

City of Northfield

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



Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

Environmental Quality Commission

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. [26-077](#) January 21, 2026 EQC Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [1 - January 21, 2026 EQC 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. Members of the public wishing to speak must adhere to the following guidelines:

- *Speak only once for no more than two minutes (not including interpreter's time) on the topic unless the speaker is addressed by the Commission;*
- *Identify your relationship to the topic;*
- *Have a spokesperson or two for your group to present your comments;*
- *Persons wanting a response to a question must submit the question in writing to the recording secretary, including name and how you would like to be contacted.*

2. [26-078](#) Sustainable Building Policy

Attachments: [1 - EQC_SBP_Final](#)

3. [26-079](#) 2026-2027 Work Plan

Attachments: [1 - 2026 Work Plan Final Initiatives](#)
[2026 Work Plan Tracker](#)

4. [26-081](#) Consider Motion of Support for Resolution Proclaiming April 24, 2025 as Arbor Day in Northfield.

Attachments: [2026 Arbor Day Resolution](#)

STAFF UPDATES

- 5. [26-080](#) Staff Update

ADJOURNMENT



Legislation Text

File #: 26-077, **Version:** 1

Environmental Quality Commission Meeting Date: February 18, 2026

To: Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

From: Matt Bailey, Meeting Associate

January 21, 2026 EQC Meeting Minutes

Action Requested:

Please review the January 21, 2026 EQC 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 Environmental Quality Commission

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

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

Chair Provancha called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Present: 8 - Chair Michael Provancha, Commissioner Bruce Anderson, Commissioner Janet Petri, Commissioner George Kinney, Commissioner Susannah Shmurak, Vice Chair Rob Hanson, Commissioner Ava Podracky and Commissioner Kimberly Haroldson

Also present: Risi Karim, Assistant to the City Administrator; Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator; Matt Bailey, Meeting Associate; Alex Halverson, Youth Representative

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Kinney, to approve the agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Chair Provancha, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Kinney, Commissioner Shmurak, Vice Chair Hanson, Commissioner Podracky and Commissioner Haroldson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. [26-039](#) December 17, 2025 EQC Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Shmurak, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, to approve the December 17, 2025 EQC Meeting Minutes. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Chair Provancha, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Kinney, Commissioner Shmurak, Vice Chair Hanson, Commissioner Podracky and Commissioner Haroldson

PRESENTATIONS

2. [26-040](#) Zero Waste Initiative #1 - Single-Use Carryout Bag Community Survey Results

Assistant to the City Administrator Risi Karim presented the results of the Single-Use Carryout Bag Community Survey. Karim responded to questions and comments from the EQC.

OPEN PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was received.

BOARD MEMBER AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

- Commissioner Petri informed the EQC of the upcoming presentation by Forest to Fork on February 22, 2026 at Cannon Valley Friends.
- Commissioner Anderson has been following developments in balcony solar power, small-scale solar panels that can generate small amounts of household power where rooftop solar is not an option.

REGULAR AGENDA

3. [26-041](#) Discussion regarding the 2026 Work Plan

Assistant to the City Administrator Risi Karim presented the suggestions she received from the EQC for the 2026-2027 EQC Work Plan. The commissioners discussed all the suggested initiatives, working via consensus-building to make a final list of six.

STAFF UPDATES

4. [26-042](#) Staff Update

Assistant to the City Administrator Risi Karim introduced the new Sustainability Coordinator Sara Pabich. Karim presented updates from City staff.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Commissioner Shmurak, seconded by Commissioner Kinney, to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. The motion carried by the following vote:

- Yes:** 8 - Chair Provancha, Commissioner Anderson, Commissioner Petri, Commissioner Kinney, Commissioner Shmurak, Vice Chair Hanson, Commissioner Podracky and Commissioner Haroldson



Legislation Text

File #: 26-078, Version: 1

EQC Meeting Date: February 18, 2026

To: Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

From: Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator

Sustainable Building Policy

Action Requested:

N/A

Summary Report:

The City's Sustainable Building Policy is currently not achievable for current development projects due to external constraints on renewable energy interconnections and policy requirements that depend on on-site renewables. As a result, projects receiving City financial assistance cannot comply with the policy as written.

