Northwest Area Process Advisory Committee Recommendation

Need and Purpose

The City of Northfield needs a shared vision for the development of the Northwest Area of Northfield, Minnesota. The purpose of this summary document is to outline the current situation and what the City believes it needs as it develops a shared vision.

Desired outcome: Vision for all or part of the City's Northwest Area, which may include:

- Future land use map
- Development standards
- