

# City of Northfield

*City Hall  
801 Washington Street  
Northfield, MN 55057  
[northfieldmn.gov](http://northfieldmn.gov)*



## Meeting Agenda

**Wednesday, January 21, 2026**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers**

**Environmental Quality Commission**

## 6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. [26-039](#) December 17, 2025 EQC Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [1 - December 17, 2025 EQC Meeting Minutes](#)

### PRESENTATIONS

2. [26-040](#) Zero Waste Initiative #1 - Single-Use Carryout Bag Community Survey Results

Attachments: [1 - BuisnessData All 260114](#)  
[2 - ResidentData All 260114](#)

### OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

*Persons may take one opportunity to address the Board/Commission for two (2) minutes (not including interpreter's time) on any topic, even if on the agenda, with the condition that they may not speak on the same item later in the meeting. No notification of the Chair is required. However, speakers are asked to complete a sign up card. Persons wanting a response to a question must submit the question in writing to the recording secretary. Questions must include name and information on how to contact. You may use the back side of the comment cards available in the meeting room. Persons cannot gift their 2 minute speaking time to other members of the public.*

### BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

#### REGULAR AGENDA

*Persons that wish to speak on a regular agenda item must provide name and address by completing & submitting a sign up card. Persons may also contact the staff liaison via the City's website no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the meeting. The Chair will call up individuals to speak, based on preregistration and cards submitted, after the staff report on an item. Please be respectful of the public's and the Commission's time. Members of the public wishing to speak must adhere to the following guidelines:*

- *Speak only once for no more than two minutes (not including interpreter's time) on the topic unless the speaker is addressed by the Commission;*
- *Identify your relationship to the topic;*
- *Have a spokesperson or two for your group to present your comments;*
- *Persons wanting a response to a question must submit the question in writing to the recording secretary, including name and how you would like to be contacted.*

3. [26-041](#) Discussion regarding the 2026 Work Plan

Attachments: [1- 2026 Work Plan Consideration](#)

### STAFF UPDATES

4.     [26-042](#)           Staff Update

## ADJOURNMENT



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-039, **Version:** 1

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**Environmental Quality Commission Meeting Date:** January 21, 2026

**To:** Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

**From:** Matt Bailey, Meeting Associate

December 17, 2025 EQC Meeting Minutes

**Action Requested:**

Please review the December 17, 2025 EQC Meeting Minutes and approve or approve with amendments.

**Summary Report:**

N/A

**City Plans & Policies Relevance:**

N/A

**Alternative Options:**

N/A

**Financial Impacts:**

N/A

**Tentative Timelines:**

N/A



# City of Northfield

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801 Washington Street  
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## Meeting Minutes - Draft Environmental Quality Commission

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Wednesday, December 17, 2025

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### 6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Provancha called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**Present:** 7 - Chair Michael Provancha, Commissioner Bruce Anderson, Commissioner Daniel Jones, Commissioner Janet Petri, Commissioner George Kinney, Commissioner Susannah Shmurak and Vice Chair Rob Hanson

**Absent:** 1 - Commissioner Ava Podracky

*Also present: Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator; Matt Bailey, Meeting Associate; Alex Halverson, Youth Representative (voting)*

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Petri, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Yes:** 8 - Chair Provancha, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Kinney, Commissioner Shmurak, Vice Chair Hanson and Commissioner Halverson

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. [25-652](#) November 19, 2025 EQC Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Shmurak, seconded by Commissioner Petri, to approve the October 15, 20205 EQC Minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Yes:** 8 - Chair Provancha, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Kinney, Commissioner Shmurak, Vice Chair Hanson and Commissioner Halverson

### OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

*No public comment was received.*

### BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

*- Commissioner Anderson requested EQC representation in any consideration of a new Sustainability Coordinator hire. Anderson reported that City Administrator Ben Martig replied to him that there is no hiring committee and thus no representatives from any*

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*Boards or Commissions.*

## REGULAR AGENDA

2. [25-653](#) Discussion regarding the 2026 Work Plan

*Assistant to the City Administrator Risi Karim reminded the EQC to look at the 2026 Work Plan Submissions for Consideration and consider what they would like to prioritize for 2026. The work plan will actually be in effect from the start of 2026 through April 2027. The EQC discussed logistics of the work plan and ideas for the initiatives it contains including consolidation of some initiatives such as native plantings and planting for food production on both public and private land, a campaign for electrification of home appliances and transportation, and electric bike regulations and tying them into other traffic safety initiatives.*

3. [25-654](#) 2025 Work Plan Updates

*- Zero Waste Plan Implementation: Assistant to the City Administrator Risi Karim confirmed that this initiative is complete but will continue in a similar fashion in 2026.*  
*- Community Engagement Campaign: Energy Efficiency, HVAC Contractor and Homeowner Education: This initiative is complete but will continue in a similar fashion in 2026.*  
*- Native Planting Ordinance: Tree Planting & Vegetation: This initiative will be addressed in the upcoming Land Development Code process. The City Horticulturalist, Shelley Evanson, has provided feedback on the EQC's suggestion.*  
*- Water Quality & Conservation: This initiative is complete.*  
*- Research Level 3 Charger Use & Need: This initiative is complete.*

## STAFF UPDATES

4. [25-655](#) Staff Update

*Assistant to the City Administrator Risi Karim presented updates from City staff.*

## ADJOURNMENT

**A motion was made by Commissioner Shmurak, seconded by Commissioner Petri, to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 p.m. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes: 8 - Chair Provancha, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Jones, Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Kinney, Commissioner Shmurak, Vice Chair Hanson and Commissioner Halverson**



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-040, **Version:** 1

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**Meeting Date:** January 21, 2026

**To:** Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

**From:** Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator

Zero Waste Initiative #1 - Single-Use Carryout Bag Community Survey Results

**Action Requested:**

Commission will receive survey results

**Summary Report:**

As part of the EQC 2025 Work Plan, the Commission initiated *Initiative #1: Zero Waste Plan Implementation*, with a focus on evaluating Northfield's approach to single-use carryout bags. The intent of this effort was to better understand community and business perspectives through targeted outreach and surveys before considering any potential policy actions.

In early 2025, the subcommittee met to establish the project timeline, priorities, and survey framework, and worked with local Zero Waste advocates to refine survey questions. Surveys were finalized and launched in the spring, with outreach conducted at Earth Day, Pride, and Crazy Days, along with coordination with the Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce to engage businesses. A draft ordinance was presented to the Commission in July, and while a planned town hall was canceled, the surveys remained open until mid September to continue collecting feedback.

Staff is sharing the results of both the resident and business surveys with the Commission for informational purposes. At this time, the City will not be moving forward with further consideration of implementing a bag fee. Staff and the EQC may revisit this topic as part of future work plan discussions if desired and instructed by City Council.

**Alternative Options:**

N/A

**Financial Impacts:**

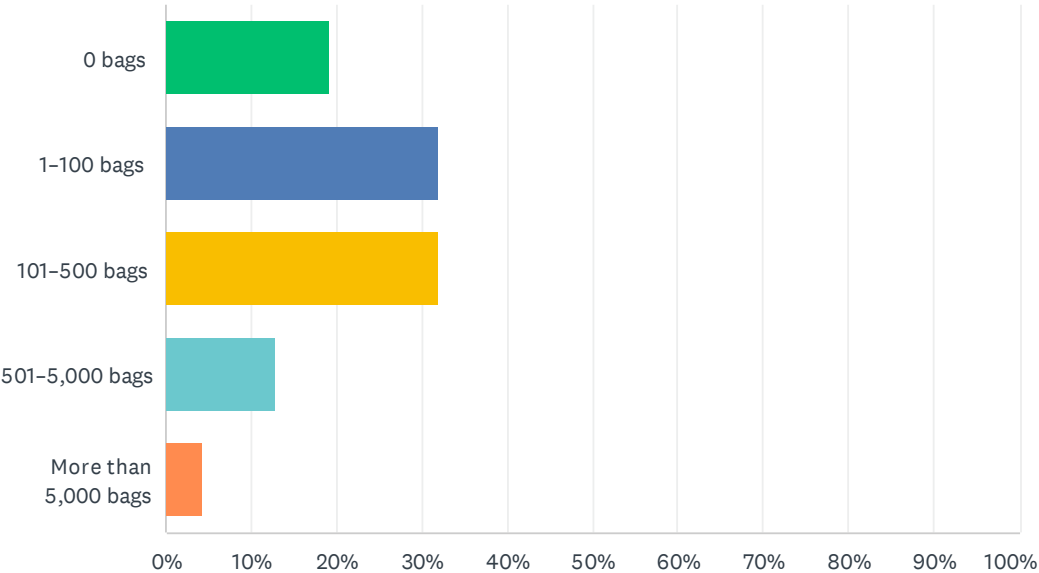
N/A

**Tentative Timelines:**

N/A

Q1 Approximately how many carryout bags does your business distribute to customers each month?