Background: The Sustainable Building Policy supports Northfield's Climate Action Plan and goal of becoming a carbon-free community by 2040. Since buildings account for the most local greenhouse gas emissions, the policy is intended to reduce energy use and environmental impacts in new construction and major renovations. The policy applies to projects receiving City financial assistance, including tax increment financing, grants, loans, or land write-downs. One of the core elements are the "Northfield Green Requirements," which include:

1. Calculate greenhouse gas emissions
2. Energy efficiency standards
3. Renewable energy standards

These requirements cannot be modified administratively and require Council approval to change.

Key Reasons the Policy Is Not Currently Achievable

1. Renewable Energy Standard: The policy requires evaluation and installation of on-site renewable energy when cost-effective. However, Xcel Energy's interconnection queue for solar and microgrids is currently three to five years long, with no guarantee of approval due to grid congestion. This makes on-site solar infeasible for current projects and requires studies for systems that may never be built. Geothermal is technically allowed but is complex, costly, and must be incorporated very early in design, making it impractical for projects already underway.

2. Energy Efficiency Standard: The current developments fall under Sustainable Buildings 2030, which requires a 90% reduction in energy use and emissions compared to 2003 levels. This cannot be achieved without on-site renewables or large purchases of renewable energy credits. With installations blocked, developers would be forced to rely on credits, which are costly and do not meaningfully reduce emissions within Northfield.

3. Calculate Greenhouse Gas Emissions: While emissions must be calculated, no reduction from a baseline is required, so this component does not advance the City's goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Conclusion: Due to these combined factors, no current development project receiving City financial assistance can fully comply with the Sustainable Building Policy as written. Staff are working on potential solutions and will return to Council with recommendations.

Alternative Options:

N/A

Financial Impacts:

N/A

Tentative Timelines:

February 17, 2026 City Council to receive presentation

March 2026 City Council to receive proposed amendment to Sustainable Building Policy



Sustainable Building Policy

Sustainability Coordinator



- Professionally

- Bachelors in Economics and Environmental Studies
- Dual Masters degree in Public Affairs & Public Health from UW-Madison

- Experience in local government sustainability, climate data and applied policy research

Excited to be here in Northfield!



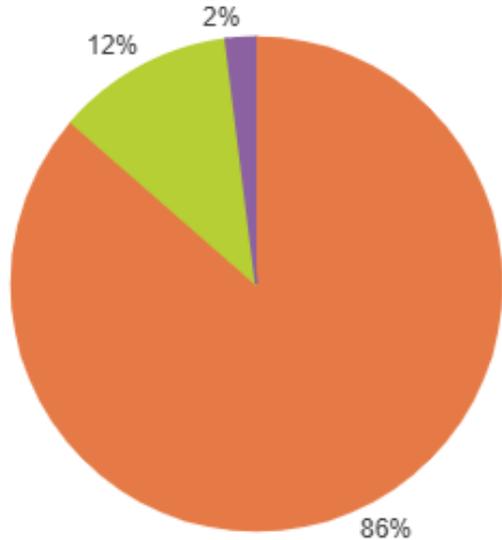
Climate Action Plan



The plan has two main components:

- Decreasing our greenhouse gas emissions through mitigation strategies.
 - 100% carbon-free community by 2040
- Becoming more resilient to prepare for a changing climate

Greenhouse Gas Emission



- In 2020, 86% of the Northfield's greenhouse gas footprint is from the energy used in buildings

Prioritize building strategies

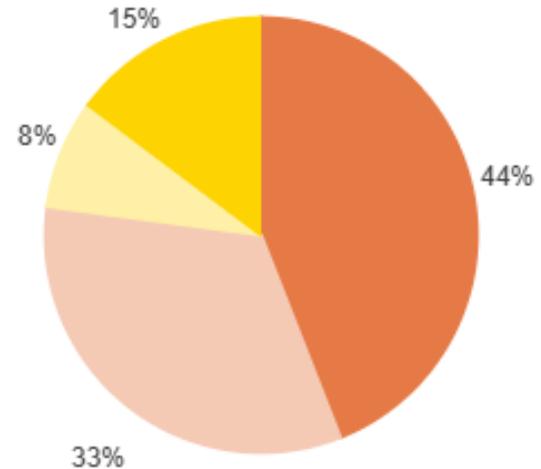


Greenhouse Gas Emission



- In 2020, 77% of the community's greenhouse emissions came from commercial businesses

