

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION 2025-004

RECOMMENDATION APPROVING A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT TO CITY COUNCIL
TO OPERATE A MICRODISTILLERY

WHEREAS, the applicant, Loon Liquors, LLC (the “applicant”), seeks a Conditional Use Permit, pursuant to Northfield City Code, Ch. 34, Secs. 3.2.3 and 8.5.9, to operate a microdistillery at 115 5th Street West, which is zoned C1-B: Downtown Commercial; and

WHEREAS, Loon Liquors, LLC is the owner of the above-referenced property; and

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

WHEREAS, all required notices regarding the public hearing were properly made; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on April 17, 2025, and received public testimony regarding the proposed Conditional Use Permit; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission found that the application meets the standards in Northfield City Code, Chapter 34, the Land Development Code, for conditional use; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has reviewed and recommended approval of the Conditional Use Permit without conditions.

PASSED by the Planning Commission of the City of Northfield on this 17th day of April 2025.

Chair

Member

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

EXHIBIT A

LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

The East 75 feet of all of the following:

Lots 6 and 7 and the North Two thirds of Lot 8 in Block 47 of the Town (now City) of Northfield according to the plat thereof on file and of record in the office of the County Recorder, Rice County, Minnesota.

(Abstract Property)

EXHIBIT B

PLANNING COMMISSION FINDINGS

Conditional Use Permit Approval Procedure & Approval Criteria:

A CUP follows the Type 4 Review Procedure found in Section 8.4.7 of the LDC. For the Type 4 Review Procedure, the Planning Commission holds a public hearing and makes a recommendation to City Council, and City Council makes the final decision.

In the approval of a conditional use permit, the Planning Commission may recommend that City Council impose such conditions as necessary to make the use compatible with other uses allowed in the same district zone or vicinity. Criterion (a) below must be met and criteria (b) through (n) shall be considered in the review of conditional use permit applications:

a) **The proposed use is allowed as a conditional use in the district for which it is proposed as shown in Table 2.7-1;**

Yes, the proposed use of a microdistillery is allowed as a conditional use in Table 2.7-1 within the C1-B: Downtown zoning district.

b) **The conditional use will be in accordance with the general objectives, or with any specific objective, of the city's comprehensive plan and this LDC;**

The microdistillery upholds the objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan and LDC in the following categories:

CI 2.5 Support existing and new local businesses that provide dining, retail, arts and entertainment.

CI 3.2 Provide economic incentives and design flexibility to aid in the restoration and long-term economic vitality of historically significant buildings in the Downtown.

LU 2.1 Promote general merchandise retailers, financial institutions, office developments and entertainment uses within the downtown core. Create new opportunities for businesses by reinvesting in the infrastructure and public spaces in and around the downtown.

LU 3.1 Create incentives to encourage infill, redevelopment, and land intensification.

LU 5.1 Encourage small-scale retail and service commercial uses to locate in the downtown area.

ER 1.3 Natural resource conservation will be incorporated into the design and construction of residential, commercial and industrial development.

The proposed use meets the following purposes of the LDC:

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

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

1.1.3 Encourage growth in infill locations as the desired location of development with expansion on the edge of the city a secondary priority.

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

1.1.6 Allow for places with a mixture of uses that are distinctive and contribute to the city's overall vitality.

1.1.8 Provide for the expansion and diversification of the economic base to assure a strong economy.

1.1.9 Promote an ethic of sustainability in all activities to ensure that proposed development and redevelopment will, at a minimum, conserve energy and natural resources.

