

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION 2025-00X

RECOMMENDATION OF TEXT AMENDMENTS TO ADDRESS REGULATING ADULT
USE CANNABIS

WHEREAS, in 2023 and 2024, amendments to Minnesota Statutes § 342 legalized adult–use cannabis in Minnesota, established a regulatory framework for the cannabis industry, and allowed cities to use zoning tools to regulate adult-use cannabis businesses within their jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, to respond to state law changes, staff developed amendments to the Zoning Code relating to adult-use cannabis to achieve statutory compliance and provide a framework for these new business types; and

WHEREAS, the Northfield Land Development Code, found in chapter 34 of the Northfield Legislative Code, is established to classify all property in such manner as to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the city; and

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

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on March 20, 2025, and received public testimony regarding the proposed land development code amendments; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission recommends a rationale for amending the Land Development Code related to adult-use cannabis;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Planning Commission hereby recommends to the Mayor and City Council the following amendments to Chapter 34 of the City Legislative Code.

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

Planning Commission Findings

Land Development Code Approval Criteria

When reviewing a zoning text amendment, the Planning Commission and City Council is to consider several criteria as established in Article 8 of the Land Development Code (8.5.14.C). The Planning Commission and City Council shall review the necessary submittal requirements, facts, and circumstances of the proposed amendment and make a recommendation and decision on the application based on, but not limited to, consideration of the following criteria:

(1) The specific policies, goals, objectives, and recommendations of the comprehensive plan and other city plans, including public facilities and the capital improvement plans.

As stated in the 2008 plan, commercial and industrial development is vital to distinguish Northfield in the larger regional context. The creation of jobs and the expansion of the tax base will continue to set Northfield apart from the suburban residential communities of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. While the proposed text amendments related to adult-use cannabis are required by the adoption of state statute, the proposed text amendments also support the City's economic development agenda as outlined in the 2006 Economic Development Plan.

The amendment also addresses CED Plan objectives: Opportunity 1: diversify the economic base and Opportunity 3: attracting and retaining talent.

Amending Land Development Code language addressing commercial and industrial uses helps facilitate the Economic Vitality – A community that's economically thriving – strategic initiatives of the current Strategic Plan. Economic Vitality calls out that the city needs to implement economic stabilization, recovery & growth strategy and implement infill & redevelopment strategies. The text amendments offer changes to commercial and industrial uses suitable for both infill properties and greenfield redevelopment opportunities.

Land Use Principle 6 – Places with a mix of uses that are distinctive and contribute to increasing the city's overall vitality are preferred.

The local identity defined as "Old Northfield", which includes a variety of uses mixed together on the same block, or same building, reflects positively on the community. Over the last fifty years land uses have been segregated from one another, which detracts from this identity. Commercial and industrial development is vital to distinguish Northfield in the larger regional context. The creation of jobs and the expansion of the tax base will continue to set Northfield apart from the suburban residential communities of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

(2) The purpose and intent of this LDC, or in the case of a map amendment, whether it meets the purpose and intent of the individual district.

The purpose of the Industrial (I1) district is to provide an area to accommodate manufacturing uses, general businesses, offices, service and repair businesses, warehousing and office

showroom uses in a functional, attractive manner that does not unduly affect the development or use of nearby property. Limited and incidental retailing shall be allowed in this district. The portion of the district that abuts the Cannon River shall be developed in a manner that enhances, restores, augments and maintains the ecology and beauty of this natural corridor. The proposed amendments respond to the purpose and intent of the I1 district.

The proposed amendments which accommodate new uses as described in state statute, meet the following aspects of the purpose and intent statement related to the Highway Commercial District (C2) as described in the LDC:

1. Provide locations for retail and service businesses that benefit from access to and visibility from the highway.
2. Provide for a wider range of commercial building and site sizes than may be possible in other zoning districts.
3. Provide locations for mixed-uses within buildings and sites.
4. Support efficient use of the limited highway commercial land supply, attract and retain businesses that contribute to economic growth and job creation, and enhance the economic vitality of the district and of Northfield.
5. Provide locations for businesses that rely on easy auto access and parking plus visibility from the highway while providing safe and attractive routes to businesses for pedestrians and bicyclists from neighboring sites and the rest of the city.
6. Minimize the negative effects of commercial site development on housing in adjacent residential zoning districts.

(3) The adequacy of infrastructure available to serve the proposed action.

The text amendments include standards associated with the new uses and seeks to permit only those uses that will not negatively impact existing infrastructure. For those uses that are larger than 15,000 square feet, the amendments use a conditional use permit approach to ensure staff and policymakers have adequate time to consider any potential concerns for any potential future user in those locations.

(4) The adequacy of a buffer or transition provided between potentially incompatible districts.

The proposed amendments offer a buffer and a distance separation in order to address potential concerns related to buffering or sufficient transitional areas between potentially incompatible uses.