

May 6, 2022

David Bennett
Public Works Director/City Engineer
City of Northfield
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057

RE: Bridge Square-Riverside Park Improvement Project – Phase I
Northfield, Dakota and Rice Counties
SHPO Number: 2022-1266

Dear David Bennet:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above referenced project. Information received on April 6, 2022, has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the State Historic Preservation Office by the Minnesota Historic Sites Act (Minn. Stat. 138.665-666) and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act (Minn. Stat. 138.40).

As stated in your correspondence, the City of Northfield is proposing improvements to Bridge Square and Riverside Park, which are contributing resources within the **Northfield Commercial Historic District**, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Accordingly, in order for our office to determine that the project will not adversely affect the historic property, the proposed work must be designed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (SOI Standards).

We have reviewed the following documentation that was included with your April 6th submission:

- City of Northfield Cover Letter (dated April 5, 2022)
- Draft Concept Plan: *Bridge Square Concept + Connections Plan, Final Draft Concept Plan – Public Outreach + Engagement Presentation* (no date)
- Current photos of Bridge Square and Riverside Park

According to your letter, the Draft Concept Plan includes nine primary features: The Plaza, The Green, The Terrace, The Riverwalk, The Landing, The Woonerf, The Frame, The Bridge, and the Lighting Design. The proposed work at these primary features has been divided into three (3) phases. At this time, the City is requesting our comments on Phase I of the Bridge Square-Riverside Park Improvement Project which includes The Plaza, The Green, and The Terrace.

Our initial comments regarding the first phase of the proposed project relative to its effects on cultural resources are provided below.

Archaeological Resources

Due to the nature and location of the proposed project, we recommend that a Phase I archaeological survey be completed for areas of proposed ground disturbance. It may be most efficient to have an archaeological survey completed for the entire project area, rather than separate surveys for each phase. With this approach, if archaeological sites are identified, it would be easier to alter plans to avoid impacts to them. The survey must meet the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation and should include an evaluation of National Register eligibility for any properties that are identified. For a list of consultants who have expressed an interest in undertaking such surveys, please visit the website preservationdirectory.mnhs.org, and select "Archaeologists" in the "Search by Specialties" box.

Draft Concept Plan Design Review

Generally speaking, in order to conform with SOI Standards, the historic through-street should not be abandoned in order to transform the historic landscape features from two separate green spaces into one large green space. In the concept presented, the City is proposing to convert Water Street to a pedestrian use which is acceptable under the SOI Standards, however, the overall character of the street should remain the same. We recommend that the project design integrate paving and site furnishings to preserve the appearance of a street, blocking vehicle access with bollards or the installation of a surmountable curb. For reference, our office recently consulted with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the City of Stillwater regarding a project that proposes to convert a portion of a street into a pedestrian space in the downtown historic district. A link to this project can be found here: <https://www.ci.stillwater.mn.us/city-government/departments/planning-development/community-development/chestnut-street-plaza-project>. A link to the project concept design is provided on the webpage. Another example of a successful transformation from vehicle use to pedestrian use while preserving historic character, is the front gathering area/plaza that was formerly a car drop off area in front of the St. Paul Union Depot. We recommend that the City of Northfield use these two projects for reference as the design for this project moves forward.

Thank you for providing a summary of the City's broader consultation efforts for this project. We understand that the City has been consulting with various constituent groups, the Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, City Staff, the Mayor, and the City Council. Your letter also states that there has been extensive community engagement as well.

We look forward to further consultation on this project. Please take our above comments and recommendations into consideration as the City begins to develop construction plans for this project. We look forward to reviewing the plans as they become available. If you have any questions regarding our comments or would like to set up a meeting to discuss next steps, please feel free to contact me at 651-201-3285 or kelly.graggjohnson@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Kelly Gragg-Johnson

Kelly Gragg-Johnson
Environmental Review Program Specialist

cc: Reeve Needham, Assistant City Planner
Barbara Evans, Chair, Northfield Heritage Preservation Commission