

THE CITY OF  
**NORTHFIELD**  
ESTD MINNESOTA 1855

# 2025 Board & Commission Annual Report



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# Arts and Culture Commission

## Accomplishments

- Honored Bob Gregory-Bjorklund as the 2025 Living Treasure in April
- Commissioned two large-scale downtown murals
- Selected an artist to install a large-scale mosaic mural in the new Ice Arena
- Installed an exhibit of Mark Daehlin’s “Freedom Road Heroes” Civil Rights portraits in City Hall

The Arts and Culture Commission will not continue in 2026. We thank the members of the Arts and Culture Commission for their service.



# Charter Commission

## Accomplishments

A new set of officers for the charter commission was elected. Unlike some years past, we had a full complement of 7 Charter Commission members. Our commission this year was blessed with dedicated members who brought a broad variety of experience and skills to the commission, and who put in many, many hours of dedicated work both at commission meetings and on appointed committees.

The Commission prepared and approved the 2024 annual report which was provided and accepted by the Chief Judge of the third judicial district.

The Commission continued its discussion from 2024 regarding a need to clarify Section 3.5 of the Charter which addresses filling vacancies in the City Council and the office of Mayor. Amendment to any section of the Charter is a monumental task. It requires a great deal of work and requires input from multiple sources – e.g. comparisons to similar provisions in other city charters; examination of state statutes which address similar issues; input from the Minnesota League of Cities, and Minnesota case law which often guides and establishing boundaries for what is legally permissible and what is not. In the end no Charter provision can be adopted without the unanimous consent of the City Council and the Mayor.

After much work and discussion, the Charter Commission forwarded to the City Council a proposed amendment to Section 3.5 which clarified provisions dealing with the specific times when vacancies occur; when elections will help to fill those vacancies; and specifying the time at which a term filled by a vacancy will end. After presentations to the City Council at public hearings, this proposed amendment was adopted unanimously by the City Council, and the Charter was amended accordingly.

## Projects working on for next year

In 2024 the Charter Commission began work on a possible amendment to Charter section 4.1. After some public and city administration input, the issue as to the specific time when council and mayoral terms begin and end may need clarification. The examination of this issue, as with any issue which may lead to a Charter amendment, may require an extensive effort which would occupy much of the 2026 calendar year.

The Charter Commission, as always, will remain open to any proposals from the commission, the city administration, and the public which will assist the commission in its duty to keep the Charter clear, understandable, and timely.

# Economic Development Authority

## Accomplishments

- Facilitated the expansion, relocation and retention of Loon Liquors, LLC to Northfield's downtown! This included applying for and receiving an asbestos mitigation grant from DEED for the building, facilitating the building purchase, and administering two EDA revolving loans to gap their financing. They also received one of the SMIF/DEED grants through the City.
- Completed the Connecting Business and Community program with the University of MN Extension, which included interviewing over 50 local businesses
- Executed a Request for Proposals for the redevelopment of the 5<sup>th</sup> St. E. and Washington St. S. parking lot. Selected Streetfront to pursue redevelopment of the site.
- SMIF/ DEED Mainstreet grant – EDA administered \$750,000 in renovation and construction grants for downtown buildings and businesses, funded by MN DEED, with the help of SMIF.
- Micro grants program: administered 4 \$5,000 grants for local small businesses, including Awakened Healing, Tin Tea, Relationship Therapy, and Verbena Vinyl
- Façade improvement program: granted two façade projects, the Northside Boards building and By All Means Graphics, for brick, window, and door work

## Projects working on for next year

- Strategic planning session
- Provide feedback on the zoning code update.
- Continue to support the 5<sup>th</sup> and Washington redevelopment
- Initiate a micro-loan program, currently being drafted



# Environmental Quality Commission

## Accomplishments

- Initiated a Zero Waste Campaign by launching a community survey targeting both businesses and residents to gauge support for a potential bag fee ordinance aimed at reducing waste and promoting sustainable consumer habits.
- Hosted the “Lower Your Energy Costs” community education event in partnership with Rotary and the Minnesota Center for Energy and Environment (MNCEE), providing residents with resources, incentives, and actionable steps to improve home energy efficiency.
- Coordinated HVAC contractor training with MNCEE to ensure local contractors became certified and knowledgeable about available tax credits, rebates, and energy-efficiency programs, ultimately increasing access to benefits for Northfield residents.

