

# City of Northfield

*City Hall  
801 Washington Street  
Northfield, MN 55057  
northfieldmn.gov*



## Meeting Agenda

**Thursday, February 19, 2026**

**6:00 PM**

**Council Chambers**

**Planning Commission**

## 6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. [26-082](#) January 15, 2026 PC Meeting Minutes

**Attachments:** [01-15-2026 PC Meeting Minutes](#)

### OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

*Persons may take one opportunity to address the Board/Commission for two (2) minutes (not including interpreter's time) on any topic, even if on the agenda, with the condition that they may not speak on the same item later in the meeting. No notification of the Chair is required. However, speakers are asked to complete a sign up card. Persons wanting a response to a question must submit the question in writing to the recording secretary. Questions must include name and information on how to contact. You may use the back side of the comment cards available in the meeting room. Persons cannot gift their 2 minute speaking time to other members of the public.*

### BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

### REGULAR AGENDA

*Persons that wish to speak on a regular agenda item must provide name and address by completing & submitting a sign up card. Persons may also contact the staff liaison via the City's website no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the meeting. The Chair will call up individuals to speak, based on preregistration and cards submitted, after the staff report on an item. Please be respectful of the public's and the Commission's time.*

2. [26-083](#) Discussion on Proposed Text Amendments to 5.2.6 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Dedication in Chapter 34 - Land Development Code.

**Attachments:** [1 - Hyperlink to Northfield Park Plan \(2008\)](#)

### STAFF UPDATES

### ADJOURNMENT



Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-082, **Version:** 1

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**Planning Commission Meeting Date:** February 19, 2026

**To:** Members of the Planning Commission

**From:** Kari Bonde, Administrative Associate

January 15, 2026 PC Meeting Minutes

**Action Requested:**

Please review the January 15, 2026 PC Meeting Minutes and approve or approve with amendments.

**Summary Report:**

N/A

**City Plans & Policies Relevance:**

N/A

**Alternative Options:**

N/A

**Financial Impacts:**

N/A

**Tentative Timelines:**

N/A



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## Meeting Minutes - Draft Planning Commission

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Thursday, January 15, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

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### 6:00 PM - REGULAR AGENDA

#### CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

- Present** 6 - Commissioner Buckheit, Commissioner Nowak, Commissioner Schmidt, Commissioner Holmes, Kuhlmann, and Schroeer
- Absent** 1 - Commissioner Holleran

*Chair Kuhlmann called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.*

*Also present: City Planner Mikayla Schmidt, Associate City Planner Mathias Hughey, Community Development Director Scott Wopata, Administrative Associate Kari Bonde. Youth rep: Abby Pape.*

#### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**A motion was made by Commissioner Buckheit, seconded by Commissioner Schmidt to approve the agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:**

- Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Buckheit, Commissioner Nowak, Commissioner Schmidt, Commissioner Holmes, Kuhlmann, and Schroeer

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. [26-031](#) December 18, 2025 PC Meeting Minutes

**Attachments:** [12-18-2025 PC Meeting Minutes](#)

**A motion was made by Commissioner Holmes, seconded by Commissioner Nowak to amend the minutes to not include Commissioner Holmes on the votes because she was absent from the meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:**

- Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Buckheit, Commissioner Nowak, Commissioner Schmidt, Commissioner Holmes, Kuhlmann, and Schroeer

#### OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

*No comments.*

#### PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. [BC 26-000](#) Public Hearing for Consideration of a Zoning Map Amendment for 304 2nd St. W.

- Attachments:** [1 - 350-ft Public Hearing Notice Location Map](#)  
[2 - Public Hearing Notice Mailing](#)  
[3 - Presentation](#)

Associate Planner Mathias Hughey introduced the public hearing for the consideration of a Zoning Map Amendment for 304 2nd St. W. The current zoning is R1-B: Low Density Residential. The amendment would be to rezone it to C1-B: Downtown. Hughey reviewed the location, timeline, criteria and noted that the zoning change is supported by city staff.

Youth rep Abby Pape arrived at 6:18pm.

