

Dear Northfield, we dream of a town where **WE FEEL CONNECTED**

"More communication is needed in Northfield. Between everyone. I would like to see people engage more. White people with Latino people."

"We definitely need more transportation. I hope they can do something about that. We are very far from everything."

"[Something I would like to see is] more town-wide cultural events that bring people together. Like, Hispanic Heritage, but African, Native American, Asian..."

"We are one Northfield, or are supposed to be, right? I think we all just want to feel more connected"

Northfield 2045 Comprehensive Plan

Planning Commission recommendation April 17, 2025

Adopted May xx, 2025

northfieldmn.gov/2045



Querido Northfield, soñamos con una ciudad donde **NOS SENTIMOS UNIDXS**

"Se necesita más comunicación en Northfield. Entre todos. Me gustaría que la gente conviviera más. La gente blanca con la gente Latina."

"Definitivamente necesitamos mejor transporte. Espero que puedan hacer algo sobre eso. Estamos muy lejos de todo."

"[Algo que me gustaría ver es] más eventos culturales que unan a la gente. Como la herencia Hispana, pero Africana, Nativa Americana, Asiática..."

"Somos un Northfield, o se supone que lo somos, ¿no? Creo que lo que todos queremos es sentirnos más unidxs."



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Northfield 2045 Comprehensive Plan

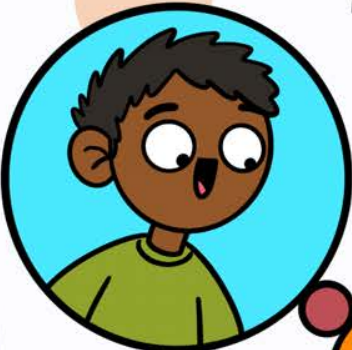
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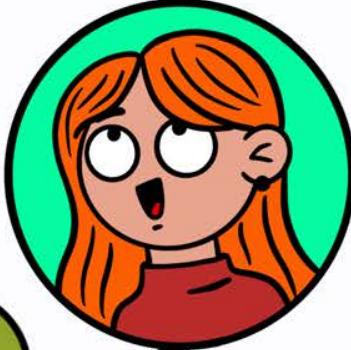
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"[Algo que me gustaria ver es] más eventos culturales que unan a la gente. Como la herencia Hispana, pero Africana, Nativa Americana, Asiatica..."



"Somos un Northfield, o se supone que lo somos, ¿no? Creo que lo que todos queremos es sentirnos más unidxs."



Acknowledgments

What do we want Northfield to be in 2045?

Northfield 2045 describes a vision for a Northfield that is a good place to live for our children, and everyone who wants to live here, and then describes how we can create that Northfield.

To create Northfield 2045, we talked with you about your priorities for how Northfield should grow in the next 20 years. Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute your expertise, answer survey questions, and offer feedback on the draft plan. The Planning Commissioners have done our best to create a plan which will realize the vision you described for Northfield according to the values you said were important.

Northfield 2045 is organized and written to help everyone in Northfield work together to achieve the goals in the Comprehensive Plan.

These goals are:

1. Integrate climate action into the work of the city:
 - Reduce Northfield's contributions to climate change.
 - Ensure Northfield is resilient in the face of more extreme weather: mitigate damage and costs from flooding and heat, in part through designing park and riverfront improvements to accommodate flooding.
2. Create economic opportunity:
 - Build homes for people who want to work in Northfield,

- Develop in ways that produce more, new tax revenue, and
 - Fill residential and commercial needs the market does not provide.
3. Connect people to places:
 - Locate homes near shopping, schools and services.
 - Grow local jobs.
 - Design streets to connect people safely to where they need to go.

Everyone in Northfield includes its Council, city staff, and the community.

To achieve these goals and create the Northfield that we want for our children and everyone who wants to live here, all of us will have to work together to create the Northfield you said you want. Northfield 2045 requires the City Council in 2025, and every future City Council, to ask whether each action or project will help Northfield achieve these goals.

The planning commission will review the plan on annual basis to monitor the progress of the implementation of the plan and to make recommendations for plan amendments to the Northfield community and the City Council for adoption based on circumstances unforeseen at this time that will help keep the plan current and consistent with the guiding values of this plan.

Our hope is that Northfield 2045 helps you and the next 20 years of Northfield residents achieve those goals and create the Northfield we want.

Your representatives,
—Northfield Planning Commission



Contents

Acknowledgments

5

What do we want Northfield
to be in 2045?

5

Community members

8

Steering Committee

8

Planning Commission

8

City Council

8

Boards and commissions

9

Community groups

9

City staff

9

Consultants

9

Design credits

10

Vision

11

Mission

11

1 Introduction

15

How to use the plan

16

Core principles: economy,
environment, and equity

17

2 Vision & Guiding Values

21

What we heard

22

Vision

24

Guiding values overview

24

Decision-making framework

25

3 Access

Connecting people to places and
opportunities

33

What we heard

34

Connecting land use and
transportation

35

Core principles: economy, environment,
and equity

37

Definitions

38

Existing conditions

40

Future land use and investment

47

Future land use

48

Future land use categories

49

Analysis and
interventions framework

57

How Northfield can grow

63

Strategies and actions

67

Guiding values overview

68

Strategy 1: Plan for accessibility

69

Strategy 2: Develop in a compact,
sustainable, and fiscally
responsible pattern

70

Strategy 3: Target areas of
under investment

72

Strategy 4: Ensure equitable access

73

Strategy 5: Design for safe access

74

Strategy 6: Design for resiliency and
sustainability

75

4 Sustainable Economic Future

Connecting housing and
economic security

79

What we heard

80

Connecting housing and
economic security

81

Core principles: economy,
environment, and equity

82

Definitions

83

Existing conditions

86

Analysis

88

Strategies and actions

94

Guiding values overview

94

Strategy 1: Strengthen Northfield's
Downtown core

95

Strategy 2: Develop Carleton and St.
Olaf relationships

96

Strategy 3: Small business
development

97



Strategy 4: Support the local workforce	98
Strategy 5: Diversify Northfield's tax base	99
Strategy 6: Grow in a compact, sustainable development pattern	100
Strategy 7: Maintain Northfield's existing housing stock	101
Strategy 8: Build more housing	102
Strategy 9: Support at-risk sellers, buyers and tenants	103
Strategy 10: Create programs to support affordable and sustainable homes and neighborhoods	104

5 Resilient Infrastructure

Connecting essential municipal services with sustainability	107
What we heard	108
Connecting essential municipal services with sustainability	109
Core principles: economy, environment and equity	110
Definitions	111
Existing conditions	113
Analysis	121
Strategies and actions	125
Guiding values overview	125
Strategy 1: Implement blue-green infrastructure planning and natural asset management	126
Strategy 2: Plan water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure to be resilient	127
Strategy 3: Plan streets for safety and stormwater management	128
Strategy 4: Provide sufficient broadband services to the community	129

Strategy 5: Reduce solid waste through diversion, recycling, and reuse	130
--	-----

6 Implementation

Connecting actions and goals to achieve outcomes	133
Connections to guiding values	134
Implementation actions	136
Connections to other plans	136
Connecting outcomes, actions and values	147
Outcomes and values matrix	148
Actions implementation	155

Glossary	177
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Index	183
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Appendices	185
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Community members

Special thanks to all the community members who generously gave their time to attend meetings, complete surveys, visit the website, review drafts, and provide thoughtful input and feedback that serves as the foundation of this plan. Additional thanks to community members who volunteered and provided additional technical assistance based on professional expertise.

Steering Committee

- Betsey Buckheit, Steering Committee chair
- Tracy Davis Heisler, Steering Committee vice chair
- Brian Nowak
- Sean Allen
- Beth Kallestad
- Crystal Mulvihill
- Tyler Westman
- Willian Estrella
- Francisco E. Murillo Ponciano
- Juan Trinidad
- Rachel Estrella
- Lahna Tran
- Chao Troung
- Robert Morrison
- Rhonda Pownell
- Davin Soku
- Aki Gupta
- Patricia Owusu

Planning Commission

- Xiomara Conde Arenas
- Chad Beumer
- Betsey Buckheit
- Clarie Casson
- Griffin Dahle
- Tracy Davis Heisler
- Philip Holleran
- Kathleen Holmes
- Bill Kuhlmann
- Brian Nowak
- Julia Menard
- Steven Schmidt
- William Schroeer
- Don Stager

City Council

- Rhonda Pownell, mayor
- Erica Zweifel, mayor
- Chad Beumer
- Peter Dahlen
- Kathleen Holmes
- Brad Ness
- Jessica Peterson White
- Jami Reister
- Davin Soku
- George Zuccolotto



Boards and commissions

- Arts and Culture Commission
- Charter Commission
- Economic Development Authority
- Environmental Quality Commission
- Heritage Preservation Commission
- Hospital Board
- Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- Human Rights Commission
- Library Board
- Northfield Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention
- Northfield Area Fire and Rescue Services
- Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
- Mayor's Youth Council
- Park and Recreation Advisory Board

Community groups

- Age Friendly Northfield
- Cannon Valley Special Education Cooperative
- Carleton College
- Community Action Center of Northfield
- FiftyNorth
- Friends of Downtown Northfield
- Health Community Initiative
- Laura Baker Services, Inc.
- Northfield Chamber of Commerce
- Northfield Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Northfield Promise Council of Champions
- Northfield Racial and Ethnic Equity Collaborative
- Northfield Rotary
- Northfield Union of Youth
- Three Rivers Community Action
- St. Olaf College

City staff

- Ben Martig, City Administrator
- Jake Reilly, Community Development Director
- Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner
- Mathias Hughey, Associate City Planner
- Bryanna Paarman, GIS Technician
- Kara Trygestad, Communications Specialist
- Claudia Garcia, Interpreter/Translator

Consultants

- Bruce Jacobson
- Enterprise Community Partners
- Maxfield Research
- NEOO Partners
- Stantec
- Visible City/SRF Consulting



Design credits

Artwork *Dear, Northfield* by Rocky Casillas Aguirre

Photography provided by City of Northfield, Carleton College, St. Olaf College, NEOO Partners, Luke Marks

Design and layout by Kara Trygestad, City of Northfield

Artist Statement

In 2023, as part of *Arte en Acción*—a collective of Latine artists and activists who live and work in Northfield—at the request of the City of Northfield crafted a multi-faceted public art project that connected community members to one another, while placing an emphasis on Latine voices. As part of this effort, Rocky Casillas Aguirre launched a poster campaign titled “Querido, Northfield” or “Dear, Northfield” and interviewed over 100 Latine residents, asking them: “If you could write a letter to the people who govern our city, what would you tell them?”

The campaign aimed to raise awareness on the challenges Latines face in our town through large posters that visually represent six recurring themes Latines are concerned about daily: transportation, housing, visibility, food access, language barriers, and community isolation. To encourage Latines to speak freely, their quotes were anonymously shared, along with statistics uplifting the voices and contributions of Latines to our country and community.

The following year, the City of Northfield proposed a continuation of this project, with a new set of color illustrations. This time, seeking

to answer the questions: “What do Latine community members dream of? What is their vision of Northfield?” The hope in returning to the Latine community for this conversation was that the City would gain insight on both the challenges and possible solutions to help improve the lives of Latine residents.

Over 2,000 Latines live in Northfield, Minnesota—an estimated 10% of the city’s population. Most Latine families are segregated into apartments and mobile home parks on the north side of the Cannon River, making it more difficult for them to access important services and resources. Latines are the largest minority demographic in town, yet often remain invisible to the greater population. Dozens of Latine artists, farmers, entrepreneurs, parents, youth, and elders were asked to dream about what would make Northfield feel more inclusive. Their responses were shared once more visually through posters displayed at City Hall. Additionally, all of the illustrations produced through this effort will be included in Northfield’s Comprehensive Plan.

Rocky Casillas Aguirre is a Latino artist, originally from Tijuana, Mexico, Rocky grew up in Northfield and has been part of the community for more than 20 years. Creating art that promotes social justice is one of his greatest passions and what he devotes his artistic career to doing, as the owner of Rokaturas—an art studio, business, and brand on a mission to help youth struggling with mental health.

This project was made possible by the City of Northfield Art in Public Places Program, funded through the 1% for the Arts.



Vision



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

Mission



The City of Northfield works for the common good of our residents and businesses and the improvement of our community by providing excellent, innovative municipal services that carry out the city's vision for a high quality of life for all.



Dear Northfield, we dream of a town where
WE ARE REPRESENTED



"I believe we need more representation among local governors. Someone who would actually care about our community and fight for our rights and needs."

"Northfield is a very welcoming town and everything, but there is so much that needs to change. I would love to see more Latinos at city hall making a difference for our community."

"We need more Latinos everywhere—teachers, bus drivers, doctors... Then we wouldn't need interpreters as much. It's difficult when you don't speak the language, but that day will come. It's just a matter of time."

"There are almost no Hispanic businesses here. For example, downtown. Imagine if there were more Hispanic owners with their shops? Forget about it. Everything would be so different."



Querido Northfield, soñamos con una ciudad donde **SOMOS REPRESENTADXS**



"Creo que necesitamos más representación entre los gobernadores locales. Alguien que realmente se preocupe por nuestra comunidad y luche por nuestros derechos y necesidades."

"Northfield es una ciudad muy acogedora y todo, pero hay muchas cosas que necesitan cambiar. Me encantaría ver más Latinos en el city hall haciendo una diferencia para la comunidad [Latina]."

"Necesitamos más Latinos en todos lados: maestros, choferes, médicos... así no necesitaríamos tanto interprete. Es difícil cuando no hablas el idioma, pero ese día vendrá. Es solo cosa de tiempo."

"Casi no hay negocios Hispanos aquí. Por ejemplo, en el centro. ¿Imagínese si hubiera más propietarios Hispanos con sus tiendas? Olvídalo. Todo sería muy diferente."

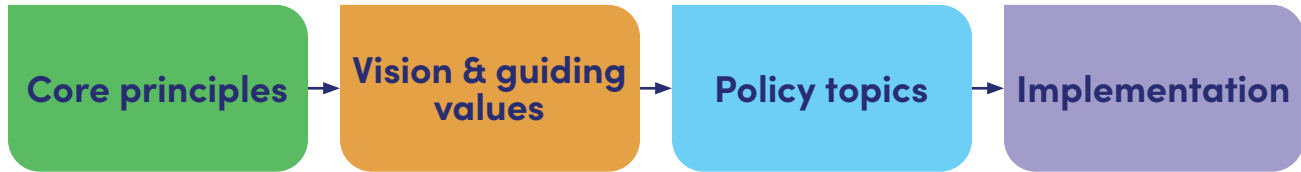




1 Introduction

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 the 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.



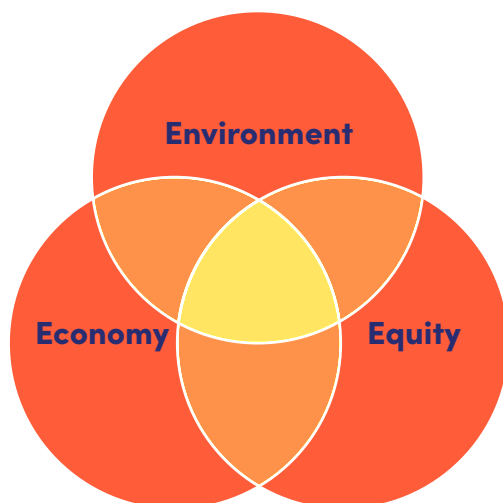
How to use the plan

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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 Economic Future, and Resilient 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.

4. 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 for moving cars, they are key public spaces 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, 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: our triple bottom line.

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 promote 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 each of these three values, especially when they may be 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 [Engagement Summary](#), and for information about equity within the plan, visit [Equity Policy Framework](#) and [Community Profile](#).

Figure 1. How the parts of the plan relate to each other



Dear Northfield,

WE ARE LEADERS



LATINE INVENTIONS:
ROBERTO LANDELL DE MOURA
(WIRELESS PHONE 1895)
GUILLERMO GONZÁLES
CAMARENA
(COLOR TV 1940)
(PROJECT PULSO).

AND MANY MORE!

THERE ARE 4 MILLION+
LATINE-OWNED BUSINESSES
IN THE U.S. THAT'S 10% OF
ALL COMPANIES AND
\$2.8 TRILLION IN ECONOMIC
OUTPUT (US CENSUS
BUREAU).

THERE ARE OVER 50 LATINES
SERVING IN THE U.S. CONGRESS,
AND 34 MILLION LATINE VOTERS
(CONGRESS.GOV).

1.8 MILLION LATINE WORKERS (73% OF
ALL U.S. AGRICULTURAL LABOR) HELP
FEED AMERICAN FAMILIES WITHOUT
RECOGNITION (WILSON CENTER).

Querido Northfield,

SOMOS LIDERESES



INVENTOS LATINOS:
ROBERTO LANDELL DE MOURA
(TELÉFONO INALÁMBRICO 1895)
GUILLERMO GONZÁLES
CAMARENA
(LA TELEVISIÓN A COLOR 1940)
(PROJECT PULSO).

¡Y MUCHOS MÁS!



HAY 4 MILLONES+
DE EMPRESAS LATINAS EN
LOS EE. UU. QUE
REPRESENTAN EL 10% DE
TODAS LAS EMPRESAS Y
\$2.8 TRILLONES EN
APORTES ECONÓMICOS AL
PAÍS (U.S BUSINESS
BUREAU).



HAY MAS DE 50 LATINOS
CON CARGOS DE LIDERAZGO EN EL
CONGRESO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS Y
34 MILLONES DE VOTANTES LATINOS
(CONGRESS.GOV).



1.8 MILLONES DE TRABAJADORES LATINOS
(73% DE TODOS LOS TRABAJADORES
AGRÍCOLAS DE EE.UU.) AYUDAN A
ALIMENTAR ESTE PAÍS SIN
RECONOCIMIENTO (WILSON CENTER).



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. They align with and complement the city's overall vision and mission established in 2017.



What we heard

Below and beginning each chapter, we share the significant themes heard from residents, business owners, and other key stakeholders like educational institutions and the nonprofit 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

- Smart, sustainable, balanced growth
- 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

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



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
- 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

- Address the high tax rate for residents
- 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 from the north and northwest neighborhoods
- Residents need access to good jobs, food, housing, green/open space, and recreation to ensure economic stability and a good quality of life
- Address the needs of the most vulnerable and underrepresented 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



CREATIVITY

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.



ECONOMY

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.



HOME

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



RESILIENCE

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



MOBILITY

Northfield works to provide a full complement of **mobility options** so all Northfield residents and visitors can get where and how they want.



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.



CONNECT

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 developing relationships with consultants who understand Northfield's complexity and its values, including but not limited to the value of fiscal impact, responsibility and government accountability.

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 practices?
- ... 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 (municipal, 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.

Sample 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.

Sample 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.

Sample 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?



Dear Northfield, we dream of a town where **OUR CHILDREN THRIVE**

"There are many drug and violence problems in our neighborhood. It would be great to have a Latino youth center."

"Technology is affecting our children. We need more mental health resources like books, classes...and for the parents too."

"Childcare support is needed. It would help both the parents and the children too..."

"I'd love to see more programs to get kids outside in nature."



Querido Northfield, soñamos con una ciudad donde **NUESTRXS HIJXS PROSPERAN**

"Hay muchos problemas de drogas y violencia en nuestro vecindario. Sería genial tener un centro para jóvenes Latinos."

"La tecnología está afectando a nuestros hijos. Necesitamos más recursos de salud mental como libros, clases... y para los padres también."

"Apoyo para cuidado de niños es necesario. Ayudaría tanto a los padres como a los niños..."

"Me gustaría ver más programas para que los niños salgan al aire libre... estén en la naturaleza."

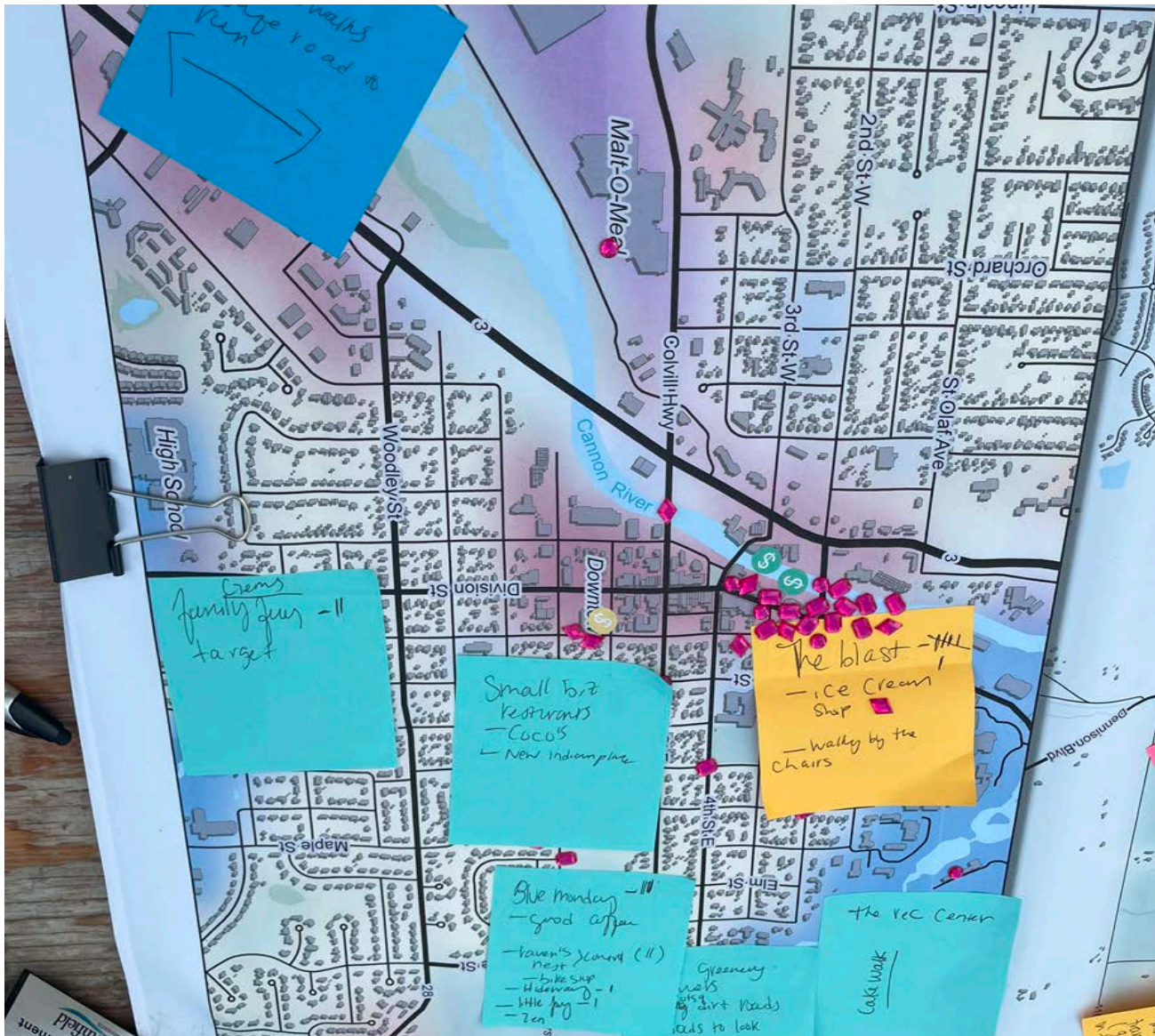


3 Access

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 for 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

- "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."

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



Connecting land use and transportation

How Northfield builds streets and locates businesses, schools, and services determines how residents can carry on daily activities. The last several comprehensive planning efforts show community members want to be able to go to the park, the store, and schools safely and conveniently without having to drive. People gave multiple reasons including reducing our dependence on nonrenewable energy, getting more exercise, letting kids get to school independently, and seeking more affordable options. Being able to bike and walk plus developing better transit is a priority for Northfield. Providing this kind of accessibility requires connecting places at a scale and proximity which makes walking, biking and transit safe, pleasant, and convenient.

This plan recognizes that driving is how most people in Northfield get around and also calls out past planning which has made driving necessary. Starting in the 1960s, Northfield (and most other places) began building places for easy driving by widening streets, putting stores and schools at the edges of town, and requiring large amounts of parking. By 2025,

the costs of this pattern of development are becoming clearer. These costs include impacts to personal finances (owning and operating a new vehicle is estimated to cost \$1,000 a month in 2024), travel time, physical health, safety, the environment, and reduced human connections.

This plan gives Northfield a framework for steady, incremental actions to move away from the “drive everywhere” model begun in the 1960s while also ensuring driving is not difficult. Everyone benefits from safer and greener streets, better connected streets, and more ways to travel.

To visualize how patterns of land use and transportation interact, compare Division Street with Minnesota State Highway 3, which runs roughly parallel to Division Street, but has four plus lanes of traffic that generally moves 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 on foot and unhealthy to live next to.



Division Street and Bridge Square

On Division Street and around Bridge Square, the downtown shops, the river, and other services are most accessible by walking. Within a short walk, a person can buy groceries, vote at City Hall, borrow a library book, fish at the riverfront, eat at a restaurant, have coffee (or ice cream or a beer), check out both the historic Depot and the brand-new transit hub, and get a haircut. Downtown's land use pattern of multi-story mixed use development (retail on the street level and apartments and services on floors above), public space, and closely spaced storefronts make walking easy. Division Street itself is slow with parking on both sides, pedestrian scale lighting, trees, and seating also signal it's a place to park and walk, linger, and gather. Northfield's parklets further integrate transportation and land use by providing public space to sit in the street right-of-way. Downtown's pattern of street and buildings generates more tax revenue per acre than less dense areas, maximizes existing infrastructure, and is the core of Northfield's distinctive sense of place.

