

SCOTT WOPATA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR



September 26, 2025

Attn: Ben Martig, City Administrator
C/O City of Northfield Hiring Committee
Re: Community Development Director
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057

Dear Ben and others,

I am committed to making Northfield a thriving community for all people. In 2015, I left the private sector to focus on building community for youth in Northfield as the Executive Director of the Northfield Union of Youth (NUY). In 2018, I expanded my efforts as the Executive Director of Community Action Center (CAC). Now, I'm excited to expand my efforts as the Community Development Director for the City of Northfield. This is the place I've called home for over 20 years, and where I have established a track record of successfully leading innovative, collaborative, and critical community-centered programs and projects.

My tenure in organizations has been a legacy of growth, both quantitatively and qualitatively. I've implemented programs through a combination of listening to the needs of the community while integrating established best practices. This has helped more families find deeper and more meaningful support to thrive in Northfield. Publicly, I've leveraged my leadership positions to find common ground across stakeholders, establishing trusted and positive relationships with low-income families, nonprofits, city leaders, law enforcement, business leaders, both colleges, the school district, and many others. I bring people together and I move projects forward. Behind the scenes, the key to growth has been administrative sophistication and responsible fiscal management. At CAC, I currently manage 50+ employees and oversee all functions of the organization including HR, fundraising, grant development, project management, and finance - weaving together an incredibly complex tapestry of high compliance state and federal funding streams.

Most importantly, my skills and experiences will help support the vision of the City of Northfield. Growth continues to drive the strategic plan with explicit goals of increasing the tax base and housing availability. This is what I do, I grow things; by bringing people together and getting things done. I'm excited to leverage my relationships and track record of growth and successful project management to support the strategic plan of the city. This includes flood prevention and the removal of the dam, which can be done efficiently, with public insight, and environmental mitigation measures. As part of enhancing service delivery for the city, my experience and relationships can help improve the positive collaboration with established business leaders, the colleges, and the diverse individuals and families who live here. Together, we can tackle current and future challenges around transportation, housing, parks, facilities, and programs while prioritizing progress on our climate action plan.

The City of Northfield is fortunate to have 20,000+ ideas, insights, and perspectives. We have engaged elected leaders, high performing staff, and an array of critical partners who share the vision of a thriving community for all people. I would be honored to be part of that vision as the Community Development Director.

I wish you luck as you navigate this hiring process. Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns that I can address. I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Wopata". The signature is stylized with a large initial "S" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Scott Wopata

SCOTT WOPATA

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR



VISION, GROWTH, AND COMMUNITY

For two decades, I have led Northfield and Rice County organizations through periods of exponential growth, establishing a respected track record of successful projects, programs, and initiatives aligned with complex community development challenges. The keys to this success have been increasingly complex fiscal management, equity-driven community engagement, and communicating a shared and compelling vision. Quite simply, I bring people together and I get things done. I have committed my career to making Northfield a better community. The arc of this career has prepared me for the challenging and yet critical role of Community Development Director for the City of Northfield.

EXPERIENCE

2018-present Executive Director

[Community Action Center](#) (CAC) – human services and community development nonprofit in Rice County

Leadership: Provided renewed vision, energy, and growth after a decade of fiscal deficits and declining community relevance.

Responsible for all functions of the organization including finance, HR, fundraising, grant writing, operations, program, strategic partnerships, and capital projects.

Recruited, led, and managed an engaged board of directors through sweeping strategic shifts in mission, geography, programs, and project development. Includes preparing board reports, leading committees, and establishing roles, policies, and governance.

Growth: Grew CAC over 6+ years from serving 3,000 to 18,000 people (6x); from \$1 million to \$6 million annual budget (6x); from \$500k to \$10 million in fixed assets (20x); from 10 to 50 staff (5x).

Expanded breadth and depth of basic needs human services through complex funding models and deep community collaboration to implement systemic change.

Finance: Managed increasingly complex labyrinth of local, state, and federal funding through periods of growth and economic instability.

Built and led a sophisticated financial administrative system with direct oversight of vendors, auditors, and staff.

Established CAC as a recognized and sought out leader in financially managing private, public, and nonprofit partnerships for programs and projects.

