. How Northfield plans, builds and maintains core systems is also key to long term financial health, equitable outcomes, and Northfield's climate goals.

Building, maintaining and replacing infrastructure is expensive. Past decisions to permit extensive low density and geographically dispersed development mean Northfield – like most American communities - has more streets and pipes with comparatively few taxpayers to support the ongoing expense to maintain the systems. This Plan stresses compact development to maximize current infrastructure while also increasing the tax base for an economically and environmentally sustainable city. Ultimately, plans to extend or expand infrastructure should occur only when the return on public investment will be sufficient. Compact growth also serves Northfield's goals to preserve natural resources; put people closer to destinations and provide more and more complete transit options.

This Plan also requires that infrastructure projects be designed to help the city achieve its climate goals including evaluating current infrastructure for climate vulnerabilities such as localized flooding, extreme heat and heat-island effects, and planning upgrades which can withstand more flooding, hotter summers, and other extreme weather. Modeling infrastructure for more extreme weather, such as 500- or 1000-year floods, is one way to plan for resilience.

From an equity standpoint, infrastructure for safe drinking water, healthy sanitation, and excellent connectivity - for **all** - is a baseline measure of success of these systems. In addition, climate resilience for infrastructure is often considered in terms of protecting the streets, pipes and facilities which form these systems. Significant consideration should be given to how infrastructure is planned for greater resilience and mitigation with the goal of ensuring excellent emergency response and prioritizing access to needed services during extreme weather events particularly for neighborhoods without reliable transportation or which have been isolated by a lack of sufficient transportation connections.

## Core principles: Economy, Environment and Equity Graphic?



## Definitions

The following terms are defined as they are used within this Chapter:

Gray infrastructure

Blue-green infrastructure

Natural asset management

Low-impact development

Best management practices (BMPs)

Sanitary sewer

Stormwater management

Solid waste

PFAS

Organic waste

## Existing Conditions

This Plan often refers to infrastructure as an “investment” which captures only part of the picture: public spending from property taxes, grants from other governmental agencies, bonding to raise capital costs to build more streets and pipes to serve new development, improve existing infrastructure, and increase the climate resilience of infrastructure systems is a key way cities attract new taxpayers, improve the city’s quality of life, and protect public health and safety. New development often pays for the construction of infrastructure to serve the development. We can measure the return on this initial investment (how much more tax revenue does the city receive after improving infrastructure). Yet the City must also pay for perpetual maintenance, repair, and eventual replacement. Northfield, like many other cities, has not always considered the long-term costs of installing the infrastructure in the first place. While infrastructure is certainly an economic issue, it determines much about how and where we can use land, address climate change, and ensure everyone in the community has comparable services regardless of where they live.

### Streets

Street maintenance continues to be important. trying to play catch up: pavement condition map

Streets: variety of bike/walk facilities, ADA compliance, street trees (downtown replacement, power lines), wide too-fast streets

### Wastewater

Wastewater infrastructure includes sanitary sewer lines and the wastewater treatment plant which treats wastewater from both Northfield and Dundas. Wastewater treatment capacity is one limiting factor for development; current capacity is sufficient to support a population of 30,000 with room for expansion onsite. Generally, sanitary sewer collection systems are designed to use gravity flow, but elevations may require lift stations to collect sewage from these areas including the industrial district in the NW part of the city increasing the cost of construction, operation and maintenance of the system. Directing development to locations most effectively connected by gravity flow can limit costs. Failures of wastewater facilities have environmental and public health consequences by discharging untreated sewage into the Cannon River and other surface water sources. Wastewater treatment facilities are vulnerable to flooding.

Northfield completed a Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan (CSSP) for Northfield and Dundas in 2007 which had a 20-year planning horizon. Since this plan was adopted, Dundas updated its [Comprehensive Plan](#) in 2023 and this Plan makes considerable changes to future land use, proposed development pattern, and planning for climate mitigation and resilience. Updates to the CSSP to update data and planning assumptions, as well as climate planning are needed.