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. Although the posted speed limit in downtown is 30 miles per hour, traffic moves much faster. The four lanes of fast-moving traffic along with the noise and debris from the vehicles make walking along the highway unpleasant and unsafe

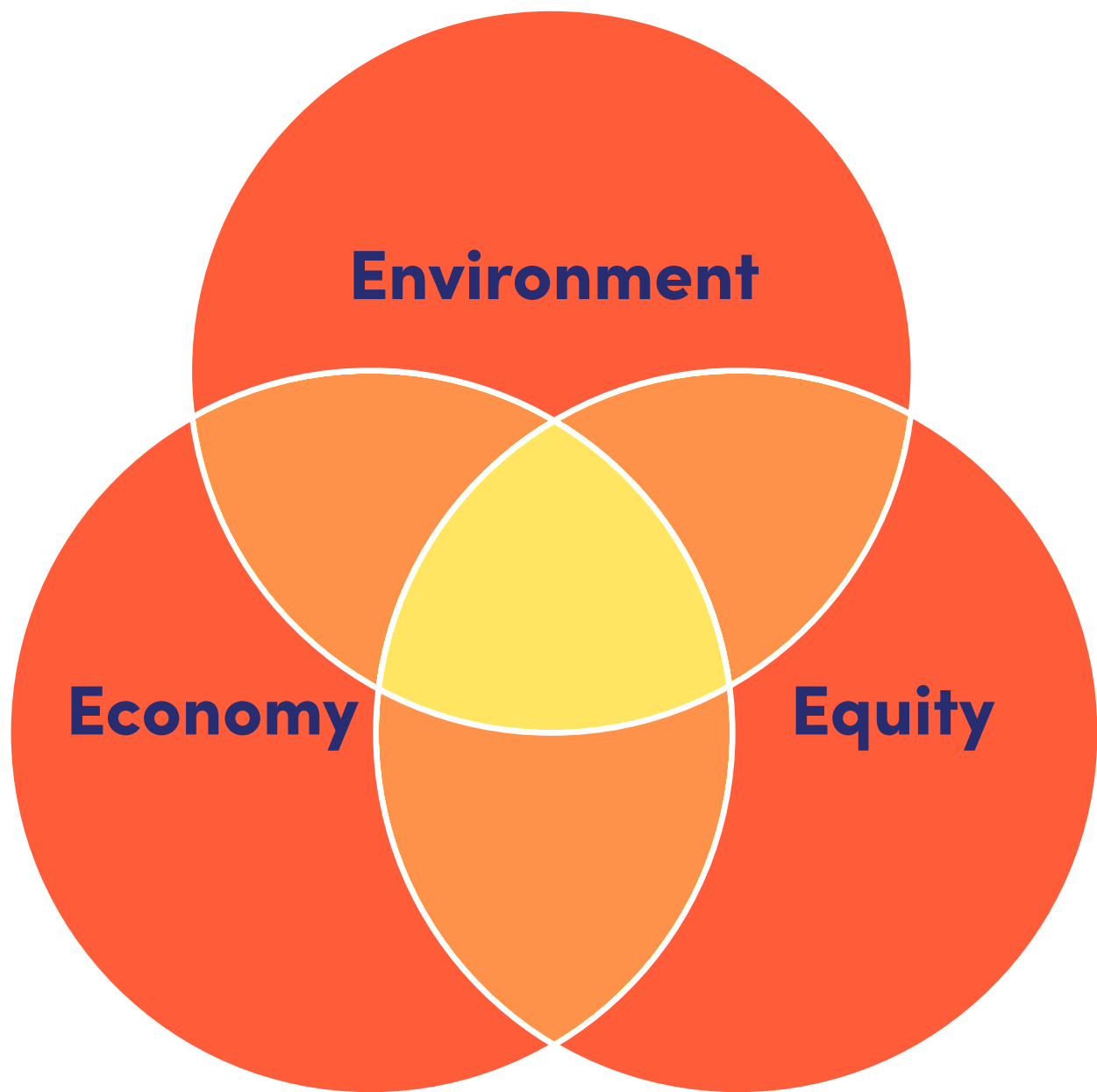
to cross; the painted bike lanes are unsafe. Highway land use is different, too. Businesses are not directly accessible from the highway but require using side streets or parking lots to walk to the door. Buildings are typically one story, set further back and widely spaced. This pattern makes walking and biking distances longer, generates less tax revenue per acre, and requires more vehicle travel.

For Northfield, planning growth to be more like the pattern of land use and street pattern downtown rather than highway focused development is intended to use land more productively, reduce the need for vehicle trips, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, increase tax values, make streets safer and provide more freedom to choose how to travel. Shifting Northfield's transportation planning to increase and measure accessibility addresses climate, economic, and equity goals simultaneously and capitalizes on Northfield's distinctiveness. Responding to Northfield residents' desire to walk and bike more requires guiding growth for efficient locations and safe street connections and helps the city meet its climate action goals.

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).

The three core principles function as Northfield's "triple bottom line" and interact with each other in this chapter, and each of the three foundational chapters.





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.

Active transportation

This term is a catchall for people walking and using “small things with wheels¹” – 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. Also sometimes referred to as micromobility.

All Ages & Abilities (AA&A) Design

This industry term refers to designing streets and active transportation 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.

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.

Orderly annexation agreement

A binding contract between a city and a township that identifies larger potential growth areas and terms to what triggers an annexation. It allows both the city and township to proactively address annexation potential instead of passively waiting and reacting to growth. The agreement is enforceable in the district court in the county in which the unincorporated property in question is located.

¹ NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, 2nd Edition



Priority growth area

Defined area within the urban expansion area to which growth may be directed after other priorities within a municipal boundary are exhausted or insufficient. Priority growth areas offer greater connectivity to the street network, are able to be served more efficiently by transit and municipal infrastructure, are more proximate to important destinations such as schools and shopping, and encourage future growth in a compact pattern.

Separated bikeway

Sometimes called protected bikeways, these are bikeways and paths that are separated from car traffic by some sort of physical barrier. They can be designed just for people biking, or they can be designed to be shared by people walking and biking. Separated bikeways always include both a bike travel space and a buffer between the bikeway and the street.²

Transit

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



Urban expansion area

An area around the boundary of a village or city that is reserved for future residential and business growth. It is developed in collaboration with the county and informed by orderly annexation agreements between municipality and township officials.

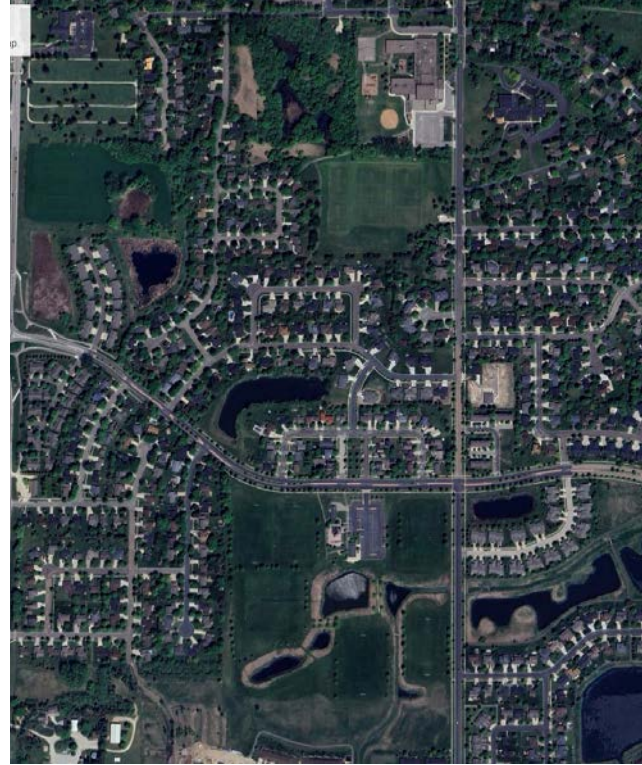
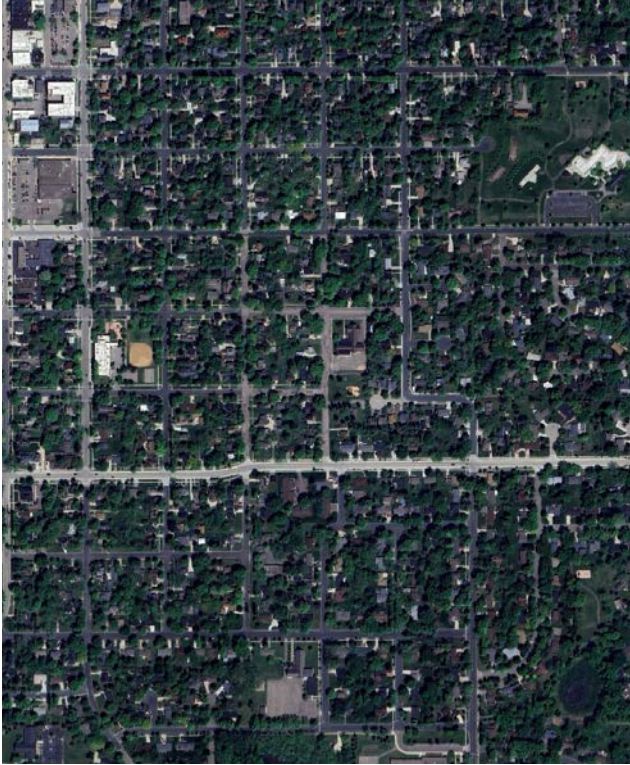
Walkable

Walkable refers to how safe, convenient, and comfortable it is to walk to destinations.

Walkability

Measurable by tracking distances (how long does it take to get to the supermarket?), navigation difficulty (how many turns does it take?), sidewalk connections (do you have to cross two streets because sidewalks abruptly end?), access to shade and benches, and safety (do cars or vehicles endanger pedestrians on this path?).

2 NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, 3rd 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. Division Street and adjacent blocks formed the business district, Central Park was the community center, and churches, schools, and parks were added within residential neighborhoods. The regular street pattern and central business district created a compact and walkable city providing easy access to daily destinations that 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 winding roads with cul-de-sacs creating residential areas with few through roadways connected to the now more distant commercial areas of the city by busier collector streets.

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 and dispersed land uses increase travel time, greenhouse gas emissions and the amount of infrastructure the city must maintain.

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.



Analytical focus areas

Northfield identified three analytic focus areas for increased work in this plan:

1. Completing the active transportation network
2. Planning for increased transit
3. Future land use and development

All three areas analyze existing conditions and needed to change to achieve the outcomes described above and established in the strategies which follow.

Completing a safe, connected system for biking, walking and rolling.

Northfield has planned 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 completing a consistent, connected and comfortable active transportation network connecting everyday destinations like grocery stores, schools, and the central business district. This means city officials will have to change the ways they determine how the public right-of-way is used.

Northfield's past choices about land uses and transportation infrastructure make developing a wonderful active transportation network more challenging; it shares this problem with many other cities. 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

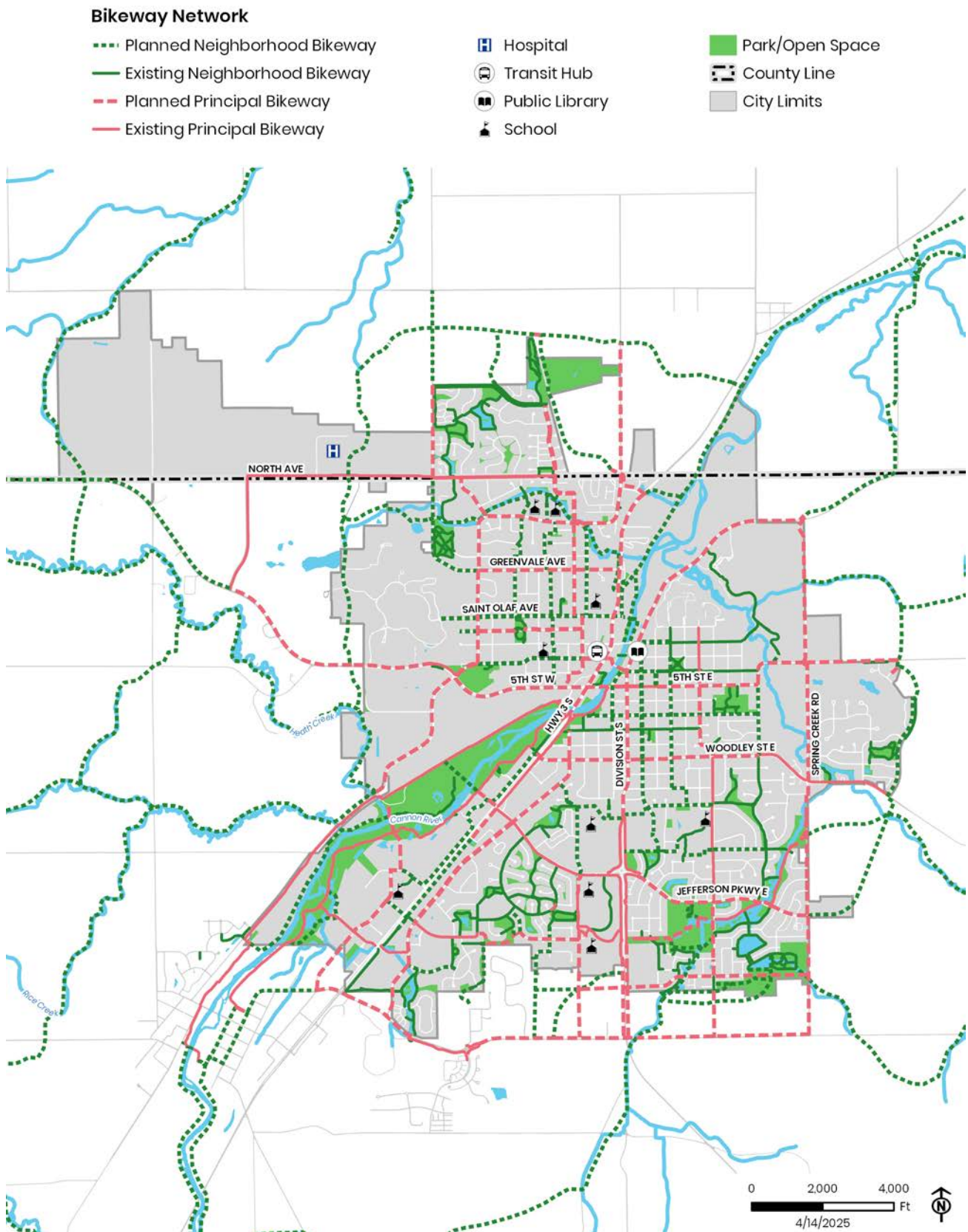
ends or disconnected streets reduces options for direct and clear routes to connect people to places they want to go. In some cases, earlier attempts at providing bike lanes and pedestrian facilities have proved to be unsafe or even unusable. Now that we know better, we can do better.

Figure 2 proposes an active transportation network intended to create a safe, comfortable, convenient, and consistent system for getting around Northfield by walking, biking and rolling. Northfield has planned active transportation 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 below builds on the 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan because of its attention to accessibility to important destinations not found in other plans.

The proposed network features both principal routes and neighborhood routes. Both are designed to prioritize safety of the most vulnerable street users, implementing AA&A Design, and the specific facilities provided are selected based on conditions including land use context, vehicle volumes, type, and speed, expected users, and grade. Principal routes accommodate higher volumes of active transportation users and provide direct, convenient connections across neighborhoods and throughout the city. Neighborhood routes connect people to destinations within a neighborhood and to principal routes.



Figure 2. Future active transportation network





Safe and seamless connection of recreational trails and facilities with the street network is a top 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:

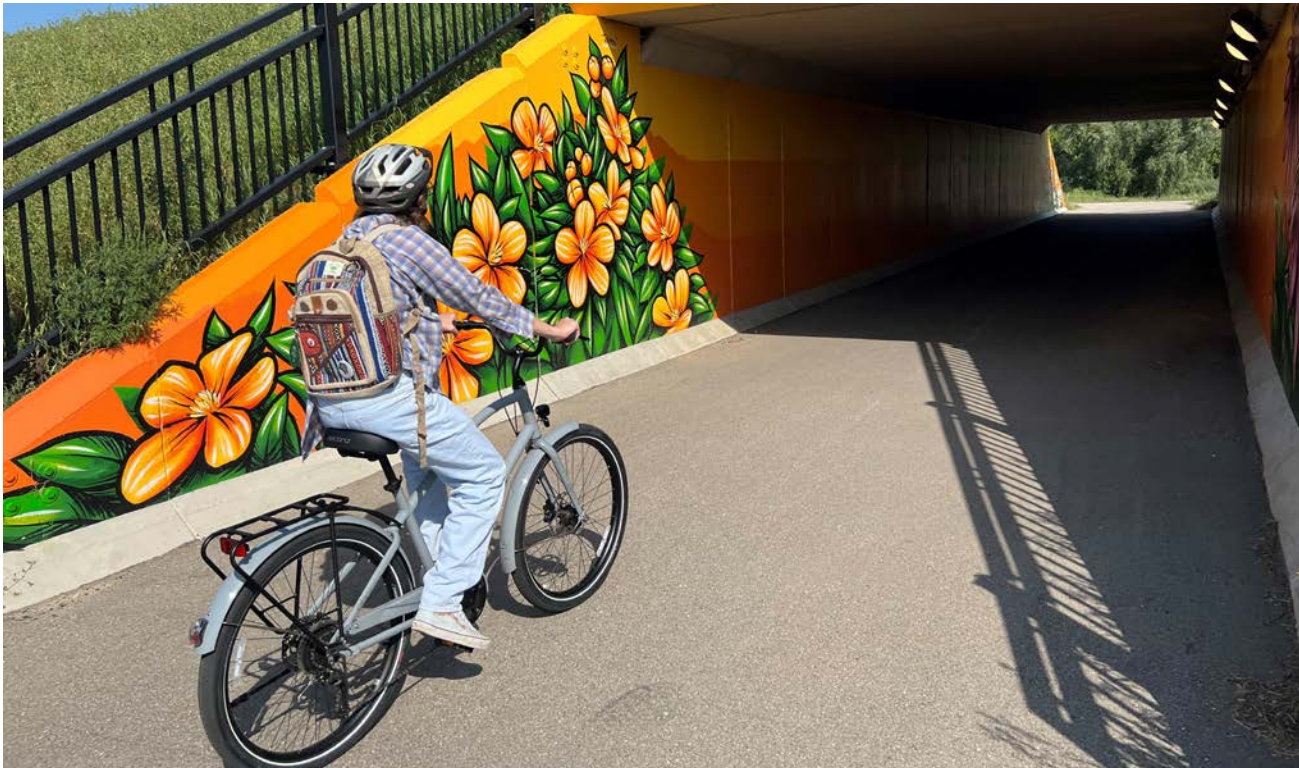
Who is the intended user and where are they going?

The 2008 Parks, Open Space and Trail Plan used access to schools, college campuses, downtown, and other public facilities to plan primary routes using main streets as the most direct routes. In addition, access to shopping areas, the river, and connecting parks to neighborhoods and to each other were 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. For example, when considering routes to schools, facility design should prioritize safe and intuitive use by children.

What is the best type of sidewalk, trail, or on-street bikeway for the location?

The suggested network is based on designing routes and types of infrastructure for the character of the land use, traffic speed and volume, destinations served and the most likely users of different segments.

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)* including preferring one-way bikeway designs in most situations. 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.



Principal routes

Principal routes are the ‘highways’ of the active transportation network. They are planned as direct routes to and from critical destinations and across barriers like Highway 3 and the Cannon River. No specific design is suggested in advance, because there are multiple ways to provide safe facilities including curb or concrete medians, planters, bollards, vehicles in a parking lane, traffic filtering and calming, and off-street facilities. Special consideration is given to prioritizing active transportation users at intersections.

Neighborhood routes

Neighborhood routes will provide All Ages & Abilities facilities appropriate to the traffic volume and speed as well as surrounding land use. These may include separated bikeways. Neighborhood 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 in addition to driving. This requires investing in traffic calming measures within the roadway and at intersections creating AA&A conditions for most, if not all streets within a neighborhood.

All routes

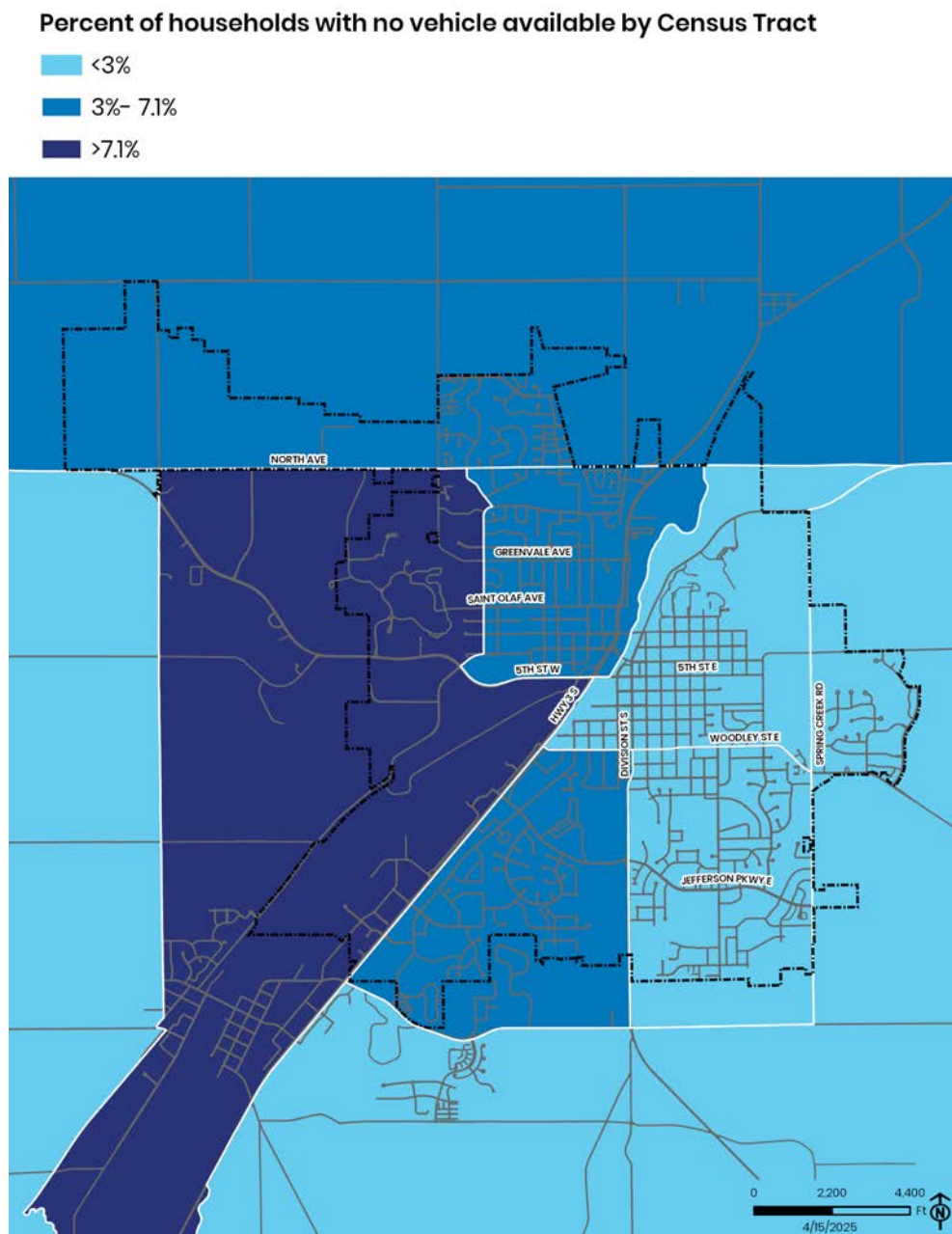
When evaluating capital improvements to roadways designated as principal routes, projects must create routes which are simple and easy for residents and visitors alike to navigate. They must plan for safety by providing dedicated space for active transportation that is physically protected from fast-moving and turning vehicles and at the same time lower vehicle speeds by designing for and posting a lower speed limit. Intersection safety must be a top priority in designing roads for all modes.

Planning for transit

Community engagement revealed an unmet need for reliable transit. Public transit in Northfield is currently provided by Hiawathaland Transit, which was created in 1998 by the nonprofit Three Rivers Community Action to meet transit needs in the region. Primary service is provided by two fixed routes centered at the Transit Hub and on-demand dial-a-ride services in Northfield. Hiawathaland Transit also provides a regional route connecting Northfield and Faribault, which runs every two hours during weekdays.

Current routes and transfer locations are not aligned with the areas of greatest need for transit services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the highest percentage of households with workers age 16 and older with no vehicle available are in two census tracts.

Figure 3. *Percentage of households with workers without a vehicle*
U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) 2019–2023 5-year estimates, Table(s) B08201





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, people using transit either must plan trips carefully to make transfers or they may have to wait extended amounts of time for the next bus. Buses are not available before 6 a.m. or after 6 p.m., limiting the ability for second- and third-shift workers to use transit.

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, as well as money. 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.

Transit should not only help people get around within Northfield, but also between Northfield and other parts of the region. To that end, the City of Northfield was awarded \$1.75 million in state bonding funds in 2020 to complete the construction of the Northfield 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 opened 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 routes need to include more stops at shopping and medical services. Planning efforts should include all the different kinds of people who use or would like to use transit, in particular: older adults, youth, people with disabilities, and college students. In addition, planning for transit should consider it to be an important tool in providing affordable transportation and helping Northfield achieve its climate goals.

Providing effective and affordable transit requires more attention to compact and connected land use.¹ As Northfield grows, planning streets and housing should consider how new development can be served by transit including safe walking to and from transit stops.

¹ See, e.g. [Ireland National Transportation Authority - Planning Cities and Towns for Bus Service](#)



Future land use and investment

In the face of uncertainty associated with global climate change and documented demographic shifts, Northfield must capitalize on what has contributed to its success – like downtown’s compact and diverse mix of uses – to ensure the sustainable future of a likely more populous Northfield. This plan lays out what future development patterns will look like in different parts of the city.

Community conversations throughout the planning process and existing policies highlight the need to encourage more commercial, industrial, and residential development. Greater diversity in the types of housing built is needed, and a strong preference exists for this to occur within the existing urbanized core.