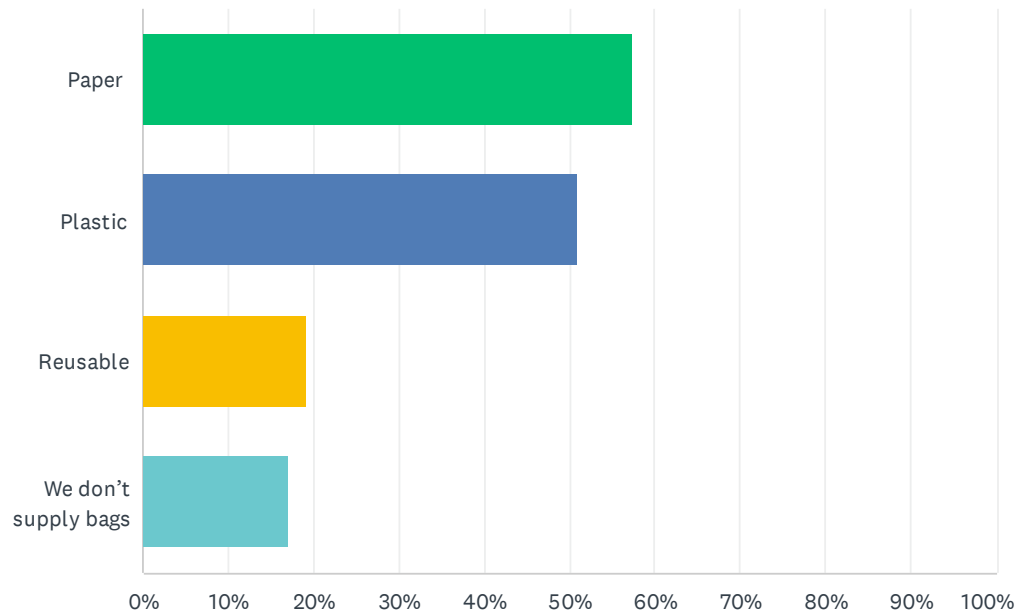
Answered: 47    Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0 bags	19.15%	9
1–100 bags	31.91%	15
101–500 bags	31.91%	15
501–5,000 bags	12.77%	6
More than 5,000 bags	4.26%	2
TOTAL		47

Q2 If you supply carryout bags, are they (select all that apply):

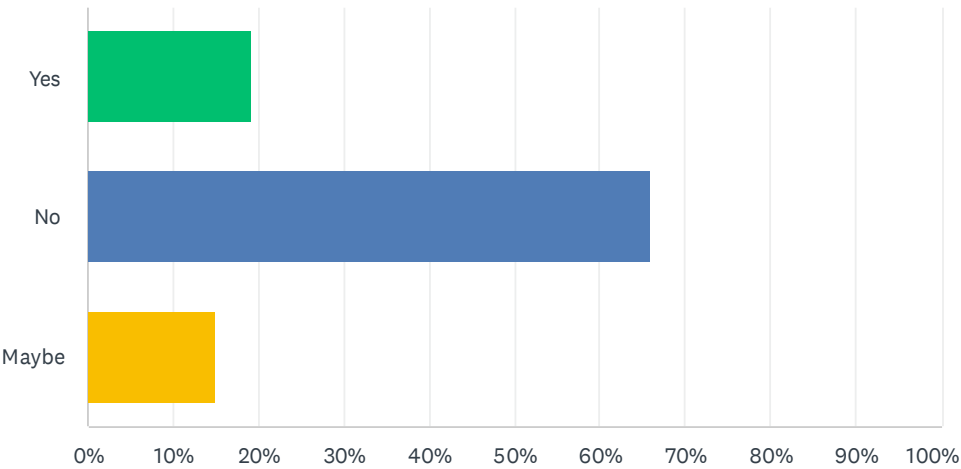
Answered: 47    Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Paper	57.45%	27
Plastic	51.06%	24
Reusable	19.15%	9
We don't supply bags	17.02%	8
Total Respondents: 47		

Q3 Would you support an ordinance for a small pass through (such as \$0.05 and the business keeps the revenue) surcharge for single use of carryout bags?

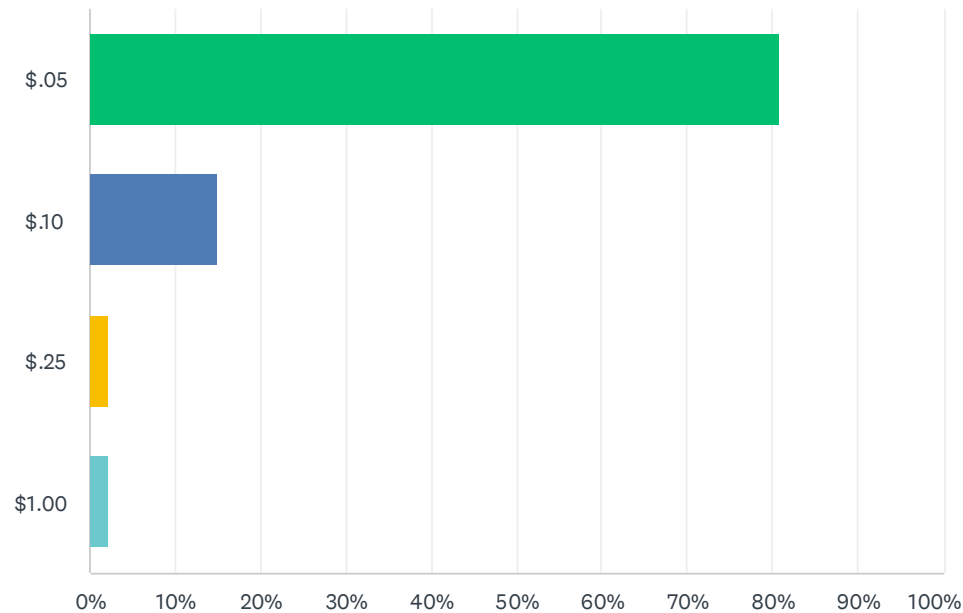
Answered: 47    Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		19.15%	9
No		65.96%	31
Maybe		14.89%	7
TOTAL			47

Q4 What would you consider a reasonable and minimal pass-through charge amount?

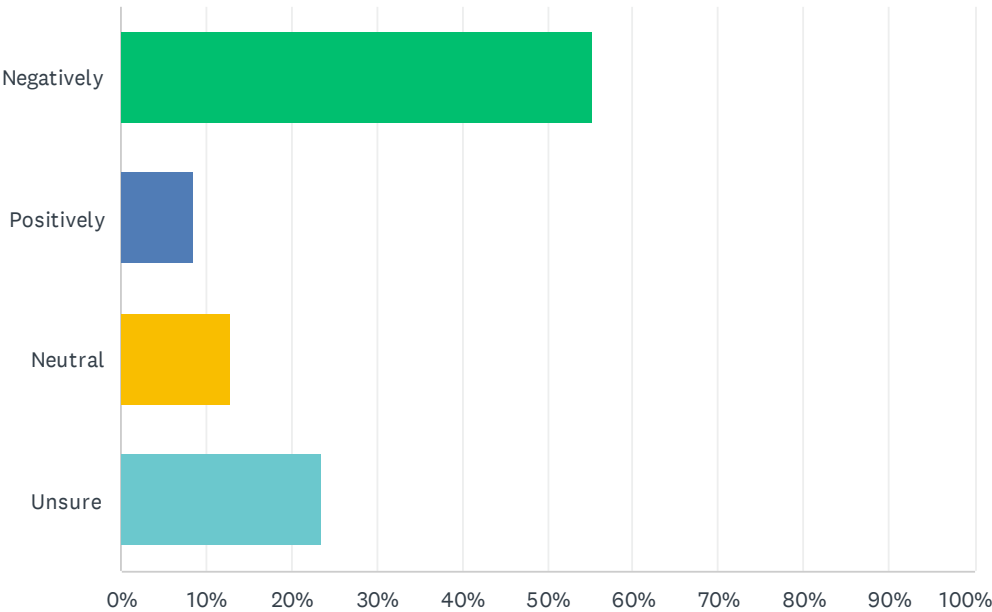
Answered: 47    Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$.05	80.85%	38
\$.10	14.89%	7
\$.25	2.13%	1
\$1.00	2.13%	1
TOTAL		47

Q5 Would a pass through charge impact your business operations?