## Projects working on for next year

- Host a forum and education campaign on the climate change implications of agricultural practices and dietary choices
- Outreach Campaign to residents to encourage composting
- Continue educational/promotional campaign focused on home energy efficiency and electrification and EV adoption



# Heritage Preservation Commission

## Accomplishments

- Applied for and received a Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant to create an updated Preservation Plan for the city.
- Helped to update the Land Development Code regarding the sign ordinance.
- Responded to MNDOT's 106 Review regarding the Highway 19 resurfacing project.
- Designated Central Park as a Local Heritage Preservation Site.
- Approved 4 Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) for Major Work, 2 COAs for Minor Work, 10 signs, and provided comment on the adjacent Loon Liquor project.

## Projects working on for next year

- Hire a consultant and develop an updated Preservation Plan.
- Provide guidance on the zoning code update regarding balconies, murals, solar panels, the COA process, etc.
- Continue to respond to applications by reviewing COAs as required.



# Hospital Board

## Accomplishments

- Northfield Hospital + Clinics was included in Becker's list of 100 Great Community Hospitals. Becker's exclusive list honors community hospitals that achieve clinical excellence and personalized, whole-person care delivery.
- In 2025 the birth center and OBGYN practice are on track to deliver over 700 babies! Under the leadership and direction of the Board of Directors, the hospital completed a strategic plan for OBGYN care to support both our growing obstetrical population and expand mid-life gynecological care by strengthening and growing women's health programs.
- NH+C launched a new pain management service to address unmet needs in our community. Through a team-based care approach the clinicians at Northfield Hospital + Clinics work together to eliminate pain and improve quality of life.

## Projects working on for next year

- Medicaid restrictions and changes to Medicare Advantage will require continued NH+C Board focus and attention in 2026. Northfield Hospital is well positioned for continued financial success as an independent hospital and clinic system.
- The Hospital Board and leadership are actively monitoring changes to healthcare access in our neighboring communities. As other rural communities see reductions in local hospital-based services, NH+C will grow our regional care model to expand essential services like obstetrical and surgical services.
- The Northfield Hospital + Clinics board is continuing to focus on supporting high quality care across all our locations. We are committed to excellence in patient care and experience!



# Housing and Redevelopment Authority

## Accomplishments

- Secured a matching grant from the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) for the Local Housing Trust Fund, which will be allocated to Down Payment Assistance and Home Rehabilitation programs.
- Submitted a matching grant application to support a potential Workforce Housing development on City-owned land at Meadows Park; the application was not awarded.
- Implemented a municipal 4d tax program under the Low-Income Rental Classification (LIRC) program, providing reduced property tax rates to owners of affordable rental properties – an important housing preservation tool.
- Provided financial support to key community partners, including:
  - Northfield Union of Youth’s Wallflower Project and Wallflower House
  - Community Action Center’s rent stabilization programs
  - Rice County Habitat for Humanity’s affordable housing programs

## Projects working on for next year

- Develop legislative priorities that strengthen and support housing initiatives in Northfield.
- Update Down Payment Assistance and Home Rehabilitation Loan programs to ensure compliance with the MHFA Local Housing Trust Fund grant requirements.
- Advance housing development on HRA-owned land including necessary predevelopment activities.
- Provide guidance on the zoning code update, focusing on best practices for housing preservation and strengthening the local housing ecosystem.

**Membership of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority will transition to the City Council in 2026. We thank the members of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority for their service.**

# Human Rights Commission

## Accomplishments

- Drafted the LGBTQIA+ Sanctuary City Resolution, which passed the City Council unanimously in August 2025.
- Planned for the city's 2026 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, newly in partnership with the Northfield Public Schools.
- Being present and public, including tabling at Pride and Hispanic Heritage Celebration, and speaking at large public actions related to Gaza and ICE presence in Northfield.