The next section outlines future land use categories designed to meet those stated outcomes and shows those categories on the future land use map. The subsequent section outlines the approach to realizing the desired future development pattern in the interventions framework map and text. The interventions framework is used to make the critical connection between land use and transportation.

The interventions framework is derived from the future land use map and categories; it designates key locations and specific properties as opportunities for different levels of intervention.

The 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.

Priority growth areas: Key areas and/or intersections adjacent to existing city limits and infrastructure

New development in priority growth areas should be mixed use and serve as neighborhood centers offering commercial/ services and amenities with safe options for nonmotorized access to 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. While the city does not have land use or zoning authority over those areas it is important to work together with township and municipal neighbors to limit disconnected and unsustainable development. For the city this means guiding development within the municipal boundary while working in partnership with neighboring townships and municipalities to ensure a successful economic future.



Future land use

The future land use map is based on the community vision and guides development for the next 20 years using very general categories:

- Mixed-use commercial
- Mixed-use residential neighborhood
- Parks and open space
- College
- Industrial
- Rights-of-way

Upon adopting this plan, the official controls of the municipality such as relevant portions of the city's Code of Ordinances, notably chapters 34 and 70, and relevant regulatory guidance will be updated and revised to best implement the plan. The interventions map identifies those areas expected 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, a citywide average density of 5 to 15 units per acre should be the minimum outcome to provide enough density to support future transit connections with other parts of the city.
- **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. Future interventions in the historic district and nearby blocks include the preservation and maintenance of historic buildings and enhancing this area as a compact mixed-use core of the city by supporting small business and adding housing.

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. Priorities for downtown include properties on the west side of Washington Street, along both sides of Division and between 2nd Street and Woodley Street.

The area located west of Division Street and north of 5th 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. The Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan recommends enhancements to the river-facing sides of the downtown business district to make the riverfront and





river walk more active and by improving the parks and trails along the Cannon River. This plan capitalizes on that concept to build support for expanding the compact mixed use development pattern to Fremouw Avenue to the north and Linden to the west. 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 Campostella 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. The Mill Towns State Trail crosses Highway 3 at Woodley Street, follows the east side of the highway frontage road and crosses Jefferson Parkway; ensuring this regional facility is safe and prominent is a strong priority.

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, along with adding more housing, office, retail, small-scale production, and gathering spaces.

The “South Highway 3” area is designated *Transform* in the interventions analysis, indicating a need for 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 multi-story mixed-use buildings that meet defined community needs.

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



Mixed-use Residential Neighborhood

Summary

- **Uses:** Residential, neighborhood scale or incidental commercial.
- **Densities:** Residential infill projects will include a mix of single-family homes and smaller (2 to 12-unit) multifamily structures. Small scale mixed-use infill buildings of two to three stories are encouraged. Transit would be best supported by an overall citywide residential density of 15 units per acre and excellent connectivity.
- **Transportation considerations:** Continue to plan for active transportation, 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 its diverse housing types to suburban character neighborhoods with prominent garages, more uniform home types within subdivisions, and larger homes and lots 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 stormwater management facilities.

Future state

- Zoning code revisions will:
 - More easily allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and small-scale multifamily housing (5 to 12 units per building) by right in these high amenity neighborhoods.
 - Define a clear separation of land uses between the college campuses and adjacent neighborhoods to create a defined edge to both.
 - Permit small-scale, neighborhood commercial nodes in all residential areas. This may be incentivized in projects where public funding is requested.
- Revisions to Northfield street standards will require increased connectivity for all new development to promote greater connections to the existing grid structure and provide greater access to destinations across the city.
- Streets will be redesigned to improve safety for all users, reduce traffic speeds, provide sustainable stormwater management, grow a denser tree canopy, and complete the proposed active transportation network. Particular attention should be paid to connecting schools, parks and neighborhoods and building out the proposed active transportation 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 10 to 15 minutes by walking, biking, or rolling.
- **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. Transit access to community and regional parks should guide future development.

Description

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

Future state

- City initiatives focus on providing equitable access to parks across the community, ensuring park facilities are appropriate for the neighborhood and ensuring playgrounds and parks are accessible to people with disabilities. Parks should include an appropriate mix of active uses (basketball, pickleball, skateboarding, etc.) and passive uses (walking trails, seating, access to nature)
- Parks and open space are treated as green infrastructure which is planned, planted and maintained to manage stormwater, mitigate flooding, improve habitat, and provide shade.
- Greenway corridor access and protection are central to the city's planning efforts.





College

Summary

- **Uses:** may include offices, classrooms, athletic facilities, parking, residences, and other uses needed to operate a residential college campus.
- **Density:** relatively intense in terms of mix of uses and size of student residential dormitories. Generally, campus-like settings.
- **Transportation considerations:** sidewalk and trail connections to downtown, job centers, and shopping destinations. Those who live in these areas can access reliable and effective transit to health care facilities, which may require improved paratransit service for medical transportation, particularly for older people and people with disabilities. Emergency vehicles must also have safe and direct access.

Description

Areas dedicated to the two college campuses.

Future state

- Defined “edges” are designed to connect the educational campuses including Northfield Public Schools and Carleton and St. Olaf colleges and prevent encroachment into surrounding neighborhoods as applicable.
- Connections between and among these facilities and neighborhoods are safe and convenient, with limited impact on the surrounding residential or agricultural uses. Reliable transit connects the campuses to most dense commercial and residential areas with service every 30 minutes or greater.



Industrial

Summary

- **Uses:** manufacturing, raw material processing, production, assembly, research and development, warehousing, distribution.
- **Density:** buildings that cover at least 50% of the lot and have an average of 1,200 square feet of space per industrial worker.
- **Transportation considerations:** connections to transit, rail freight, highways and major transportation corridors. 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 and strengthen the city's tax base.

Future state

- Code-based or adopted policy direction to require performance standards for industrial uses limit impacts such as noise, odors, water use and other nonrenewable resource use.
- Enterprises offering family-sustaining wages (\$27 per hour by 2024 standards) are recruited and encouraged to locate and expand in Northfield.
- Enterprises offering complementary goods and services to the greater Northfield economy are 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

- **Uses:** transportation of people and goods, recreation, tree canopy, stormwater management, utilities.
- **Transportation considerations:** allocating space for appropriate modes of transportation based on policy priorities, safety, and land use context.

Description

Primarily street rights-of-way which can be developed to serve multiple goals of this plan at once. Which government has jurisdiction may influence the design, purpose, maintenance, rehabilitation and installation of the right-of-way. Those rights-of way under municipal jurisdiction offer the greatest amount of influence and control over evaluation and implementation of tools to improve the right-of-way. This important public space can offer multimodal connectivity, stormwater management, and increased human connection.

Future state

- A reduced citywide speed limit increases safety for residents of all ages.
- New street and street reconstruction projects are designed for safe and legible use by cars, pedestrians, cyclists, and other nonmotorized users.
- Surface stormwater is better managed in the rights-of-way.
- Budgeting for capital projects includes community member involvement.

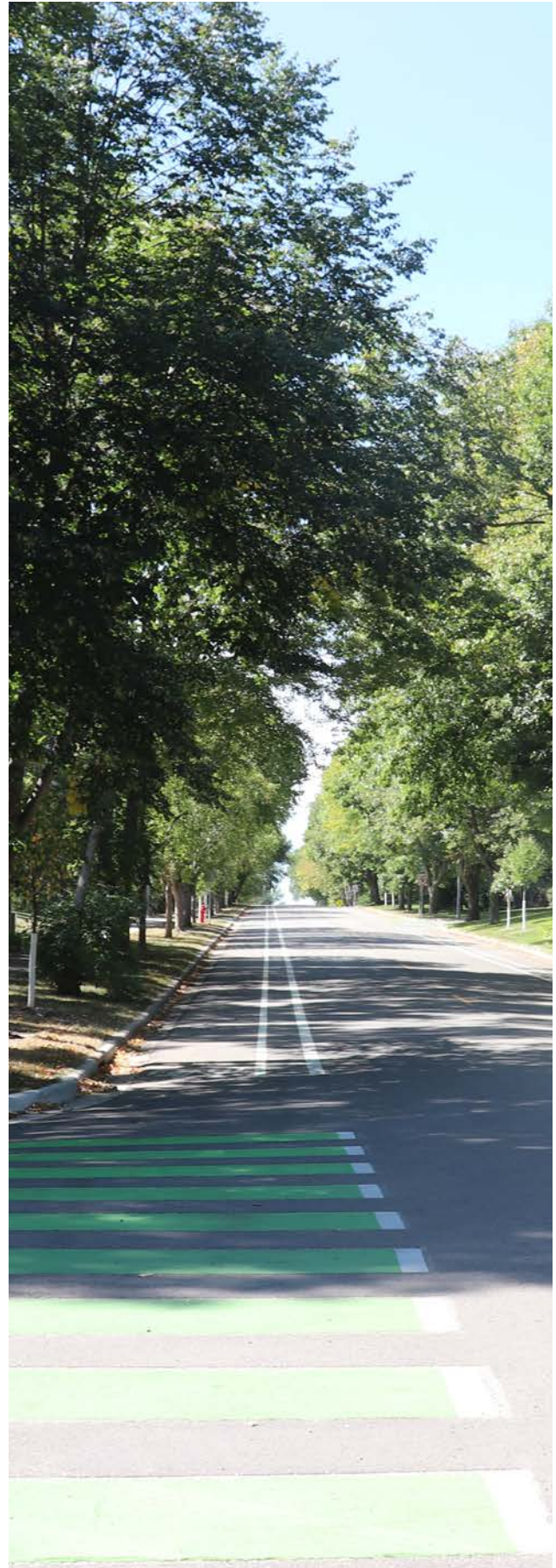
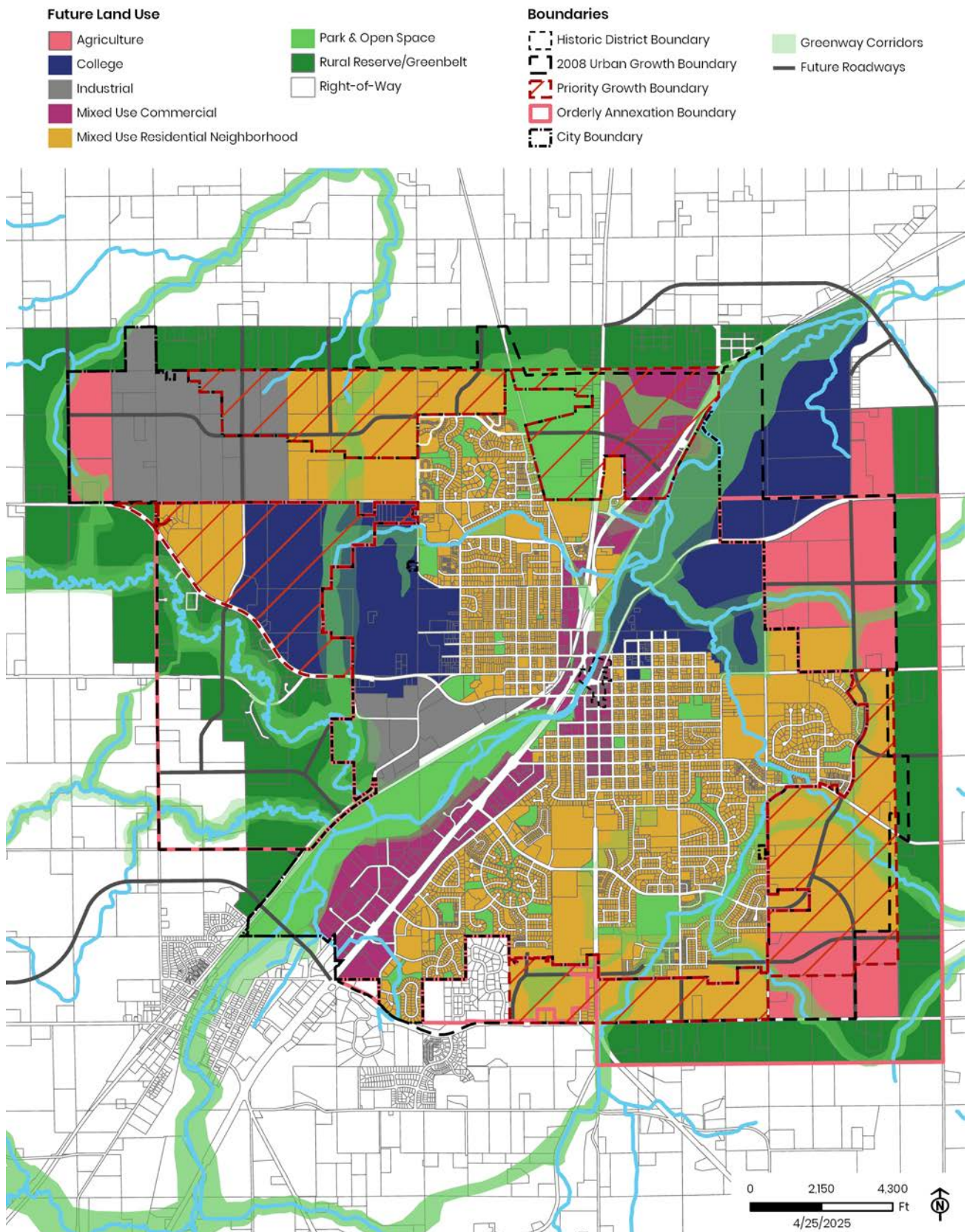




Figure 4. Future land use



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.

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

Transform

Transform areas represent the greatest opportunity for future development and redevelopment to harness growing market demand and create walkable, mixed-use, mixed-income centers. Land use changes and/or an intensification of uses will create lively places to live, work and play. They will serve 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

Strengthen areas present 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 and/or support to make necessary improvements to private property
- Infill development supporting the surrounding uses.

Enhance

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 people of all ages and abilities 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 available housing types.

Preserve

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. Opportunities exist 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.

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.



The labels on Figure 4 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 downtown land use pattern and scale will expand west, making the river the focal point and making the Transit Hub accessible and more convenient, and encouraging lively and active streets. Ames Park will be a year-round usable and active space.

T2– Highway 3 and Fremouw Avenue

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.

T5– South and southeast priority growth areas

While the preference is to focus on infill and redevelopment first, this area offers additional land for mixed use residential development which has the most opportunity to connect to the existing street network and create a more connected neighborhood than other areas. The proximity to schools and southern shopping, connections to major corridors (Division Street/ Highway 246, Highway 81/County Road 1, Ford Street, Maple Street, and Spring Creek Road make this area most aligned with the goals of this plan.

In addition to homes, this area includes the planned Meadows Park community park and greenway corridors connecting the southern part of town. Meadows Park has been master-planned for land acquired through tax forfeiture and must be used for public uses such as parks and affordable housing.¹ The 41.7-acre site has been planned with future residential development on the northeast 4.6 acres of the site and along the redefined southern boundary of the park. The planned park property consists of 34.0 acres. Managing stormwater through the park's design while maintaining road connectivity are strongly aligned with the objectives of this plan.

T— Individual Transform properties

- **Riverpark Mall and adjacent blocks:** interventions focus 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:** interventions focus 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 the 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):** interventions focus on planning safe street connections, especially access to Division Street/Highway 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, Water, Woodley, and Poplar streets

This neighborhood consisting of naturally occurring affordable homes with excellent proximity to downtown offers a rare opportunity to improve the safety and stability of the neighborhood homes, streets and sidewalks. Care must be taken to prevent displacement of lower-income residents.

S2– West side industrial area

This area, south of 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 is the primary focus in this area. Visual appeal, access to the river, and connectivity between existing facilities should be improved with any development, whether private or city driven.

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

These areas are components of completing the downtown riverwalk, including transferring Carleton College-owned Cannon River frontage to the city. The city must implement planned flood wall improvements and work with Riverpark Mall managers, owners, and tenants to co-design minor enhancements to the back of the property.



E1– Residential neighborhood west of the river

This residential area lacks parks and could also benefit from enhanced nonmotorized 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 Street from Northfield High School; small-scale commercial or mixed-use development could be considered here. Gradually increasing residential density or allowing for smaller multifamily 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 nonmotorized connections.

E– Individual Enhance properties

- **Cannon Riverfront:** Use the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan as a guide to establish the riverfront as a regional park: a well-connected recreation destination featuring opportunities for land and water-related active transportation, 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:** This park is a critical component of the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan and currently almost unreachable by any mode of travel. Access to 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 to make this park usable.
- **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; reconsider the two-way bikeway in favor of one-way facilities on both sides of this important route for more intuitive and safer route.
- **Ole Store:** When the market allows, use this long-standing neighborhood dining institution to anchor a neighborhood-serving commercial node.

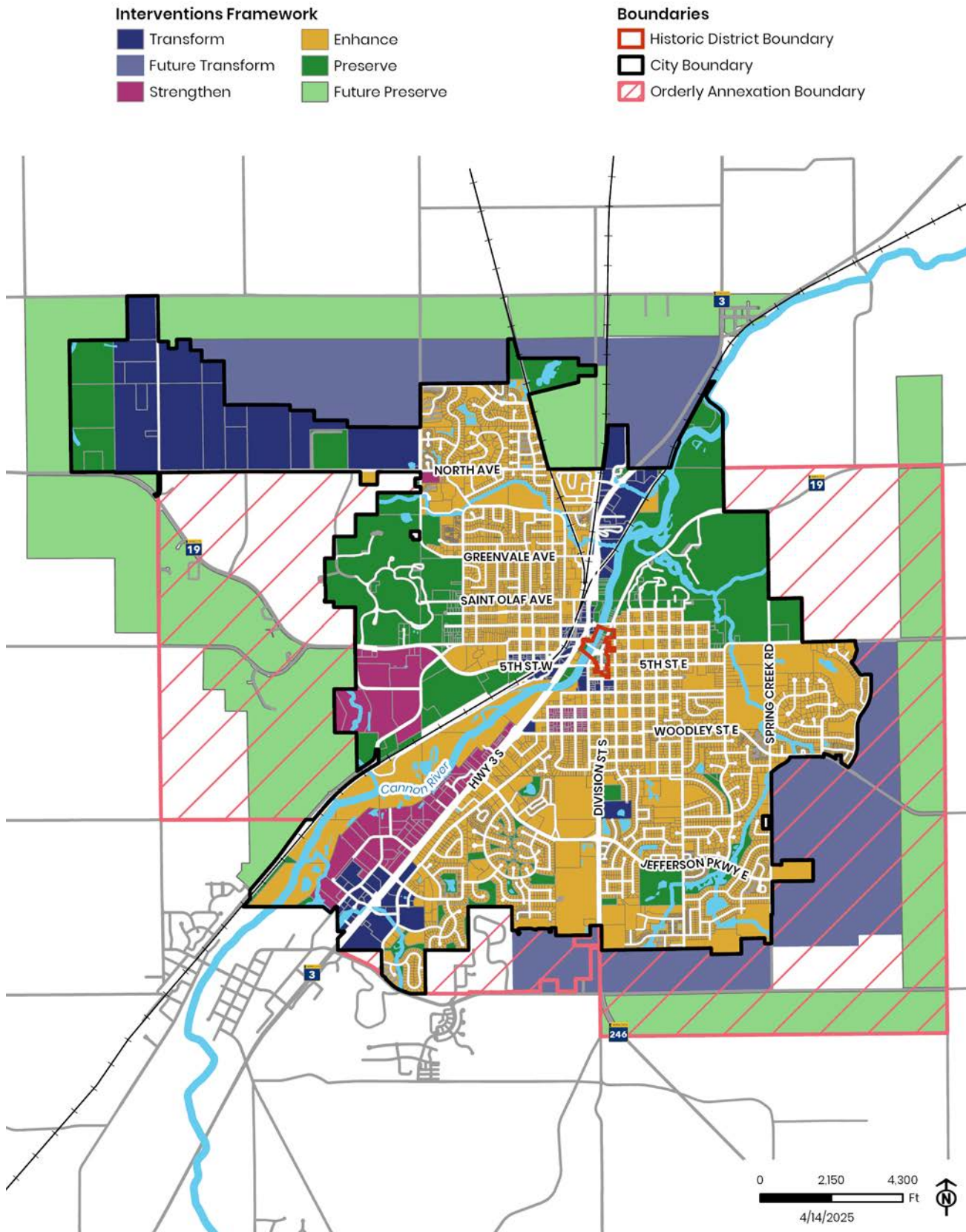


P— Preserve properties/areas

- 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: Work with the colleges to create firm and identifiable boundaries between college property and surrounding neighborhoods and prohibit campus parking adjacent or visible 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. Interventions map





How Northfield can grow

To ensure municipal growth is predictable and productive, Minnesota provides several tools to designate land for future development.

Northfield's orderly annexation areas

Orderly annexation begins with the adoption of a joint resolution by a township and a city to designate an area adjacent to the city limits in need of orderly annexation. Following the resolution, the jurisdictions negotiate a contract describing what land may be annexed and other terms of the agreement. The city has established orderly annexation agreements with three of four surrounding townships. The agreements typically allow a certain number of acres to be annexed within the duration of the contract and stipulate compensation to the township in exchange for the land. Although the city does not have land use or zoning authority over those areas, it is important to work with township neighbors to guide development to areas served by municipal sewer, water and other utilities to protect groundwater and limit costs.



Urban expansion area

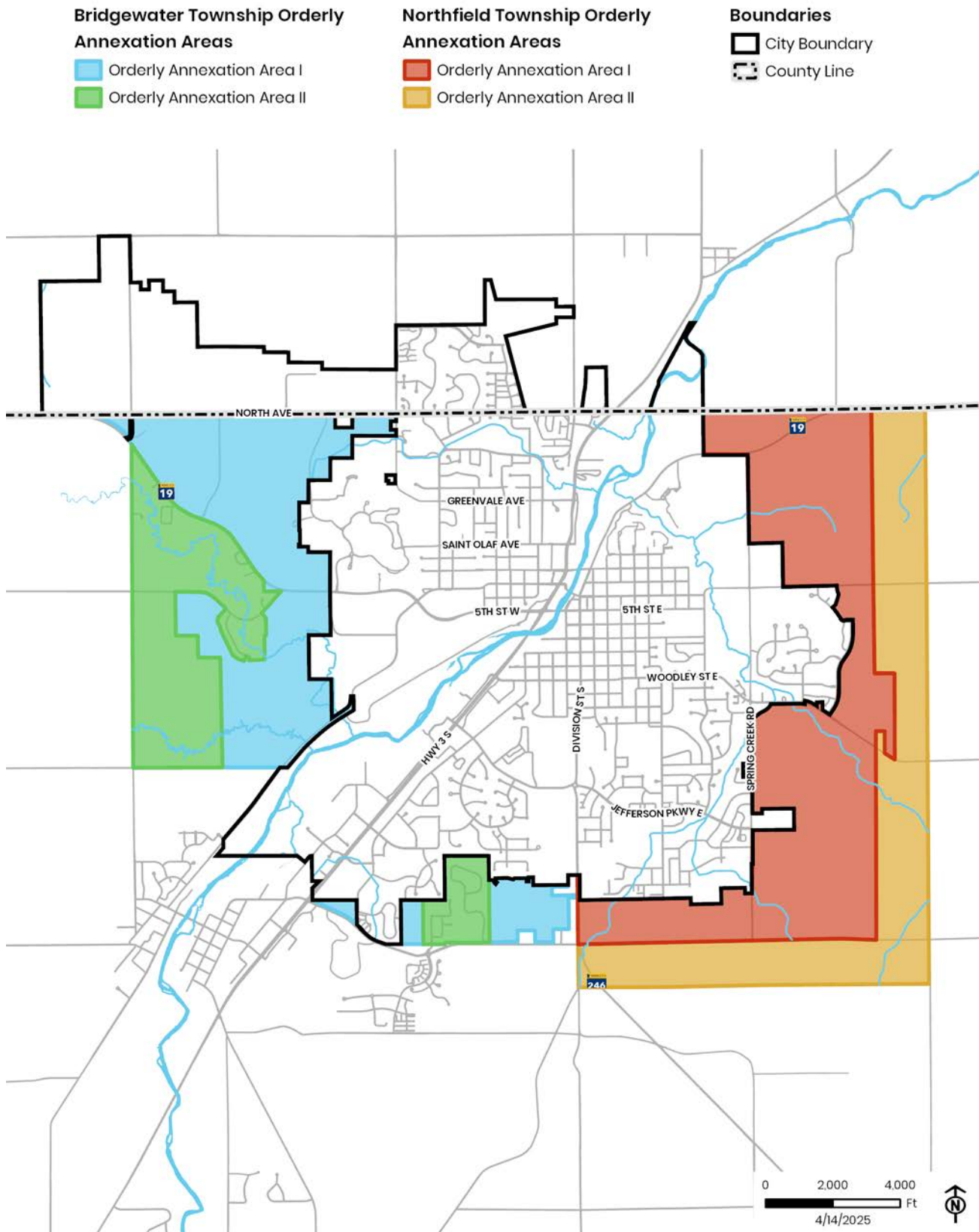
Based on orderly annexation agreements between the townships and the City of Northfield, Dakota and Rice Counties have identified "urban expansion" areas in the county comprehensive plans. These are areas around the municipal boundary of an incorporated city that are reserved for future orderly development of commercial and residential property by extending municipal services. Often, they are used to protect high-value natural or agricultural resources from encroachment by urban-style development.

Priority growth area

Within the urban expansion area, the city has identified a smaller area designated as the priority growth area to identify for developers and policymakers where greenfield development is preferred. The priority growth area is established to protect significant resources and direct efficient extension of infrastructure including ensuring annexed areas have equitable accessibility to city resources by all modes. The policy has been and continues to be to prioritize infill development over greenfield development; the city has great discretion to extend or decline to extend utilities to newly annexed areas based on the fiscal impact to the city, impact to natural and agricultural resources, and other policy determinations.



Figure 6. Orderly annexation map





The priority growth areas in this plan have been selected using the following criteria. First, areas which are more readily connected by streets, trails, and infrastructure are the highest priority. Second, clustering development around existing major transportation corridors and intersections. 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.