Strategically addressed years of deficit with 7 consecutive years of budget growth, budget surplus, and increasing strategic reserves.

Supervision: Recruited, trained, and managed a diverse workforce of 50+ staff (30+ FTE) to carry out mission-aligned, essential programs and initiatives across 6 locations throughout Rice County. Responsible for developing and supporting organizational culture, evaluating performance, and retaining high quality staff.

Housing: Established myself and CAC as a state-wide leader in tackling affordable housing in Northfield, Faribault, and as a consultant throughout the state of MN.

Successfully supported the completion of Zero Energy Housing developments in Northfield and Rochester, as well as projects currently in pre-development and mid-construction.

Development: Leveraged CAC's expanded scale to position CAC as a trusted and effective leader in community and economic development. Includes requests from City staff, colleges, and the private sector for CAC to take the lead in collaborative projects related to redevelopment, transportation, climate action, business development, and housing.

Strategic grant leadership with a growing portfolio, currently including 30+ co-occurring and interwoven Federal, State, County, and regional foundation contracts and grants; including successfully authoring and administering housing and redevelopment grants for the Cities of Northfield and Faribault.

Publicity: Robust experience sharing complex information with diverse stakeholders. I have recently presented at an AIA conference, EEBA national summit, Energy and Housing Committees at the State Capital, St. Olaf College, Carleton College, MPR, WCCO television, UMN Institute on the Environment, Small Cities and Climate Change Conference, and locally at churches, Rotary, and other events. This also includes regular written communication distributed to thousands of households in Rice County.

Relationships: Positive, trusted, and collaborative relationships with leaders from Northfield businesses, developers, builders, both colleges, city, county, and state staff and elected officials, school districts, law enforcement, nonprofits, faith communities, and deep connections to low- and moderate-income individuals and families.

2015-2018 Executive Director

[Northfield Union of Youth](#) – youth services and enrichment non-profit

Stabilized and rebuilt local youth services organization with renewed vision and leadership. Re-established board policies, governance, and strategic plan. Refreshed programming and built lasting community partnerships.

Grew NUY through new programs, funding, and initiatives to support 3x the youth supported by 5x the staff.

2008-2015 Large Loss Technical Specialist

[Travelers Insurance](#) – multi-national insurance company

Managed and directed the resolution of mid-to high severity property/casualty insurance losses between \$100k - \$10 Million (ie: similar to the Archer House fire).

Senior ranking point person for most difficult, contentious, and highest publicity cases throughout the Midwest (often for cities or larger institutions).

Coordinated application of technical policy language with management of engineers, lawyers, public safety, contractors, and accountants.

2005-2008 General Contractor – licensed general contractor in the Northfield area with a practical understanding of building code compliance.

EDUCATION AND AWARDS

St. Olaf College

Bachelor of Arts – Economics

Graduated Cum Laude with significant course work in public policy, accounting, and statistical analysis. Includes authorizing original research paper on contributing factors and variables to land values in Northfield.

Recent Awards:

City of Northfield Human Rights Award 2024

MN Climate Adaptation Partnership award for Climate Justice Leadership 2024

Bush Prize for Innovation Finalist 2024

Xcel Energy Builder of the Year 2022 (most electric savings per square foot)

OTHER EXPERIENCE AND INTERESTS

- 2011-2018 **Northfield High School Boys Soccer Coach** - Includes a 2016 appearance in the Class A State Championship final
- 2004-2015 **Youth Pastor** – Includes founding a community youth group in Northfield, growing it from 1 to 100 youth per night
- 2021-Current **Elite Trail Runner** – Winner of 2024 Superior 100-mile race and ranked in top 0.3% of the globe according to [UTMB](#) (out of 1,040,000 athletes)

MEDIA LINKS

[Human Rights Award](#) – City of Northfield video related to 2024 Human Right Award

[MN Public Radio](#) – Interview on Climate Cast about Zero-Energy Housing

[WCCO TV](#) – Interview showcasing the human and environmental impact of Zero-Energy Housing

[Climate Justice Leadership](#) – Article and video on Climate Adaptation Partnership Award for Climate Justice Leadership

[Carleton College Convocation](#) – Public discussion about the importance of building community before building programs