## Projects working on for next year

- Exploring certification program for LGBTQIA+ safe businesses.
- Facilitate more “Know Your Rights” trainings/education for the community.
- Exploring how to support our Northfield immigrant community members in the face of ICE presence in our community.



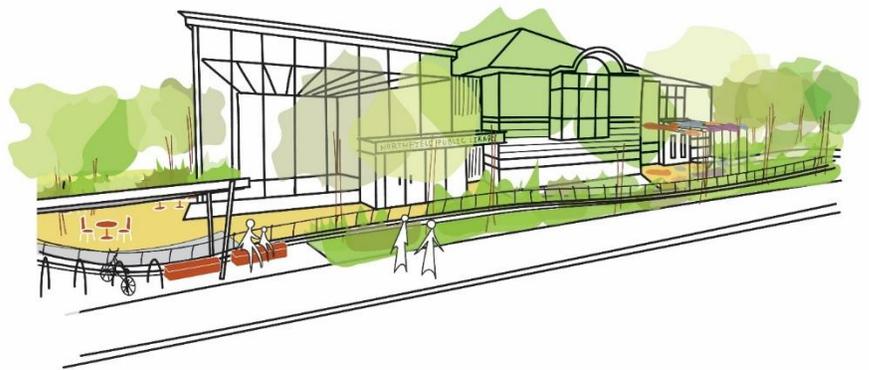
# Library Board

## Accomplishments

- Updated strategic plan
- Finished reviewing and revising all library policies
- Sought community input on accessible, sustainable, and safe site plans

## Projects working on for next year

- Achieving certification as a “sustainable library” through the Sustainable Libraries Initiative
- Approve sustainable, accessible, and safe site plans
- Launch fundraising campaign, grant-seeking, to refurbish library’s grounds
- Draft and approve missing policies



# Mayor's Youth Council

## Accomplishments

It has been another successful year for the Mayor's Youth Council. In April, the City Council voted to approve MYC's request to amend the Council's rules so that members of the public do not have to provide their full address during public comment. In May, MYC members led a field trip to City Hall for more than 80 Greenvale Park Elementary 5th graders, where they learned about how City Council meetings operate and got the chance to share their ideas during a mock "public comment" session. In October, MYC members designed a civically engaged trunk for Northfield High School's Trunk or Treat event where visitors had a chance to vote on fun Halloween-related questions.

## Projects working on for next year

In the upcoming year, Mayor's Youth Council is focusing on increasing community awareness about the group. They produce a regular newsletter updating students on what is happening at the City Council level, plan to table at Winter Walk, and hope to expand on the previous year's early youth engagement activities in the spring. They also plan to focus on greater communication and collaboration with other youth board and commission members beginning in December.



# Northfield Area Fire and Rescue Services Board

## Accomplishments

- Administrative efficiencies: 2025 moved NAFRS to Quickbooks Online and automated accounts receivable applications allowing more time spent on operations and risk reduction vs. data entry and manual processes.
- Strengthen Community Risk Reduction (CRR) work with meetings at independent living communities, property owners/managers, and individual residents educating them on fire safety and prevention.
- Fire ISO Classification – as part of a scheduled review, successfully lowered the Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating's from a Class 4 to a Class 3. The lower the classification, the better suited the fire department and municipal water/hydrant systems can lower insurance loss in the area. This classification fits into the formula insurance carriers use to price property insurance.
- Call reduction – Continue to work on the fire code enforcement and call follow up to prevent repeat fire alarm calls where systems or conditions are the cause. Work with Rice/Steele Dispatch to focus on medical call dispatch for when Rescue Squad is needed. Most times, NH+C Ambulance and law enforcement response suffices. This lowers burnout of volunteer responders.