Focus on commercial building emission reduction strategies



City Priorities



1. Energy Use & Carbon Emissions: *Highest impact on Climate Action Plan*

- High-performance building envelopes and systems
- Electrification ready and reduction of on-site fossil fuel use

2. Resilience, Durability, and Climate Adaptation: Protecting long-term public investment

- Using durable materials appropriate for Minnesota's climate
- Designing sites and systems to account for heavier rainfall and hotter summers (e.g., stormwater capacity, overflow routing, cooling loads, and shading)

Sustainable Building Policy



- **Purpose:** Support Northfield's Climate Action Plan and goal of becoming carbon-free by 2040
- **Application:** Development projects receiving financial assistance
 - Such as tax increment finance, grants, loans or land write downs

Sustainable Building Policy



Key takeaway:

Sustainable Building Policy is currently not achievable for current development projects due to external constraints on renewable energy interconnections and policy requirements that depend on on-site renewables.

Sustainable Building Policy



Sustainable Building Rating System means any of the following:

- a) LEED – minimum of Silver
- b) State of Minnesota B3 Guidelines; Certified Compliant
- c) Green Communities; Certified
- d) Parksmart – minimum of Silver;
- e) Equivalent substitute standards may be utilized at the discretion of the Coordinator.

Sustainable Building Policy



Northfield Green Requirements (NGR)

- a) Calculate greenhouse gas emissions
- b) Energy efficiency standard
- c) Renewable energy standard

The NGR cannot be altered without Council approval.

SBP: Policy Tension #1



Northfield Green Requirements: Renewable energy

- i. Conduct economic and technical evaluation of providing 2% of building energy load with on-site renewables
 - ii. Install if cost-effective using a payback of 15 years following the Sustainable Buildings 2030 methodology
- **Xcel Interconnection timelines: 3 – 5 year queue for interconnection**
 - Makes solar and microgrids infeasible within the next couple of years.
 - **Limited Alternatives without Grid Interconnection**
 - Potential on site renewable options: Geothermal systems
 - Technical complexity and timeline constraints limit feasibility

SBP: Policy Tension #2



Northfield Green Requirements: Energy Efficiency Standard

- i. For 1-4 unit residential New Construction and Major Renovation projects: 1. US Department of Energy Zero Energy Ready Homes
- ii. For all other residential and commercial New Construction and Major Renovation projects: Sustainable Buildings 2030

Sustainable Buildings 2030

- i. New Construction is expected to achieve 90% reduction in energy use and carbon emissions relative to 2003
 - i. To meet a 90% reduction, developer would has to install renewable energy or purchase a large amount of renewable offset credits

SBP: Policy Tension #3



Calculate greenhouse gas emissions

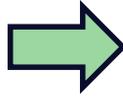
i. Calculated based on predicted energy use, as ascertained through the sustainability rating system modeling, using utility emissions factors and reported to the City in metric tons of CO₂e

- i. Once an emission number is calculated, there currently is not a standard that requires greenhouse gas emission reduction
 - i. Does not advance the goals in the Climate Action Plan

SBP: Policy Summary

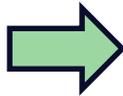


Calculate Greenhouse Gas Emissions



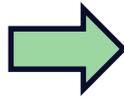
No requirement for greenhouse gas emission reduction or standard

Energy Efficiency Standard



Energy efficiency standards not achievable by current development

Renewable Energy Standard



Renewable energy not feasible within the next 3–5 years

Result: Policy does not effectively support energy, emissions reduction, or climate resilience goals.

Solutions



Short Term

- i. Propose an Amendment to Northfield Green Requirements – staff recommendation to be determined

Long Term

- i. Conduct a full review and update of the Sustainable Building Policy to create a clear, achievable, and locally appropriate framework that still advances Northfield's carbon-free 2040 goals, with final adoption by Council.



Legislation Text

File #: 26-079, **Version:** 1

EQC Meeting Date: February 18, 2026

To: Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

From: Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator

2026-2027 Work Plan

Action Requested:

EQC Commissioners sign up for initiative work items, with no more than three (3) Commissioners assigned per work item and make a motion to approve assignments.

Summary Report:

EQC Commissioners review initiative work items and volunteer to participate, with participation limited to a maximum of three Commissioners per item. Once assignments are finalized, the Commission will make a motion to approve the 2026-2027 Work Plan.

