



MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 12, 2025

To: Northfield Planning Commission

CC: Jake Reilly, Community Development Director; Mathias Hughey, Associate City Planner; Nate Carlson, Economic Development Coordinator; Melissa Hanson, Housing Coordinator; Mike Morehouse, Building Official; Ben Martig, City Administrator, Dave Bennett, Director of Public Works/City Engineer; Jeff Schroepfer, Police Chief; Lynette Peterson, City Clerk; Michelle Mahowald, Communications & Human Resources Director; Natalie Draper, Director of Library; Brenda Angelstad, Finance Director; Chris Hood, City Attorney

From: Mikayla Schmidt, City Planner

RE: Supplemental Agenda Background Memo for June 16, 2025.

Summary Report:

The following is an update on agenda items as supplemental background agenda information made available for the Monday, June 16, 2025, Planning Commission meeting:

9. PC Res. 2025-010 Consideration of the Annexation Application for PID 0432375001 by Baja3, LLC.

- The applicant requested their application be removed from the agenda. Staff will remove this agenda item and will keep the public hearing item on the agenda, so the public can still provide comment. Their comments will be saved as part of the public record and anyone who speaks at the public hearing on June 16 may speak again on this item at a future meeting.
- See the attached public comment for this item.

I am writing to express concern about some of Northfield's intentions regarding annexing farmland. I live in Northfield Township just east of the new piece of agricultural land that is up for being annexed. Our farm has been an operating farm for over 125 years as is true for several of the farms around here. *Mikayla, please pass this on to the Planning Commission.*

I believe it is important that Northfield government and planners pay attention to some important issues:

1. Rice County says right on its website that it holds a strong value in protecting agriculture. The city of Northfield should have that value too.

2. Agriculture is an important business. It should be protected and not annexed for development especially on the east side. (See "especially" why below.)

3. Our country is experiencing an extremely serious climate crisis. Are you paying attention and do you care? Do you care about our climate crisis and is the City willing to pay attention and take actions that protect our climate? Farmers know how to sequester carbon, and many do with their tilling practices. Northfield should have a value of protecting the climate. We have a call to do what we can to make sure it doesn't get **worse and worse and worse** than it is already. As you know it's already pretty bad. and so if you annex the property on Wall Street Rd., then use it for development and take it out of agriculture that would be a terrible thing to do. The Mayor calls herself "a climate Mayor". I was so happy to hear that because I think that is really important. It's important for you all to know we are in a climate crisis and The City should have a value in protecting agriculture, to protect the planet,

4. The east side of Northfield has the most fertile soil of anywhere around Northfield. This is not the area that should go toward development. Many years ago when migrant workers would come here to work spring, summer and early fall and then return to their homes often in Mexico, that worked out well for all. Farmers got the help they needed and workers got paid. Those workers would say, "Lets go work on Wall Street---we'll be paid in cash." They named it Wall Street, now called Wall Street Road. The rich soil gave the farmers good crops and they were able to pay the workers well. So this good agricultural soil should be protected. I wish Northfield would take on that value that Rice County holds and states as so important.

5. I know there is a developer who wants the city to annex rich farmland on Wall Street Road next to our farm. This is not a good idea. Also in the past we saw in your plans that possibility and it also showed a "Greenway" proposed to go right through our farm, right through our turkey barns! It was so tragically sad to see that, as if our business doesn't matter. Supposedly Northfield wants more businesses around so why would it take one unnecessarily down?? Does Northfield have a value in protecting businesses?? I hope you, the Council and the Mayor will take good action in these ways realizing the *value* of agriculture.

Years ago when agriculture was in trouble financially in the 80's, Phil Parsons, who owned the first farm out of Northfield on the east side, was at risk of losing his farm for economic reasons, so he decided to develop it, so Northfield now has Mayflower development. That was when Leonard Hubers, 2nd farmer outside on the east side of Northfield, sat in my

kitchen and told me he understood I would be really concerned about his plans to invite annexation and develop part of his land. He said he wished he didn't have to but he was being assessed by the city for **40 lots (!)** adjoining Parson's development! This is what is known as the "domino effect" on farmers--when one farm goes down it can easily affect the next one. So one at a time farmers can go down. What farmer can afford to pay assessments on 40 lots? No homeowner could, yet a farmer is expected to? I am not sure if those kinds of assessments still go on. It has been confusing when I looked into it, but they shouldn't. Leonard told me he was developing a portion of his farmland (which became Rosewood) in order to protect the rest of his farm so he could keep it for his children and grandchildren.

That was very sad to hear he had to do that. So if the land the city is being asked to annex, our farm, 125 years old, would also go down. Because when one farmer sells his land that's next to another farm and it gets developed then the other farm for all of the land that adjoins the developed land, in the past, got charged \$40 per acre for taxes, That is the domino effect on farmland. Whether it has actually changed or not I do not know. What local owner in Northfield could afford to pay \$40 per acre on their land? I know the City has been more interested in development on the south west and even north sides of the city and I think that is better than annexing the rich agricultural soil land on the east side.

So I hope the Northfield City Council, planners, and the new Mayor will hold these values of protecting agriculture, protecting our climate, and not annex land on the east side, make a respectful plan with Northfield Township and remember that farmers matter, and keep in mind the need to care about our world. I hope you will think about being conscious of the climate catastrophe we are going through and not add to it by bringing our farm down too, taking it out of production. I saw that part of Northfield's future vision is the preservation and enhancement of environmental resources, and says that the natural environment will be protected. This would be a higher vibration of caring and cooperation rather than separation, and I hope you all will follow through with this wider vision.

Sincerely,
Dorothea Hrossowyc Holden
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