Highway 246 South

This area presents a growth opportunity to increase development along a major transportation route into the city which also connects 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 has a strongly interconnected street network with excellent active transportation facilities to schools and Highway 3 commercial areas; it is an excellent opportunity to add neighborhood-serving commercial and provide a welcoming gateway into Northfield.

Southwest corner of Falk Avenue / Eveleth Avenue and North Avenue

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

Between Dresden Avenue and Highway 3 North

With 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.

Urban expansion area outside priority growth areas

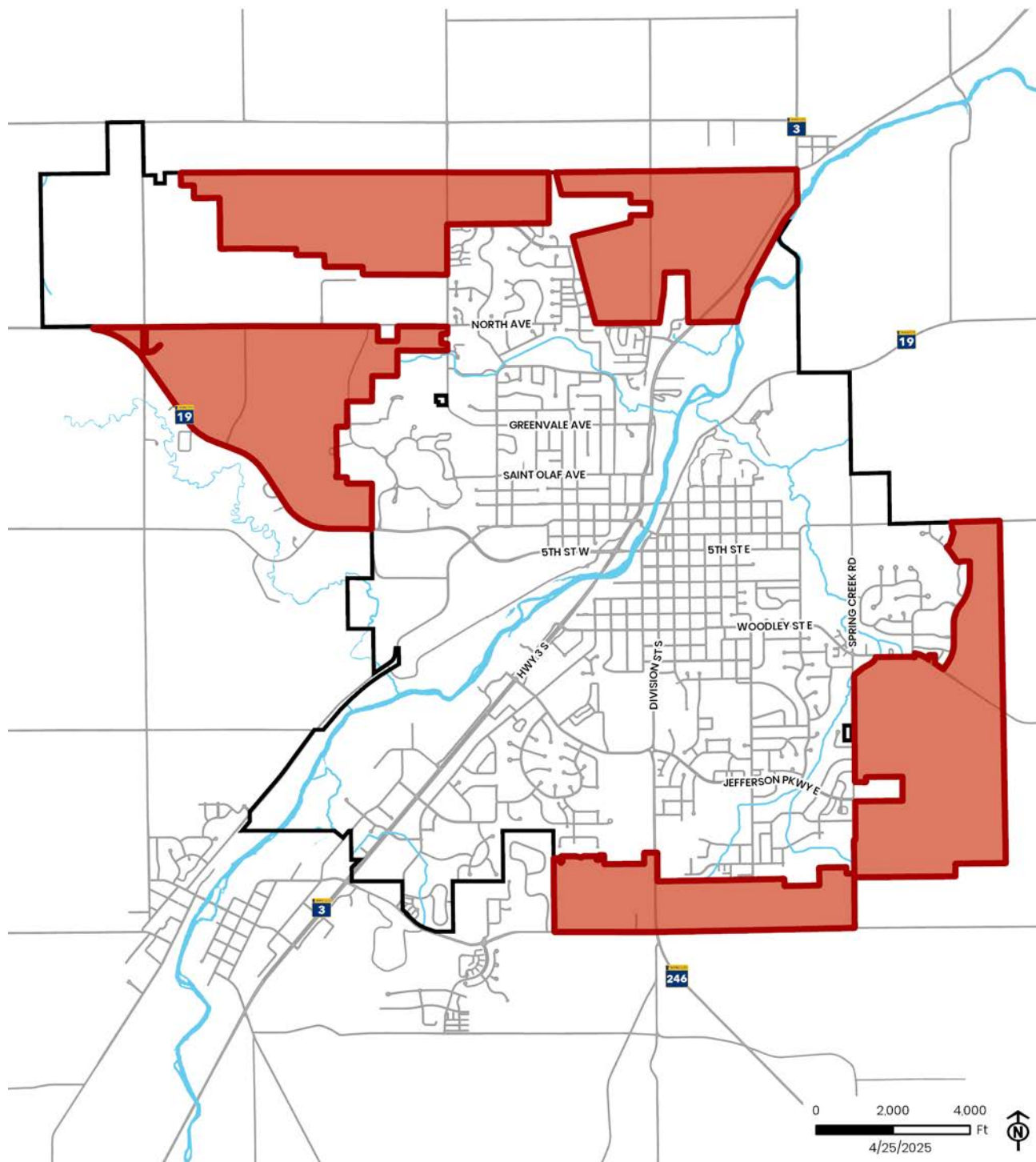
These areas should be considered last for redevelopment and be prioritized for additional housing to serve demand, along with neighborhood serving small-scale commercial/services and amenities with safe and convenient access to existing and new nearby residents, ideally within a 10-minute walk or roll at average pace. The city should extend services to these areas only after detailed review of the fiscal impact and connectivity. Low density (one unit per half-acre or less) single family residential development is discouraged.



Figure 7. Priority growth areas

Priority Growth Boundary

City Boundary





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.

Past land development and transportation practices worked to separate land uses. Homes were located farther from stores, schools, and jobs and streets designed 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. The City of Northfield specifically addresses many of these concerns in the 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP).

This comprehensive planning effort reunites land use and transportation to help Northfield grow more equitably, sustainably and affordably. It also reiterates the city's CAP policy commitment to 100% carbon-free electricity by 2030 and being a 100% carbon-free community by 2040. This plan incorporates strategies from the CAP 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 doing things differently, starting with the larger picture of equitable access and connections – both physical and human – as guides for future development.



Guiding values overview



CREATIVITY

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.



ECONOMY

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.



HOME

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.



RESILIENCE

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



MOBILITY

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.



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.



CONNECT

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.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Northfield has established goals for connectivity, land development, and transportation and adopted relevant metrics to measure progress.
2. 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.
3. Northfield has well-connected and well-used transit, rideshare, and carshare alternatives for trips that require a vehicle.
4. All existing documents guiding planning, growth, and development are updated to reflect the goals of this plan.
2. Update or replace the Typical Street Sections, Comprehensive Transportation Plan and other relevant plans to plan for accessibility and adopt relevant metrics to measure progress.
3. Update or replace the Typical Street Sections, Comprehensive Transportation Plans, and other relevant plans to reduce climate impacts including lifecycle emissions, air and water pollution, urban heating, and stormwater runoff.
4. 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.
5. 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 and road congestion.
6. Plan land use to locate housing, services, and shopping areas close to one another for improved accessibility.
7. Quantify nonmotorized and transit use in Northfield on a biannual basis.
8. Establish accessibility goals and measure progress. Use the shorter-term strategic planning process and capital improvement program to make progress toward identified goals.
9. Commit to funding and improving options for transit services and other options when a trip requires a vehicle, including ridesharing and car sharing options.
10. Develop and adopt an official map identifying future street and trail connections, parks, and other public infrastructure in accordance with MN Stat. 462.359.

Actions

1. Update or replace the Typical Street Sections, Complete Streets Policy, Safe Routes to School, and other relevant plans to prioritize safety, comfort, and access to destinations for people of all ages, incomes and abilities in accordance with the goals of this plan. Simplifying and consolidating policy documents should be a guiding priority.



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.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Short-term strategic planning sets interim goals and adopts quantifiable metrics to measure progress including measuring fiscal impact, advancing equity, and climate action progress.
2. The city increases overall density, has fewer underutilized properties and a wider range of housing types, connected by multiple transportation options reducing vehicle miles traveled, improving transit, and meeting climate goals.
3. The city supports farmland preservation in surrounding townships, reducing climate impact, encouraging food production, and maintaining Northfield's rural edge.
4. Northfield maximizes the value of existing infrastructure and extends infrastructure in a fiscally responsible and sustainable way by directing 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 consider orderly annexation areas beyond the priority growth areas when other locations have been exhausted.

Actions

1. Use the Future Land Use Map to guide short-term strategic planning efforts.
2. Revise zoning and other regulations to implement this plan:
 - a. Ensure zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development to advance this plan.
 - b. Incentivize infill and intensification in both commercial and residential areas.
 - c. Encourage accessory dwelling units and small-scale multi-family housing in all residential neighborhoods to add more housing in existing neighborhoods, add housing types, and put more people closer to established 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 neighborhoods to advance this plan's goals of greater accessibility, increased housing, and reduced reliance on vehicle trips. Sites where the building to land value ratio is low indicating the site is ripe for redevelopment may offer prime opportunity for these types of uses..
 - 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. 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.
4. Adopt a fiscal impact tool to measure the impact of all large developments to determine if adopted metrics are met. Prioritize developments and initiatives that meet adopted metrics, and incent innovations not previously contemplated that may have the potential to outperform the adopted standard.
5. Seek grants to reduce capital costs of projects while also budgeting for the additional costs of operations and maintenance over the lifecycle of the project.



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.

Guiding values



CREATIVITY



ECONOMY



HOMES



RESILIENCE



MOBILITY



EQUITY



CONNECT

Outcomes

1. City infrastructure, such as roads, water, sewer and stormwater facilities, and tree canopy are of the same quality across the city.
2. 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.

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 out-of-school time programming to fill needs not currently met.
4. Prioritize transportation infrastructure connections between underserved residential neighborhoods and desired destinations such as downtown, educational facilities, highway-oriented job centers.
5. Prioritize affordable transportation and safe access to desired destinations regardless of age, ability, or income.

Strategy 4: Ensure equitable access

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

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. The network designed for people biking, walking, and rolling is complete, safe, and consistent.
2. Highways 3 and 19 have been redesigned to improve residents' freedom to travel by reducing speed, noise, pollution, and adding facilities for safe travel along and across the highways.
3. 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.

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. Continue improving railroad crossings for quiet crossings to improve safety and quality of life in Northfield.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Work with MnDOT to redesign Highway 246 from Jefferson Parkway to County Road 1 to improve pedestrian safety, facilitate safer vehicular access to Bridgewater Elementary and Northfield Middle School and surrounding neighborhoods, and improve the character of Northfield's southern gateway.
9. 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.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. There are clear, safe pathways for people walking, rolling, biking, and driving to access destinations within the city on highly interconnected streets. Programmed road projects will be designed to complete or create a highly connected street network.
2. 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 of all ages and abilities, pedestrian scale lighting, green infrastructure, and shade trees.
3. Pedestrian, nonmotorized, and transit and/or emergency-only access ways are implemented where full street construction may be infeasible or unnecessary, through-traffic may be at odds with the land use context, or motor vehicle access can reasonably be expected to result in nuisance driving behaviors.

Actions

1. Update Chapter 34 of the Legislative Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability. 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 2 prioritizing connections to schools and parks.
 - b. Identify and include appropriate metrics for measuring access in addition to mobility.
 - c. 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 and to simplify and coordinate policy guidance.
 - d. 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 and the variety of facilities creates unnecessary confusion.
 - e. Revise posted speed limits to lower speeds citywide, and update street designs to design for slower speeds.
 - f. 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.
2. Prioritize CIP projects based on transparent process, early community engagement and this plan. When determining facility type and design, focus on improvements that consider land use context, equity, increased accessibility, affordable modes, as well as cost.
 3. Require a highly connected street system with new development and prioritize areas which can be most effectively connected to the existing system. Northfield will revisit its roadway network to ensure new roadways or extensions of existing roadways are highly connected using widely accepted metrics such as intersection density, link node ratio, block density, cul-de-sac density, block length to create multiple route options and better support active transportation.

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.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. The city, as a municipal entity, and its residents and businesses have collectively decreased our greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on non-local energy sources through mitigation strategies.
2. The city has taken action to ensure climate-resilient infrastructure and facilities, employing redundancy where appropriate to reduce the risk of catastrophic failure.
3. The city plans land uses and new development to reduce vehicle miles traveled and non-local inputs, including energy sources.
4. The city has integrated climate action into all capital projects and annual budgeting.
5. The city has robust physical and social infrastructure in place to reduce the risk of and respond quickly to catastrophic events, including natural disasters.

Actions

1. The following strategies and actions of the city's adopted 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP) are incorporated to embed them in city decision-making processes:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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).
 - d. Coordinate with local waste and recycling haulers to offer curbside compost pickup for residents and businesses that will be delivered to a local compostable waste processing facility.
 - e. Use metrics described in the 2019 CAP to establish goals in strategic planning efforts to meet the outcomes in this plan.
2. Encourage the use of energy-efficient mechanical systems and building products and/or the use of building designs and materials that reduce lifecycle carbon and reliance on non-local energy sources in rehabilitation and new construction to decrease building operation costs and impacts on the environment
3. Encourage the use of deconstruction methods over demolition to decrease negative impacts on the environment, where and when possible. Require for City-led and/or financially facilitated projects.
4. Update Chapter 34 of the Code of Ordinances, 2008 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and 2020 Surface Water Management Plan to:
 - a. Require green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and sustainable stormwater



management practices in public and private projects related to stormwater runoff.

- b. Plan and schedule improvements in city rights-of-way to reduce the urban heat island effect and increase resilience to flooding through methods such as shared, stacked-function green infrastructure and planting
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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 (208 volts or greater power) be installed with new developments and public projects. Prioritize locating infrastructure for electric vehicle charging stations at appropriate publicly accessible areas such as in the right-of-way or in parking lots.
 - e. Require designs that facilitate social interaction and build social connection consistent with best practices from organizations such as Happy Cities or Reimagining the Civic Commons.
5. Create a natural asset management plan and blue-green infrastructure plan which includes parks and public rights-of-way.
 6. Strengthen partnerships with groups such as Clean Water Partners, Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board, and educational institutions to measure, evaluate, and enhance the health of the Cannon River.
 7. Maintain response readiness for emergencies related to water supply contamination or interruption and for damage to treatment and distribution infrastructure.
 8. Measure 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 greenhouse gas emissions and prioritize projects which advance city emissions goals.
 9. Analyze and map the city's land surface temperature to establish a baseline heat map for the city.
 10. Manage both above and below ground utilities to improve the health of the tree canopy in public spaces and rights-of-way.
 11. Comprehensively maintain and improve the tree canopy to provide shade, clean air, and stormwater treatment.
 12. Ensure all new buildings meet 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.
 13. Retrofit existing city buildings with energy efficiency upgrades as part of capital improvement scheduling.
 14. Manage flood mitigation at the watershed level with regional partners.
 15. Work with river-adjacent landowners, including Carleton College, Riverpark Mall, Just Foods Co-op, Post Consumer Brands and others to mitigate negative impacts of flooding.
 16. Provide consistent community engagement to identify assets or systems susceptible to critical failure, and where critical failure would have disproportionate community impacts.
 17. Design public facilities and public spaces to foster the development and strengthening of social connections by providing community gathering spaces accessible to people of all ages and abilities.

Dear Northfield, we dream of a town where **WE HAVE A HOME**

"Over the years, Northfield has supported the development of new apartments, town homes ...that claim to offer affordable housing and actually do not. Meanwhile, many Latinos are struggling. Something needs to change."

"My dream? Well, having a house. I have one in Mexico, but here it's very hard you know?"

"I would like to be able to buy a house and no longer live in a trailer. Our trailer is too small for us, but they are very expensive! Maybe they can help us with that."

"I have lived in Northfield 20 years and just bought a house last year. It took a long time to save up. It should not be that difficult for people."



Querido Northfield, soñamos con una ciudad donde **TENEMOS UN HOGAR**

"A lo largo de los años, Northfield ha apoyado el desarrollo de nuevos apartamentos y casas ...que según ofrecen vivienda asequible pero no es así. Mientras tanto, muchos Latinos siguen batallando. Algo necesita cambiar."

"Mi ¿sueño? Bien, tener una casa. Tengo una allá en México pero aquí es muy difícil, ¿sabes?"

"Me gustaría poder comprar casa y ya no vivir en una trilla...es demasiado pequeña para nosotros. Pero, las casas son muy ¡caras! Tal vez nos puedan ayudar con eso."

"Tengo 20 años en Northfield y apenas compre casa el año pasado... Nos tomo un buen de tiempo para poder ahorrar. No debería de ser tan difícil para la gente..."





4 Sustainable Economic Future

Connecting housing and economic security

A sustainable and secure economic future for Northfield and its residents has three components. First, Northfield must have abundant housing to meet the needs of people at all income levels and stages of life. Next the city must develop a more diverse and robust tax base to support the city's needs. Finally, Northfield must ensure these first two components are secure in a changing climate, protect the area's resources, and that 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 been considered separately in past plans. This chapter describes the current housing stock and economic development landscape, then projects future housing needs and priorities for public spending on economic development. The strategies and actions draw on earlier 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 resources.”
- “There is not enough affordable housing in the most walkable areas of the city.”
- “Northfield should develop 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 with 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, refer to the [Engagement Summary](#).



Connecting housing and economic security

A secure and sustainable economic future requires attention to what housing and business activities are supplied by the market and where the market is failing. Public spending should 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.

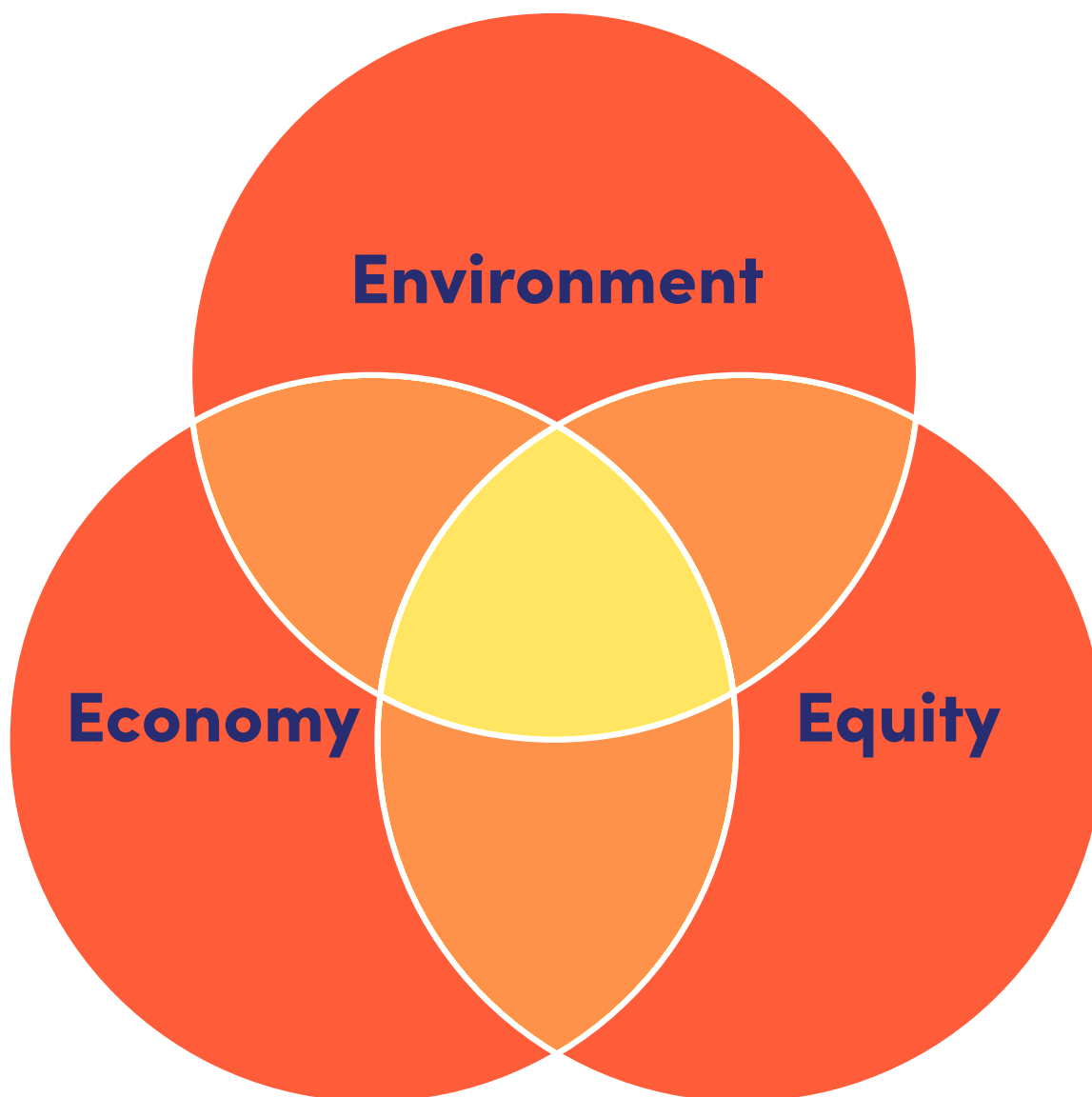
Planning for climate resilience and mitigation, and protecting environmental resources, are also key to this plan. Extreme events such as the 2024 record-breaking flood caused damage to both private and public assets and required repairs and inventory replacement. Planning to manage stormwater, flooding, 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). Northfield is experiencing low rental vacancy rates, rapidly increasing housing prices, and more workers commute into the city than leave to work elsewhere, all indicating a shortage in available housing.



Core principles: economy, environment, and equity

Northfield's economic future depends on both our ability to provide housing for those who work here and employment opportunities paying a living wage. Housing strategies in this chapter focus on providing safe, affordable housing for all residents with a particular emphasis on ensuring housing availability for those who work here. The economic development strategies in this chapter focus on recruiting and retaining businesses to provide the necessary employment opportunities and tax base to help Northfield thrive. All strategies, whether housing or economic development, must hold up to Northfield's triple bottom line—making meaningful progress toward economic, environmental, and equity goals.





Definitions

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

Adaptive reuse

Refurbishing or rehabilitating a building for purposes other than its original use. Adaptive reuse extends building lifespan by updating structures to meet economic, energy, and social needs of the community.

Affordable housing

The general definition of affordability as established by the U.S. 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 development

The process by which the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation, region, or local community, are improved according to targeted goals and objectives.

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. Defined by HUD.



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. Defined by HUD.



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 at initial occupancy 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.

Visit-ability

Housing designed in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people who have trouble with steps or who use wheelchairs or walkers. A home is visitable when it meets three basic requirements: one zero-step entrance; doors with 32 inches of clear passage space; one bathroom accessible in a wheelchair.

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. Generally defined by a funding agency.



Existing conditions

The City of Northfield and community housing and economic development partners invested in professional analyses of its tax base, and housing needs to understand the needs of residents and employers. Maxfield Research conducted an analysis of the housing market, related supply and demand, and the city's future need for different housing types. A community-based project facilitated by Enterprise Community Partners (ECP) and Healthy Community Initiative (HCI) 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 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. Population growth is led by people in the

25- to 45-year-old age groups moving into Northfield.

- **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%.
- **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.
- **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% in 2011 to approximately 10% in 2021. Estimates from the Census Bureau in 2024 suggest that population is now closer to 20% of the total population in the city limits.





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 between \$11 and \$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. An estimated 21% of owner households and 35% of renter householders pay more than 30% of their income for housing in Northfield.
 - Northfield's unemployment rate decreased from 6.5% in 2020 to 2.7% in 2023.
- 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 2024 across 31 multifamily properties (three properties offer both market rate and affordable units).
 - Vacancy rates are very low: Vacancy rates were 0.7% for affordable units and 0.7% for market rate units. A healthy rental market 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:** There are 925 age-restricted 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

Housing supply and demand

- An entry-level single-family home in Northfield could expect to be sold for around \$250,000 in 2024. At this price point, given typical 2025 down payment 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.
- Entry level homes for purchase are few and far between.



Analysis

In addition to the housing market 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 that were 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, and 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 Development Analysis](#).

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 toward residents.
- **Cost by land area/development intensity:** The cost of providing some city services are more correlated with the amount of land developed than the number of people served. These include snow plowing services and street and utility reconstruction. Land intensive and low-density development can be fiscally challenging, especially over the long run.



- **Average cost versus 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 in previously developed locations that have preexisting street and utility infrastructure fiscally beneficial in comparison to development on previously undeveloped land.
- **Climate/environmental impact:** Typically evaluated when adopting and/or implementing long-term visions for climate mitigation and resiliency to address whether, how, and if places are affected by physical development such as buildings and roads.

Infill opportunities

The city has created a future infill map to guide community development investments in three key areas:

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

This map is based on the interventions framework and aims 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, but caution must be taken to protect Heath Creek and other streams to the west. Transportation connections into and out of Northfield still need consideration; Armstrong Road is the only connection and should be planned carefully for infill development to be successful at this site.

Downtown core expansion opportunity

- **Highway 3 between 2nd Street and 3rd Street:** 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 (northeast corner, Highway 3 and Woodley):** The former MnDOT maintenance site is another opportunity to extend downtown and is a key component to making the Riverfront Enhancement and Mill Towns Trail plans work well. Although visually prominent from Highway 3, access to this site is currently difficult; planning to create additional access from 9th Street and Highway 3 as well as Woodley Street is required.



Mixed-use infill opportunity

- **Highway 3 north of Woodley:** Reimagining this stretch of Highway 3 is a high-level goal and high priority. Past plans have emphasized capitalizing on the river with better connections to a high-quality mixed-use environment. Continuing this work is important. Intersection improvements should focus first on 2nd/3rd Street and Highway 3 for safer access from west side residential areas. The second priority should be the Woodley intersection, with particular attention to providing increased access to nearby parcels, redesigning the frontage road at Woodley, and ensuring safe and comfortable connections for the Mill Towns State Trail which crosses this intersection twice.
- **Highway 3 south of Woodley:** This area, including the highway frontage road to the east and the land west of the highway to the river, and between the highway to Jefferson Road is also a priority. This area is bound by Woodley Street to the north, the Cannon River to the west, Jefferson Road to the east, County Road 1 the south. Because Northfield has a bikeway on Heritage/Lincoln/Roosevelt as the only connecting segment south of Jefferson Parkway, this intersection needs high priority attention to connect the trail across the highway.
- **Festler Farm, Division Street:** This is a prominent and relatively large redevelopment site across from the high school will require improvements to access to be successful. The city should begin to plan desired street, bike/walk, and driveway connections to both Division Street/Highway 246 and neighboring residential streets now.