Alternative Options:

N/A

Financial Impacts:

N/A

Tentative Timelines:

N/A

1. Energy Efficiency Education for Residents

Goal: Help residents understand cost savings and energy-efficient HVAC practices.

- Collaborate with partners to coordinate educational outreach and materials.
- Research and summarize current incentives, rebates, and best practices.
- Develop a short handout highlighting cost savings and upgrades.

2. Electric Vehicle Community Showcase

Goal: Educate the public about EV adoption, charging infrastructure, and cost savings.

- Organize a showcase event featuring local EV owners, dealerships, and informational displays.
- Prepare a one-page summary or talking points outlining EV adoption, available rebates, and charging options.
- Provide volunteer support to assist with event coordination and engagement on the day of the event.

3. Active Transportation Awareness Campaign

Goal: Increase safety and visibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

- Create a public education campaign promoting active transportation.
- Support and promote initiatives such as Bike to School Day through volunteering to encourage safe, active travel among youth and families.
- Educate community stakeholders on upcoming and ongoing pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements to support and promote active transportation.
- Focus on low-cost awareness strategies: social media posts, flyers, and research of low cost solutions such as visibility (lights, reflective vests).

4. Landscaping & Native Planting Research

Goal: Promote better use of city parks and private lands through native planting.

- Support and promote native planting initiatives through programs like Lawns to Legumes, increasing pollinator-friendly plants, and encouraging community gardens with partner organizations.
- Research best practices for native planting and community gardens, including pollinator gardens, rain gardens, native grasses and flowers, and shared food-growing spaces.
- Develop resources for residents, including one-pagers on invasive species and recommended native plants, to encourage native gardening and biodiversity.

5. Waste Reduction Library Research

Goal: Explore opportunities for community lending libraries for sustainable items.

- Research what current waste reduction spaces exist in the community (i.e. Carleton Maker Space, Library Repair desk, Swap events happening, etc.)
- Research models like toy libraries, tool libraries, diaper banks, and other reusable item programs.
- Analyze potential benefits and challenges for the community.
- Written summary documenting current community initiatives, ongoing research efforts, and identified best practices to support continued waste reduction (2 pages max)

6. Zero Waste: Recycling and Compost Education Toolkit

Goal: Provide resources to improve household recycling and organics management.

- Develop a draft educational toolkit for recycling and organics outreach, including short handouts, example visuals, and a basic presentation.
- Conduct an internal pilot with City staff or volunteers to gather feedback and identify gaps.
- Finalize the toolkit and produce a brief summary report with findings, lessons learned, and recommendations for potential future expansion or implementation.

Commission: Environmental Quality Commission 2026 Annual Work Plan

Initiative # 1	Initiative Type <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing / Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Event		
Initiative Title: Energy Efficiency Education for Residents	Commissioners:	Target Completion Date April 2027	
Progress Q1 January-March:			
Progress Q2 April-June:			
Progress Q3 July-September:			
Progress Q4 October-December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

Initiative # 2	Initiative Type <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing / Annual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Event		
Initiative Title: Electric Vehicle Community Showcase	Commissioners:	Target Completion Date April 2027	
Progress Q1 January-March:			
Progress Q2 April-June:			
Progress Q3 July- September:			
Progress Q4 October -December:			
Progress Q5 January-March:			

Initiative # 3	Initiative Type <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing / Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Event	
Initiative Title: Active Transportation Awareness Campaign	Commissioners:	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March:		
Progress Q2 April-June:		
Progress Q3 July- September:		
Progress Q4 October -December:		
Progress Q5 January-March:		

Initiative # 4	Initiative Type <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing / Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Event	
Initiative Title: Landscaping & Native Planting Research	Commissioners:	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March:		
Progress Q2 April-June:		
Progress Q3 July- September:		
Progress Q4 October -December:		
Progress Q5 January-March:		

Initiative # 5	Initiative Type <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing / Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Event	
Initiative Title: Waste Reduction Library Research	Commissioners:	Target Completion Date April 2027

Progress Q1 January-March:
Progress Q2 April-June:
Progress Q3 July-September:
Progress Q4 October-December:
Progress Q5 January-March:

Initiative # 6	Initiative Type <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing / Annual <input type="checkbox"/> Event	
Zero Waste: Recycling and Compost Education Toolkit	Commissioners:	Target Completion Date April 2027
Progress Q1 January-March:		
Progress Q2 April-June:		
Progress Q3 July-September:		
Progress Q4 October-December:		
Progress Q5 January-March:		

Parking Lot: (These items have been considered by the Commission, but not proposed as part of this year’s work plan. If the Commission decides they would like to work on them in the current year, it would need to be approved by a Majority vote of the Commission.)