Answered: 47    Skipped: 0



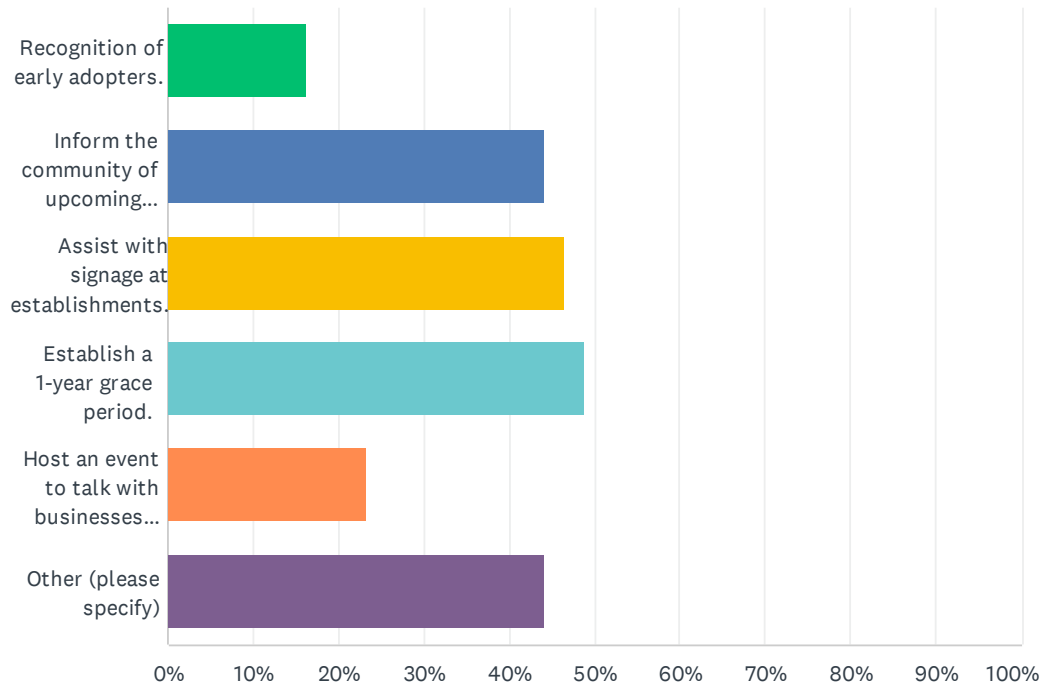
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Negatively	55.32%	26
Positively	8.51%	4
Neutral	12.77%	6
Unsure	23.40%	11
TOTAL		47

## Q6 What other actions should Northfield consider to help reduce waste?

Answered: 43   Skipped: 4

## Q7 How can the City help you prepare if an ordinance is passed that requires merchants to charge customers a fee for carryout bags? (Select all that apply)

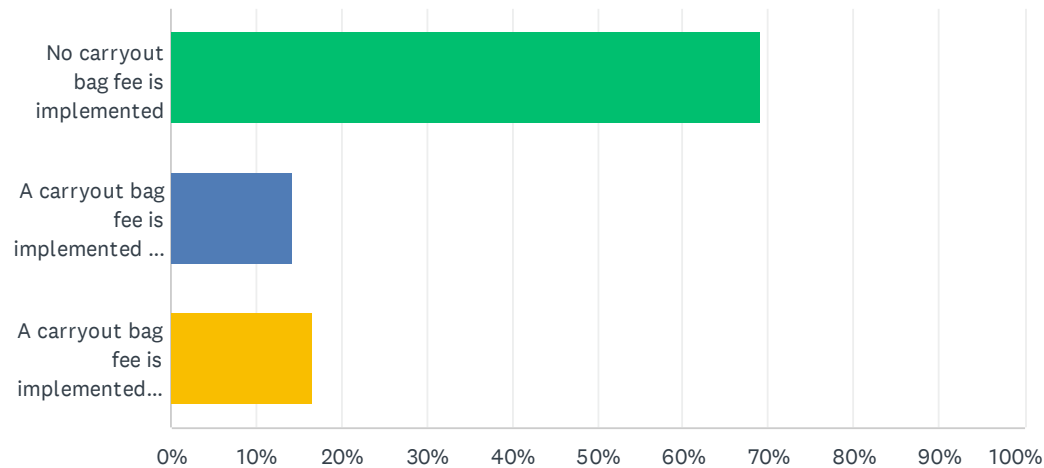
Answered: 43 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Recognition of early adopters.	16.28%	7
Inform the community of upcoming changes with media and in-person efforts.	44.19%	19
Assist with signage at establishments.	46.51%	20
Establish a 1-year grace period.	48.84%	21
Host an event to talk with businesses about best practices for implementation (i.e. employee training, systems updates, tracking and reporting, customer relations, how to use the revenue).	23.26%	10
Other (please specify)	44.19%	19
Total Respondents: 43		

Q8 Which of the following options do you prefer?

Answered: 42    Skipped: 5



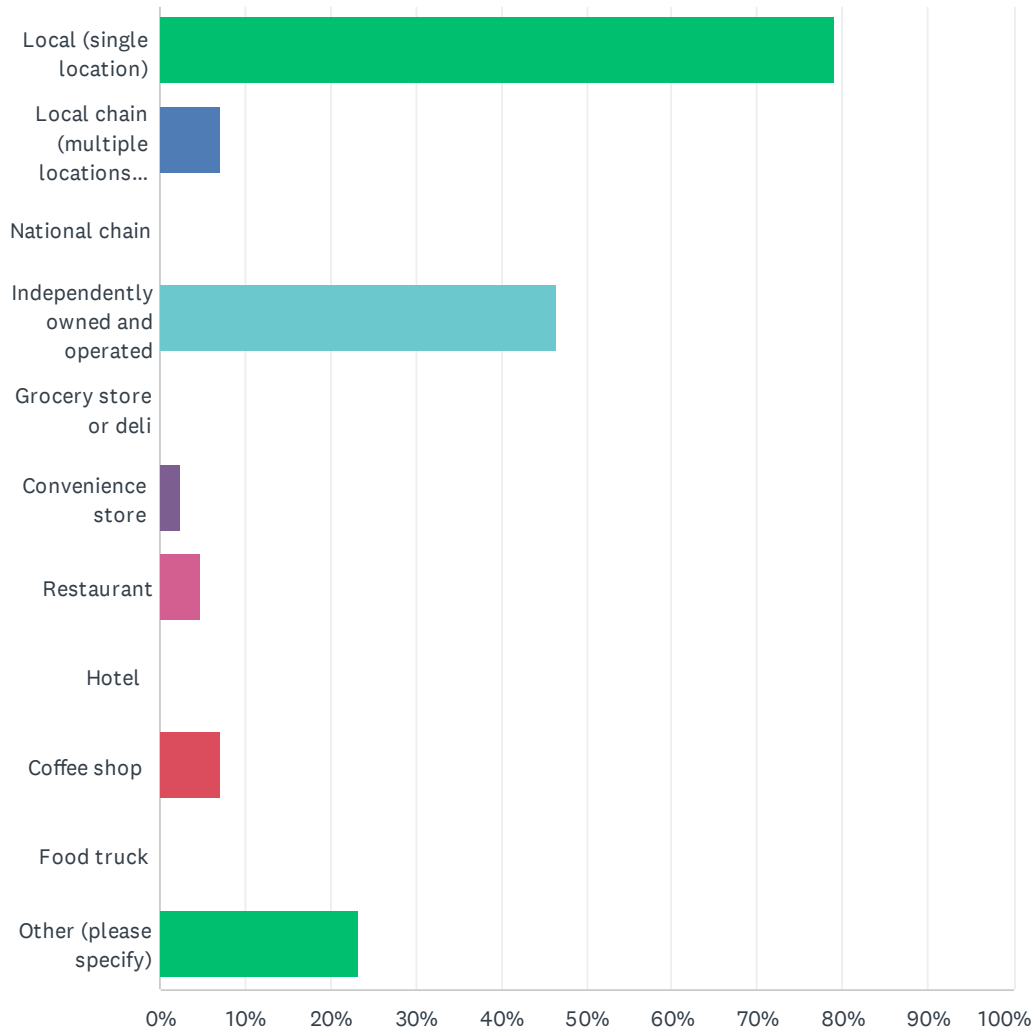
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No carryout bag fee is implemented	69.05%	29
A carryout bag fee is implemented and all merchants are required to charge per bag	14.29%	6
A carryout bag fee is implemented with voluntary merchant participation	16.67%	7
TOTAL		42