Deacon Mickey Redfearn - concerned about additional traffic passing by St. Dominic's church if 2nd St. closes.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Holmes, seconded by Commissioner Schroeer, to close the Public Hearing. The motion carried by the following vote:**

- Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Buckheit, Commissioner Nowak, Commissioner Schmidt, Commissioner Holmes, Kuhlmann, and Schroeer

**3. [PC Res. 2026-000](#) Consideration of a Zoning Map Amendment for 304 2nd St. W.**

- Attachments:** [1 - PC Resolution](#)

**A motion was made by Commissioner Schroeer, seconded by Commissioner Buckheit, to approve the PC Resolution 2026-001 - Consideration of a Zoning Map Amendment for 304 2nd St. W. The motion carried by the following vote:**

- Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Buckheit, Commissioner Nowak, Commissioner Schmidt, Commissioner Holmes, Kuhlmann, and Schroeer

**BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS**

*Commissioner Holmes - starting in May there will be a Council liaison on the PC instead of a voting member.*

**STAFF UPDATES**

**4. [26-032](#) Staff Updates.**

- Attachments:** [1 - Upcoming Council Agenda Items](#)  
[2 - Hyperlink to the Northfield Comprehensive Plan - Vision and Guiding Values](#)  
[3 - Hyperlink to Northfield Construction & Development Projects](#)  
[4 - Hyperlink to Maryland Department of Planning Webinars](#)

*City Planner Mikayla Schmidt updates:*  
 - introduced the new Community Development Director, Scott Wopata.  
 - Zoning Code update, contract approved, kick-off meeting will be on 1/16.  
 - Park and Trail dedication fees update.  
 - Archer project: City Administrator Martig is extending the TIF for the project.  
 - Cedar Meadows is still moving forward.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**A motion was made by Commissioner Buckheit, seconded by Commissioner Holmes, to adjourn the meeting at 6:55pm. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Yes:** 6 - Commissioner Buckheit, Commissioner Nowak, Commissioner Schmidt, Commissioner Holmes, Kuhlmann, and Schroeer



Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-083, **Version:** 1

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**PC Meeting Date:** February 19, 2026

**To:** Members of the Planning Commission

**From:** Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner  
Scott Wopata, Community Development Director  
Mathias Hughey, Associate City Planner  
Paige Peters, Planning Intern  
Bruce Jacobson, Consultant

Discussion on Proposed Text Amendments to 5.2.6 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Dedication in Chapter 34 - Land Development Code.

**Action Requested:**

The Planning Commission is asked to discuss and provide feedback on the additional analysis and data provided by staff in relation to a potential text amendment to the park and trail dedication fees.

**Summary Report:**

Additional details will be released in a supplemental memo.

Staff received a request to review and develop recommendations related to updating park and trail dedication fees to meet current standards. Northfield's park dedication fees are lower than most comparison communities' which is outlined in this staff report. As part of the Strategic Plan, the council has prioritized developing alternative sources of revenue, and this fee contributes to supporting the city's parks and trails. Community engagement in town consistently reveals a desire for additional investment in trails, parks, and recreational facilities. Access to high quality green space is also an equity and public health issue.

Background

Minnesota State Statute Section 462.358 Subd. 2b. and 2c. (attached) provides enabling legislation to allow municipalities the ability to require parkland dedication or a cash equivalent for park acquisition and development.

Summary of State Statute Section 462.358 Subd. 2b. and 2c.

1. Land Dedication or Fee Requirement
  - a. Cities may require developers to dedicate a reasonable portion of land for public use, such as parks, playgrounds, or open spaces.
  - b. As an alternative, developers may pay a fee in lieu of land dedication.
2. Use of Fees
  - a. Fees collected under this provision must be used exclusively for the acquisition, development, or improvement of parks, recreational facilities, playgrounds, trails, wetlands, or open spaces.
  - b. These funds cannot be used for ongoing operation or maintenance.

3. Nexus and Proportionality
  - a. There must be a clear connection between the fees or land dedication requirements and the municipal purposes they serve.
  - b. The amount of land or fees required must be proportional to the impact of the proposed development.

The current park dedication and fee requirements for the city are summarized below.

**City of Northfield - Chapter 34 - 5.2.6 Parks, Trails, and Open Space Dedication.**

**(D) Land Dedication Required.**

(5) The amount of land required to be dedicated by the applicant for stated purposes in (1) above shall be based upon the net area (gross area minus area required for public streets, trails, and stormwater ponding) of the land to be subdivided which could be developed for residential, commercial, industrial or other purposes. The area shall be determined at the time of the preliminary plat and shall be calculated as follows:

(a) Residential Development.

Dwelling Units per Net Acre	Percent of Net Land Dedicated
0 to 3.9	12
4.0 to 7.9	9
8.0 or more	6

(b) Commercial Development. Five percent of the gross area subdivided.

(c) Industrial Development. Two percent of the gross area for the purpose of trails only.

**(K) Dedication or Cash-in-Lieu of Requirements.** The city may elect to accept a cash payment in lieu of land dedication for parks, recreational facilities, playgrounds, trails, wetlands or open space purposes. In such cases the applicant shall be required to make such payment to the city's dedicated park fund based on the Estimated Market Value as indicated in the records of the County Assessor that is equivalent to a land dedication requirement as follows:

(1) Residential Development.

Dwelling Units per Net Acre	Percent of Land Dedication Equivalent
0 to 3.9	16
4.0 to 7.9	13
8.0 or more	10

(2) Commercial Development. Five percent of the gross area subdivided.

(3) Industrial Development. Two percent of the gross area subdivided.

Basis for Evaluation of Existing Park & Trail Dedication Fees

The City anticipates residential and commercial growth in the coming years and this will place even greater pressure on the park system. Without an increase in the residential share of park dedication fees, the city risks falling behind in acquiring and enhancing park infrastructure to meet the evolving needs of both current and future residents. Many comparable cities have already adjusted their fee structures to ensure new residential developments adequately contribute to the long-term sustainability of their parks.

By aligning Northfield’s residential park and trail dedication fees with comparable cities, the park and trail fund can meet increasing costs to preserve, enhance, and expand park offerings without shifting the financial burden onto existing residents. Park and trail dedication fees will secure long-term sustainability of the existing parks and that new residential development contributes proportionately to the parks that will serve them for decades to come.

Case Study Review & Summaries

As part of the review and evaluation of changing the park dedication fees, staff reviewed other communities’ fees and requirements.

*Case Study 1 - City of Owatonna*

The City of Owatonna does not currently require park and trail dedication fees. They continue to explore this idea through Parks and Trails System Master Plan recommendations which encourages the city to explore adoption of a parkland dedication ordinance. The basis for this recommendation included that the fees provide the needed capital to fund parks and open space. As land develops they recognize the need to provide park land to accommodate the new residents. The same can be said for Northfield. The excerpt recommending park land dedication for Owatonna was provided at the December Planning Commission meeting.

*Case Study 2 - City of Faribault*

The City of Faribault’s park and trail dedication fees are similar to Northfield’s.

*Case Study 3 - City of Red Wing*

The City of Red Wing park dedication is listed below. Information is limited to this chart included within their Zoning + Subdivision Regulations:

FEES IN LIEU OF PARK LAND DEDICATION

Equivalent cash amounts for new subdivisions and planned development for recreational facilities are charged at the time building permits are issued and are as follows:

Apartments & Townhouses	\$225.00 per bedroom
Commercial and Industrial Subdivisions: Planned Industrial Development and Planned Commercial Development	\$1,450.00 per gross acre of development
Double-Family Dwelling	\$500.00 per unit*
Single-Family Dwelling	\$525.00 per unit*

\* Planned Residential Development to be calculated based on per unit fees shown above.

*Case Study 4 - City of Hastings*

The following excerpts from recent City Council Memorandum show the methodology, comparables and analysis of updating their park land dedication requirements. They show

examples of existing requirements for two subdivisions and appraisal-based requirements - see below:

**Yield Substantially Higher**

Calculations of parkland dedication using the new methodology are substantially higher than the current rate as demonstrated in the following comparison:

<b>Subdivision</b>	<b>Existing Requirements</b>	<b>Appraisal Based</b>
Heritage Ridge - 116 single\villa homes	\$2,100 per unit \$243,600 total payment	\$5,141 per unit \$596,366 total payment
Lake Isabelle Flats - 89 apartments	\$1,100 per unit \$97,900 total payment	\$16,229 per unit \$1.4 million total payment

**Fees of Comparable Communities**

A survey of 25 comparable communities was conducted to determine parkland dedication rates. Most cities had a single rate for all unit types. The amount of park dedication charged per dwelling unit is below:

<b>Unit Type</b>	<b>Median Survey Value</b>	<b>Range</b>
Single Family	\$3,631	\$1,500 - \$8,000
Townhome	\$3,525	\$1,500 - \$8,000
Apartment	\$3,500	\$1,500 - \$8,000

Additionally, Hastings then completed a survey of 25 comparable cities. See below:

X-C-01 (a,b)

	Existing Fee	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Low & Mid Density - Less than 12 units per acre	\$ 2,200	\$ 2,700	\$ 3,200	\$ 3,600	\$ 3,600	\$ 3,600
High Density - More than 12 units per acre	\$ 1,100	\$ 1,600	\$ 2,100	\$ 2,600	\$ 3,100	\$ 3,600

Keep the proposed methodology for establishing parkland dedication within the ordinance, which demonstrates that while the City could charge up to the amount in the methodology formula, the actual fees being charged are significantly less.