#### FIGURE X. MAP OF SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

## Drinking water

**Distribution System:** The current public drinking water supply system includes five deep wells (four active and one inactive), two ground storage reservoirs, one elevated storage tank, a booster station and almost 93 miles of distribution piping. This water system serves residential, commercial and industrial uses as well as providing water for firefighting.

### **FIGURE X. MAP OF DRINKING WATER SYSTEM (MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE – SECURITY ISSUES?)**

**Supply and Treatment:** Northfield's water supply comes from five wells drawing from the Jordan-St. Lawrence, Jordan and Jordan-Prairie-du-Chien aquifers. Three wells are normally in operation and being controlled by the water level in the ground and elevated storage tanks. As the water level in the tanks decreases, the wells pump to meet system demands and refill storage tanks. Raw water is currently treated at well pumping stations; treatment includes chlorine (disinfection), fluoride (dental health), and polyphosphate (inhibiting iron oxidation). Land use near the wells is regulated by the Well Head Protection Plan to prevent water contamination by managing potential pollution sources in supply recharge areas.

A water treatment plant is currently planned to reduce manganese, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) or “forever chemicals,” and water hardness. Planning for a water treatment plant is a specific response to address increasing levels of manganese. Three of five wells have a consistent level of manganese exceeding EPA guidelines for a safe level for infants under one year old. Periodic testing demonstrates higher-than-acceptable levels in other wells. Additionally, there is intent to insure Northfield's water is also safe from PFAS which do not break down in the environment. PFAS are a class of human-made chemicals that have been widely used for decades. These chemicals can make products waterproof, stainproof, nonstick, heat-resistant, and more. However, there is a risk of PFAS pollution whenever a product containing PFAS is made, used, or even after it is disposed. PFAS have been found in the water, air, and soil in Minnesota. Once PFAS are in the environment, they can make their way into water and food supplies, leading to human exposure. Long-term exposure to PFAS in even small amounts can affect human health. At the current time guidance on this wide variety of chemicals does not point to clear recommendations for treatment based on levels of contamination, however, current research shows that the planned water treatment plant will capture most if not all of the “forever chemicals,” including microplastics.

## Solid waste

Northfield's solid waste includes recycling, landfill materials, and organic waste; the City contracts for the hauling of trash for the landfill and collecting recyclable materials. A cooperative offers organics recycling pickup within the city. Each year, Northfield disposes of more than 26,000 tons of solid waste. Roughly half of that amount is recycled with most of the remainder of the non-recycled waste sent to the Rice County landfill; a small percentage goes to a resource recovery (waste to energy) facility. Ninety-five percent of emissions from Northfield's solid waste come from landfill waste. Organic materials, such as food and yard waste, sent to a landfill decompose over time, releasing methane, a greenhouse gas. Methane could be captured for use as either compressed natural gas for heavy-duty vehicles or as renewable natural gas that is refined and added to existing natural gas pipeline. Methane production can also be reduced by diverting organic waste from the landfill. The current level of organics

composting is not sufficient for this purpose; the City can consider managing organics collection and composting at a municipal scale.

## Other infrastructure:

broadband, electricity, gas to be filled in before next draft

## Analysis

Since Northfield adopted its Comprehensive Water Plan (2006) Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan (2007), Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2008), and the preceding Comprehensive Plan (2008), significant changes have occurred in Northfield including infrastructure design, and our understanding of climate change. Northfield's land use and planned land use have also changed, the water treatment plant will extend the distribution system, a new elevated storage tank is scheduled for construction in 2026 in the NW area of the city and the importance of ensuring the system is resilient to climate hazards and uses the most sustainable methods possible has become critically important. The health of the aquifers from which we draw water is another consideration.