## Q9 What other questions or comments do you have about this possible single use carryout bag ordinance?

Answered: 43   Skipped: 4

## Q10 Which of the following best describe your business? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 43 Skipped: 4

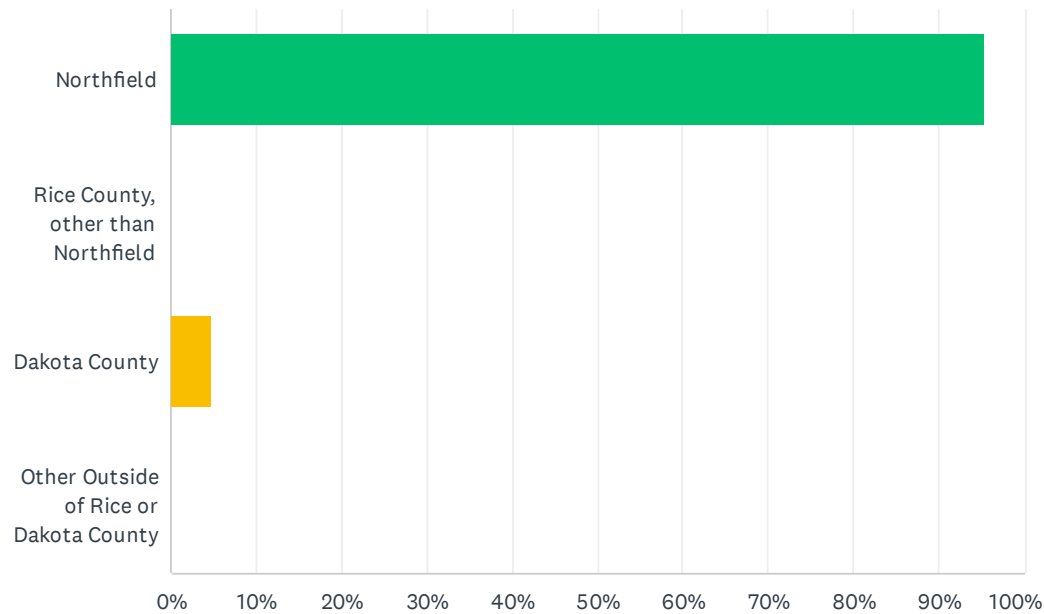


## Business Survey: Shape Northfield's Approach to Single Use Carryout Bags

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Local (single location)	79.07%	34
Local chain (multiple locations within the region)	6.98%	3
National chain	0.00%	0
Independently owned and operated	46.51%	20
Grocery store or deli	0.00%	0
Convenience store	2.33%	1
Restaurant	4.65%	2
Hotel	0.00%	0
Coffee shop	6.98%	3
Food truck	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	23.26%	10
Total Respondents: 43		

Q11 Is your business located in any of the following?

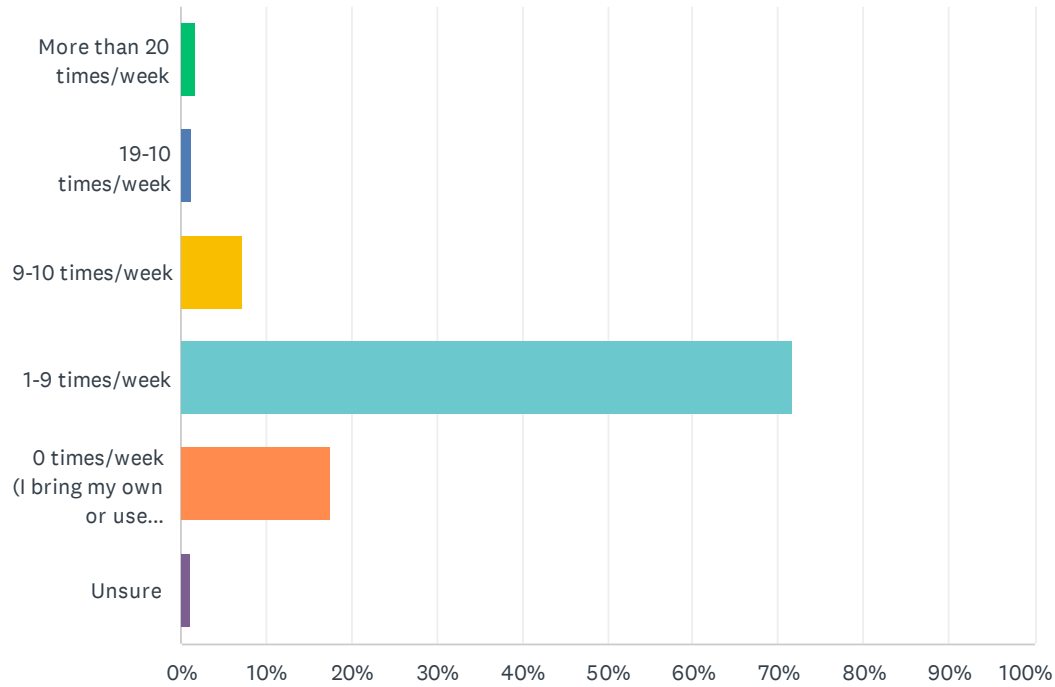
Answered: 43    Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Northfield	95.35%	41
Rice County, other than Northfield	0.00%	0
Dakota County	4.65%	2
Other Outside of Rice or Dakota County	0.00%	0
TOTAL		43

## Q1 How often do you use retailer supplied carryout bags (paper, plastic, reusable) for items purchased?

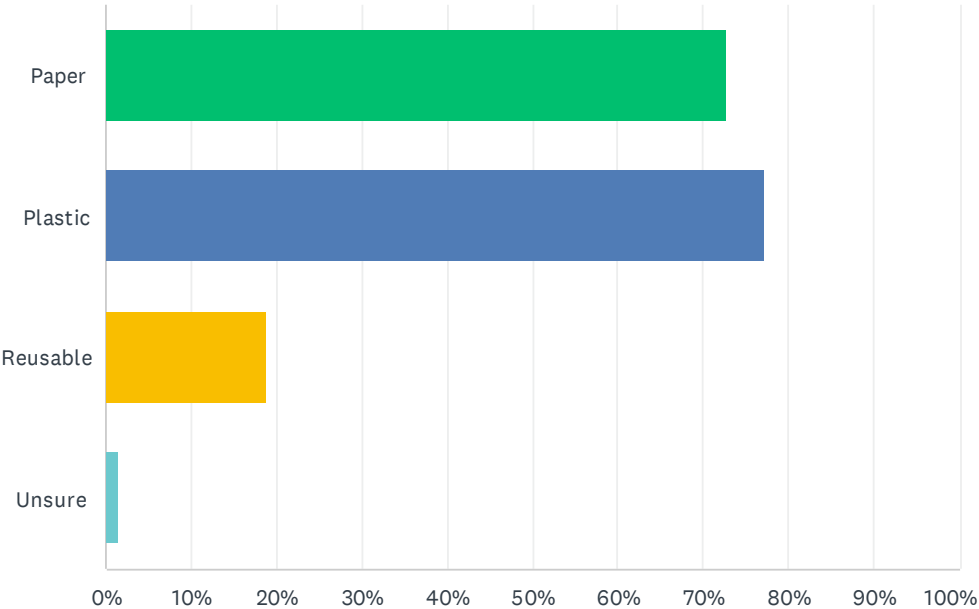
Answered: 977 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More than 20 times/week	1.64%	16
19-10 times/week	1.23%	12
9-10 times/week	7.27%	71
1-9 times/week	71.65%	700
0 times/week (I bring my own or use store-supplied, reused boxes)	17.40%	170
Unsure	1.13%	11
TOTAL		977

Q2 If you use retailer supplied carryout bags, are they (select all that apply): :

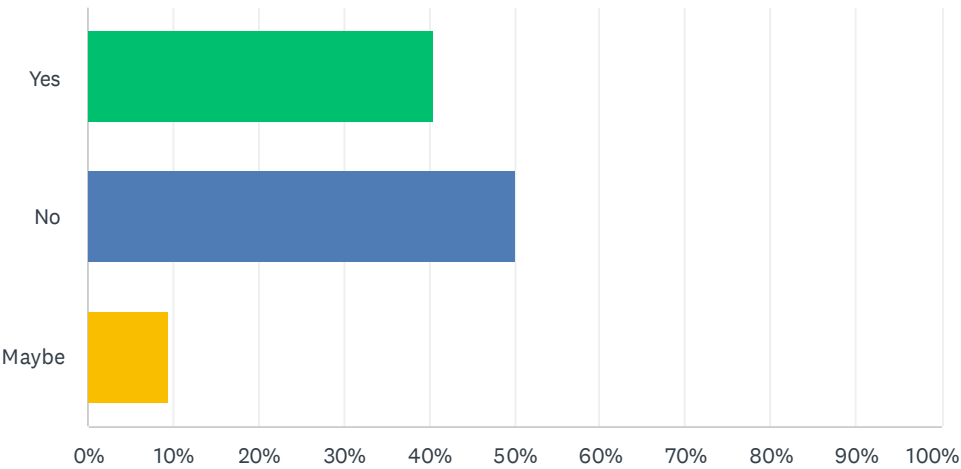
Answered: 965    Skipped: 13



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Paper	72.64%	701
Plastic	77.20%	745
Reusable	18.86%	182
Unsure	1.55%	15
Total Respondents: 965		

Q3 Would you support an ordinance for a small pass through (such as \$0.05 and the business keeps the revenue) surcharge for single use of carryout bags?