**Advisory Commission Discussion:**

The Planning Commission reviewed changes at their May 22, 2023, meeting with limited discussion. No one from the public spoke during the public hearing.

The Parks Commission also discussed the ordinance and supported adjusting fees.

**Council Committee Discussion:**

The Finance Committee of City Council (Chair Folch and Leifeld) reviewed proposed changes at their June 12, 2023, meeting. The Committee was generally supportive of establishing fees near the middle of comparable communities and to provide a phased-in approach for implementation.

**Attachments:**

- Ordinance Amendment – Chapter 154
- Ordinance Amendment – Chapter 34

Staff then proposed to establish a \$3,600 per unit parkland dedication fee for all units and proposed a phased approach to implement the change.

*Case Study 5 - City of Ramsey*

In 2022, staff recommended updating the park dedication fees for the City of Ramsey. The two charts below illustrate the current Park and Trail fees collected at the time of closing for all (or at least most) new development projects:

**City of Ramsey**  
2024 Residential Fee Calculator

	Units	Unit Type	Unit Price	Total	Notes
<b>Park Dedication and Trail Development</b>					
Park Dedication					
0-12 Units per acre; or	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$4,500		\$0
12-19 Units per acre; or	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$4,163.00		\$0 7.5% Density Bonus
20+ Units per acre; or	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$3,825		\$0 15% Density Bonus
Assisted Living	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$5,100		\$0
Trail Development					
Residential	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$1,500		\$0
<b>Subtotal Park and Trail Development</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Water and Sewer Fees</b>					
Water Trunk (Connection)	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$2,009		\$0
Water (Lateral Benefit)	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$6,954		\$0
Sanitary Sewer Trunk (Connection)	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$1,349		\$0
Sanitary Sewer (Lateral Benefit)	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$5,418		\$0
<b>Subtotal Water and Sewer Fees</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Stormwater Management Fees</b>					
Stormwater Management	<input type="text"/>	per unit	\$534		\$0
<b>Subtotal Stormwater Management</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Street Signs</b>					
Street Signs	<input type="text"/>	per sign	\$265		\$0
<b>Street Sign Subtotal</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Tree Removal Restitution</b>					
Restitution	<input type="text"/>	inches removed	\$125		\$0 inches beyond 300% preservation threshold
<b>Tree Removal Restitution Subtotal</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL FOR DEVELOPMENT FEES</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Sureties and Inspection Fees</b>					
Performance Surety (returned when complete)	<input type="text"/>	cost of improvement	125%		\$0 Cash or Letter of Credit
Engineering Inspection Fee	<input type="text"/>	cost of improvement	5%		\$0 Cash Escrow
<b>Sewer Accessibility Charges (SAC) &amp; Water Accessibility Charges (WAC) - Collected with Building Permit</b>					
Accessibility Charge (WAC)	<input type="text"/>	per SAC Unit	\$1,481		\$0 Collected with Building Permit
Accessibility Charge (SAC)	<input type="text"/>	per SAC Unit	\$2,485		\$0 Collected with Building Permit
<b>GRAND TOTAL FOR SAC &amp; WAC</b>					<b>\$0</b>