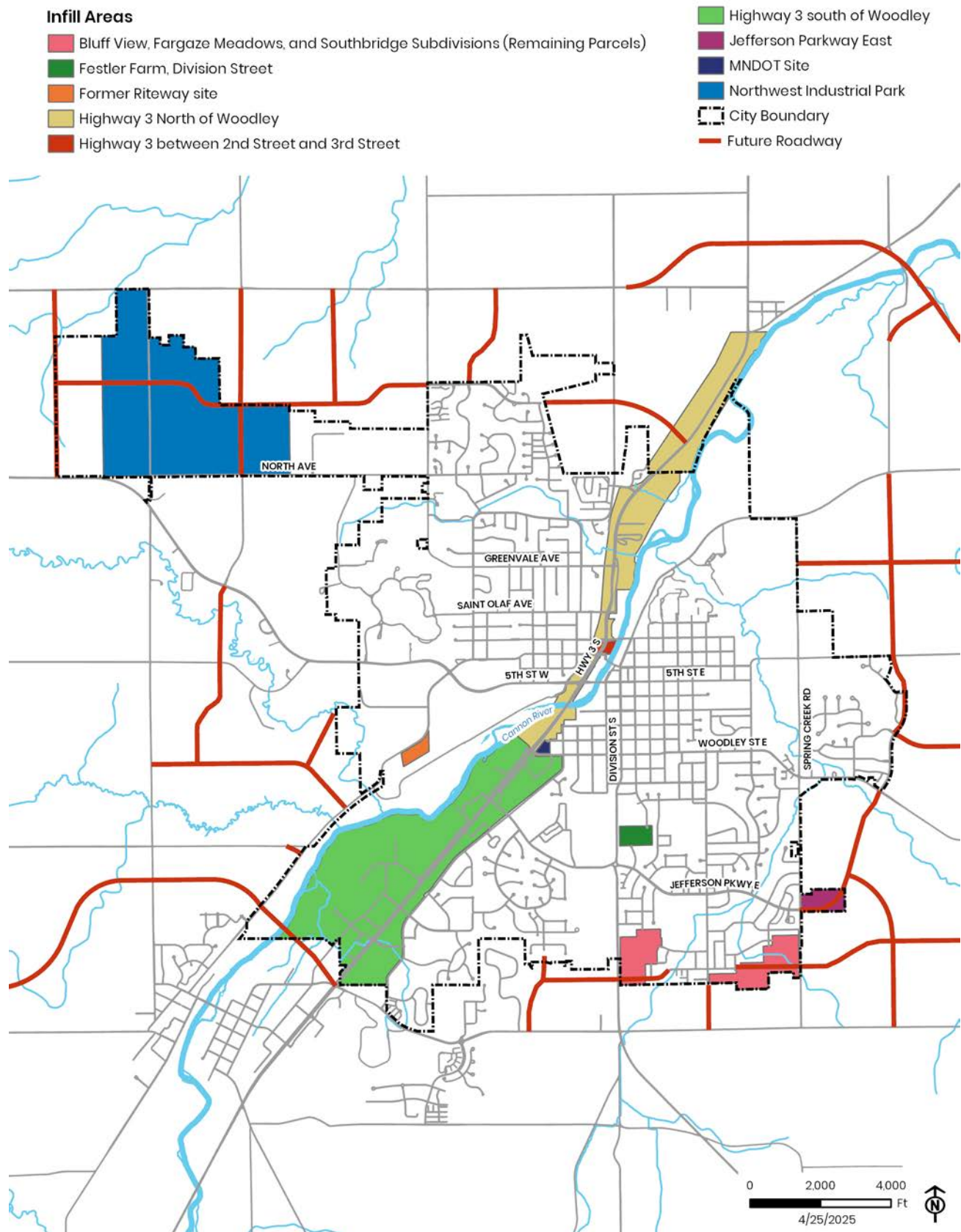
Residential mixed-use infill opportunity

- **Jefferson Parkway East:** The city has planned a water treatment plant in this area. The city should further evaluate the feasibility and cost of serving this area with additional infrastructure before actively pursuing additional commercial or residential development.
- **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.

This area would require new road construction and should prioritize connections to Highway 246 and Ford Street. In 2002 subdivision planning, Ford Street was planned as the only continuous road connection from Spring Creek Road to Division Street/Highway 246. The planned subdivision failed with the 2008 recession, and ensuring this connection continues to be critical for ensuring connectivity for future growth. A regional park, Meadows Park, is planned for the far southeast corner of the community and should be scheduled for construction using the park system capital improvement plan.



Figure 8. Potential 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



CREATIVITY

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.



ECONOMY

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.



HOME

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.



RESILIENCE

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



MOBILITY

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.



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.



CONNECT

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.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Downtown Northfield grows as the river-focused anchor of the city and key component of its sense of place.
2. Downtown is the hub of Northfield's small business community, locus of valuable tax base, a residential neighborhood, a welcoming and accessible public space, and location of city services on the banks of the Cannon River.

Actions

1. Identify opportunities and provide support for improved business mix, marketing, events, and physical improvements.
2. Promote new and rehabilitated housing in and 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. Redesign Highway 3 from Fremouw Avenue to Woodley Street to slow traffic and make it easier to access the Transit Hub, Riverfront, parks, and downtown businesses.
5. Proactively identify, evaluate, and survey historic and cultural resources with the Heritage Preservation Commission to ensure a consistent approach to preservation. Consider local, state, and/or national designation as appropriate, after study.
6. Prioritize adaptive reuse and reinvestment in existing buildings.
7. Consider creating 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.

Guiding values



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.

Actions

1. Identify opportunities to increase the 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, improve river health, and learn from their climate approach.
3. Guide college land-use planning to eliminate surface parking visible to the community and increase access to the Cannon River.
4. Plan development with the colleges to contain it within the set boundary.
5. 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.

Guiding values



CREATIVITY



ECONOMY



HOMES



RESILIENCE



MOBILITY



EQUITY



CONNECT

Outcomes

1. Local small business owners know about and use technical and financial resources available to them.
2. Regulations, policies and programs are designed to make small business development easier.

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.

Guiding values



Outcome

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

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 services for working families in Northfield.



Strategy 5: Diversify Northfield's tax base

Northfield has a sufficiently diverse tax base so that higher value properties carry the greater share of the tax.

Guiding values



CREATIVITY



ECONOMY



HOMES



RESILIENCE



MOBILITY



EQUITY



CONNECT

Outcome

Northfield will intentionally build a more sustainable local economy to maintain and expand city services and infrastructure.

Actions

1. Prioritize development in *Transform* 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. [[Capital Improvement Program](#) and [budget](#)]
2. Pursue intensified infill development and business expansions in highway-oriented commercial areas, particularly on Highway 3 between Woodley Street and County Road 1 to increase density, right-size parking, improve accessibility for nonmotorized travel, and diversify the range of uses.
3. Focus recruitment, retention, and expansion investments that support, complement and enhance the existing retail, commercial, industrial, and service industries. Do so while recognizing that the community's largest local employers are Carleton and St. Olaf colleges, Northfield Hospital and Clinics, and Post Consumer Brands and 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

Northfield grows in a compact pattern that is financially and environmentally sustainable.

Guiding values



Outcome

Northfield's development and redevelopment initiatives focus on projects that increase tax productivity, preserve natural resources, limits negative climate impacts, improves access to jobs and services, and assesses the fiscal impact of the development or redevelopment project.

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 and connectivity, address climate, reduce vehicle trips, and include 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. Require infill developments to complement existing neighborhoods while incrementally intensifying uses, improving connectivity to the rest of the city and allowing innovation and considering market needs, climate impact, economic feasibility and sustainable affordability.



Strategy 7: Maintain Northfield's existing housing stock

Existing housing is safe and healthy.

Guiding values



CREATIVITY



ECONOMY



HOMES



RESILIENCE



MOBILITY



EQUITY



CONNECT

Outcome

All residents in Northfield live in safe and healthy housing.

Actions

1. Develop programs and partnerships to support manufactured home communities and preserve this form of housing.
2. Establish a survey program to evaluate housing conditions citywide and connect owners with resources to improve unsafe conditions.
3. Develop programs in partnership with affordable housing and educational institutions to ensure housing stability in all neighborhoods and communities.
4. 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.
5. Create incentives for landlords to reduce energy costs.
6. 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 by being complementary to existing housing.

Guiding values



Outcome

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 construction and rehabilitation, owner-occupied and rental, single- and multi-family are needed to ensure lifecycle choices.

Actions

1. Prioritize building new housing in walkable areas of the city and guide new development to areas most connected to the existing street system and water infrastructure.
2. Complete and regularly update an analysis of market conditions and regulatory approaches that support the development of affordable housing in Northfield.
3. Adopt an inclusionary housing ordinance that reflects market conditions and offers a flexible approach to support the development of affordable units.
4. Prioritize developing infill sites through direct property acquisition, site preparation for redevelopment, and actively soliciting development proposals targeted to identified needs.
5. Partner with local home builders, employers, financial institutions, and other regional nonprofit 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.
6. Revise and regularly update the Land Development Code to remove barriers and reduce costs to housing and economic development.
7. Include housing needs in strategic planning efforts to ensure that short-term goals meet local market needs and address potential local market failures.
8. Encourage visit-ability to make homes accessible to all residents.
9. Support township and county efforts to build new housing within the Northfield school district.

Strategy 9: Support at-risk sellers, buyers and tenants

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

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Residents can afford to own or rent a home in Northfield and stay in their homes through hardships.
2. Northfield will ensure strong protection for residential tenants.

Actions

1. Partner with local organizations working on housing support, such as Community Action Center, Healthy Community Initiative, Rice County Habitat for Humanity, and Three Rivers Community Action to support first-time homebuyers with education and down payment-related assistance and homeowners at risk of foreclosure.
2. Coordinate with nonprofit partners to ensure municipal, EDA and HRA-leveled funds are used in ways that most closely align with the direction set through the citywide comprehensive and strategic plan documents and offer the greatest return on investment.

3. Pursue mechanisms to enhance and improve the use of Rice County-administered Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) within the Northfield city limits.
4. Build a coalition of partners to create a fund to support replacement of manufactured homes as they reach the end of their useful life and provide temporary relocation support for manufactured home residents when the homes are being repaired or rehabbed.
5. Build a coalition of partners to create, fund, and administer a housing legacy program that capitalizes on the Local Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) and Minnesota State Housing Tax Credit (SHTC) programs. A housing legacy program facilitates the donation or bequest of homes by homeowners wishing to leave a legacy of affordable homeownership for future generations.¹
6. 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 rental properties.

¹ [City of Boulder Colorado - Housing Legacy Program](#)



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.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. All residents in Northfield live in safe and stable housing and neighborhoods.
2. Local housing needs are met at a greater scale than market forces can provide using existing public resources, authorities and community partners.

Actions

1. Revise the zoning code to permit denser development by right in neighborhoods dominated by single-family development.
2. Incentivize energy efficiency in building materials and design, heating/cooling infrastructure, and electrification to reduce lifetime costs of housing.
3. 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.
4. Work to improve sustainability of new and existing housing. All new housing developers are encouraged to construct Net-Zero-ready housing.
5. Continue to provide incentives for landlords and homeowners to reduce energy costs.
6. Use public financial resources to develop the types of housing that are needed and are not being supplied by the market, including through strategic purchase of available property.
7. Develop existing city/housing or economic development authority-owned land to increase the types and range of affordability of housing being built.
8. Explore fee waivers, reductions and other incentives for development that addresses city goals (sustainability, affordability, compact development, etc.).
9. Support housing near necessary goods and services to increase affordable access, reduce the need to drive, and community connectivity.
10. Encourage mixed income neighborhoods, through targeted investment and planning.

Dear Northfield,

WHERE'S THE BUS?

SOME
LATINES DON'T
HAVE A CAR OR A
DRIVER'S LICENSE, AND
RELY ON CARPOOLING
OR THE PUBLIC
TRANSIT SYSTEM.

DRIVER'S LICENSE

AGE
DISABILITY
IMMIGRATION
STATUS AND
LANGUAGE CAN
ALL BE BARRIERS
TO HAVING A
LICENSE.

WE NEED BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

FOR ALL

Let's
GO!

THERE NEED TO BE SPANISH-
SPEAKING BUS DRIVERS FOR ALL
PUBLIC BUS SYSTEMS.



TOO OFTEN,
MISCOMMUNICATION
HAS LED TO LATINES BEING LEFT
STRANDED FOR HOURS.

LATINE FAMILIES ARE ISOLATED FROM
THE REST OF NORTHFIELD. GETTING
KIDS TO SCHOOL, GOING TO DR'S
APPOINTMENTS, AND BUYING
GROCERIES IS A DAILY CHALLENGE.



Querido Northfield, ¿DÓNDE ESTÁ EL AUTOBÚS?

ALGUNOS
LATINOS NO
TIENEN COCHE O
LICENCIA Y
DEPENDEN DE RIDES
O EL SISTEMA DE
TRANSPORTE
PÚBLICO.

DRIVER'S LICENSE

EDAD
ESTATUS
MIGRATORIO
DISCAPACIDAD
Y EL IDIOMA,
TODOS PUEDEN
SER BARRERAS
PARA OBTENER
UNA LICENCIA.

NECESITAMOS UN MEJOR TRANSPORTE PÚBLICO



NECESITAN HABER CONDUCTORES DE
AUTOBUSES QUE HABLEN ESPAÑOL PARA
TODOS LOS SISTEMAS DE
TRANSPORTE PÚBLICO.



MUY SEGUIDO, LA
FALTA DE COMUNICACIÓN HA DEJADO A
LATINOS TIRADOS POR HORAS.

LAS FAMILIAS LATINAS ESTÁN
AISLADAS DEL RESTO DE NORTHFIELD.
LLEVAR A LOS NIÑOS A LA ESCUELA,
IR A CITAS MEDICAS Y COMPRAR
MANDADO ES UN DESAFÍO DIARIO.



5 Resilient Infrastructure

Connecting essential municipal services with sustainability

The planning, construction, operation, and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities is a core municipal function and where the city can most directly implement many goals of this plan.

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 including streets, trails, and infrastructure contained in street rights-of-way such as street lighting and boulevard trees. Actions are recommended for traditional, gray infrastructure as well as adding blue-green infrastructure and natural assets.

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

Northfield's 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. Public works projects must be informed by the broader planning and development work in the Community Development Department, environmental quality and climate action work, and leverage the expertise and community connections of public engagement and communications staff, as well as the Arts and Culture Commission.

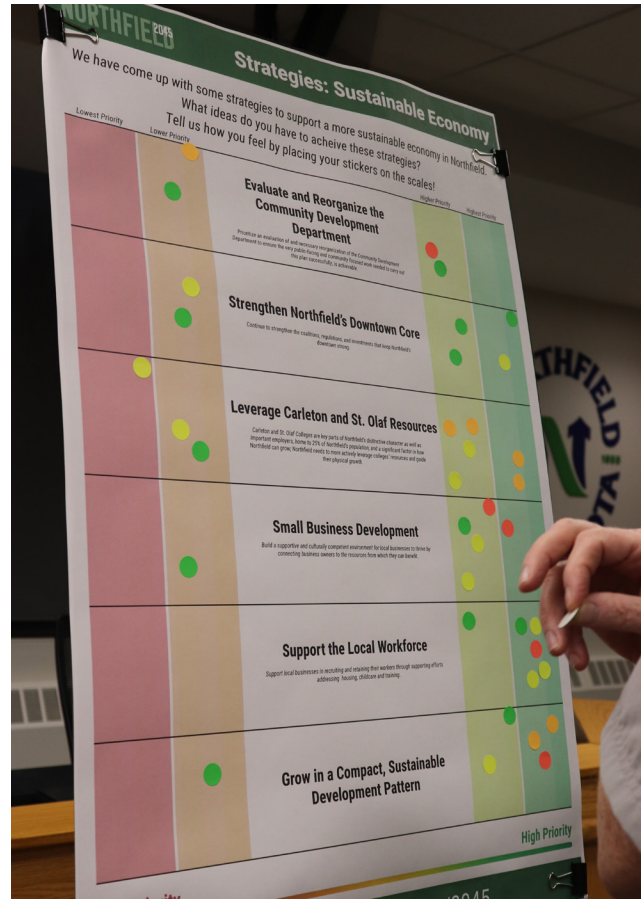
In 2017, the City of Northfield established the Art in Public Places policy. This policy commits 1% of the project construction cost of city capital improvement projects to be used for the cost of public art. As the city's Arts and Culture Commission mission statement says, "Northfield is a community which values, integrates, and engages in arts and cultural experiences—in all their diversity—throughout the fabric of civic life." In Northfield, the arts are valued and promoted for their economic benefits and development potential, especially in the downtown area. And works of art and cultural experiences are a valuable component of welcoming new cultural and ethnic groups to Northfield and developing shared approaches to Northfield's identity as an inclusive and welcoming place to live, work, learn, and play.



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, improving the tree canopy, wetland protection and sufficient green spaces (active and passive) are important for the ecosystem, mitigating the effects of climate change, making the community feel more welcoming, and offering outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Artwork and artistic components of city-led projects are a vital part of Northfield life and the economic sustainability of the robust art and artistic community.

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



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 maintenance and replacement of these 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.

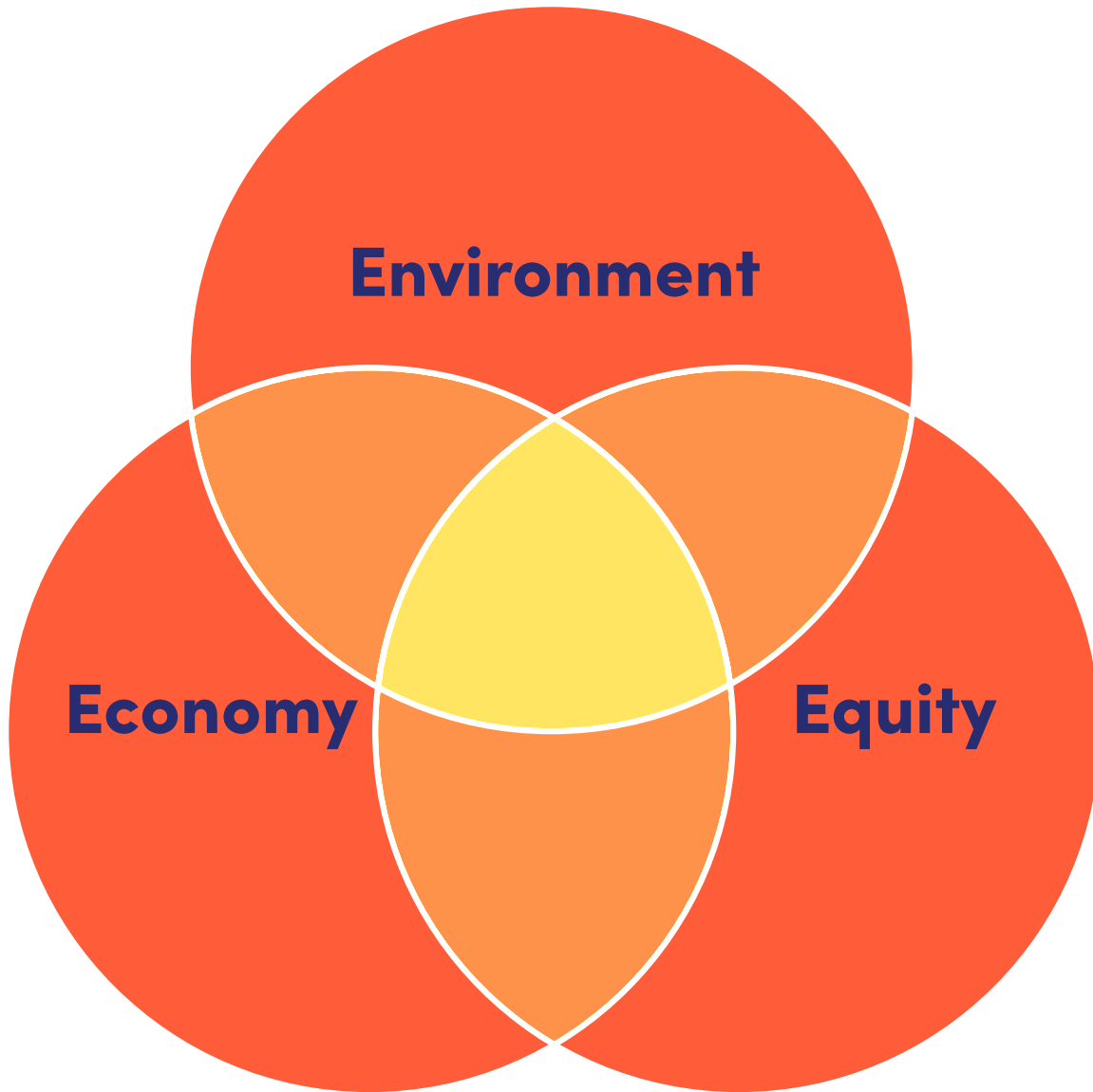
This plan directs the city to design infrastructure projects to help Northfield reach its climate goals. This includes both locating infrastructure extensions responsibly as well as evaluating current infrastructure for climate vulnerabilities such as localized flooding, extreme heat and heat-island effects, and planning upgrades which can withstand more flooding, and other extreme weather. Modeling infrastructure for more extreme weather, such as 500- or 1,000-year floods, is one way to plan for resilience.

From an equity standpoint, infrastructure for safe drinking water, healthy sanitation, and excellent connectivity at reasonable cost—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





Definitions

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

1% for the Arts

A program or policy in which 1% of all capital improvement projects (for example, road work) must set 1% of their budget aside for public art. In Northfield, the Arts and Culture Commission oversees the design and implementation of that public art.

Best management practices (BMPs)

Methods that local governments may use to manage and protect the environment. These practices help reduce pollution, improve water quality, and increase resiliency with climate change. BMPs are used to deal with issues like stormwater runoff, waste, and how land is developed.

Blue-green infrastructure (BGI)

Blue-green infrastructure as a stormwater management strategy relies on networks of natural and designed components, like bodies of water (blue) and fields, marshes, forests, etc. (green). Other examples can include green roofs, retention ponds, and rain gardens. Blue-green infrastructure is increasingly seen by municipalities globally as an effective way to manage flood risk while simultaneously improving the public realm.

Gray infrastructure

Gray infrastructure is a stormwater management strategy that is human engineered, often including treatment facilities, sewer systems, sanitary sewers, and storage basins. During a storm, gray infrastructure redirects water from all sorts of locations through underground pipes to storage basins and water reclamation facilities. There, those systems remove pollutants and toxins from the water so it can be redistributed into the environment.

Low-impact development (LID)

A stormwater management strategy that controls rainwater where it falls, reducing the need for large, expensive systems. This includes specific site plan designs and small-scale interventions, including rainwater harvesting, natural systems of filtration, and evapotranspiration (when water evaporates into the air from bodies of water and plants).

Natural asset management

The practice of protecting and managing natural resources, like wetlands and forests, to ensure they continue providing vital services for the health, wellbeing, and long-term sustainability of a community. Rather than relying on gray infrastructure (like stormwater treatment facilities and storm drains), natural asset management focuses on using blue-green infrastructure (like natural landscapes and water systems) to provide services, including drinking water, regulating the climate, reducing flood risks, and offering recreational and cultural benefits that enhance the quality of life in a community.



Organic waste

Refers to materials made from plant and animal matter that are discarded as garbage. While it often refers to food waste, it also includes yard waste, paper, wood, certain fabrics, sewage, and manure. In both the U.S. and around the world, organic waste makes up about three-quarters of all waste. Organic waste, when properly composted, can be recycled into nutrient rich soil for gardens and farms, reducing waste and supporting healthier ecosystems.

PFAS

An acronym for “Per- and polyFluoroAlkyl Substances” and commonly referred to as ‘forever chemicals.’ This generic term refers to thousands of chemicals that are widely used across consumer, commercial, and industrial products. PFAS can be found by examining water, air, fish, soil, animals and humans across the globe. PFAS are being studied by several scientific bodies, and findings demonstrate that exposure to some PFAS is linked to harmful effects in humans and animals.

Public art

Public art includes murals, sculptures, paintings, and even public performances. It can also describe intentional designs on public features like street signs, streetlamps, playgrounds, and buildings. Public art is intended to represent and speak to the community that accesses it and is often designed by people from the place in which it is featured.

Sanitary sewer

A wastewater management feature that collects and transport wastewater to treatment facilities. This includes sewer pipes and transfer and lift stations.

Solid waste

Describes most of the things we throw away or discard. This includes everyday household trash, industrial waste from factories, food scraps, construction debris, hazardous waste like lightbulbs and batteries, electronic waste like televisions and computers, and agricultural waste. Solid waste includes things we recycle, compost, incinerate, treat, or send to landfill.

Stormwater management

The practice of controlling and treating stormwater runoff from rain and snow. This includes planning, maintaining, and regulating stormwater systems. The goal is to reduce flooding, protect water quality, and create more resilient communities. There are many approaches to stormwater management, including using gray and blue-green infrastructure, deploying low impact development, and encouraging best management practices.

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

In Chapter 3, this plan guides the city to think of streets as valuable, multimodal public space to connect people safely, manage stormwater, and serve the city’s larger goals. Discussion of the kinds of connections and types of facilities is found in that chapter. In this chapter, the focus is on how Northfield develops, maintains and improves the street network to achieve these outcomes.

Maintenance and deferred maintenance

Northfield typically spends an average of \$3 million annually on street maintenance from crack filling to reconstruction; this is a debt-financed capital expense. Over the last three decades, this number has fluctuated between less than \$1 million and more than \$5 million. The city employs a pavement management program to extend the life of its streets, maintain reasonable pavement quality, and manage costs. A robust pavement management program can reduce the cost of maintaining a road by almost 30% over a 60-year period.