## Projects working on for next year

- Supporting Fire command staff in recruitment and retention of paid-on-call firefighters, including continued diversity.
- Continue supporting community risk reduction and capital purchases for equipment, technology, training, and safety for NAFRS.
- Expand the data and technology into responding apparatus to give crew as much information on the call. Also gaining efficiency tools with crews to/from Dispatch communications.
- Coordination with MnDOT on Trunk Highway 3 corridor planning, bridge replacement planning



# Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee

## Accomplishments

- Recommendations for the Trunk Highway 246 Turnback from County Road 1 to Trunk Highway 3
- Coordination with other Jurisdictions on the Decker Ave Corridor Study by Rice County
- Update from MnDOT and coordination related Bridge Replacement on Trunk Highway 3
- Rice County/Dundas coordination related to trail connection to Cannon River Regional Park
- Grand opening of Transit Hub.



## Projects working on for next year

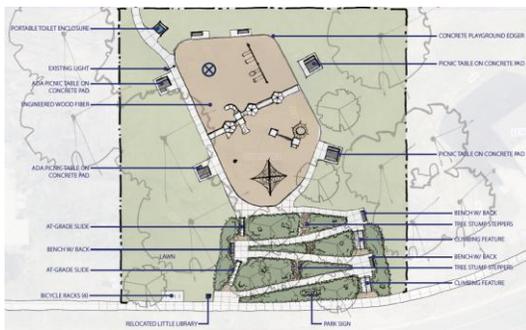
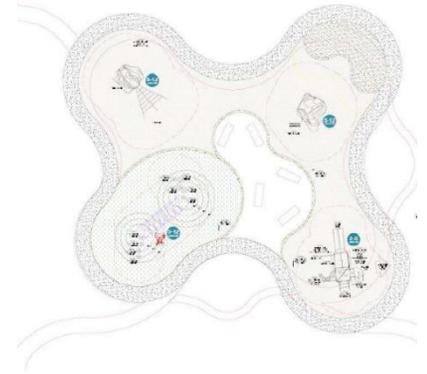
- Improving Transit in Northfield
- Coordination with MnDOT on Trunk Highway 3 corridor planning, bridge replacement planning



# Park and Recreation Advisory Board

## Accomplishments

- Designate Central Park as a local heritage preservation site.
- Relocated Archery Range due to development of surrounding area at old location.
- Develop, Design, and Approve Discovery Zone Playground in Riverside Park. The discovery zone will be a nature-based play park, using different natural materials vs typical metal and plastic equipment.
- Develop and design Central Park playground improvement project.
- Develop and design Dresden Hill playground improvement project.



Dresden Hill Park Design



Central Park Design

The Park and Recreation Advisory Board will not continue in 2026. We thank the members of the Park and Recreation Advisory Board for their service.



# Planning Commission/Zoning Board of Appeals

## Accomplishments

- Completed the Comprehensive Plan 2045 update!
- Started the zoning code update process and hired a consultant for the zoning code update & redesign.
- Processed two annexation applications for properties adjacent to the Northwest Industrial Park.
- Processed three conditional use permits (Loon Liquors, St. Olaf College, and Northfield Dispensary).
- Completed and sent recommendations to the city council on text amendments for adding cannabis to our zoning code, updated the permitted use table, and adding language on short-term rentals.

## Projects working on for next year

- Kick off and continue the zoning code update & redesign! Completion of the update is scheduled for April of 2026.
- Process zoning applications that are received, which include annexations, conditional use permits, subdivisions, variances and more!
- Work with the community, the city council, and all other boards and commissions on the zoning code update.
- Continue promotion of the 2045 Comprehensive Plan!



# Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Alliance

## Accomplishments

Some accomplishments were the Be Safe Be Sober/Prom Readiness campaign, TTHY (quarterly mailings to parents of students grades 5-12 education on the harms of substances and the value youth place on the voice of their parents), Night to Unite, and Continued parent education around the dangers of vaping and other substances through several different modalities.

## Projects working on for next year

For next year, we are going to work on pursuing avenues to limit nicotine access for minors. We want to explore connections between mental health and substance use in youth and continue parent education around substance use and mental health.