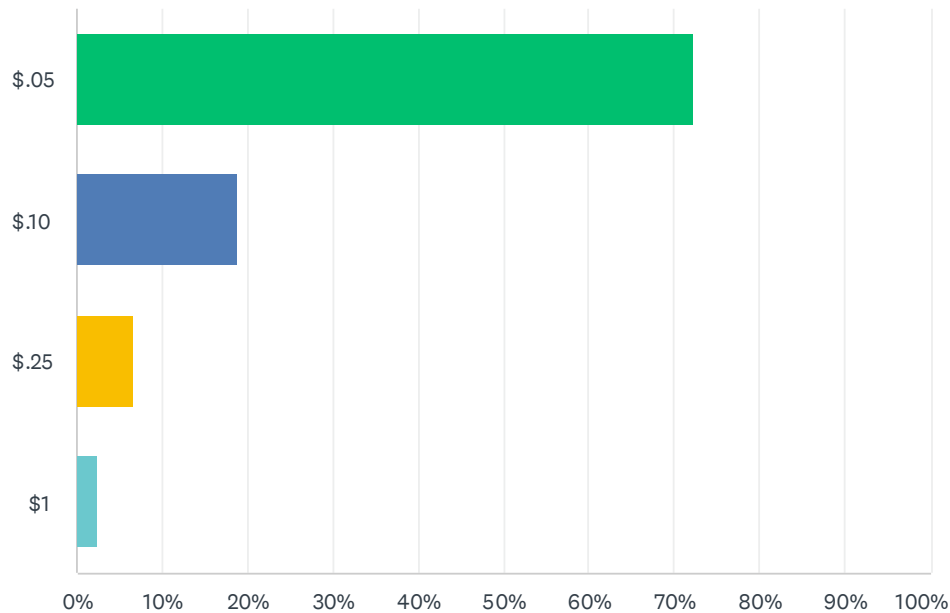
Answered: 975    Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		40.51%	395
No		50.15%	489
Maybe		9.44%	92
TOTAL			975

Q4 What would you consider a reasonable and minimal pass-through charge amount?

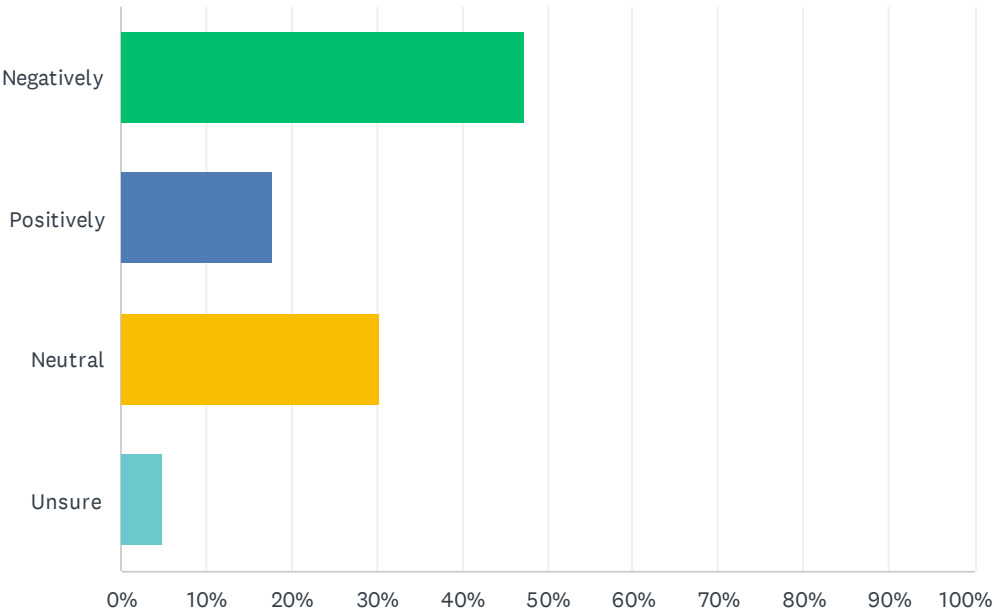
Answered: 899    Skipped: 79



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$.05	72.30%	650
\$.10	18.80%	169
\$.25	6.67%	60
\$1	2.34%	21
TOTAL		899

Q5 Would a pass through charge impact your purchase experience?

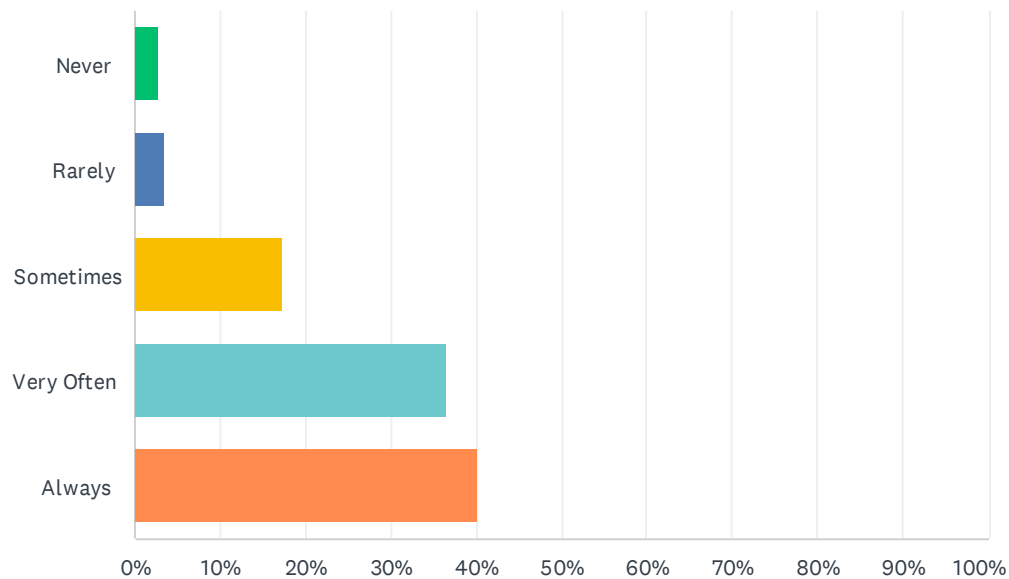
Answered: 977    Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Negatively	47.29%	462
Positively	17.60%	172
Neutral	30.30%	296
Unsure	4.91%	48
TOTAL		977

Q6 How often do you reuse carryout bags, if at all? Examples include: plastic bags for trash liners, paper bags for recycling, etc.

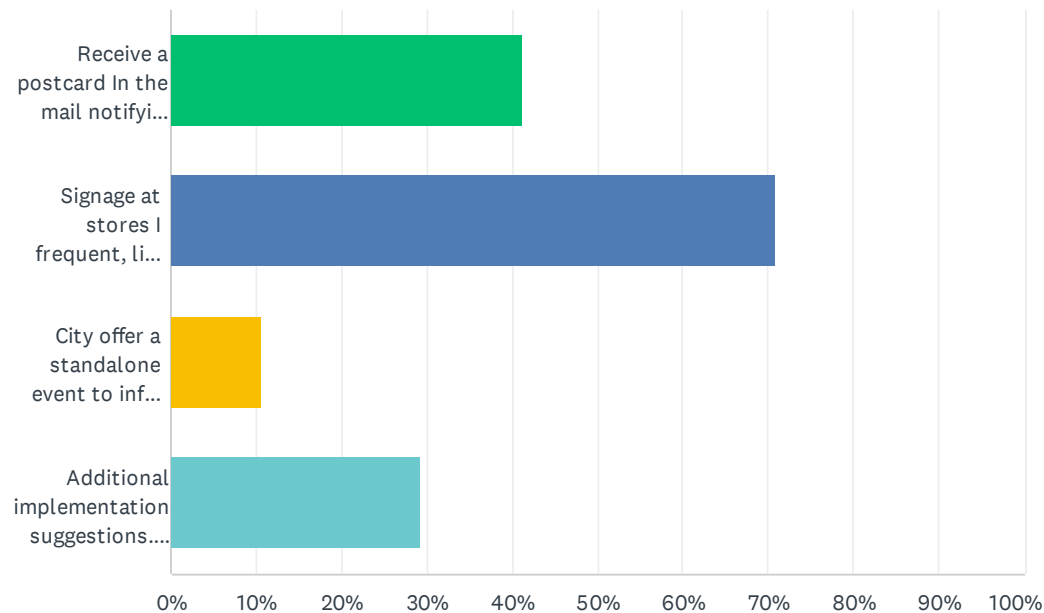
Answered: 976 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Never	2.87%	28
Rarely	3.48%	34
Sometimes	17.21%	168
Very Often	36.48%	356
Always	40.06%	391
TOTAL		976

Q7 How can the City help you prepare if an ordinance is passed that requires merchants to charge customers a fee for single use carryout bags?