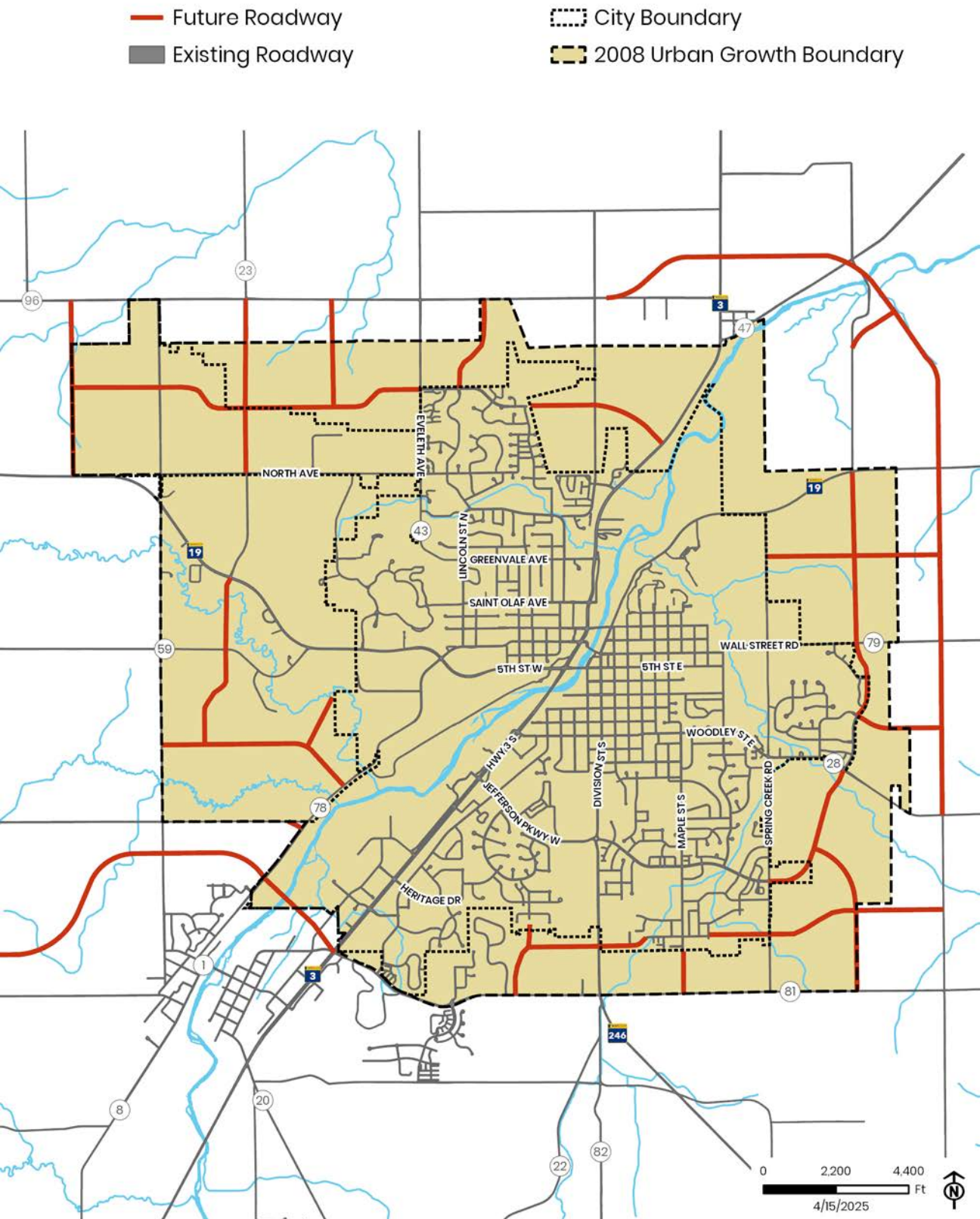
The cost of street maintenance is considerable and at times the city has reduced maintenance to fill short-term budget gaps. Unfortunately, deferring needed maintenance simply allows more streets to deteriorate and increases the need for maintenance in subsequent years. This plan’s foundation in a sustainable economy calls for the city to develop a schedule to address deferred maintenance concerns over time.

Rightsizing streets

Over the last 50 years, the trend was to build wider streets. While easy to drive, these designs encourage speeding, discourage or prevent walking and biking, contribute to the urban heat island effect and create more stormwater runoff. They also cost more because of the additional width and more lane miles to serve a more dispersed community. Part of the answer to maintaining Northfield streets is to consider what roadways can be narrowed, how right-of-way can add more low impact travel modes and building stormwater infiltration into the street corridors.



Figure 10. Roadway system





Climate and trees

Trees are an important part of maintaining street corridors and Northfield's Climate Action Plan and this plan asks the city to develop measurable goals for improving the health of the existing tree canopy and increasing its density in strategic ways.

For example, managing underground and overhead utilities for the health of trees is an important goal. Overhead utility wires have required extensive pruning of street trees to avoid encroachment on wires. The result is not only unsightly, but damages trees, limits their ability to shade pavement and help manage stormwater. Digging and placing underground utilities often entails drastically cutting tree roots, often resulting in the death of trees.

Mapping the tree canopy as a system to evaluate how to improve it is part of blue-green infrastructure planning which this plan calls for. Further, trees are an equity issue. Research has shown a denser tree canopy contributes to higher property values; conversely, lower income neighborhoods tend to have fewer trees than more affluent areas.

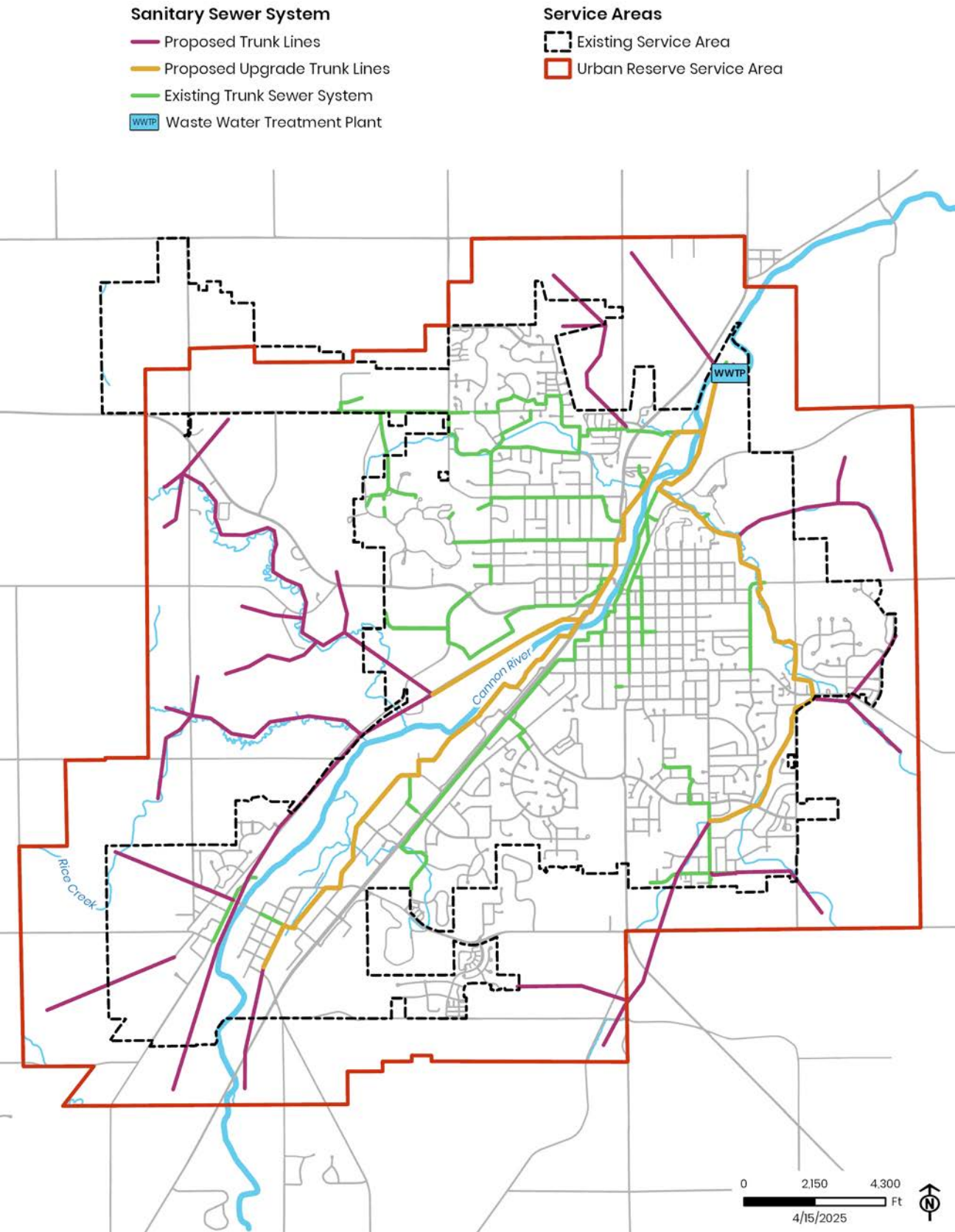
Northfield has done significant work to develop a preferred tree list, require replacement of trees removed for development, and worked to manage invasive species. In 2025, the spread of the emerald ash borer is forcing the city to remove mature ash trees from public right-of-way and other public land. Planning to replace these trees is a top priority.

Equity and affordability

How streets are designed and maintained can help or hinder people with disabilities and deter use of affordable transportation like walking and biking. Northfield has an ADA compliance plan which should prioritize projects to add curb ramps, safer crossings, and remove barriers. Adding sidewalks, trails and bike lanes builds in affordability as a cost which is a small fraction of the total street improvement budget. Street and sidewalk condition, not just design, is significant for people using mobility aids, older adults, and people riding bikes, skateboards or other devices with small wheels. Car and trucks can roll over many pavement flaws with no difficulty, but the same small cracks or rough pavement can cause more significant falls and crashes for people outside vehicles.



Figure 11. Map of sanitary sewer system





Wastewater

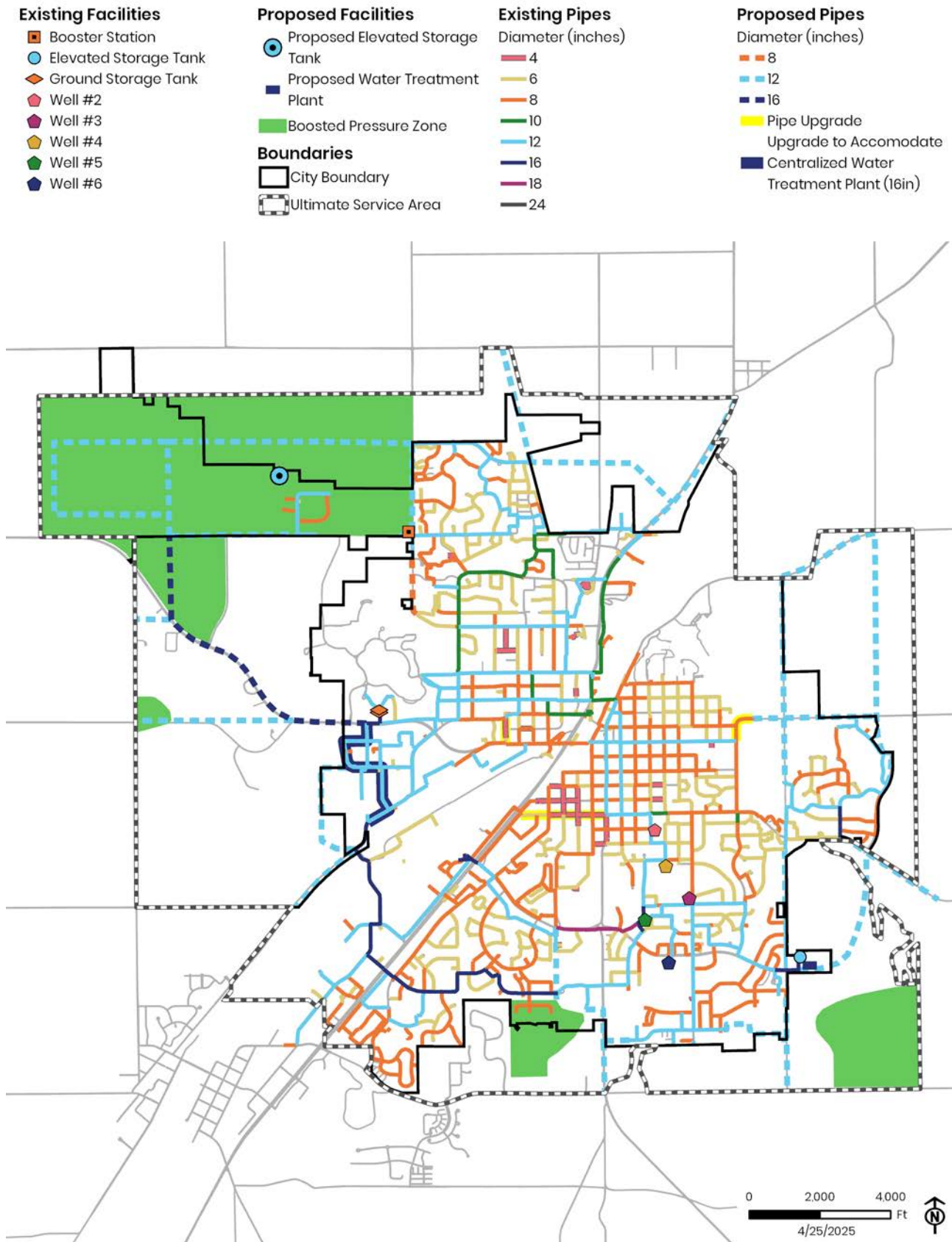
Wastewater infrastructure includes sanitary sewer lines and the wastewater treatment plant which treats wastewater from both Northfield and Dundas. Wastewater treatment capacity is one limiting factor for development; current capacity is sufficient to support a population of approximately 30,000. Generally, 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 northwest 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 12. Water distribution system





Drinking water

Distribution System

The current public drinking water supply system includes six deep wells (five 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.

Supply and treatment

Northfield's water supply comes from five wells drawing from the Jordan-St. Lawrence, Jordan and Jordan-Prairie-du-Chien aquifers. These wells are normally in operation and are 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.

Northfield's wells are considered vulnerable by the Minnesota Department of Health source water assessment. "Vulnerable" describes how easily both water and pollution can move from the land surface into groundwater, rivers or lakes used for drinking water supplies. Northfield's aquifers could be vulnerable if the local geology lacks protective layers between the ground surface and the drinking water aquifer. Scientists at Minnesota Department of Health designate areas that need special protection because human activities inside these boundaries could easily harm the water

quality in these sources of drinking water.¹ Northfield has a wellhead protection plan to address possible contamination near wells and issues an annual water quality report as mandated by the state of Minnesota.²

Construction of a water treatment plant has been recommended to the city by Minnesota Department of Health to reduce manganese. Initial planning for a water treatment plant is a specific response to address levels of manganese in the drinking water supply. Three of five wells have a consistent level of manganese exceeding Minnesota Department of Health guidelines for a safe level for infants under one year old. An additional potential benefit of a water treatment plant would be the reduction in per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) or "forever chemicals," and water hardness.

Additionally, it is a component of municipal authority to ensure Northfield's drinking water is also safe. The city has designed a water treatment plant, however, due to costs, in early 2025 the City Council elected not to move forward with the project. The water treatment plant will be planned for future construction.

Many of Minnesota's aquifers are known to have higher-than-advised levels of PFAS which do not break down in the environment. PFAS are a class of human-made chemicals that have been widely used for decades. Long-term exposure to PFAS in even small amounts can affect human health. The current level of forever chemicals in Northfield's drinking water is below EPA guidance that requires treatment. Northfield should evaluate and plan water system improvements holistically to address both specific chemicals like manganese as well as climate resilience, future growth, and treating PFAS and other contaminants as identified.

¹ [Minnesota Department of Health Source Water Assessment](#)

² [Northfield Drinking Water Report](#)



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.

As of 2021, Rice County estimated the county landfill would reach capacity within 15-20 years at anticipated waste volumes or about the lifespan of this plan. When current landfill capacity is reached, Rice County will need to seek out other disposal options which will likely be economically challenging. Reducing solid waste sent to the landfill should be a high priority to extend the life of that facility as well as divert materials which can be reused, composted or recycled.¹

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 which also helps extend the lifespan of 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.

Northfield also has single stream curbside recycling for paper, glass, some plastic, and some metals as well as a yard waste pick up service and a city yard waste drop off site. Rice County accepts small quantities of hazardous waste (yard chemicals, paint, etc.), appliances, electronics at its recycling center.

Northfield also works to keep prescription medications out of the water and waste systems by providing a "Take it to the Box" program where residents can drop off unused medications at the Northfield Police Department at any time.

¹ [Rice County Solid Waste Plan](#)



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 current and planned land use, infrastructure design, and our understanding of climate change. The water treatment plant would extend the distribution system by pumping all water to the treatment plant and then distributing water across the city. A new elevated storage tank is scheduled for construction when prompted by development in the northwest area of the city. The importance of ensuring the system is resilient to climate hazards and using the most sustainable methods possible has become critically important. The health of the aquifers from which we draw water is another consideration.

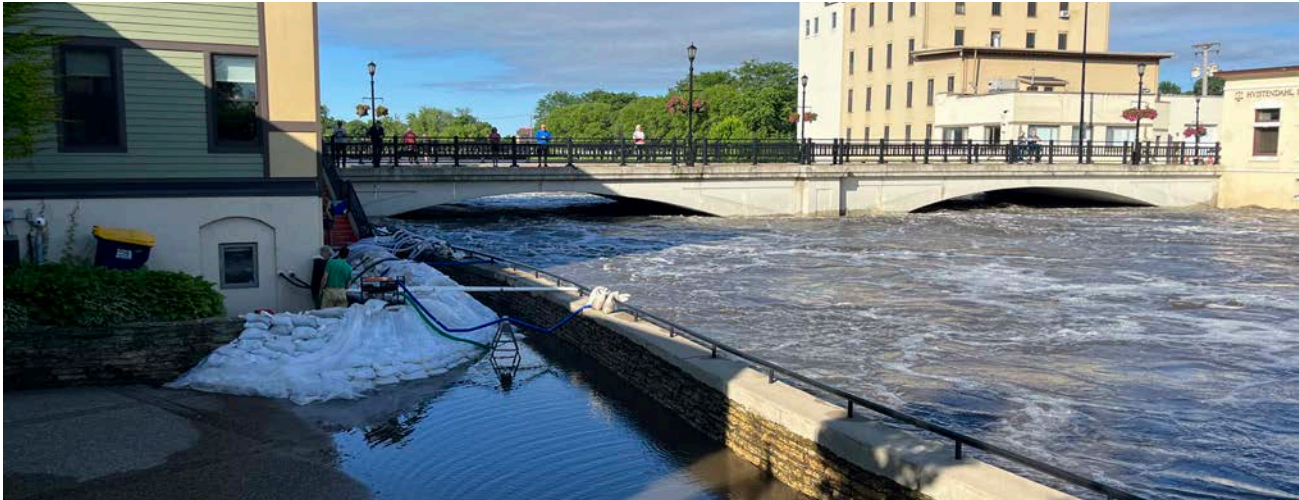
The 2008 Comprehensive Plan began planning for more compact development to intensify land use to increase density, increase tax value, create more walkable/bikeable places, preserve open space and habitat, and maximize use of existing infrastructure first. This plan sharpens that focus. As a result, 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 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 planting 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 five 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) has sketched plans for parks adjacent to the river. Planning for developing the riverfront as a regional park also embeds parks 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 allow 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. In 2024, the Northfield 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.



Tax productivity and development pattern

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 northwest 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 northwest 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. Similarly, the [Economic Development Analysis](#) by VisibleCity and Stantec identifies infill opportunities for tax base diversification throughout the city.

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



Other infrastructure

Broadband

Reliable, high-speed broadband infrastructure is essential for Northfield's economic growth, education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. The city recognizes its role in promoting equitable access to broadband services, including internet, television, and telecommunications, to ensure all residents and businesses—regardless of location or income—can stay connected. Northfield is committed to supporting public and private investment in fiber-optic networks, working with providers to expand service coverage, and prioritizing the installation of conduit or fiber during road construction projects to reduce future costs and improve access. Strengthening broadband infrastructure will also support smart city initiatives, remote work opportunities, and digital inclusion efforts, ensuring that all community members can participate in an increasingly connected world.

Northfield provides free internet in the downtown area as well as public facilities like the library and Northfield Community Resource Center (NCRC) which levels the playing field for those who cannot afford subscription prices as well as convenience for any resident in these facilities or areas.

Renewable energy generation

In an effort to address renewable energy generation, the City of Northfield has participated in Xcel's Partners in Energy program to develop its Climate Action Plan. By working with the entities that supply our energy, we can leverage the knowledge and expertise of people and entities best equipped to address energy efficiency within our community. Simultaneously, we recognize that a for-profit organization that sells us power is incentivized to promote actions that increase our energy consumption and are acutely aware of the rebound effect of energy efficiency – that is, when energy use becomes more efficient, consumers use more energy often negating most or all efficiency gains. Because we all benefit from a safe, reliable energy delivery system, the City will continue



to work with Xcel, and the Center for Energy and the Environment to pursue best practices in energy use reduction and actively strive to employ strategies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We understand that efficiency gains have in some cases improved to the point where applying them to individual buildings does not adequately take advantage of these technologies. For instance, advances in geothermal technologies can now provide heating and cooling to multiple structures from a single well. Conversely, some buildings and uses generate waste heat that their neighbors could put to productive use, but because these buildings are isolated from one another, both are forced to use energy, increasing GHG emissions and costs. The City can serve as a valued partner in such instances, working to implement district energy improvements that make better use technology and energy use patterns.

Strategies and actions

Guiding values overview



CREATIVITY

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.



ECONOMY

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.



HOME

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.



RESILIENCE

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



MOBILITY

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.



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.



CONNECT

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: Implement blue- green infrastructure planning and natural asset management

Northfield integrates blue-green infrastructure and other natural asset management into land use planning, capital improvements, and infrastructure decisions.

Guiding values



Outcome

1. Northfield integrates blue-green infrastructure into land use planning, capital improvements, and infrastructure decisions.
2. 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.
3. Northfield establishes a timeline and interim goals to implement the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan, Meadows Park plan, 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.

Actions

1. Require planting native 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 Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan, Greenways Corridor plan, and integrated blue-green infrastructure plan.
4. Work with Xcel Energy and other utilities to strategically bury power lines to eliminate aggressive tree trimming 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.
7. 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 2: Plan water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure to be resilient

Everyone in Northfield has sufficient access to and use of clean drinking water and all storm water and wastewater infrastructure is sound.

Guiding values



CREATIVITY



ECONOMY



HOMES



RESILIENCE



MOBILITY



EQUITY



CONNECT

Outcome

1. Northfield water, wastewater, and stormwater systems are planned and built to withstand extreme weather and improve climate resilience.
2. Water and wastewater capacity are used as key metrics for assessing development projects and planning growth.

Actions

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 1,000-year events.
2. Evaluate existing drinking water and wastewater systems for capacity concerns and direct investment to those areas with the greatest capacity for expansion for the lowest capital outlay.
3. Assess water, wastewater and stormwater systems for any critical failure points and the likely impact on the community and transportation, plan needed improvements.
4. Inventory the city's existing tree canopy, landscaping practices, wetland restoration, river and stream buffers, and opportunities for improvement.
5. Determine locations for regional stormwater management prior to development and build around those locations.



Strategy 3: Plan streets for safety and stormwater management

Streets are designed to serve as part of the stormwater management system.

Guiding values



Outcome

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

Actions

1. Adopt a street use hierarchy that prioritizes the safety needs of people walking, biking, rolling, and using transit.
2. Adopt revised street types in the zoning code to apply to all planned and future street projects 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.
3. Consider adopting overlay plans as part of a redesign of the zoning code to sharpen the street type guidance for critical areas, which guide special attention to tree canopy, school access, or equity concerns.
4. Plan demonstration projects or project areas to test ideas and educate the community about allocating space for all users and green infrastructure.
5. Aggressively seek funding to reduce initial capital costs of improvements while ensuring revenue for ongoing maintenance and replacement.
6. Review, map, and prioritize for reinvestment in those areas of the city where infrastructure may have seen less investment and then work to improve these areas.



Strategy 4: Provide sufficient broadband services to the community

Broadband services, including internet, television, and telecommunications both ensure all residents and businesses can stay connected and are resilient to climate impacts.

Actions

1. Support public and private investment in fiber-optic networks, working with providers to expand service coverage, and prioritizing the installation of conduit or fiber during road construction projects to reduce future costs and improve access.
2. Bury broadband lines to help maintain the tree canopy and avoid potential damage.

Guiding values



Outcome

All residents and businesses—regardless of location or income—can stay connected and the infrastructure is protected.



Strategy 5: Reduce solid waste through diversion, recycling, and reuse

Northfield will be a zero-waste community.

Guiding values



Outcomes

1. Northfield has robust policies and procedures in place to reduce the quantity of solid waste that is sent to the Rice County landfill.
2. All organic materials are diverted from the waste stream through a community-wide curbside compost collection system available to all property owners and renters.

Actions

1. Decrease total per capita municipal solid waste handled 30% by 2030.
2. Achieve 70% organics landfill waste diversion by 2030.
3. Increase diversion of potential recoverables by 15% by 2030.
4. Increase recycling from 32% to 35% of total municipal solid waste handled by 2030.
5. Consider establishing a “deconstruction” program for municipal demolition projects.
6. Conduct a citywide study to identify large contributors of solid waste and develop a plan to address waste reduction.
7. Explore a municipal/citywide organics collection program.
8. Work with county and other partners to establish reuse and recycling of building materials.
9. Offer grants, loans, other financial incentives to support business development that reduces solid waste generation and/or increases repurposing or reuse.
10. Actively recruit complementary businesses, especially industrial users, that effectively use/reuse waste products from existing businesses.
11. Explore low- and zero-waste provisions in sustainable building policies.