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan began planning for more compact development to intensify land use to increase density, increase tax value, create more walkable/bikeable places, preserve open space and habitat, and maximize use of existing infrastructure first. This Plan sharpens that focus. As a result, the land use assumptions on which many of Northfield's infrastructure plans were based may no longer be valid; strategies and actions below direct the city to update relevant plans.

A key feature of this Plan is planning to realize multiple benefits by planning for systems and people, rather than disciplines and projects. Chapter 3 connected streets with helping people reach where they need to go, improving safety for people walking, biking and rolling, and building climate resilience and mitigation into our street corridors. Chapter 4 emphasized developing housing and attracting businesses which are secure, and which pay for the services needed. This Chapter sets up Northfield to plan its infrastructure as more than pipes, but as necessary foundation for the other goals of this Plan.

Transportation planning has been undergoing a paradigm shift. Northfield's earlier plans are based on the old model of planning for mobility including increasing capacity based on traffic projections which have proved unreliable, functional classification of roadways not suited to the land use context in Northfield and relying on metrics to measure vehicle delay and speed. Emphasizing mobility produced wider and faster streets, required more parking, but paid little attention to adjacent land uses, safety for people walking and biking, and the cost of expanding capacity. This Plan explicitly guides Northfield to measure accessibility to destinations by measuring proximity, connectivity, affordability, and considering land use and transportation together.

Climate action has taken on critical importance in recent years for infrastructure planning and maintenance; Northfield's infrastructure planning and projects need to incorporate mitigation and resilience. Since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, Northfield has experienced significant flooding in 2010 and 2024 from heavy rainfall with damage to utilities along the river, damage to businesses, roads and homes, downed trees, and contamination from floodwater. Hotter

summers stress water supplies from greater demand and extreme weather puts all infrastructure systems at risk of failure. Mitigating the effects of climate change, reaching Northfield's climate goals and ensuring our critical systems are resilient is a key recommendation of this Plan.

Northfield's related plans must strongly guide the city toward practices to manage a changing climate and extreme weather. This Plan and the 2019 Climate Action Plan call for planning street right of way and parks to include rain gardens or bioswales, larger tree planning areas to increase the tree canopy. While the most recent Surface Water Management Plan was updated in 2020, with the adoption of this 2045-horizon Comprehensive Plan, that plan should be updated within the next two years.

The Cannon River has been identified as important to the city in every comprehensive plan beginning in 1966. Designated as a state water trail and protected as a Wild and Scenic River, the potential for increasing access to the river and improving the health of the river requires more attention to the river as part of Northfield's blue green infrastructure. Blue green infrastructure uses natural features plus strategically engineered facilities use bodies of water, parks and natural areas, and built infrastructure to build a network of natural areas to manage stormwater and reduce the amount of water running off streets to storm sewers to the river. Properly designed and maintained, blue green infrastructure can deliver multiple benefits including recreation, habitat, economic value, and improved water quality.

The Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan (REAP) plans parks adjacent to the river as part of Northfield's flood mitigation system and developed to increase the tree canopy, strategically use natural plantings to infiltrate stormwater, plan park features to manage and withstand flooding, and allowing Northfield to realize the promise of its riverfront.

A key piece of the REAP is planning for the removal of the Ames Mill Dam built in 1918. Removing the dam could play a critical role in reversing some of the environmental degradation along the river and enabling a greater range of recreational uses. The City Council recommended an option which would replace the dam with extended rapids. Removing the dam and reconstructing this section of the Cannon River requires careful planning of existing sewer and water infrastructure nearby as well as ensuring adjacent buildings are protected from potential damage.

## Solid waste

Finally, city planners and leaders have paid greater attention to the long term costs of infrastructure and importance of the development pattern for generating sufficient revenue to support needed services. During Northfield's explosive growth in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the prevailing belief was that all growth was good for the tax base. In the short term, development does pay for new infrastructure and spur tax base growth, but the obligation to maintain, repair and replace infrastructure over decades requires more tax revenue than low density and widely dispersed development can provide. Building many single-family homes and adding big box stores extended Northfield's street network and water and wastewater systems significantly, yet this pattern of development generates relatively little tax revenue to support its share of the infrastructure.