1.1.14 Encourage vibrancy in the downtown core and fringe areas.

c) The conditional use will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained so as to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity and that such use will not change the essential character of the same area;
The proposed use utilizes a repurposed structure. The renovations will give the building a unique feel that is compatible with the downtown. The new use will not change the essential character of the area.

d) The conditional use will not be hazardous or reasonably disturbing to existing or future uses;
Distribution activities will be fairly limited and will occur mainly at off-peak hours from the distillery. The distillery is not expected to be hazardous or disruptive to the existing or future uses. The renovation of the building will mitigate and remediate any existing hazards within the structure.

e) The conditional use will be served adequately by essential public facilities and services such as streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water and sewer;
The microdistillery will be adequately served by essential public services. The property is served by 5th St. W. to the north and a driveway access easement to the south accessed off of Water St. S. Emergency services will have access from both 5th St. W. and Water St. S. Drainage on site is served by a storm sewer easement. Refuse disposal will be handled through trash collectors on the south side of the building serviced by a waste removal provider. Water and sewer connections are available and adequate to serve the project and site. Based on this information, existing municipal utilities are adequate to meet the requirements of the proposed project. Final design is subject to technical zoning review completed and approved by staff.

f) The benefits of the conditional use outweigh the potential negative effects of the surrounding community;

The benefits of the proposed development likely outweigh the potential negative effects. This project will bring multiple benefits to the community:

- Locally owned business
- Increased tax base
- Additional restaurant choice, focused on locally sourced food
- Renovation and reuse of a building
- New jobs
- Central location near existing sidewalk, bike lanes, trails in the downtown core

Potential negative impacts could include increased vehicular traffic and parking.

- g) The conditional use will not create excessive additional requirements at public cost for public facilities and services;
The conditional use will not create additional public cost for public facilities or services.
- h) The conditional use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions or operations that will be detrimental to any persons, property or the general welfare by reason of excessive traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors;
The microdistillery is not expected to generate noise, smoke, fumes, glare, or odors that are any more excessive than a standard bar. There will be a noticeable increase in traffic to and from the site as the property has been vacant, but it is not anticipated to be excessive.
- i) The conditional use will not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance as may be established in the comprehensive plan or other city plans related to natural, scenic, or historic features;
The microdistillery is not expected to result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance as may be established in the comprehensive plan or other city plans related to natural, scenic, or historic features. The project involves renovation and reuse of an existing building.
- j) The traffic and parking generated by the use will not lower the Levels of Services as described in the comprehensive plan update of intersections within a quarter mile of the site.
The additional trips generated by this use are not significant enough to lower the Levels of Services in the downtown area.
- k) In residential districts, the use is of a similar height, building orientation, massing, setback, and scale as to be compatible with surrounding uses in compliance with Section 3.5 Neighborhood Compatibility Standards;
N/A
- l) In the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA) within the college development district (CD-S) that abut residential and commercial districts, height, building orientation, massing, setback and scale shall be considered in building renovation and/or new construction in order to maintain compatibility with surrounding areas as described in Section 3.4, Neighborhood Compatibility Standards. These neighborhood compatibility standards are to be administered in order to maintain a harmonious neighborhood environment and absolute compliance with these standards is not intended.
N/A
- m) Impacts such as noise, hours of activity, and outdoor lighting have been addressed to mitigate negative impacts on nearby uses.
The development is not anticipated to have negative impacts caused by noise, hours of activity and outdoor lighting. Loon will operate with similar hours as other downtown bars and restaurants. There will be no outside activity to generate noise – all operations are contained within the building. All additional lighting is required to be downcast in compliance with the LDC.

n) Parking is adequately provided for the proposed conditional use.

The LDC requires no additional off-street parking in the C1-B: Downtown Commercial - East of Hwy 3 zoning district. All parking will be on-street.

The following information shall be provided as part of the Conditional Use Permit application:

(i) Number of customers, patients, visitors, or other patrons of the proposed use.

The building has a maximum capacity of 182 persons, including employees and customers.

(ii) Number of full time and part time employees;

Loon is planning on 15 employees working while the cocktail room and pizzeria are open.

(iii) Number and approximate timing of deliveries.

Shipments and supply trucks are anticipated to make deliveries approximately 3 times per week between the hours of 8am – 4pm.