Dear Northfield, we dream of a town where
OUR CULTURE IS SEEN



"I would like there to be more entertainment for our people like music, comedy. Many Hispanics go to Minneapolis because there is not much to do here. One gets bored."

"It would be cool to see more murals like the ones in Chicago. Art that represents our Latino community."



"A Latino museum or cultural center would be very nice in Northfield. A place where we can share and learn from other cultures and the people who live here."

Querido Northfield, soñamos con una ciudad donde
NUESTRA CULTURA ES VISTA



"Me gustaria que hubiera más entretenimiento para nuestra gente como musica, comedia. Muchos Hispanos van a Minneapolis porque aqui no hay mucho que hacer. Uno se aburre."

"Seria genial ver más murales como los de Chicago. Arte que representa a nuestra comunidad Latina."



"Un museo o centro cultural Latino seria muy bueno en Northfield. Un lugar donde podemos compartir y aprender de otras culturas y de las personas que viven aqui."



6 Implementation

Connecting actions and goals
to achieve outcomes

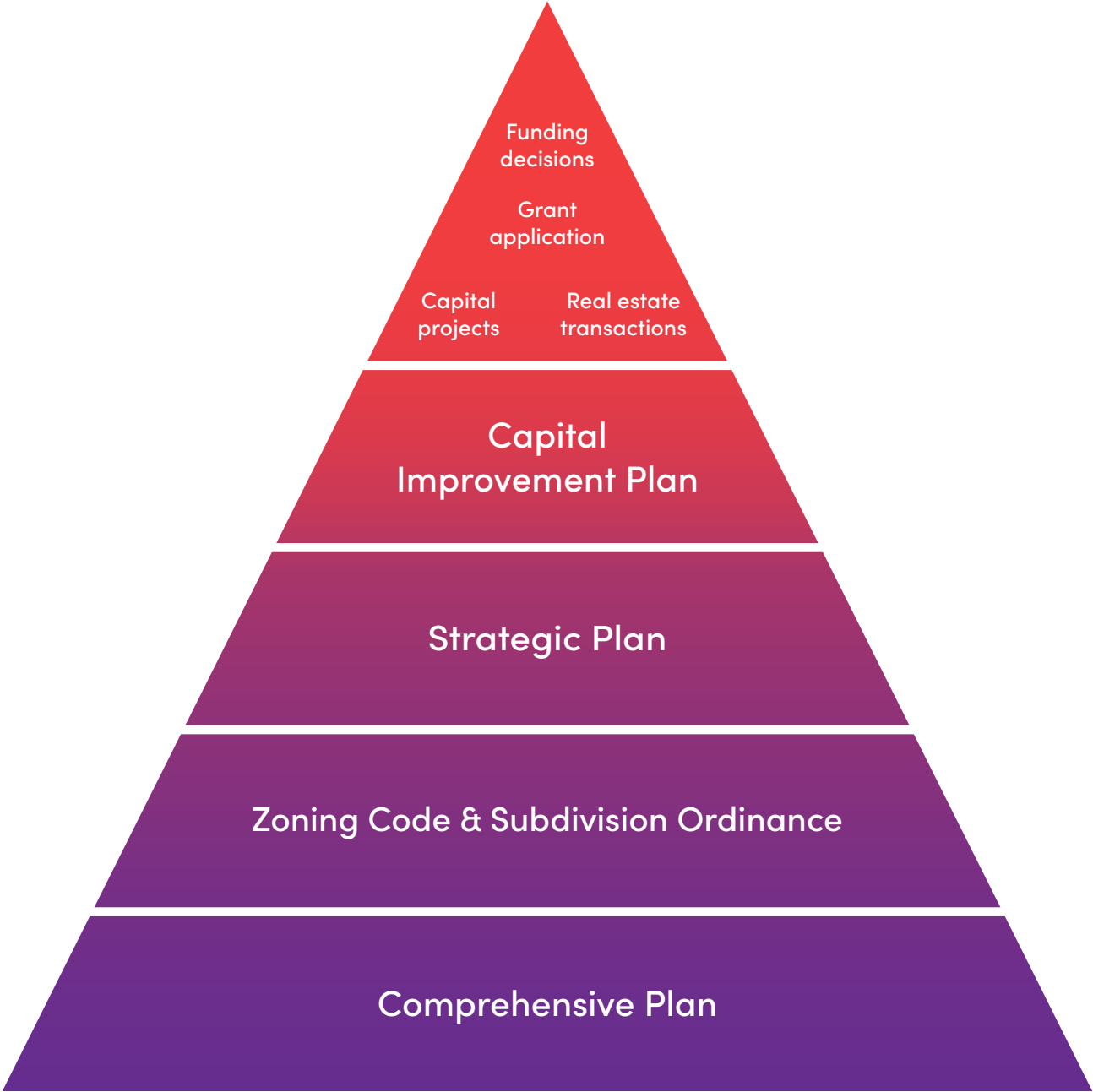


Connections to guiding values

Guiding city planning, budgeting and decision-making

At its core, the Northfield 2045 Comprehensive Plan sets policy directions for decisions made day-to-day by the City Council, Planning Commission, other boards and commissions, and municipal staff. The plan itself does not have regulatory authority but is 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 13. Successful implementation of this plan requires the City Council to include its recommendations in its capital planning and budgeting to allocate the resources needed to realize the outcomes in this plan.

Figure 13. Hierarchy of plans





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 nonprofits 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.



Connections to other plans

A comprehensive plan functions as an umbrella document under which more specialized plans fit. Northfield has produced 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 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.

For coherence and efficiency, policies should be revised then consolidated in fewer but more actionable plans to aid city staff, council members, board and commission members, consultants, external funders, and the public in understanding city priorities and recommended actions. For example, transportation projects are currently subject to the Complete Streets Policy, Safe Routes to School Policy, Transportation Plan, Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 34 of the municipal code of ordinances, and Climate Action Plan. Providing more concise guidance will help Northfield achieve the goals of this plan and others.

Where possible, plans are scheduled to be superseded by updates to higher level plans. Complete streets concepts, for example, should be part of the Transportation Plan rather than a standalone policy.

Technological, scientific, and research-based changes over time will more likely than not lead to the need to adapt and amend this plan. Work planning and strategic planning efforts must include the regular evaluation of current data and developments in both practical and policy-based approaches to urban infrastructure, civil engineering, and civic enterprises to ensure appointed and elected officials and the plan are incorporating best-practices and innovations, as appropriate.

Implementation actions

Implementation actions are presented in the following pages in three tables.

The first table presents the titles of existing plan documents upon adoption of this plan in the first column with supporting information provided in the subsequent columns, as described below:

Purpose	The document’s intended or stated purpose
Key policies or ideas	Highlights the primary policy ideas established in or by the plan document and any relevant outcomes since its adoption
Year	Year adopted
Status	Identified how—if at all—the policies and provisions of the plan are incorporated in Northfield 2045 and why/why not.
Notes	Includes relevant background or contextual information for institutional memory



Land use

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Downtown Streetscape Framework	Specific improvements to reinforce identity and improve image, function and livability of downtown.	• Thoughtful analysis of downtown areas • Coordinated wayfinding and signage • Flexible palette of design elements • Recommendations to add stormwater infiltration along Division Street • String of Pearls: Linking downtown focal points and highlights with design elements and public art	2006	Replaced	• Many improvements completed (Library corner, e.g.) • Some aspects replaced by Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan • Consider whether to retain streetscape palette • Retain for reference
Comprehensive Plan	Long-range plans for managing the growth of the community and foundation for policies and regulations	• Explicit emphasis on compact development prioritizing infill, redevelopment before greenfield projects • Rejects continuing suburban development of early 2000s • Stronger policy on walking/biking • Traditional neighborhood design	2008	Replaced	-
Gateway Corridor Improvements Plan	Recommendations to improve entrances to the city along major corridors	-	2012	Replaced	• Retain for reference and design ideas



Environment and climate

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Natural Resources Inventory	Assessment of remaining significant natural and open space areas to guide protection and management.	- Detailed assessment of plant, animal, water, and soil resources - Basis for Greenway Corridor system plan	2005	Partially incorporated	Update any areas which have been developed or undergone significant change (e.g. Kraewood property)
Greenway Corridor System Plan	Regional plan for connected system of protected natural areas and cultural resources accessible for human use	- System protects, preserves and connects natural areas and open spaces - Prioritizes high quality resources for protection and restoration. - Corridor system is one of the community's basic infrastructure systems and part of its comprehensive transportation network.	2006	Incorporated	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 (CAP)	Strategic guide to addressing climate change in the city.	- Commits the City of Northfield to using 100% carbon-free electricity by 2030 and being a 100% carbon-free community by 2040. - Includes strategies to enhance the resilience of the community through cultivating and supporting a resilient population, forward-looking storm water management and infrastructure planning, 21st century electric grid updates, and supporting local food efforts.	2019	Partially incorporated	- Review CAP and update Northfield 2045 in near future with outcomes, strategies and actions. - CAP has extensive information about education and programming, but only scattered recommendations for land use and infrastructure which are actionable.



Economic development

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Comprehensive Economic Development Plan	Guide for economic development in response to overdevelopment of residential uses	• Asset-based approach to maximize existing advantages • Increasing availability of commercial land, • Leveraging Cannon River and sense of place • Aggressive business recruitment.	2006	Replaced	Retain for reference
Northfield Strategic Plan	Three-year strategic action plan set by City Council. Component of implementing the policies and goals set forth in this and subsequent 10-year long-range comprehensive planning efforts.	• Establishes goals and measures for Council priorities. • Guides work programs for departments.	-	Updated every 3 years	• Provides mechanism for evaluating shorter term successes associated with Northfield 2045 vision. • Provides mechanism for addressing new or emerging community needs that may be time-sensitive or not anticipated by Northfield 2045.



Utilities

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Comprehensive Water Plan	Plan analyzing existing water distribution system and recommending improvements to address growth and expansion	-	2006	Update within 3 years	Update to reflect changed land use assumptions, development which has occurred and incorporate climate action priorities
Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan	Plan analyzing sanitary sewer collection and treatment systems in Northfield and Dundas.	-	2007	Update within 3 years	Update to reflect changed land use assumptions, development which has occurred and incorporate climate action priorities
Surface Water Management Plan	Plan analyzing current stormwater management system with recommendations for future capacity needs	-	2020	Update within 5 years	- Includes section on green infrastructure and low impact development which is not used for making recommendations in the plan - Update to reflect changed land use assumptions, development which has occurred and incorporate climate action priorities



Transportation/access

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
City of Northfield Comprehensive Transportation Plan Update	Plan analyzing existing and future transportation needs with recommendations for updates and improvements	- Standalone document developed along with 2008 comprehensive plan and its land use principles - Relies on traditional metrics such as LOS, expanding capacity based on traffic projections	2008	Update within 3 years	Complete update needed
Safe Routes to School Plan	Guide to necessary improvements for safe routes to school in Northfield	- Focus on improving Jefferson Parkway and Highway 246 intersection - Plan did not include Northfield High School or Arcadia (included in pedestrian, bike and trail update in 2019)	2009	Replaced	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.
Northfield Area Access Management and Safety Plan (Highway 19)	MnDOT plan for Highway 19 between I-35 and Minnesota State Highway 3 to address growth and safety concerns.	Anticipates Highway 19 as 4-lane road to I-35	2009	Replaced	Superseded by Highway 19 mill and overlay planning
Northfield Modal Integration Project Study Report	Recommendations to improve multimodal crossings of Highway 19 and Highway 3.	- Emphasis on grade separated crossing - Foundation for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant project	2009	Replaced	Seek out new/additional mechanisms to improve connectivity across the highways.



Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Complete Street Policy	Policy to guide the development of Complete Streets	- Recommended developing design guidelines and review every 5 years - Included climate and stormwater management as part of street design	2012	Replaced	As with Safe Routes to Schools, the policy and design principles should be included in the Land Development Code and update to comprehensive transportation plan while eliminating this as a named policy
Pedestrian, bike and trail system update	Reviewed existing policy and regulations for filling network gaps, updating street types	-	2019	Partially incorporated	- Recommendations to update ordinances and policy not completed - Recommended bike and walk networks had no discernible basis for choosing routes or connecting places
Pedestrian and Bikeway Analyzation	Identified projects in the CIP that can be designed to improve bikeway and pedestrian design.	Recommended two-way bikeways as "preferred facilities" (some off-street, some on street, when protection is needed etc.)	2022	Partially incorporated	- Preferred facility approach did not reflect surrounding land use or improve accessibility - Include any relevant information in transportation plan update and Land Development Code



Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Downtown Parking Study	Analyzes downtown parking supply and demand.	• Identifies sufficient parking supply • Recommends managed parking solution • Recommends pay-for-parking program • Contemplates eventual structured parking	2001	Update	• 2023 parking counts sustain 2001 study recommendations • 2024-2025 Connecting Business and Community surveys validate results of both 2001 and 2023 parking data



Parks and open space

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Parks, Open Space and Trail System Plan	Extensive analysis of park system, recommended improvements and funding guidance	• Employed Complete Streets framework • Includes master plans for individual parks	2008	Partially incorporated	• 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 • Served as the basis for proposed bike/walk system in Northfield 2045
Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan (REAP)	Framework to guide improvements along the river and future design of park spaces.	• Remove motorized vehicles from the riverfront. • Turn backs into fronts to activate the riverfront. • Create a pedestrian loop connecting both sides of the river. • Contemplates reconstruction of the Ames Mill Dam to improve river ecology and access to river recreation.	2020	Partially incorporated	Needs review for compliance with Northfield 2045



Housing

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
Northfield Housing Study (HKGi)	Comprehensive study of Northfield's housing needs through 2025.	- Identifies housing needs. - Completed during the Covid-19 pandemic.	2021	Replaced	Significant market changes since completion.
Housing and Education in Northfield (Enterprise Community Partners)	Provides strategies for improving housing affordability and capacity in Northfield.	- Noteworthy study connecting housing, education and social mobility - Focused on meeting needs of lower income families	2022	Data informs Northfield 2045.	Needs review for compliance with Northfield 2045
Housing Needs Assessment (Maxfield Research)	Provides projections for housing need through 2035.	- Evaluates existing conditions. - Identifies a recommended range of needed supply.	2024	Incorporated	-
Comprehensive Housing Study (Rice County)	Evaluates current housing demand and projected needs for Rice County	-	2024	Informed this plan	-



Other plans

Document	Purpose	Key policies or ideas	Year	Status	Notes
ArtsPlan06	Purpose of the plan is to provide direction on building the cultural life of our community through the mechanisms of cultural placemaking.	• Led to the establishment of the Arts and Culture Commission in 2007.	2006	Update to reflect Northfield 2045 within three years.	-
2019-2024 Cultural Plan	Recommended creation of 1% for the Arts program	• Cultural placemaking • Awareness of multicultural assets and impact • Sustain funding for public art and creative placemaking	2019	-	-
Racial Equity Action Plan	Plan for internal action to address racial inequity	• Increase diversity of full-time staff • Build an inclusive and welcoming workplace environment	2020	Partially incorporated	Equity is both a guiding value and part of Northfield's municipal triple bottom line.



Connecting outcomes, actions and values

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.

The matrix indicates which actions most strongly support this Plan's core principles and assigns a rough priority or timeframe as well as which department or other group should lead action. This Plan presumes boards and commissions are a key part of the work of this Plan.

For example, revising zoning regulations is the number one priority action and must precede several other recommendations in this Plan. Zoning changes also strongly influence the cost of development (for both the city and private developers), climate and environmental impact, and ensuring benefits are distributed equitably.



Outcomes and values matrix

The outcomes and values matrix presents outcomes and actions in the following pages by plan topic (i.e., land use and transportation; jobs and housing, etc.) and depicts the strategic and the outcomes aligned with the values of the comprehensive plan. The values which are most prominent in the outcome are in bright orange circles and those that are less prominent are shown in gray.

Chapter 3 Access: connecting people to places and opportunities

Strategy	Outcomes	Guiding values
Strategy 1: Plan for accessibility	Northfield has established goals for connectivity, land development, and transportation and adopted relevant metrics to measure progress.	
	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.	
	Northfield has well-connected and well-used transit, rideshare, and carshare alternatives for trips that require a vehicle.	
	All existing documents guiding planning, growth, and development are updated to reflect the goals of this plan.	
Strategy 2: Develop in a compact, sustainable, and fiscally responsible pattern	Short-term strategic planning sets interim goals and adopts quantifiable metrics to measure progress including measuring fiscal impact, advancing equity, and climate action progress.	
	The city increases overall density, has fewer underutilized properties and a wider range of housing types, connected by multiple transportation options reducing vehicle miles traveled, improving transit, and meeting climate goals.	
	The city supports farmland preservation in surrounding townships, reducing climate impact, encouraging food production, and maintaining Northfield’s rural edge.	
	Northfield maximizes the value of existing infrastructure and extends infrastructure in a fiscally responsible and sustainable way by directing 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 consider orderly annexation areas beyond the priority growth areas when other locations have been exhausted.	



Strategy	Outcomes	Guiding values
Strategy 3: Target areas of under investment	City infrastructure, such as roads, water, sewer and stormwater facilities, and tree canopy are of the same quality across the city.	      
	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 4: Ensure equitable access	The network designed for people biking, walking, and rolling is complete, safe, and consistent.	      
	Highways 3 and 19 have been redesigned to improve residents' freedom to travel by reducing speed, noise, pollution, and adding facilities for safe travel along and across the highways.	
	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 5: Design for safe access	There are clear, safe pathways for people walking, rolling, biking, and driving to access destinations within the city on highly interconnected streets. Programmed road projects will be designed to complete or create a highly connected street network.	      
	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 of all ages and abilities, pedestrian scale lighting, green infrastructure, and shade trees.	
	Pedestrian, nonmotorized, and transit and/or emergency-only access ways are implemented where full street construction may be infeasible or unnecessary, through-traffic may be at odds with the land use context, or motor vehicle access can reasonably be expected to result in nuisance driving behaviors.	



Strategy	Outcomes	Guiding values
Strategy 6: Design for resiliency and sustainability	The city, as a municipal entity, and its residents and businesses have collectively decreased our greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on non-local energy sources through mitigation strategies.	
	The city has taken action to ensure climate-resilient infrastructure and facilities, employing redundancy where appropriate to reduce the risk of catastrophic failure.	
	The city plans land uses and new development to reduce vehicle miles traveled and non-local inputs, including energy sources.	
	The city has integrated climate action into all capital projects and annual budgeting.	

Chapter 4 Sustainable economic future: connecting housing and economic security

Strategy	Outcomes	Guiding values
Strategy 1: Strengthen Northfield's Downtown core	Downtown Northfield grows as the river-focused anchor of the city and key component of its sense of place.	
	Downtown is the hub of Northfield's small business community, locus of valuable tax base, a residential neighborhood, a welcoming and accessible public space, and location of city services on the banks of the Cannon River.	
Strategy 2: Develop Carleton and St. Olaf relationships	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.	
Strategy 3: Small business development	Local small business owners know about and use technical and financial resources available to them.	
	Regulations, policies and programs are designed to make small business development easier.	
Strategy 4: Support the local workforce	Northfield's existing and future workforce faces fewer barriers to moving to Northfield and living close to their place of employment.	
Strategy 5: Diversify Northfield's tax base	Northfield will intentionally build a more sustainable local economy to maintain and expand city services and infrastructure.	
Strategy 6: Grow in a compact, sustainable development pattern	Northfield's development and redevelopment initiatives focus on projects that increase tax productivity, preserve natural resources, limits negative climate impacts, improves access to jobs and services, and assesses the fiscal impact of the development or redevelopment project.	
Strategy 7: Maintain Northfield's existing housing stock	All residents in Northfield live in safe and healthy housing.	
Strategy 8: Build more housing	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 construction and rehabilitation, owner-occupied and rental, single- and multi-family are needed to ensure lifecycle choices.	



Strategy	Outcomes	Guiding values
Strategy 9: Support at-risk sellers, buyers and tenants	Residents can afford to own or rent a home in Northfield and stay in their homes through hardships.	
	Northfield will ensure strong protection for residential tenants.	
Strategy 10: Create programs to support affordable and sustainable homes and neighborhoods	All residents in Northfield live in safe and stable housing and neighborhoods.	
	Local housing needs are met at a greater scale than market forces can provide using existing public resources, authorities and community partners.	

Chapter 5 Resilient infrastructure: connecting essential municipal services with sustainability

Strategy	Outcomes	Guiding values
Strategy 1: Implement blue-green infrastructure planning and natural asset management	Northfield integrates blue-green infrastructure into land use planning, capital improvements, and infrastructure decisions.	
	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.	
	Northfield establishes a timeline and interim goals to implement the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan, Meadows Park plan, 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.	
Strategy 2: Plan water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure to be resilient	Northfield water, wastewater, and stormwater systems are planned and built to withstand extreme weather and improve climate resilience.	
	Water and wastewater capacity are used as key metrics for assessing development projects and planning growth.	
Strategy 3: Plan streets for safety and stormwater management	Streets and the entire public right-of-way are planned, designed, built and operated to meet safety, connectivity, and green infrastructure goals.	
Strategy 4: Provide sufficient broadband services to the community	All residents and businesses—regardless of location or income—can stay connected and the infrastructure is protected.	
Strategy 5: Reduce solid waste through diversion, recycling, and reuse	Northfield has robust policies and procedures in place to reduce the quantity of solid waste that is sent to the Rice County landfill.	
	All organic materials are diverted from the waste stream through a community-wide curbside compost collection system available to all property owners and renters.	



Actions implementation

The actions implementation represents overarching strategies alongside the regulatory, programming, planning and guidance actions. The primary city-led groups and partner entities anticipated to participate in completing the action and realizing the outcomes is also included.

Chapter 3 Access: connecting people to places and opportunities

Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-1.1	Update or replace the Typical Street Sections, Complete Streets Policy, Safe Routes to School, and other relevant plans to prioritize safety, comfort, and access to destinations for people of all ages, incomes and abilities in accordance with the goals of this plan. Simplifying and consolidating policy documents should be a guiding priority.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-1.2	Update or replace the Typical Street Sections, Comprehensive Transportation Plan and other relevant plans to plan for accessibility and adopt relevant metrics to measure progress.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-1.3	Update or replace the Typical Street Sections, Comprehensive Transportation Plans, and other relevant plans to reduce climate impacts including lifecycle emissions, air and water pollution, urban heating, and stormwater runoff.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Sources
3-1.4	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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee MnDOT Rice County Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-1.5	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 and road congestion.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Carleton College St. Olaf College Northfield Public Schools
3-1.6	Plan land use to locate housing, services, and shopping areas close to one another for improved accessibility.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-1.7	Quantify nonmotorized and transit use in Northfield on a biannual basis.	Community Development Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Carleton College St. Olaf College
3-1.8	Establish accessibility goals and measure progress. Use the shorter-term strategic planning process and capital improvement program to make progress toward identified goals.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Park and Recreation Advisory Board Consultants Community partners
3-1.9	Commit to funding and improving options for transit services and other options when a trip requires a vehicle, including ridesharing and car sharing options.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Community partners
3-1.10	Develop and adopt an official map identifying future street and trail connections, parks, and other public infrastructure in accordance with MN Stat. 462.359.	Planning Commission Public Works
3-2.1	Use the Future Land Use Map to guide short-term strategic planning efforts.	Community Development

Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-2.2	Revise zoning and other regulations to implement this plan: a. Ensure zoning and infrastructure support environmentally and economically efficient, resilient land use development to advance this plan. b. Incentivize infill and intensification in both commercial and residential areas. c. Encourage accessory dwelling units and small-scale multi-family housing in all residential neighborhoods to add more housing in existing neighborhoods, add housing types, and put more people closer to established 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 neighborhoods to advance this plan's goals of greater accessibility, increased housing, and reduced reliance on vehicle trips. Sites where the building to land value ratio is low indicating the site is ripe for redevelopment may offer prime opportunity for these types of uses.. 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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-2.3	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.	Public Works Friends of Downtown Northfield Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce Northfield Convention and Visitors' Bureau
3-2.4	Adopt a fiscal impact tool to measure the impact of all large developments to determine if adopted metrics are met. Prioritize developments and initiatives that meet adopted metrics, and incent innovations not previously contemplated that may have the potential to outperform the adopted standard.	Administration Economic Development Authority
3-2.5	Seek grants to reduce capital costs of projects while also budgeting for the additional costs of operations and maintenance over the lifecycle of the project.	Administration



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-3.1	Establish criteria for identifying underinvestment, map these areas, and plan for improvements using the strategic plan, capital improvement plan and budget.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Administration
3-3.2	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.	Park and Recreation Advisory Board Administration
3-3.3	Partner with Northfield Public Schools, Northfield Community Education and private partners to consider youth out-of-school time programming to fill needs not currently met.	Park and Recreation Advisory Board Northfield Public Schools Community partners
3-3.4	Prioritize transportation infrastructure connections between underserved residential neighborhoods and desired destinations such as downtown, educational facilities, highway-oriented job centers.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-3.5	Prioritize affordable transportation and safe access to desired destinations regardless of age, ability, or income.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-4.1	Prioritize safety and equity benefits in transportation project selection.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-4.2	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.	Carleton College St. Olaf College Three Rivers/ Hiawathaland Transit
3-4.3	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.	Three Rivers/ Hiawathaland Transit