In 2018 Northfield invited Urban3 to analyze tax productivity in Northfield generally with special attention to the industrial land in the NW part of the city. The analysis and resulting [StoryMap](#)

show downtown's multistory, mixed use pattern generates much more tax revenue per acre than more spread out development like Northfield's Target and Cub Foods development. For the NW area, the City was cautioned to consider the cost of extending, maintaining and replacing infrastructure as it made plans to develop the area. Comprehensive plans before 2008 all identified this area as a lower priority because of the infrastructure costs associated with the distance and topography of the area.

Moving forward, Northfield is committed to developing the NW area because of the need for larger parcels of land for industrial development. The city must also plan for the life cycle of its infrastructure and whether the development considered across the entire city will generate sufficient revenue to maintain its vital infrastructure.

## Strategies and Actions

Strategy 1: Compact development [money, accessibility and sustainability]

Strategy 2: Implement blue green infrastructure and natural asset management

**Outcome:** Northfield integrates blue green infrastructure into land use planning, capital improvements, and infrastructure decisions.

**Outcome:** Northfield evaluates public land management practices (parks, open space, public right of way, public buildings) to identify natural assets and plan how to manage, plant and improve these areas to infiltrate stormwater, improve habitat, mitigate climate threats and increase climate resilience.

**Outcome:** Northfield establishes a timeline and interim goals to implement the REAC and Greenway Corridors plan to preserve natural assets, create a system of green and blue infrastructure, and build long term management of natural systems into city plans.

1. Require planning beneficial plants on public land to reduce area of turf grass, increase stormwater infiltration, and improve habitat.
2. Continue planning to remove the Ames Mill Dam, improve Cannon River water quality, and expand recreational use of the river for community and economic development benefits.
3. Use the strategic planning process to identify near term goals, metrics and actions for REAC, Greenways Corridor plan, and integrated blue green infrastructure plan.
4. Work with Xcel Energy and other utilities to strategically bury power lines to eliminate tree butchery and improve the health and appearance of boulevard trees.
5. Assess, identify and pursue opportunities for financing and funding green and blue infrastructure implementation while budgeting for long term maintenance.
6. Plan and design Division Street and other downtown streets to provide space to support larger tree planting areas and additional green infrastructure.

Map the urban forest to set goals for the density and health of the tree canopy, identify locations for improvement, and consider the economic benefits of trees to property values and livability.

### Strategy 3: Water, stormwater, and wastewater

**Outcome:** Northfield water, wastewater, and stormwater systems are planned and built to withstand extreme weather and improve climate resilience.

**Outcome:** Water and wastewater capacity are used as key metrics for assessing development projects and planning growth.

1. Water, wastewater and stormwater plans are updated to reflect current climate guidance and changes in land use assumptions including analyzing systems under extreme weather conditions such as modeling 500- and 1000-year events.
2. Assess water, wastewater and stormwater systems for any critical failure points and the likely impact on the community and transportation; plan needed improvements.
3. Inventory the City's existing tree canopy, landscaping practices, wetland restoration, river and stream buffers, and opportunities for improvement.
4. Change stormwater practice from allowing development to dictate stormwater infrastructure to determining locations for regional stormwater management prior to development and building around those concepts

### Strategy 4: Streets and stormwater

**Outcome:** Streets and the entire public right of way are planned, designed, built and operated to meet safety, connectivity, and green infrastructure goals.

1. Adopt Street Types in land development code revision to apply to all current street projects and future streets to provide context-based starting points for street design which guide allocation of space based on land use context and identified priorities for connectivity, green infrastructure, and safety.
2. Consider adopting overlay plans as part of the land development code revision to sharpen the street type guidance for critical areas which guide special attention to tree canopy, school access, or equity concerns.
3. Plan demonstration projects or project areas to test ideas and educate the community about allocating space for all users and green infrastructure.
4. Train or hire staff who can actually do the work.
5. Aggressively seek funding to reduce capital costs of improvements.