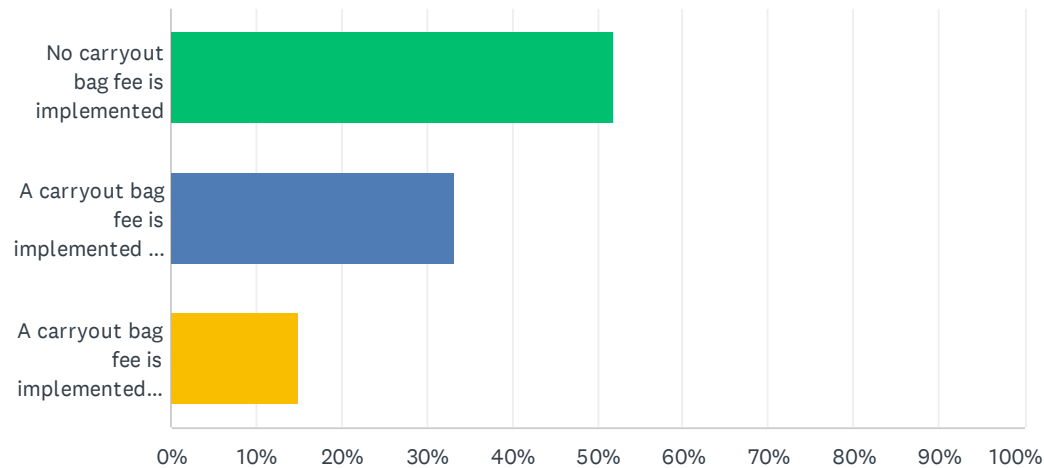
Answered: 922 Skipped: 56



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Receive a postcard In the mail notifying me that this change is coming	41.11%	379
Signage at stores I frequent, like grocery stores and restaurants	70.82%	653
City offer a standalone event to inform residents on the coming changes	10.63%	98
Additional implementation suggestions. (Please add any comments you might have)	29.18%	269
Total Respondents: 922		

Q8 Which of the following options do you prefer?

Answered: 931    Skipped: 47



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No carryout bag fee is implemented	51.88%	483
A carryout bag fee is implemented and all merchants are required to charge per bag	33.30%	310
A carryout bag fee is implemented with voluntary merchant participation	14.93%	139
TOTAL		931

## Q9 What other questions or comments do you have about this possible single use carryout bag ordinance?

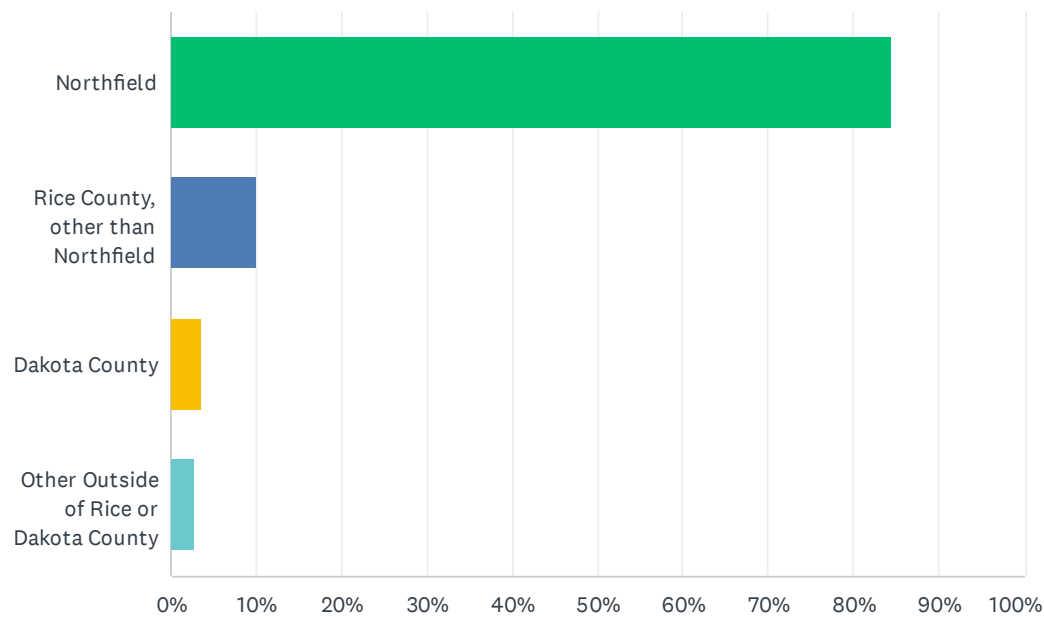
Answered: 799   Skipped: 179

Q10 What other actions should Northfield consider to help reduce waste?

Answered: 782    Skipped: 196

Q11 Are you a resident of any of the following?

Answered: 927    Skipped: 51



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Northfield	84.36%	782
Rice County, other than Northfield	9.92%	92
Dakota County	3.67%	34
Other Outside of Rice or Dakota County	2.80%	26
TOTAL		927



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-041, **Version:** 1

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**EQC Meeting Date:** January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026

**To:** Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

**From:** Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator / Staff Liaison

Discussion regarding the 2026 Work Plan

**Action Requested:**

EQC discusses priority items for the 2026 Work Plan

**Summary Report:**

In order for EQC Commissioners and staff to make the best use of meeting time and efforts outside of meetings, EQC will develop a more intentional Work Plan for 2026. The City is also asking all Boards and Commissions to align their work, as much as possible, with the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Comprehensive Plan 2045.

Keep in mind that the 2026 Work Plan will be limited to 4-6 initiatives and is subject to approval by the Mayor and City Administrator.

EQC Commissioners are asked to consider the following questions to begin discussion:

- Are there items or topics-either within the Climate Action Plan or outside of it-that you would like to see the EQC work on?
- Of these topics, are there any you would be willing to take the lead on? If so, how? For example: convene a resident work group.
- What resources might be needed to carry out these actions?
- What would the “deliverable” be?  
For example: research and draft an ordinance for City Council consideration, provide community outreach at an event, or prepare a recommendation for Council support.

**Alternative Options:**

N/A

**Financial Impacts:**

N/A

**Tentative Timelines:**



## Environmental Quality Commission

### 2026 Work Plan Submissions for Consideration

#### **Susannah Shmurak**

- 1) EMFs from wi-fi and cell towers
  - a. Mounting research is showing wireless radiation is harmful to human, animal, and plant health, examine what safeguards are in place and consider whether others should be added.
- 2) Address pesticide and herbicide use

**Staff Response:** While these are environmentally related topics, the City is asking the Commission to focus on tangible initiatives that align with or are derived from the City's Climate Action Plan, Strategic Plan, and Comprehensive Plan.

**Commissioner Shmurak Comments:** I would be interested in leading an initiative to assess where Northfield is with respect to current radiofrequency radiation sources and rules regarding placement of cell towers.

The EMF issue has largely been overlooked as something with a significant impact on public health and ecology. Because rules are lax/absent and rely on antiquated tests that use inaccurate assumptions about biological systems to set thresholds for electromagnetic radiation, no one is paying attention to the ever-increasing amounts of radiation we're exposing people -- especially children -- to. Many municipalities have adopted ordinances that set distance requirements for cell tower placement from schools and homes. I would like to develop a report for council so they may consider whether adopting an ordinance would benefit residents' health.

I wanted to share some more information to help others better grasp where the science is with this issue now. I'm hoping some of what's below could be included in next month's packet.

