

Street Design:

Discussion material for the Northfield Planning Commission

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1st Revision by R. Schulte: March 16, 2016

1 Overview

Planning Commission and City staff have been discussing how to address a variety of challenges related to street design.

The immediate and official assignment is to “Update the Street Design Chart in the LDC.” (This task has been delegated to the Planning Commission by the City Council to complete revisions to the Land Development Code (LDC) initiated in 2009). The Update has been chosen by the Planning Commission as its top priority for the year 2016.

The Planning Commission has also adopted the position that any “Update of the Street Design Chart” should be conducted as part of the larger effort to implement the Complete Streets Policy approved by the City Council in 20??.

The subject of street design is related to, and raises, a variety of other issues and challenges of interest to the Planning Commission and the City.

The goal of this discussion piece is to organize some of those issues in a way that will support the Planning Commission as it discusses how to proceed.

2 Goals

Include

1. Revise the Street Design Chart in the Land Development Code to make the Chart more understandable, applicable, and supportive of community goals.
 2. Minimize conflicts between the City and citizens in planning road repair, rebuild, and improvement activities
 3. Demonstrate and make evident that the City is including the City’s Complete Streets Policy in street design for both new developments and restoration of existing roadways
 4. Improve safety for all users. Fully implement the City’s Safe Routes to Schools Policy.
 5. Integrate recommendations from earlier, Northfield studies (for example, the Multimodal Transportation Study) into the Street Design Chart and other elements of the LDC.
 6. Avoid planning for streets, parking, sidewalks and bicycle paths that
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reflect only past housing and business expansion strategies when new technologies and new municipal development patterns may be in the offing. For example, more compact or vertical housing projects driven by the increasing cost of single family homes.

7. Involve a broad cross section of the public in planning, debating and securing approval for revisions to the LDC that relate to the Street Design Chart and the Complete Street Policy.

8. Conduct a public information and education program as an integral part of the Planning Commission’s work to revise the Street Design Chart and implement the City’s Complete Streets Policy.

any other goals could be listed; most of those are included in these seven . (These seven are inter-related; for example, discussions over whether a given street design appropriately responds to the City’s Complete Streets Policy can create conflicts over improvement costs, tree removal, sidewalk locations, and street-side auto parking vis-à-vis protected bicycle paths.)

The Planning Commission also needs a strategy or some rules for proposing the installation of sidewalks and bicycle paths on some routes, but, not on all streets.

A countervailing goal is to avoid ‘mission creep’ for the Planning Commission; that is, the Commission does not want to spend years collecting data, solving design problems that are in the purview of other departments/agencies; or seeking to address, at one time, all of the potential variables in future street design projects for existing streets or new subdivisions.

3 Stakeholders

This list of stakeholders is not meant to be exhaustive, nor meant to be (for example) the start of an invitation list to any workshop or process.

Stakeholders include	Comments
<i>1. City</i> a. City Council b. City Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering Department • Community Development • Economic Development • Public Works c. Northfield Area Fire and Rescue Service (NAFRS)	Other governments (esp. the County and MnDOT could be added)

- d. Police Department
- e. City Advisory Bodies and Commissions

2. Users

- a. Citizens, including
 - i. Students
 - ii. Senior citizens
 - iii. Handicapped (inc. Laura Baker)
 - iv. Citizens groups: including Bike Northfield, Northfield Roundtable, etc.
- b. Businesses / institutions
 - i. Schools
 - ii. Bus companies, including school
 - iii. Heavy trucking
 - iv. Agriculture
 - v. Colleges
- c. Different modes
 - i. Driving (different kinds)
 - ii. Walking (different kinds)
 - iii. Biking (different kinds)

Note: Most people travel more than one way, so dividing citizens by travel mode isn't particularly helpful)

Clearly many different kinds of businesses use Northfield streets; these ID'd as having particular needs and/or insights.

The goal with this list is to begin to organize stakeholders so the list doesn't appear so daunting. Clearly the list of stakeholders could be added to, but acknowledging the breadth of discussion does not necessarily produce an impossibly long or broad list.

Note that conceivably some of these groups could be sources of assistance as well as input.

4 Other issues

Include:

- Costs
 - Of street repair and reconstruction
 - Of various design strategies

- Best way to pursue goals for any street design update:
 - Guidelines?
 - Tool-box?

5 Ideas / Suggestions for moving forward

Proposal:

Work with the Roundtable to give a Workshop on Complete Streets and Street Design.

Workshop would (likely) have both substantive and process components.

<i>Options:</i>	<i>Discussion</i>
1. Work with National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take advantage of expertise and experience from other cities that have tackled similar challenges. ▪ Workshop is customized to our needs and situation ▪ Cost: \$12-20,000 ▪ NCSC has ideas for other sources of funds
2. Develop a workshop ourselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could still bring in some expertise from NCSC, but save money by having participate rather than run.
3. Start with a Planning Commission-only workshop with participation by the NCSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore Complete Streets implementation methods and experience successfully used in other cities. ▪ Contemplate development of a City-wide, bicycle routes plan as a precursor to work on the Street Design Chart. ▪ Cost: \$5000