This Plan requires the City to review and map areas of the city where infrastructure may have seen less investment then work to improve these areas.

### Strategy 5: Reduce solid waste which is landfilled through diversion, recycling, and reuse.

**Outcome:** Northfield reduces volume of solid waste sent to the Rice County landfill by X% by 2045.

- Actions for organic/food waste composting, recycling, construction/demolition waste1.  
Decrease total per capita municipal solid waste handled **5% by 2030**
- 2. Achieve 70% organics landfill waste diversion by \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Increase diversion of potential recoverables by \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Increase recycling from 32% to 35% of total MSW handled by 2030
- 5. Consider establishing a “deconstruction” program for municipal demolition projects

## Chapter 6 – Implementation

### Connections to Guiding Values

**Guiding city planning, budgeting and decision-making:** At its core, the Northfield Comprehensive Plan sets a policy direction for decisions made day-to-day by the City Council, Planning Commission, other boards and commissions, and City staff. The Plan itself does not have regulatory authority but instead offers the policy foundation for other official controls, like the zoning and building codes, subdivision regulations, City budget, Capital Improvement Plan and other tools, as seen in Figure X.

**FIGURE X**



**Fostering strong partnerships:** Beyond these key tools, partnerships with other agencies and institutions will also be critical to realizing the full vision of this plan. The city is committed to working with organizations and agencies who share our values; this plan articulates those values for potential partners. Our partners should come from within the Southeastern Minnesota “ecosystem” whenever possible.

**Pursuing outside funding:** This plan establishes priorities and strategies which communicate the City’s values and project priorities to county, state, and federal agencies to support applications for those entities funding programs. Many non-profits and higher educational institutions have already built programs and partnerships that need to be perpetuated with further funding and staff participation from the City of Northfield; this Plan is intended to align with those programs.

### How Northfield will Implement Its Values

The following matrix (Table 1) shows how the strategies located in the preceding chapters relate to the Guiding Values established in Chapter 2. Most of the strategies support more than one of

the Guiding Values. Looking at them all together in this way also highlights overlap between the strategies in each chapter.

**TABLE 1 VALUES IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

	Equity	Creative Solutions	Resilience	Economically Responsible and Sustainable	Human Connections	Housing	Travel Options
<b>Access</b>							
Plan for Access	X		X	X	X		X
Compact Development	X		X	X	X	X	X
Target Areas of Underinvestment	X	X		X		X	X
Equitable Access	X	X	X	X	X		X
Design for Access	X	X		X			X
Design for Resilience and Sustainability	X	X	X	X			X
<b>Sustainable Economy</b>							
Community Development Department Education		X		X	X		
Strengthen Downtown Core					X	X	
Leverage Carlton and St Olaf Resources		X	X				
Small Business Development	X	X			X		
Support Local Workforce	X					X	
Diversify Tax Base	X	X	X	X			
Grow in a Compact, Sustainable Pattern	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Preserve Housing Stock	X		X		X	X	
Build New Housing	X	X	X	X		X	
Support At-Risk Buyers and Tenants	X	X				X	
Support Affordable and Sustainable Homes	X	X	X			X	
Reduce Urban Heat Island Effect	X		X	X			

## Connections to Other Plans

The comprehensive plan is intended to function as an “umbrella” document under which more specialized plans fit. Northfield has undertaken many topical plans in the years between comprehensive plans. Depending on the age and subject matter of these other plans, some of the recommendations may not align with the vision and guiding values of this comprehensive plan. The following matrix identifies each plan, the overall purpose and key policies in each. It also indicates whether each plan should be fully or partially incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan or should be discontinued to assist staff and decision makers in determining which policies to follow and which are outdated.

