

1. It is difficult to respond fully to this plan since the details are not stated in a written document or a more detailed map. It is difficult to know, for example, whether the current mailbox will continue to be in Bridge Square or whether this plan provides parking for the Post Office, among other issues. It is also hard to decipher whether access for farmers market stalls or Jesse James food trucks will still exist where Water Street currently runs. It appears that the new trees would block access. A larger, drawn-to-scale, picture would be helpful.
2. No mention is made about the fact that the Square is a crucial part of the Northfield Historic District. and must follow the National Guidelines governing historic districts. As the 2014 plan stated " the Dept. of the Interior National Park Service's Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Preserving Cultural Landscapes 1. Identify, Retain, and Preserve Historic Materials and Features." My interpretation of this guideline specifies that, as I assume the plan agrees, the existing water sculpture as currently designed, the Civil War monument, and at least one drinking fountain would remain where they are. A splash pool is not feasible. It would be usable for only a few months and would take up too much room. Moreover the current seating surrounding the sculpture is heavily used. The sculpture fits, a lighted "art column" would not fit the National Park Service Guidelines.
3. I like the idea of a paved entrance near Division Street and a green space past the current Jacobson fountain but am unclear whether food trucks, Jesse James booths, etc. would be on the grass.
4. I remain concerned about the limited usability and flexibility of the space if all parking is removed. Where would trucks load and unload, for example. I think that it would be helpful for the consultants to present options for nearby parking.
5. Overall, I applaud the increase in trees but, given our extensive winter season, would like to see some evergreen trees retained. The current picture shows none. A decorated Spruce tree with holiday lights has been a feature of Bridge Square for more than 50 years. The Winter Walk with the Percheron drawn wagons have long reminded the town of its nineteenth century origins. The little kids and adults love them.

Thanks for considering these ideas.
Cliff Clark

Comments on Proposed Changes to Bridge Square – Alice Thomas 2-21-22

For each feature of Bridge Square plan below I am providing two types of comments: 1) comments relevant to the status of Bridge Square as an Historical Site based on the Secretary of Interior Standards for Historical Landscape Sites, which is to be utilized by the HPC, and 2) comments reflecting personal perspective views of utility, practicality, safety, etc.

Appropriate/Positive Items in Phase 1

Civil War Memorial in historical location.

- 1) Given that the feature is designated as a contributing feature, there is no question about its remaining in the square in the original location. The HPC would be abdicating our responsibility if we were to ignore the Secretary of Interior Standards which direct that *“removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided”*.
- 2) The memorial also provides year-around built-in seating that is used often.

Items in Phase 1 that could be acceptable in the Historic Square with modification

Closing Water St. in the area of Bridge Square

- 1) While the removal of the street adversely affects the historical landscape, it does provide important additional uses in the Square. The standards suggest, however, that an original feature should not be entirely erased noting that *“Designing and installing compatible new circulation features when required by the new use should assure the preservation of historic character of the landscape”*. In this case, if the area of the current street were elevated to be level with the rest of the square and the original “shadow” of the street were covered in pavers vs. grass, it would acknowledge the historical street and separate visually the two portions of Bridge Square – as it was during the period of significance.
- 2) If pavers were used on the area of the street it would also provide some hard surface between the two grassy areas that would be more vehicle friendly for food trucks, stages, etc. and make the space more flexible than in the current plan. It would also reduce the total area of grass which would reduce expense and labor to maintain. The Green is attractive on the plan and sketches due to the size, but does not seem at all practical. Is the City ready to provide the appropriate maintenance needed for the area that could include heavy vehicles during special occasions?

The Terrace - Expanding hard surface space

- 1) The size of the proposed Terrace, most, but not all, of which is in the Historic District area, affects the character of the historical landscape. If it were smaller and if it were linked to the above proposed pavers in the area of Water St., the historical character would be less affected.
- 2) Reducing the size of the current hard surface terrace and providing some grass would also provide more flexibility of the space. Note: I simply cannot tell from the plans nor the images what the green horizontal stripes in the plan in that area indicate.

Adding Trees

- 1) The Secretary of Interior Standards note that *New additions are not recommended that detract from or alter the historic topography, e.g., a new feature that would obscure an historic shoreline*. The location and number of additional trees needs to be carefully revised to prevent the historical view of the river (a significant feature of the square) from being obscured from the square.
- 2) While trees provide shade and have environmental benefits, the loss of the view of the river is a significant factor in the number and location of the trees.

Item that is not acceptable in the Historic Square

Splash Pad, i.e., Changing fountain – to a splash pad

- 1) While the 1980 fountain is not yet a contributing feature (eight years short of the required 50 yrs.), this is a designated historic area. The Secretary of Interior Standards for rehabilitation read, *When alternations to a cultural landscape are needed to assure its continued use, it is most important that such alterations do not radically change, obscure, or destroy character-defining spatial organization and land patterns or features and materials.* The sculpture does have integrity and has a continued use - it provides year-around functions: appreciation of an art piece with a Northfield history, year-around seating, and has provided entertainment to small children who put their hands in it and splash – without getting themselves and those around them totally wet. Location design, setting, and association are all aspects of integrity
- 3) A splash pad would have no Northfield history, has a limited user population, a very limited season, and an additional expense that does not seem an improvement and would eliminate a feature that in a few years would be designated as a contributing feature because of its integrity. In addition, a “child friendly” splash pad project is underway for the community that would be in a much larger and safer place regarding traffic than Bridge Square.

Items in Historic District but not in Phase 1

The Woonerf - Making street by P.O & NHS level with sidewalks and Bridge Square

- 1) Making the street level with the sidewalks and Bridge Square area in and of itself would not seem to affect the historic character of the landscape, but further changes that would affect the historic character of the landscape should not be implemented, e.g., removing parking, adding grass on the former street area, etc. Those additional changes would affect the historical character and possibly affect the future viability of the Post Office if access were affected (see discussion of The Riverwalk below).
- 2) Removing the parking would be detrimental to the area businesses and the downtown. If the street space were level with Bridge Square, it could then be shut off to traffic on special occasions to provide flexible use. That has been the practice in the past but it would be more flexible on those occasions if the surface were at the same height as Bridge Square. I question, however, how practical it is regarding water run-off and the need for storm drains in that area where there have been issues with flooding in adjacent buildings. Removing the curbs and storm drains on both the Water St. strip and this street may not be practical in that regard.

Bridge

The Bridge is a contributing feature in the Historic District. I cannot judge the extent to which the new design will affect the historical character since I am not clear about the details of the plan.

While it is a good idea to improve pedestrian safety on the bridge, care needs to be taken to retain the historical character. A clarification is also needed of the possible effect on access for the heavy 4th St. commercial delivery traffic (reported by the commerce interests) will/could be re-routed if 4th St. is significantly changed.

Items not in Historic District nor in Phase 1, but affecting the Historic District

The Riverwalk

The planned removal of almost all parking in that area will affect the use of the Bridge Square as a shopping area, and will definitely require additional parking elsewhere which could possibly push parking into historical areas. The proposed new design and lack of easy access to the Historic Post Office might also affect the future viability of the Historic Post Office – a serious, negative outcome. This area needs much more thought but there is time given that it is the 2nd phase.