

Northfield Downtown

DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

July 2018

Mid-year progress report from the NDDC on fulfilling its 2018-2020 contract with the City of Northfield

1

Implement Main Street America Program in collaboration with Economic Development Partners (i.e. Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors' Bureau and Northfield Enterprise Center).

Main Street Program

The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota presented a Certificate of Designation to the Northfield Downtown Development Corporation on June 1, 2018 in recognition of the NDDC's acceptance into the Minnesota Main Street program. Representatives from the Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce and the Northfield Convention and Visitors Bureau boards were on hand for the presentation at Bridge Square. The Economic Development partner organizations will collaborate with the NDDC, contributing their downtown-focused hours and events to help fulfill the 40 hours FTE Main Street program requirements.

During the lengthy application process, the NDDC received strong support from a broad cross-section of the community. Many area nonprofits and businesses wrote letters in support of Downtown Northfield's Minnesota Main Street designation including the Northfield City Council, Historic Preservation Commission, Economic Development Authority, Carleton College, Northfield Arts Guild, the Northfield Historical Society, Save the Northfield Depot, The Rotary Club of Northfield, Neuger Communications, and Peer Solutions.

Designation gives the NDDC access to networking, idea exchange, conferences, seminars, access to statistics and available grants, help writing workplans, sample budgets, etc. Staff recently participated in a Main Street Directors workshop in Mankato and monthly conference calls. Sarina Otaibi, MN Main Street Coordinator, met with staff on July 12th to begin implementing the program.

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Collaboration with Partner Organizations

The NDDC moved into the new shared office space at 19 Bridge Square in February--now housed under one roof with the Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce, the Northfield Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Northfield Enterprise Center. This improved visibility and proximity to Bridge Square makes it much easier to align operations, share resources and connect with downtown stakeholders. The four Economic Development Partner organizations continue to meet quarterly with City staff to coordinate efforts.

Develop strong collaborative relationships with City staff, Northfield Economic Development Authority (EDA), and the Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism on projects and programs which relate to the support and improvement of downtown Northfield.

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Communicate with businesses, both in person and through other means, to assemble a useful picture of the needs and concerns of the business district in general, and address specific issues of recruitment and retention.

Communication with Businesses

- The NDDC formed a Business Recruitment committee, which includes representation from the Chamber, the City, financial services providers, real estate professionals and local business owners. The committee meets monthly and is working to ensure a diverse mix of businesses in the downtown district, filling any vacancies and creating a waiting list for future available space.
- Staff continues to communicate regularly in person, by phone and via email with downtown businesses.
- Staff attends monthly “Be Local Buy Local” committee meetings at the Chamber.
- The NDDC continues to promote Downtown Northfield and its businesses through Facebook, Instagram and our blog/website.
- We hosted the second Downtown Northfield Taste Tour food crawl on June 21st and sold over 5000 tickets in three hours. The 12 participating downtown restaurants received 70% of the profits and 30% went back to the NDDC.
- We successfully launched our monthly First Friday Art Night events on June 1. These will occur on the first Friday of every month through 2018 (except during DJJD in September) and will bring visitors and locals to shop and dine downtown.
- All Carleton and St. Olaf freshmen will again receive a map and listing of downtown businesses as a part of our annual Welcome Students Campaign, in partnership with the Northfield News.

Stakeholder Input

- The NDDC formed a parking committee in 2018, which meets every two weeks. Since there has not been a formal parking study since the 2001 Walker Study, this committee engaged the Carleton statistics class to design a downtown parking study. This fall, we will begin gathering data for the study with sampling to occur during each of the four seasons during various days and hours.
- We have worked with City staff on the dumpster enclosure project to be constructed in the 5th street parking lot. After it is finished, the NDDC will coordinate access to the enclosure with the adjacent downtown businesses.
- We met with members of the Riverwalk Market Fair board to discuss how the NDDC could support administration and expansion of the event. We will meet again this fall after their season concludes.
- We raised funds last November to purchase new holiday lights for Bridge Square. Everyone enjoyed the new brighter look.
- 12 years ago, the NDDC coordinated the purchase of the Historic Downtown Northfield lamppost banners. We are working to replace those with a new look.

Summary

- In addition to these four categories, we continue to make progress in the remaining areas of our contract: working with the City on riverfront expansion opportunities; educating downtown businesses on signage and working to support EDA initiatives. We look forward to sharing even more progress on these deliverables at our year-end report.

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Assist CITY, as requested, in providing downtown stakeholder input related to items such as downtown parking initiatives, acting as primary coordinator for garbage enclosure initiative, marketing downtown projects and others that may arise. Identify private funds and volunteer opportunities to achieve these ideas.