Hundreds of studies suggest that EMF have effects on the developments of certain cancers, cardiac issues, and fertility problems. Researchers are especially concerned about their effects on the developing brains of children. More details below:

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) have largely relied on data from studies of a small number of subjects conducted in the late 1980s that used incorrect assumptions about biological systems to determine thresholds for electromagnetic radiation.

Foremost among these assumptions is that the only effect of concern from non-ionizing radiation is heat. ICNIRP issued safety guidelines developed in the 1990s were entirely based on thermal effects, that is, on whether radiofrequency radiation could heat things.

However, hundreds of studies looking at non-thermal effects have found numerous ways wireless radiation does in fact influence biological processes without producing any thermal effects. In a [2022 paper](#) published in the journal Environmental Health, the International

Commission on the Biological Effects of Electromagnetic Fields (ICBE-EMF) argues that “the past 25 years of extensive research on RFR demonstrates that the assumptions underlying the FCC’s and ICNIRP’s exposure limits are invalid and continue to present a public health harm.”

A [2023 paper](#) authored by scientists studying the effects of wireless radiation around the world outlines numerous additional “blind spots” in the current guidelines that “reflect a deep misunderstanding of toxicology, biology and medicine.” They explain: “Neither the fact that environmental RFR is non-ionizing nor that its levels are low preclude RFR action on living systems. Non-ionizing radiation does not act by ionizing but acts by direct action on electrons and protons.”

They also call out several ways the guidelines set in the 1990s misrepresent the ways these devices are actually used today, including distance from the body, presumed length and intensity of exposure and other methodological shortcomings.

The authors point to numerous studies suggesting that exposure to radiation similar to that emitted by cell phones increases risks of certain types of cancer and neurological disorders, damages sperm and increases oxidative stress.

Though regulatory limits have long assumed that low-frequency waves couldn’t damage DNA, a [recent meta-analysis](#) of more than 500 studies has found they can. Approximately half of the studies included found impacts on DNA from wireless exposure levels below the limits set by ICNIRP. They found some types of cells were more vulnerable to damage, especially reproductive, heart and brain cells.

Of particular concern to researchers is the possible [effects on children and fetuses](#) from exposure during times of critical brain development. Children’s skulls are thinner than adults, they point out, allowing RFR to penetrate more deeply into the brain. Further, children born since the proliferation of wireless devices will receive far greater lifetime exposure than those of us born in the previous century, so we can’t yet know about the long-term health impacts of spending one’s whole life surrounded by current amounts of RFR.

Because it’s not possible to create human control groups free of RFR exposure in a world so permeated by it, researchers rely on animal models, in-vitro experiments, and epidemiological studies, which skeptics note cannot definitively prove causation, as is true with other health issues where human subjects can’t be used for testing. Since definitive proof of harms to human health is impossible to get, regulators have resisted re-examining safety guidelines. The fact that many cancers and other health conditions can take decades to develop also means that we can’t yet have a complete picture of the epidemiological effect of RFRs at the population level.

As evidence about the health risks of EMFs has mounted, several countries have altered regulations to protect their citizens, dropping limits to a fraction of those recommended by ICNIRP. While the guidelines used in the US set the limit for wireless radiation at ten million microwatts per square meter, Italy and Switzerland allow a maximum of only 95,000, roughly a hundred times lower.

The [Environmental Health Trust](#), founded by Devra Davis, a researcher who worked with the National Toxicology Program, has white papers, toolkits, and research summaries for anyone who wants to know more. The Environmental Health Trust sued the FCC and in 2021 [won in federal court](#). The ruling determined that the FCC has ignored scientific evidence and failed to provide a reasoned explanation that its 1996 regulations are adequate.

[This document](#) deals with ordinances some cities have enacted for guiding placement of cell towers.

### **Robert Hanson**

#### **1) 2026 making progress with Xcel to figure out solutions for our electric grid congestion**

**Staff Response:** This initiative is already being monitored by staff in Engineering and Community Development. City staff have an ongoing relationship and dialogue with Xcel on this issue, as it affects many of the City's future projects. This isn't an initiative where the EQC could play an active role, since it falls under administrative responsibilities.

- 2) Supporting non-automotive transportation within Northfield. My original thought for this was promoting bikers, walkers, and runners to wear lights or reflective vests when outside in the dark. This makes it safer for them and for drivers by reducing collision risks. If other commissioners wanted, the scope could be broadened to look at other ways to encourage getting around Northfield without a car.

### **Mike Provancha**

- 1) Establish a reusable cloth diaper bank (includes reusable diapers, bio-detergent, two 5-gal buckets with lids, and a water sprayer for toilet hookup)

Encouraging the use of reusable cloth diapers reduces landfill waste, conserves resources, and saves families money over time compared to disposable options. Establishing a city-sponsored diaper bank can help make sustainable diapering accessible to all families, especially those facing financial hardship. Such a program promotes environmental responsibility while supporting public health and equity within the community.

### **Match to Climate Action Plan/Strategic Plan/Comprehensive Plan: EE-6 Materials and Waste Reduction**

- 2) Green roof project on city property or a program to promote such initiatives

Promoting and implementing green roofs can significantly enhance urban sustainability by reducing stormwater runoff, improving air quality, and lowering building energy costs. A green roof is a building roof partially or fully covered with vegetation and a growing medium planted over a waterproofing membrane, creating an engineered system with layers for drainage, filtration, and plant support. In addition to city-owned property implementation, municipal incentives, such as tax credits or grants, can encourage property

owners and developers to adopt this eco-friendly practice. Collaboration between city planners, architects, and environmental organizations ensures that green roof projects are both practical and impactful for community resilience.

**Match to Climate Action Plan/Strategic Plan/Comprehensive Plan: Advanced Building Energy IN 1.2 Explore opportunities to be a test/demonstration community for alternative building design, materials, and land management with promise to reduce energy use, incorporate recycled materials, enhance natural assets, or educate others on innovative solutions**

3) Add 3 more community gardens on city property

Community gardens provide residents with access to fresh, healthy produce while fostering social connections and a sense of shared purpose. They transform underused spaces into vibrant, green areas that support pollinators and improve neighborhood aesthetics. Additionally, community gardens promote environmental awareness, food security, and local resilience through hands-on education and collaboration.

**Match to Climate Action Plan/Strategic Plan/Comprehensive Plan: EE – 7 Expanding Local Food Access, increasing community food production and access**

4) Add more pollinator grasses and flowers on city-owned property by partnering with organizations like Prairie Restoration

Planting pollinator-friendly grasses and flowers on city property enhances biodiversity and supports essential species like bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. These low-maintenance landscapes reduce mowing frequency, conserve water, and beautify public spaces. By adopting pollinator-friendly practices, cities like Northfield can lead by example in promoting ecological health and environmental stewardship.

**Match to Climate Action Plan/Strategic Plan/Comprehensive Plan: IN – 2 Transportation and Land Use, IN 2.3 Research and promote land management practices to encourage carbon sequestration through trees and soil**

5) Outreach to residents about composting

Community outreach on composting helps educate residents about reducing food waste and turning organic materials into valuable soil nutrients. Workshops, demonstrations, and public campaigns can empower households to start composting at home or participating in local collection programs. By fostering awareness and participation, composting outreach strengthens community engagement and supports Northfield's sustainability and waste reduction goals.

**Match to Climate Action Plan/Strategic Plan/Comprehensive Plan: EE – 6 Materials and Waste Reduction, E 6.3 Conduct a campaign to reduce contamination of recycling and composting to ensure higher quality end products**

6) Educate residents on the benefits of Ames Dam removal

Community outreach on the removal of the Ames Dam and the revitalization of the riverfront with partnerships with Clean River Partners, MN Department of Natural Resources, MN Pollution Control Agency, and more. The removal of the Ames Dam will allow for natural vegetation and wildlife to proliferate in the area. The use of grants to revitalize the riverfront area post removal would enhance the area aesthetics and recreational use for residents and tourists alike.

**Match to Climate Action Plan/Strategic Plan/Comprehensive Plan: EE – 5 Travel Engagement, EE – 2 Sustainable Tourism and Marketing**

**Bruce Anderson**

- Continue educational/promotional campaign focused on home energy efficiency and electrification and EV adoption. The State of Minnesota plans to FINALLY roll out what they are now calling the "[Save Energy Minnesota](#)" program bundling state and federal rebates for home energy efficiency and electrification in early 2026. This warrants building on the 2025 work plan item related to this with regular promotion of these opportunities.
- As Rob suggested in his email this morning, he and I discussed working on addressing the roadblock to solar development in the Northfield area by partnering with Xcel on battery storage options to address grid congestion issues.
- Education campaign on the climate change implications of agricultural practices and dietary choices, perhaps with one or several forums/panel discussions focused on growing the local food economy, growing your own food, natural and edible landscaping, and greenhouse gas emissions associated with various diets (omnivore, vegetarian, vegan, flexitarian, pescatarian, etc.). Could partner with [Cannon Valley Grown](#) and the [Cannon River Sustainable Farming Association](#).

