

Archer House Redevelopment Narrative

Northfield, Minnesota

Project Description for City Review

Project Overview

The proposed Archer House redevelopment is a mixed-use infill project located within downtown Northfield along the Cannon River. This development seeks to rebuild a historically significant site by introducing a vertically integrated program consisting of structured parking in the basement, active ground-floor commercial space with 3 tenants, and upper-level hotel accommodations.

The project is designed to support downtown vitality, enhance riverfront engagement, and align with Northfield's comprehensive planning goals related to economic development, tourism, walkability, and contextual urban design.

Site Organization and Land Use

The building program is organized to maximize efficient land use while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding urban fabric:

- **Below-Grade Parking Level**

A single level of below-grade structured parking is provided to accommodate hotel guests and associated uses. Locating parking below grade minimizes visual impact, reduces demand for surface parking allowing for riverfront engagement with a patio, and supports a pedestrian-oriented streetscape consistent with downtown planning objectives.

- **Ground Floor – Commercial and Lobby Uses**

The first floor is programmed with retail and commercial tenant spaces oriented toward the public right-of-way, creating active edges along the street frontage. These uses are intended to support local businesses, enhance the pedestrian experience, and welcome hotel guests in an inviting lobby. The hotel lobby and associated service areas are integrated into the ground floor plan, providing a clearly identifiable entry point differentiated from the stairwell egress. The lobby is designed to maintain transparency and visual connection to both the street and riverfront, reinforcing public engagement.

- **Upper Floors (Levels 2–4) – Boutique Hotel**

Levels two through four are dedicated to boutique hotel accommodations. The hotel program includes guest rooms, circulation, and accessory amenities typical of a limited-service or boutique lodging use. The scale of the hotel is consistent with

downtown development patterns and supports the City's goal of expanding overnight lodging capacity within the core area and replacing the historic function of the site.

Building Design and Context

The building massing, height, and façade articulation are designed to be compatible with the scale and character of downtown Northfield. The project incorporates materials, proportions, and fenestration patterns that reference the surrounding historic context while maintaining a contemporary architectural expression.

Primary entrances are oriented toward public streets, and façade transparency at the ground level is prioritized to promote visual interaction between interior uses and the public realm.

Circulation and Access

Vehicular access to the below-grade parking is designed to minimize conflicts with pedestrian circulation and maintain efficient traffic flow. Loading and service functions are accommodated on-site and positioned to reduce impacts on public streets.

Pedestrian access is emphasized through direct connections to the sidewalk network and proximity to existing downtown amenities and riverwalk facilities.

Riverfront Integration

Given its location adjacent to the Cannon River, the project incorporates design strategies that enhance visual and physical connectivity to the riverfront. Building orientation, window placement, and amenity spaces are configured to take advantage of river views while maintaining sensitivity to environmental considerations.

Consistency with Planning Objectives

The redevelopment advances several key City objectives, including:

- Strengthening the downtown core as a mixed-use activity center
- Expanding lodging options to support tourism and economic development
- Promoting walkability and reducing reliance on surface parking
- Reinforcing active ground-floor uses along primary corridors
- Enhancing the relationship between built form and the Cannon River

Conclusion

The Archer House redevelopment represents a context-sensitive infill project that leverages a prominent downtown location to deliver a balanced mix of uses historic to the site. By integrating below-grade parking, active commercial space, and upper-story lodging, the project supports long-term economic vitality while maintaining compatibility with Northfield's historic character and urban design goals.