**City of Ramsey**

2024 Commercial/Industrial Development Fee Calculator (Estimate)

	Units	Unit Type	Unit Price	Total	Notes
<b>Park Dedication and Trail Development</b>					
Park Dedication					
Commercial	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$5,100		\$0
Industrial	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$4,375		\$0
Trail Development	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$1,300		\$0
<b>Subtotal Park and Trail Development</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Water and Sewer Fees</b>					
Water Trunk (Connection)	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$7,343		\$0
Water (Lateral Benefit)	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$7,781		\$0
Sanitary Sewer Trunk (Connection)	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$4,063		\$0
Sanitary Sewer (Lateral Benefit)	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$8,920		\$0
<b>Subtotal Water and Sewer Fees</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Stormwater Management Fees</b>					
Stormwater Management	<input type="text"/>	per acre	\$5,321		\$0
<b>Subtotal Stormwater Management</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Tree Removal Restitution</b>					
Restitution	<input type="text"/>	inches removed	\$125		\$0 inches beyond 40% preservation threshold
<b>Tree Removal Restitution Subtotal</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL FOR DEVELOPMENT FEES</b>					<b>\$0</b>
<b>Sureties and Inspection Fees - Calculated at time of Site Plan Review</b>					
Performance Surety (returned when complete)	<input type="text"/>	* cost of improvement	1.25%		\$0 Cash or Letter of Credit
Engineering Inspection Fee	<input type="text"/>	* cost of improvement	5%		\$0 Cash Escrow
		* estimated			
<b>Sewer Accessibility Charges (SAC) &amp; Water Accessibility Charges (WAC) - Calculated and Collected with Building Permit</b>					
Accessibility Charge (WAC)	<input type="text"/>	per SAC Unit	\$1,434		\$0 Collected with Building Permit
Accessibility Charge (SAC)*	<input type="text"/>	per SAC Unit	\$2,485		\$0 Collected with Building Permit
<b>GRAND TOTAL FOR SAC &amp; WAC</b>					<b>\$0</b>

\* Subject to Metropolitan Council Environmental Services rates

City	2019 Residential (Per Unit)	2020 Residential (Per Unit)	2019 Non-Residential	2020 Non-Residential
Andover	\$3,415	\$3,475	\$10,246 / Acre or 10% of FMV, whichever is less	\$10,424 / Acre or 10% of FMV, whichever is less
Apple Valley	\$1,935 - Single Family, \$3,509.69 - Townhouse, \$3,342.50 - Multi	\$1,935 - Single Family, \$3,509.69 - Townhouse, \$3,342.50 - Multi	\$1,272 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.- Retail, \$1881.50 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.- Office, \$636.00 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.- Institutional	\$1,272 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.- Retail, \$1881.50 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.- Office, \$636.00 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.- Institutional
Blaine	\$4,320	\$4,449	\$8,704 / Acre	\$8,704 / Acre
Bloomington	\$5,700	\$5,700	\$585 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.	\$585 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.
Brooklyn Center	\$0 / Acre	\$0 / Acre	\$0	\$0
Brooklyn Park	\$4,600	\$4,600	\$8,000 / Acre	\$8,000 / Acre
Burnsville	\$2,717	\$2,717	\$17,500 / Acre	\$17,500 / Acre
Chanhassen	\$5,800 - Single Family, \$5,000 - Duplex, \$3,800 - Multi	\$5,800 - Single Family, \$5,000 - Duplex, \$3,800 - Multi	\$12,500 / Acre	\$12,500 / Acre
Champlin	\$4,370	\$4,370	\$8,323 / Acre	\$8,323 / Acre
Cottage Grove	\$3,400	\$3,400	\$6,000 / Acre	\$6,000 / Acre
Eagan	\$3,579	\$3,722	\$939 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.	\$977 / 1,000 Sq. Ft.
Eden Prairie	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$11,500 / Acre	\$11,500 / Acre
Falcon Heights	8%	8%	10% FMV	10% FMV
Fridley	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$.023 / SF	\$.023 / SF
Golden Valley	6%	6%	6% FMV	6% FMV
Inver Grove Hights	\$2,850	\$2,850	\$7,000 / Acre	\$7,000 / Acre
Lakeville	Low Density: \$4,294, Medium Density: \$2,922, High Density: \$2,240	Low Density: \$4,509, Medium Density: \$3,068, High Density: \$2,352	\$7,693 / Acre	\$7,693 / Acre
Little Canada	\$3,500	\$3,500	7% FMV or 10% of Land	7% FMV or 10% of Land

Ramsey completed extensive research to review and summarize park dedication fees to support their proposed changes - see below. These fees are from 2019 and 2020, so we can assume they have only increased since then.