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-4.4	Continue improving railroad crossings for quiet crossings to improve safety and quality of life in Northfield.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Railroads
3-4.5	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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-4.6	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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-4.7	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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-4.8	Work with MnDOT to redesign Highway 246 from Jefferson Parkway to County Road 1 to improve pedestrian safety, facilitate safer vehicular access to Bridgewater Elementary and Northfield Middle School and surrounding neighborhoods, and improve the character of Northfield's southern gateway.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-4.9	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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-5.1.a	Update Chapter 34 of the Legislative Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability. Build safe, comfortable places for walking, biking, transit, and stormwater management. These regulations will apply to all street projects. Complete the active transportation network shown in Figure 2 prioritizing connections to schools and parks.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-5.1.b	Update Chapter 34 of the Legislative Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability. Build safe, comfortable places for walking, biking, transit, and stormwater management. These regulations will apply to all street projects. Identify and include appropriate metrics for measuring access in addition to mobility.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-5.1.c	Update Chapter 34 of the Legislative Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability. Build safe, comfortable places for walking, biking, transit, and stormwater management. These regulations will apply to all street projects. 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 and to simplify and coordinate policy guidance.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-5.1.d	Update Chapter 34 of the Legislative Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability. Build safe, comfortable places for walking, biking, transit, and stormwater management. These regulations will apply to all street projects. 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 and the variety of facilities creates unnecessary confusion.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-5.1.e	Update Chapter 34 of the Legislative Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability. Build safe, comfortable places for walking, biking, transit, and stormwater management. These regulations will apply to all street projects. Revise posted speed limits to lower speeds citywide, and update street designs to design for slower speeds.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-5.1.f	Update Chapter 34 of the Legislative Code to connect street design with land use and sustainability. Build safe, comfortable places for walking, biking, transit, and stormwater management. These regulations will apply to all street projects. 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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-5.2	Prioritize CIP projects based on transparent process, early community engagement and this plan. When determining facility type and design, focus on improvements that consider land use context, equity, increased accessibility, affordable modes, as well as cost.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-5.3	Require a highly connected street system with new development and prioritize areas which can be most effectively connected to the existing system. Northfield will revisit its roadway network to ensure new roadways or extensions of existing roadways are highly connected using widely accepted metrics such as intersection density, link node ratio, block density, cul-de-sac density, block length to create multiple route options and better support active transportation.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-6.1.a	The following strategies and actions of the city's adopted 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP) are incorporated to embed them in city decision-making processes: 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.	Administration Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.1.b	The following strategies and actions of the city's adopted 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP) are incorporated to embed them in city decision-making processes: 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.	Administration Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.1.c	The following strategies and actions of the city's adopted 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP) are incorporated to embed them in city decision-making processes: 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).	Community Development Administration Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.1.d	The following strategies and actions of the city's adopted 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP) are incorporated to embed them in city decision-making processes: Coordinate with local waste and recycling haulers to offer curbside compost pickup for residents and businesses that will be delivered to a local compostable waste processing facility.	Administration Public Works Environmental Quality Commission



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-6.1.e	The following strategies and actions of the city's adopted 2019 Climate Action Plan (CAP) are incorporated to embed them in city decision-making processes: Use metrics described in the 2019 CAP to establish goals in strategic planning efforts to meet the outcomes in this plan.	Administration Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.2	Encourage the use of energy-efficient mechanical systems and building products and/or the use of building designs and materials that reduce lifecycle carbon and reliance on non-local energy sources in rehabilitation and new construction to decrease building operation costs and impacts on the environment	Community Development Administration Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.3	Encourage the use of deconstruction methods over demolition to decrease negative impacts on the environment, where and when possible. Require for City-led and/or financially facilitated projects.	Community Development Administration Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.4.a	Update Chapter 34 of the Code of Ordinances, 2008 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and 2020 Surface Water Management Plan to: Require green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and sustainable stormwater management practices in public and private projects related to stormwater runoff.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.4.b	Update Chapter 34 of the Code of Ordinances, 2008 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and 2020 Surface Water Management Plan to: Plan and schedule improvements in city rights-of-way to reduce the urban heat island effect and increase resilience to flooding through methods such as shared, stacked-function green infrastructure and planting	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.4.c	Update Chapter 34 of the Code of Ordinances, 2008 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and 2020 Surface Water Management Plan to: Collaborate with partner agencies on water quality improvement efforts, including capital projects and programming. For example:	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Environmental Quality Commission



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-6.4.d	Update Chapter 34 of the Code of Ordinances, 2008 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and 2020 Surface Water Management Plan to: 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 (208 volts or greater power) be installed with new developments and public projects. Prioritize locating infrastructure for electric vehicle charging stations at appropriate publicly accessible areas such as in the right-of-way or in parking lots.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.4.e	Update Chapter 34 of the Code of Ordinances, 2008 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and 2020 Surface Water Management Plan to: Require designs that facilitate social interaction and build social connection consistent with best practices from organizations such as Happy Cities or Reimagining the Civic Commons.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Environmental Quality Commission
3-6.5	Create a natural asset management plan and blue-green infrastructure plan which includes parks and public rights-of-way.	Public Works Planning Commission Park and Recreation Advisory Board
3-6.6	Strengthen partnerships with groups such as Clean Water Partners, Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Board, and educational institutions to measure, evaluate, and enhance the health of the Cannon River.	Public Works
3-6.7	Maintain response readiness for emergencies related to water supply contamination or interruption and for damage to treatment and distribution infrastructure.	Public Works
3-6.8	Measure 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 greenhouse gas emissions and prioritize projects which advance city emissions goals.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
3-6.9	Analyze and map the city's land surface temperature to establish a baseline heat map for the city.	Public Works Community Development
3-6.10	Manage both above and below ground utilities to improve the health of the tree canopy in public spaces and rights-of-way.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
3-6.11	Comprehensively maintain and improve the tree canopy to provide shade, clean air, and stormwater treatment.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works
3-6.12	Ensure all new buildings meet 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.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works
3-6.13	Retrofit existing city buildings with energy efficiency upgrades as part of capital improvement scheduling.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works
3-6.14	Manage flood mitigation at the watershed level with regional partners.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works
3-6.15	Work with river-adjacent landowners, including Carleton College, Riverpark Mall, Just Foods Co-op, Post Consumer Brands and others to mitigate negative impacts of flooding.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works
3-6.16	Provide consistent community engagement to identify assets or systems susceptible to critical failure, and where critical failure would have disproportionate community impacts.	Community Development City Communications Local media
3-6.17	Design public facilities and public spaces to foster the development and strengthening of social connections by providing community gathering spaces accessible to people of all ages and abilities.	Public Works Park and Recreation Advisory Board Planning Commission Community Development

Chapter 4 Sustainable economic future: connecting housing and economic security

Strategy	Action	Group responsible
4-1.1	Identify opportunities and provide support for improved business mix, marketing, events, and physical improvements.	Economic Development Authority Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-1.2	Promote new and rehabilitated housing in and near downtown to increase housing supply, increase tax productivity, and support local business by putting more people near downtown retail, services, and the river.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority Heritage Preservation Commission
4-1.3	Implement the Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan to improve access to the river and build on Northfield's quality of place.	Friends of Downtown Northfield Planning Commission Economic Development Authority Housing and Redevelopment Authority Park and Recreation Advisory Board Heritage Preservation Commission
4-1.4	Redesign Highway 3 from Fremouw Avenue to Woodley Street to slow traffic and make it easier to access the Transit Hub, Riverfront, parks, and downtown businesses.	Public Works MnDOT
4-1.5	Proactively identify, evaluate, and survey historic and cultural resources with the Heritage Preservation Commission to ensure a consistent approach to preservation. Consider local, state, and/or national designation as appropriate, after study.	Community Development Planning Commission Economic Development Authority Heritage Preservation Commission
4-1.6	Prioritize adaptive reuse and reinvestment in existing buildings.	Community Development Planning Commission Economic Development Authority Heritage Preservation Commission
4-1.7	Consider creating 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.	Community Development Planning Commission Economic Development Authority



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
4-2.1	Identify opportunities to increase the 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.	Friends of Downtown Northfield Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce Northfield Area Convention and Visitors' Bureau Carleton College St. Olaf College
4-2.2	Work with colleges to evaluate district energy feasibility, improve river health, and learn from their climate approach.	Administration Carleton College St. Olaf College
4-2.3	Guide college land-use planning to eliminate surface parking visible to the community and increase access to the Cannon River.	Carleton College St. Olaf College
4-2.4	Plan development with the colleges to contain it within the set boundary.	Planning Commission Community Development Carleton College St. Olaf College
4-2.5	Develop a clear and consistent approach to working with college students and faculty on municipal initiatives for mutual benefit.	Carleton College St. Olaf College
4-3.1	Partner with existing local business support organizations and evaluate other support opportunities to establish public and private local funding resources for small businesses.	Community Development Economic Development Authority Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD) Latino Economic Development Center Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce Local banks Small Business Administration



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
4-3.2	Work with existing and potential partners to ensure current and future business owners can easily locate city-related support information for business resources.	Community Development Economic Development Authority Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce Northfield Area Convention and Visitors' Bureau
4-3.3	Work with existing and potential partners to provide culturally and linguistically competent and context-sensitive business advisory services for existing and future entrepreneurs.	Community Development Economic Development Authority Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD) Latino Economic Development Center
4-3.4	Review regulations and policies to reduce or eliminate barriers to new business creation.	Community Development
4-3.5	City staff in all departments provide effective and culturally competent assistance.	Administration
4-4.1	Support housing development that increases the supply and variety of housing that meets the needs of Northfield's workforce.	Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-4.2	Prioritize building new housing in places with convenient access to jobs and services.	Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Community Development
4-4.3	Facilitate development of transit and other affordable transportation to jobs in and out of Northfield.	Three Rivers Community Action Planning Commission Community Development Carleton College St. Olaf College Community Action Center
4-4.4	Promote strategies and partnerships for increasing high-quality affordable childcare and other needed services for working families in Northfield.	Healthy Community initiative Community Development Rice County Community Services State of Minnesota Health and Human Services



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
4-5.1	Prioritize development in Transform 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. [Capital Improvement Program and budget]	Community Development Economic Development Authority Public Works
4-5.2	Pursue intensified infill development and business expansions in highway-oriented commercial areas, particularly on Highway 3 between Woodley Street and County Road 1 to increase density, right-size parking, improve accessibility for nonmotorized travel, and diversify the range of uses.	Community Development Economic Development Authority Public Works
4-5.3	Focus recruitment, retention, and expansion investments that support, complement and enhance the existing retail, commercial, industrial, and service industries. Do so while recognizing that the community's largest local employers are Carleton and St. Olaf colleges, Northfield Hospital and Clinics, and Post Consumer Brands and the region benefits from safe, convenient, and affordable access to jobs in Northfield, Faribault, and Rice County.	Community Development Economic Development Authority
4-6.1	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.	Government Finance Officers Association Administration Economic Development Authority Community Development
4-6.2	Concentrate on the needs of existing businesses to grow in Northfield and attract compatible and complementary industries.	Economic Development Authority
4-6.3	Ensure zoning and other regulations guide all development and redevelopment to increase tax productivity, enhance access and connectivity, address climate, reduce vehicle trips, and include requiring fiscal impact analysis.	Planning Commission Public Works Economic Development Authority
4-6.4	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.	Economic Development Authority Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-6.5	Require infill developments to complement existing neighborhoods while incrementally intensifying uses, improving connectivity to the rest of the city and allowing innovation and considering market needs, climate impact, economic feasibility and sustainable affordability.	Community Development Planning Commission Public Works



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
4-7.1	Develop programs and partnerships to support manufactured home communities and preserve this form of housing.	Community partners
4-7.2	Establish a survey program to evaluate housing conditions citywide and connect owners with resources to improve unsafe conditions.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-7.3	Develop programs in partnership with affordable housing and educational institutions to ensure housing stability in all neighborhoods and communities.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-7.4	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.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-7.5	Create incentives for landlords to reduce energy costs.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-7.6	Support housing near necessary goods and services and which promotes active living and community connectivity.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-8.1	Prioritize building new housing in walkable areas of the city and guide new development to areas most connected to the existing street system and water infrastructure.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-8.2	Complete and regularly update an analysis of market conditions and regulatory approaches that support the development of affordable housing in Northfield.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-8.3	Adopt an inclusionary housing ordinance that reflects market conditions and offers a flexible approach to support the development of affordable units.	Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-8.4	Prioritize developing infill sites through direct property acquisition, site preparation for redevelopment, and actively soliciting development proposals targeted to identified needs.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-8.5	Partner with local home builders, employers, financial institutions, and other regional nonprofit 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.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority Community Development
4-8.6	Revise and regularly update the Land Development Code to remove barriers and reduce costs to housing and economic development.	Planning Commission Community Development
4-8.7	Include housing needs in strategic planning efforts to ensure that short-term goals meet local market needs and address potential local market failures.	Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Community Development
4-8.8	Encourage visit-ability to make homes accessible to all residents.	Planning Commission Community Development



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
4-8.9	Support township and county efforts to build new housing within the Northfield school district.	Planning Commission Community Development Community partners
4-9.1	Partner with local organizations working on housing support, such as Community Action Center, Healthy Community Initiative, Rice County Habitat for Humanity, and Three Rivers Community Action to support first-time homebuyers with education and down payment-related assistance and homeowners at risk of foreclosure.	Community Development Housing and Redevelopment Authority Community partners
4-9.2	Coordinate with nonprofit partners to ensure municipal, EDA and HRA-levied funds are used in ways that most closely align with the direction set through the citywide comprehensive and strategic plan documents and offer the greatest return on investment.	Community Development Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
4-9.3	Pursue mechanisms to enhance and improve the use of Rice County-administered Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) within the Northfield city limits.	Community Development Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-9.4	Build a coalition of partners to create a fund to support replacement of manufactured homes as they reach the end of their useful life and provide temporary relocation support for manufactured home residents when the homes are being repaired or rehabbed.	Community Development Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-9.5	Build a coalition of partners to create, fund, and administer a housing legacy program that capitalizes on the Local Housing Trust Fund (LHTF) and Minnesota State Housing Tax Credit (SHTC) programs. A housing legacy program facilitates the donation or bequest of homes by homeowners wishing to leave a legacy of affordable homeownership for future generations.	Community Development Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-9.6	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:	Community Development Building Department
4-10.1	Revise the zoning code to permit denser development by right in neighborhoods dominated by single-family development.	Planning Commission
4-10.2	Incentivize energy efficiency in building materials and design, heating/cooling infrastructure, and electrification to reduce lifetime costs of housing.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
4-10.3	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.	Community Development Housing and Redevelopment Authority
4-10.4	Work to improve sustainability of new and existing housing. All new housing developers are encouraged to construct Net-Zero-ready housing.	Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Building
4-10.5	Continue to provide incentives for landlords and homeowners to reduce energy costs.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority Administration
4-10.6	Use public financial resources to develop the types of housing that are needed and are not being supplied by the market, including through strategic purchase of available property.	Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
4-10.7	Develop existing city/housing or economic development authority-owned land to increase the types and range of affordability of housing being built.	Community Development Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
4-10.8	Explore fee waivers, reductions and other incentives for development that addresses city goals (sustainability, affordability, compact development, etc.).	Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
4-10.9	Support housing near necessary goods and services to increase affordable access, reduce the need to drive, and community connectivity.	Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
4-10.10	Encourage mixed income neighborhoods, through targeted investment and planning.	Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority



Chapter 5 Resilient infrastructure: connecting essential municipal services with sustainability

Strategy	Action	Group responsible
5-1.1	Require planting native plants on public land to reduce area of turf grass, increase stormwater infiltration, and improve habitat.	Public Works Community Development
5-1.2	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.	Public Works Community Development U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
5-1.3	Use the strategic planning process to identify near term goals, metrics and actions for Riverfront Enhancement Action Plan, Greenways Corridor plan, and integrated blue-green infrastructure plan.	Public Works Community Development Administration
5-1.4	Work with Xcel Energy and other utilities to strategically bury power lines to eliminate aggressive tree trimming and improve the health and appearance of boulevard trees.	Public Works Community Development Administration
5-1.5	Assess, identify and pursue opportunities for financing and funding green and blue infrastructure implementation while budgeting for long-term maintenance.	Public Works Community Development Administration
5-1.6	Plan and design Division Street and other downtown streets to provide space to support larger tree planting areas and additional green infrastructure.	Public Works Planning Commission Community Development
5-1.7	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.	Public Works Planning Commission Community Development
5-2.1	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 1,000-year events.	Public Works Planning Commission Administration
5-2.2	Evaluate existing drinking water and wastewater systems for capacity concerns and direct investment to those areas with the greatest capacity for expansion for the lowest capital outlay.	Public Works Planning Commission Administration
5-2.3	Assess water, wastewater and stormwater systems for any critical failure points and the likely impact on the community and transportation, plan needed improvements.	Public Works Administration
5-2.4	Inventory the city's existing tree canopy, landscaping practices, wetland restoration, river and stream buffers, and opportunities for improvement.	Public Works



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
5-2.5	Determine locations for regional stormwater management prior to development and build around those locations.	Public Works
5-3.1	Adopt a street use hierarchy that prioritizes the safety needs of people walking, biking, rolling, and using transit.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
5-3.2	Adopt revised street types in the zoning code to apply to all planned and future street projects 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.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee
5-3.3	Consider adopting overlay plans as part of a redesign of the zoning code to sharpen the street type guidance for critical areas, which guide special attention to tree canopy, school access, or equity concerns.	Community Development Planning Commission
5-3.4	Plan demonstration projects or project areas to test ideas and educate the community about allocating space for all users and green infrastructure.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee Environmental Quality Commission
5-3.5	Aggressively seek funding to reduce initial capital costs of improvements while ensuring revenue for ongoing maintenance and replacement.	Administration Public Works Planning Commission
5-3.6	Review, map, and prioritize for reinvestment in those areas of the city where infrastructure may have seen less investment and then work to improve these areas.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
5-4.1	Support public and private investment in fiber-optic networks, working with providers to expand service coverage, and prioritizing the installation of conduit or fiber during road construction projects to reduce future costs and improve access.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
5-4.2	Bury broadband lines to help maintain the tree canopy and avoid potential damage.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
5-5.1	Decrease total per capita municipal solid waste handled 30% by 2030.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
5-5.2	Achieve 70% organics landfill waste diversion by 2030.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
5-5.3	Increase diversion of potential recoverables by 15% by 2030.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
5-5.4	Increase recycling from 32% to 35% of total municipal solid waste handled by 2030.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
5-5.5	Consider establishing a “deconstruction” program for municipal demolition projects.	Public Works Community Development Planning Commission Housing and Redevelopment Authority Economic Development Authority
5-5.6	Conduct a citywide study to identify large contributors of solid waste and develop a plan to address waste reduction.	Administration Community Development Ric County Public Works Environmental Quality Commission
5-5.7	Explore a municipal/citywide organics collection program.	Administration Community Development Ric County Public Works Environmental Quality Commission Curbside Compost Collective
5-5.8	Work with county and other partners to establish reuse and recycling of building materials.	Administration Community Development Ric County Public Works Environmental Quality Commission Curbside Compost Collective
5-5.9	Offer grants, loans, other financial incentives to support business development that reduces solid waste generation and/or increases repurposing or reuse.	Economic Development Authority
5-5.10	Actively recruit complementary businesses, especially industrial users, that effectively use/reuse waste products from existing businesses.	Community Development Economic Development Authority Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce



Strategy	Action	Group responsible
5-5.11	Explore low- and zero-waste provisions in sustainable building policies.	Administration Public Works Environmental Quality Commission Community Development



Glossary



1% for the Arts

A program or policy in which 1% of all Capitol Improvement Project (for example, road work) must set 1% of their budget aside for public art. In Northfield, the Arts and Culture Commission oversees the design and implementation of that public art.

Accessibility

The ability to reach goods, services, activities, and destinations. Accessibility is improved by reducing travel time, and increasing safety, comfort, affordability, and variety of destinations and mode choice.

Active transportation

This term is a catchall for walking and “small things with wheels”—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). Sometimes referred to as micromobility.

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.

All Ages & Abilities (AA&A) design

This industry term refers to designing streets and micromobility facilities to be safe, low stress, and equitable for everyone regardless of age. 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 be and feel safe and comfortable by reflecting the land use context and traffic character is AA&A design.)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan

A document that outlines how a local government will remove barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. They often center transportation accessibility. These plans are a required component of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

Annexation

The process by which incorporated cities in Minnesota physically expand their boundaries. Only property contiguous to the existing municipal boundary may be annexed.

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.)

Best management practices (BMPs)

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are methods that local governments use to manage and protect the environment. These practices help reduce pollution, improve water quality, and increase resiliency with climate change. BMPs are used to deal with issues like stormwater runoff, waste, and how land is developed.

Economic development

The process by which the economic well-being and quality of life of a nation, region, or local community, are improved according to targeted goals and objectives.

Extremely low-income

Person or household with incomes below 30% of area median income, adjusted for respective household size.

Economic mobility

The ability of a person or family to improve their economic status over time.

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.

Gray infrastructure

Gray infrastructure is a stormwater management strategy that is human engineered, often including treatment facilities, sewer systems, sanitary sewers, and storage basins. During a storm, gray infrastructure redirects water from all sorts of locations

through underground pipes to storage basins and water reclamation facilities. There, those systems remove pollutants and toxins from the water so it can be redistributed into the environment. 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.

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.

Housing legacy program

A local program that facilitates the donation or bequest of homes by homeowners wishing to leave a legacy of affordable homeownership for future generations.



Low-impact development (LID)

Low impact development is a stormwater management strategy that controls rainwater where it falls, reducing the need for large, expensive systems. This includes specific site plan designs and small-scale interventions, including rainwater harvesting, natural systems of filtration, and evapotranspiration (when water evaporates into the air from bodies of water and plants.)

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.

Mobility

How quickly and easily people, goods, and services can move or be moved from one place to another. Mobility can depend on congestion and road capacity, how direct a walking route is, or whether it is safe to bike instead of walking to a destination.

Moderate income

Person or household with gross household income between 80% and 120% of the area median income, adjusted for household size. Defined by HUD.

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.

Orderly annexation agreement

A binding contract between a city and a township that identifies larger potential growth areas and the terms that govern an annexation. It allows both the city and township to proactively address annexation potential instead of passively waiting and reacting to growth. The agreement is enforceable in the district court in the county in which the unincorporated property in question is located. A municipal council may declare land annexed to the municipality if the land is owned by the municipality or is completely surrounded by land within the municipal limit.

Organic waste

Refers to materials made from plant and animal matter that are discarded as garbage. While it often refers to food waste, it also includes yard waste, paper, wood, certain fabrics, sewage, and manure. In both the U.S. and around the world, organic waste makes up about three-quarters of all waste. Organic waste, when properly composted, can be recycled into nutrient rich soil for gardens and farms, reducing waste and supporting healthier ecosystems.

PFAS

An acronym for “Per- and polyFluoroAlkyl Substances” that refer to thousands of chemicals that are widely used across consumer, commercial, and industrial products. PFAS can now be found by examining water, air, fish, soil, animals and humans across the globe. PFAS is currently being studied by several scientific bodies, and initial findings demonstrate that exposure to some PFAS may be linked to harmful effects in humans and animals.

Priority growth area

Defined area within the urban expansion area to which growth may be directed after other priorities within a municipal boundary are exhausted or insufficient. Priority growth areas offer greater connectivity to the street network, are able to be served more efficiently by transit and municipal infrastructure, are more proximate to important destinations such as schools and shopping, and encourage future growth in a compact pattern.

Public art

Public art includes murals, sculptures, paintings, and even public performances. It can also describe intentional designs on public features like street signs, streetlamps, playgrounds, and buildings. Public art is intended to represent and speak to the community that accesses it and is often designed by people from the place in which it is featured.

Sanitary sewer

A stormwater management feature that collect and transport wastewater to treatment facilities. This includes sewers, lift stations, and temporary storage basis.

Separated bikeway

Sometimes called protected bikeways, these are bikeways and paths that are separated from car traffic by some sort of physical barrier. They can be designed just for people biking, or they can be designed to be shared by people walking and biking. Separated bikeways always include both a bike travel space and a buffer between the bikeway and the street.

Solid waste

Describes most of the things we throw away or discard. This includes everyday household trash, industrial waste from factories, food scraps, construction debris, hazardous waste like lightbulbs and batteries, electronic waste like televisions and computers, and agricultural waste. Solid waste includes things we recycle, compost, incinerate, treat, or send to landfill.

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.

Stormwater management

The practice of controlling and treating water runoff from rain and snow. This includes planning, maintaining, and regulating stormwater systems. The goal is to reduce flooding, protect water quality, and create more resilient communities. There are many approaches to stormwater management, including using gray and blue-green Infrastructure, deploying low impact development, and encouraging best management practices.

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.

Sustainable development

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It considers a larger approach to decision-making by determining ahead of time how policies and actions affect people, the environment and our economy.



Transit

Transportation options other than driving a personal vehicle. Transit options include fixed-route bus service (Hiawathaland Red and Blue Lines), dial-a-ride, taxis, ride share (Lyft, Uber), pedicabs. Transit does not necessarily include micromobility options like biking or walking, though transit can supplement those options, like biking to a bus route.

Urban expansion area

An area around the boundary of a village or city that is reserved for future residential and business growth. It is developed in collaboration with the County and informed by orderly annexation agreements between municipality and township officials.

Visit-ability

Housing designed in such a way that it can be lived in or visited by people who have trouble with steps or who use wheelchairs or walkers. A home is visitable when it meets three basic requirements: one zero-step entrance; doors with 32 inches of clear passage space; one bathroom accessible in a wheelchair.

Walkable

Walkable refers to how safe, convenient, and comfortable it is to walk to destinations.

Walkability

Measurable by tracking distances (how long does it take to get to the supermarket?), navigation difficulty (how many turns does it take?), sidewalk connections (do you have to cross 2 streets because sidewalks abruptly end?), access to shade and benches, and safety (do cars or vehicles kill pedestrians on this path?)

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.



Index



Figures

Figure 1.	How the parts of the plan relate to each other	18
Figure 2.	Future active transportation network	42
Figure 3.	Percentage of households with workers without a vehicle	45
Figure 4.	Future land use	56
Figure 5.	Interventions map	62
Figure 6.	Orderly annexation map	64
Figure 7.	Priority growth areas	66
Figure 8.	Potential infill areas	93
Figure 10.	Roadway system	114
Figure 11.	Map of sanitary sewer system	116
Figure 12.	Water distribution system	118
Figure 13.	Hierarchy of plans	134

Appendices

- A. Community profile**
- B. Engagement summary**
- C. Open house event summary**
- D. Land use and growth analysis**
- E. Transportation analysis**
- F. Economic development analysis**
- G. Climate change analysis**
- H. Equity policy framework**