## **Janet Petri**

1) I think that initiative #2, “Community Engagement Campaign: Energy Efficiency, HVAC Contractor and Homeowner Education”, should be continued. Reviewing what we did in 2025:

- On 11/17 we had a workshop that provided homeowner education on electrification, efficiency, etc., and the rebates that are currently available.

- We did tabling at Riverwalk and at Earth Day, where we shared this type of information for homeowners. -

- In October there was a presentation to educate HVAC professionals.

We hear that there WILL be rebates available through the MN Dept of Commerce. These have been much delayed, but they are still expected (??) to come through. The following is from the MN Dept. of Commerce website:

“Current update (12/2/2025): Save Energy Minnesota has not launched yet. Minnesota is waiting for formal approval from the federal Department of Energy to launch our program. Due to ongoing uncertainty during the federal government shutdown, we are delayed in launching the program. “ <https://mn.gov/commerce/energy/consumer/energy-programs/save-energy-mn.jsp>

– Therefore, I think that in 2026 we should be prepared to do further outreach and information sharing regarding electrification and home efficiency opportunities for homeowners. This could include workshops, tabling at events and at Riverwalk, and social media. Perhaps outreach through KYMN and newspaper LTEs. What is the best way to reach people in 2026?

One goal, in my opinion, would be to reach people who meet the income guidelines for the rebates through HOMES and HEAR. (Assuming that the funds eventually do get released.) I am not a member of Rotary, but my understanding is that RCAT has tried to reach out to lower income homeowners, and has found it challenging to get engagement.

2) Education and outreach to promote native gardening and rain gardens. I am impressed that both rain gardens and native landscaping made it into the takeaways and priorities. How could we promote these goals? Here are some thoughts:

- We could promote the “lawns to legumes” program.
- We could have a workshop, or several workshops, about gardening with native plants.
- How could we support, learn from, &/or promote the work of the local “Wild Ones” native gardening chapter? Wild Ones (<https://wildones.org/>) is a national nonprofit organization that “promotes native landscapes through education, advocacy and collaborative action.” The local chapter (Wild Ones SE MN Prairie Partners Chapter) does excellent work. They have a full schedule of educational meetings for 2026, plus plant sales. Perhaps some of us could meet with leaders of the chapter, and discuss how we could support their work. Could we help their information reach a broader audience? For instance, many people have heard of “native pollinators”, but I suspect that not all

that many know how they could change their gardening and lawn maintenance to support pollinators.

3) Goal: Increase native groundcover and native plantings in city parks.

I would love it if there was more native planting in city parks, or maybe even just native groundcover in areas under trees in city parks. I think that would look good, if properly managed, and it would be good for native pollinators, and for the birds that depend on those native pollinators (=insects) to feed their nestlings. (“Songbirds as little as chickadees require some six to nine thousand caterpillars to raise a brood of nestlings.” - Doug Tallamy). However, I know that if such areas aren’t managed well, they become full of invasives such as buckthorn. Is there a way this could be an appropriate goal; how could this be doable?

4) Goal: Reduce invasive species in city parks, and provide education for homeowners re: invasive plants

This is a pretty obvious follow-up to Goal #4.

- How do we reduce (I don’t dare say “eliminate”) invasive species such as buckthorn, garlic mustard, and more? One answer is, do what the Friends of Hauberg Woods do (<https://www.facebook.com/p/Friends-of-Hauberg-Woods-Northfield-MN-61564976252889/>)
- Can this work on other city natural lands, for instance along the river between Northfield and Dundas, Lashbrook Park, etc.?

Should our education outreach re: native plants include information about some of the invasive species, how to recognize them, and how to control them?

### **George Kinney**

I, too, have thought the addition of trees to parks would be a topic to take on. A few years ago (earlier EQC gig) I drove to many of the parks with Lefi Knecht and scoped out areas we thought would be goodland for some trees, to reduce mowing and to help with climate change/evaporative cooling, etc. At this time, I'd add considering fruiting trees as understory, such as serviceberry and hickory and so forth. Additionally, I'm not sure what is allowed in the floodplain of the river, and whether we have any restrictions on adding or removing trees and shrubs from areas of the floodplain.

### **Ava Podracky**

- 1) Water quality as its own, not put with water conservations. So focusing on the water quality of Northfield and like the manganese levels.
- 2) Invasive Plants

### **Kimberly Haroldson**

- 1) Curbside composting city wide.
- 2) Organics in all of Northfield schools, daycares, and assisted living. Educate teachers, staff and children.
- 3) Pay as you throw trash (charge for trash only, price includes recycling, yard waste, and organics). Make the cost significant between the smallest bin and larger ones. St Louis Park and Minneapolis do this, currently implemented by Bloomington and it's on Edina's radar.
- 4) All events hosted by the city of Northfield should be a Zero Waste Event. Pass this before a Zero Waste to-go ordinance is implemented.
- 5) Pass and implement a Zero Waste to-go packaging ordinance. (All to-go items such as cups, lids, to-go containers, cutlery, straws ect shall be reusable, recyclable, and or compostable). Work with Usefull. They are at Carleton and St Olaf for reusable containers and cups. Before a ZW to-go ordinance is implemented, there needs to be city wide composting . If restaurants/businesses choose a compostable option there needs to be organic collection at a city wide level. We don't want them placed in the recycling or trash bins. Education on why we need a ZW to go ordinance. Work with Waste Wise.
- 6) Every other week garbage pickup as a service option.
- 7) Charging 5 cents for single use bags. Duluth, Edina, and Minneapolis charge for single use bags. Education on why we should charge 5 cents for single use bags.
- 8) Textile recycling. Ridwell or Retold in Northfield. Grants for this so the cost is not a hindrance?
- 9) Education to residents on what can be recycled and composted. Start a Recycle leader (advocate, expert) program and an Organics leader (advocate, expert) program. Train residents on what can be recycled and composted. The idea that neighbors listen to their neighbors telling them as opposed to the city doing it. Create a presentation and a kit to bring along with example items. I currently have one made and happy to share it.
- 10) Toys to check out at the Northfield library, aka a toy library.
- 11) Encourage/ educate on cloth diapers. Do Good Diapers services the cities with Lakeville being the furthest south they service. The last time I talked with the owner they would need 4-7 families to sign up for them to come to Northfield. Up front costs may be a hindrance?
- 12) Meatless Mondays/ Meat Free Fridays in Northfields schools.
- 13) Swap Events
- 14) Apartments in Northfield required to recycle, regardless of the size.



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-042, **Version:** 1

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**EQC Meeting Date:** January 21, 2026

**To:** Environmental Quality Commission

**From:** Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator / Staff Liaison

Staff Update

**Action Requested:**

The EQC receives an update regarding staff activities.

**Summary Report:**

This update includes items not included as agenda items for this meeting

- *Sustainability Coordinator*

Sara Pabich will begin as the City's new Sustainability Coordinator on Tuesday, January 20. She is joining us from the City of Rochester and will begin serving as the staff liaison to the Commission starting in February.

- *Community Climate Leaders Program*

The University of Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership is bringing the [Community Climate Leaders program](https://climate.umn.edu/community-climate-leaders) <<https://climate.umn.edu/community-climate-leaders>> to Northfield!

The City is excited to partner with Carleton College and the University of Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership to bring the Community Climate Leaders Program to our community in Spring 2026! This program equips participants with practical climate knowledge, strategies for local action, and a network of peers committed to making a difference.

The City will support Northfield residents by covering the registration costs through funds made available from the Carbon Reduction Fund, contributing a total of \$3,000 to the program.

Northfield residents can learn about climate change, what it means for Minnesota, and what can be done in our community to build resiliency. The online curriculum begins March 23rd, with in-person sessions taking place from 2:30-5:30 on Friday April 3, 17, May 1 and May 15th at the Weitz Center for Creativity at Carleton College room 133. The registration deadline is March 9th. This opportunity is being provided for free of charge by the City of Northfield, with support from Carleton College.

- *MN Department of Commerce RFP - Microgrids at Community Lifeline Facilities*

The City has been awarded a grant contract through the Minnesota Department of Commerce for the installation of a battery bank at the Northfield Community Resource Center (NCRC). More information to come on this project in the future

**Alternative Options:**

NA

**Financial Impacts:**

NA

**Tentative Timelines:**

NA