Maple Grove	\$4,262	\$4,177	\$11,000 / Acre	\$11,000 / Acre
Maplewood	\$3,540	\$3,540	9% FMV	9% FMV
Moundsview	\$3,500	\$3,500	10% FMV	10% FMV
Oakdale	\$2,886	\$2,886	Retail \$467 / 1,000 Sq. Ft., Office: \$534 1,000 Sq. Ft.	Retail \$467 / 1,000 Sq. Ft., Office: \$534 1,000 Sq. Ft.
Plymouth	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000 / Acre	\$8,000 / Acre
Richfield	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Roseville	\$4,000	\$4,000	10% FMV	10% FMV
Shakopee	\$5,340	\$5,340	\$9,500 / Acre	\$9,500 / Acre
Shoreview	4%	4%	10% FMV	10% FMV
St. Louis Park	\$1,500	\$1,500	5% FMV	5% FMV
Woodbury	\$3,500	\$3,500	\$6,000 / Acre	\$6,000 / Acre
Average	\$3,319	\$3,329		

Developer Reaction to Park Dedication Fees

The reaction from developers to park dedication fees is mixed; while some developers accept them as a cost of doing business, others challenge them as an unfair regulation that harms project feasibility and housing affordability. Reasons for developers' opposition include:

**Financial burden and higher costs:** Park fees are an additional expense that can make a project less profitable and sometimes even unfeasible. This is especially true for projects in high-cost, built-out cities, where fees are layered onto already-high land and construction costs.

**Questionable "nexus" to the specific development:** Some developers object that their project creates no new demand for parks and that the fees are an arbitrary tax. This has led to court challenges, arguing that fees are only proper when there is a "direct link" between the subdivision and the need for more parks.

**Erosion of housing affordability:** Developers argue that park fees, along with other impact fees, add to the cost of new housing and are ultimately passed on to the buyer or renter. This can increase the price of new homes and reduce affordability.

**Slowing or stalling development:** Faced with additional costs and reduced profitability, some developers may postpone or cancel projects, which can hurt local economic growth and worsen housing shortages.

**Unclear spending and proportionality:** Developers sometimes challenge how fees are calculated and where the money is spent. Legal precedents, including some from the U.S. Supreme Court, mandate that fees be "roughly proportional" to the development's impact. However, some developers argue that municipalities often fail to make these individualized determinations, instead using a one-size-fits-all formula.

To address developer concerns, cities and developers have explored alternative arrangements:

**Donating land instead of cash:** Some ordinances allow developers to dedicate a portion of their land to the city for park use instead of paying a fee. This is often an option for large suburban subdivisions but less common in dense, urban infill projects where available land is scarce.

**On-site private parks with public access:** In some cases, developers can receive credit toward their park fee by providing publicly accessible open space on their private property. This can take the form of plazas or green spaces.

**Flexible fee structures:** Cities have made some concessions by adjusting fee calculations based on property type, density, or location. For example, some cities have lower fees for downtown high-density developments or for certain affordable housing projects.

**Targeted spending zones:** Some regulations ensure that fees collected from a specific development must be spent on parks in the same geographic area. This provides a more direct link between a developer's contribution and a nearby community benefit.

It is important to note that developers' objections are often in conflict with city planners and park boards, who view these fees as an essential tool to ensure that new development is accompanied by the necessary public infrastructure. From a city's perspective, park fees are a way to fund growth responsibly; provide crucial funding for infrastructure improvements; and reflect increased demand for quality public space to serve a growing population.

Also of note is that access to parks and open space provides economic and public health benefits. A 2005 study cited in Northfield's Park's Open Space and Trail System Plan reports that nearly two-thirds of Twin Cities residents would pay 10-25% more for a home within walking distance of open space, a premium that offsets additional developer costs.

Total Northfield park acreage is **564**, divided by total city population **26,500** [including the colleges] = **.0213** acres of parkland per person, multiplied by the average persons per household unit of **2.4** = **.05** acres per household unit, multiplied by fair market value\* of vacant land **\$54,700** = Park and Trail Dedication Fee per household unit **\$2,735 . . . adjusted to \$2,500 per unit as a reasonable place to start with this amended approach to park and trail dedication fees.** [\*Note: fair market value is an average based on Rice County property values listed for these Northfield properties: Bluff View 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition, Harvest Hills 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition, Festler Farms, MnDOT Site, Northwest Business Park]

**Alternative Options:**

NA

**Financial Impacts:**

If an increase in park dedication fees occurs, there will be more funds available for parks, trails, etc. as development occurs.

**Tentative Timelines:**

December 18, 2025: First discussion of Park Dedication fees with the Planning Commission  
February 19, 2026: PC Discussion  
March 19, 2026: Potential public hearing date on a text amendment  
April 7, 2026: First Reading at City Council

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**File #: 26-083, Version: 1**

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April 21, 2026: Second Reading at City Council and Summary Publication Notice  
April 29, 2026: Summary Publication published in the newspaper  
30 days later: Ordinance goes into effect