**TABLE 2 TABLE OF RELATED PLANS**

Document	Purpose	Key Policies or Ideas?	Year	Replaced	Incorporated	Partial Incorp.	Notes
<b>Land Use</b>							
<b>Downtown Streetscape Framework</b>	Specific improvements to reinforce identity and improve image, function and livability of downtown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughtful analysis of downtown areas</li> <li>• coordinated wayfinding and signage</li> <li>• Flexible palette of design elements</li> <li>• Recommendations to add stormwater infiltration along Division Street</li> <li>• String of Pearls: Linking downtown focal points and highlights with design elements and public art</li> </ul>	2006	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many improvements completed (Library corner, e.g.)</li> <li>• Some aspects replaced by REAC</li> <li>• Consider whether to retain streetscape palette</li> <li>• Retain for reference</li> </ul>
<b>Comprehensive Plan</b>	Long-range plans for managing the growth of the community and foundation for policies and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit emphasis on compact development prioritizing infill, redevelopment before greenfield projects</li> <li>• Rejects continuing suburban development of early 2000s</li> <li>• Stronger policy on walking/biking</li> <li>• Traditional neighborhood design</li> </ul>	2008	Yes			
<b>Gateway Corridor Improvements Plan</b>	Recommendations to improve entrances to the city along major corridors		2012	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain for reference and design ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Environment and Climate</b>							
<b>Natural Resources Inventory</b>	Assessment of remaining significant natural and open space areas to guide protection and management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Detailed assessment of plant, animal, water, and soil resources</li> <li>• Basis for Greenway Corridor system plan</li> </ul>	2005			Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update any areas which have been developed or undergone significant change (e.g. Kraewood property)</li> </ul>

Greenway Corridor System Plan	Regional plan for connected system of protected natural areas and cultural resources accessible for human use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System protects, preserves and connects natural areas and open spaces</li> <li>• Prioritizes high quality resources for protection and restoration.</li> <li>• Corridor system is one of the community's basic infrastructure systems and part of its comprehensive transportation network</li> </ul>	2006		Yes		Emphasis on greenway corridors as a essential infrastructure and part of transportation network is tightly aligned with Northfield 2045 emphasis on accessibility and planning for blue-green infrastructure and natural asset management.
Climate Action Plan	Strategic guide to addressing climate change in the city.		2019			Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review CAP and update Northfield 2045 in near future with outcomes, strategies and actions</li> <li>• CAP has extensive information about education and programming, but only scattered recommendations for land use and infrastructure which are actionable</li> </ul>
Economic Development							
Comprehensive Economic Development Plan	Guide for economic development in response to overdevelopment of residential uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• asset-based approach to maximize existing advantages</li> <li>• increasing availability of commercial land,</li> <li>• leveraging Cannon River and sense of place</li> <li>• aggressive business recruitment.</li> </ul>	2006	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain for reference</li> </ul>
Northfield Strategic Plan	Plan to guide the city's work through 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not strategic</li> <li>• Not a plan</li> </ul>	2021	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will be superseded by 2025 Strategic Plan</li> </ul>
Utilities							
Comprehensive Water Plan	Plan analyzing existing water distribution system and recommending improvements to address growth and expansion		2006				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update to reflect changed land use assumptions, development which has occurred and incorporate climate action priorities</li> </ul>
Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan	Plan analyzing sanitary sewer collection and treatment systems in		2007				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as above</li> </ul>