Legislation Text

File #: 26-081, **Version:** 1

EQC Meeting Date: February 18, 2026

To: Members of the Environmental Quality Commission

From: Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator

Consider Motion of Support for Resolution Proclaiming April 24, 2025 as Arbor Day in Northfield.

Action Requested:

The Environmental Quality Commission is asked to approve a motion to send the attached resolution proclaiming April 24, 2026 as Arbor Day in Northfield to the City Council for consideration.

Summary Report:

EQC members are to discuss considering a motion that would send the attached resolution to the City Council that would proclaim April 24, 2026, as Arbor Day in Northfield.

The City of Northfield urban forest is a large asset of which the City can be proud. The trees throughout Northfield are beneficial in numerous ways including reducing erosion, decreasing cooling costs, and providing wildlife habitat as well as increasing property values of homes. Recognizing and protecting this asset can assure the residents of the continued existence of the urban forest.

This proclamation is one component necessary for the 2026 Tree City USA application. The City of Northfield has been recognized as a Tree City USA 26 times previously.

Alternative Options:

None

Financial Impacts:

None

Tentative Timelines:

Arbor Day will be celebrated on April 24, 2026.

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN
CITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2026-XXX
PROCLAIMING APRIL 24, 2026 AS
ARBOR DAY IN NORTHFIELD

- WHEREAS, in 1872 J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting and caring of trees; and
- WHEREAS, this holiday, called Arbor Day, was first observed with the planting of more than a million trees in Nebraska; and
- WHEREAS, Arbor Day is now observed throughout the nation and the world; and
- WHEREAS, trees can reduce the erosion of our precious topsoil by wind and water, cut heating and cooling costs, moderate temperature, clean the air, produce oxygen and provide habitat for wildlife; and
- WHEREAS, trees are a renewable resource giving us paper, wood for our homes, and countless other wood products; and
- WHEREAS, trees in our City increase property values, enhance the economic vitality of business areas, and beautify our community; and
- WHEREAS, trees, wherever they are planted, are a source of joy and spiritual renewal; and
- WHEREAS, the City of Northfield has been recognized as a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation in the past; and
- WHEREAS, the City is reapplying to be a Tree City and continue its tree-planting ways.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL THAT:
The City Council of the City of Northfield does hereby proclaim April 24, 2026 as Arbor Day in the City of Northfield, and urges all citizens to support efforts to protect our trees and woodlands and to support our City's urban forestry program.

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT:
All citizens are encouraged to plant trees to gladden hearts and promote the well-being of present and future generations

PASSED by the City Council of the City of Northfield on this XXth day of April, 2026.

ATTEST

City Clerk

Mayor

VOTE: ___ ZWEIFEL ___ BEUMER ___ DAHLEN ___ HOLMES
 ___ NESS ___ PETERSON WHITE ___ SOKUP



Legislation Text

File #: 26-080, **Version:** 1

EQC Meeting Date: February 18, 2026

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Sara Pabich, Sustainability Coordinator

Staff Update

Action Requested:

The EQC receives an update regarding staff activities.

Summary Report:

This update includes items not included as agenda items for this meeting.

- **Less Mow Summer:** This year the City is rebranding Less Mow May to Less Mow Summer. Recent guidance from the University of Minnesota Bee Lab indicates that supporting pollinators throughout the growing season is more effective than letting grass grow long in May. Residents are encouraged to adopt pro-pollinator gardening practices year-round to provide continuous habitat and forage.
- **Paper Shredding Event:** The City has organized and sponsored a paper shredding event at the Streets and Parks Maintenance Facility (1710 Riverview Drive, Northfield) that is occurring Saturday April 25th from 9:00am to 12:00pm.
- **Earth Day:** The Northfield Earth Day Celebration will take place on Saturday, April 25th, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The City is participating as a Gold-level sponsor, contributing \$500 from the Carbon Reduction Fund. Commissioners will be asked to sign up to volunteer at the Earth Day table during the March meeting.

Alternative Options:

NA

Financial Impacts:

NA

Tentative Timelines:

NA