	Northfield and Dundas.						
Surface Water Management Plan	Plan analyzing current stormwater management system with recommendations for future capacity needs		2020				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes section on green infrastructure and low impact development which is not used for making recommendations in the plan</li> <li>Same as above</li> </ul>
Transportation/Access							
City of Northfield Comprehensive Transportation Plan Update	Plan analyzing existing and future transportation needs with recommendations for updates and improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standalone document developed along with 2008 comprehensive plan and its land use principles</li> <li>Relies on traditional metrics such as LOS, expanding capacity based on traffic projections</li> </ul>	2008				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete update needed</li> </ul>
Safe Routes to School Plan	Guide to necessary improvements for safe routes to school in Northfield.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on improving Jefferson Parkway and TH246 intersection</li> <li>Plan did not include NHS or Arcadia</li> </ul>	2009	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate needed updates in update to transportation plan and LDC</li> </ul>
Northfield Area Access Management and Safety Plan (MN Highway 19)	MnDOT plan for Highway 19 between I-35 and Minnesota State Highway 3 to address growth and safety concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>anticipates TH19 as 4 lane road to I-35</li> </ul>	2009	Yes			Superseded by TH19 mill & overlay planning
Northfield Modal Integration Project Study Report	Recommendations to improve multimodal crossings of Highway 19 and Highway 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emphasis on grade separated crossing</li> <li>foundation for TIGER grant project</li> </ul>	2009	Yes			
Complete Street Policy	Policy to guide the development of Complete Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended developing design guidelines and review every 5 years</li> <li>Included climate and stormwater management as part of street design</li> </ul>	2012	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As with SR2S, the policy and design principles should be included in the LDC and update to comprehensive transportation plan while eliminating this as a named policy</li> </ul>
Pedestrian, bike and trail system update	Reviewed existing policy and regulation plus recommendations for		2019	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations to update ordinances and policy not completed</li> </ul>

	filling network gaps, updating street types						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended bike and walk networks had no discernible basis for choosing routes or connecting places</li> </ul>
<b>Pedestrian and Bikeway Analyzation</b>	Identified projects in the CIP that can be designed to improve bikeway and pedestrian design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended two way bikeways as “preferred facilities” (some off-street, some on street, when protection is needed etc.)</li> </ul>	2022	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preferred facility approach did not reflect surrounding land use or improve accessibility</li> <li>Include any relevant information in transportation plan update and LDC</li> </ul>
<b>Downtown Parking Study</b>	Analyzes downtown parking supply and demand.		2023	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deeply flawed study biased in favor of desired projects which are no longer anticipated</li> </ul>
<b>Parks and Open Space</b>							
<b>Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan</b>	Extensive analysis of park system, recommended improvements and funding guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employed Complete Streets framework</li> <li>Includes master plans for individual parks</li> </ul>	2008 "			Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs review to determine if park master plans are still relevant (some park plans have been updated without reference to this plan) or other policy guidance is still useful</li> <li>Served as the basis for proposed bike/walk system in Northfield 2045</li> </ul>
<b>Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan</b>	Framework to guide improvements along the river and future design of park spaces.		2020			Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs review for compliance with Northfield 2045</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>							
<b>Northfield Housing Study</b>	Comprehensive study of Northfield's housing needs through 2025.		2021	Yes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor quality study</li> </ul>
<b>Housing and Education in Northfield (Enterprise)</b>	Provides strategies for improving housing affordability and capacity in Northfield.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Noteworthy study connecting housing, education and social mobility</li> <li>Focused on meeting needs of lower income families</li> </ul>	2022			Yes	
<b>Housing Needs Assessment (Maxfield research)</b>	Provides projections for housing need through 2035.		2024		Yes		

Comprehensive Housing Study (Rice County)	Evaluates current housing demand and projected needs for Rice County.		2024	Yes			Northfield 2045 relies on Maxfield research assessment
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**ADD LINES FOR ARTS PLANS FROM 2006 AND 2019-2024**

## Connecting outcomes and actions

The most important reason to update a comprehensive plan every decade is to respond to changing needs, evaluate what is working and what isn't, and to ensure the municipality is moving forward in the direction the community desires. The matrix below shows how the outcomes statements and actions relate and offer a menu of opportunities for shorter term strategic planning by elected officials, work planning for departments and the appointed boards and commissions they serve.

**TABLE 3 OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX <PENDING>**

# Appendices

Glossary

Engagement Summary

Equity Policy Framework

Interventions Analysis

Economic Development Technical Memo

Housing Technical Memo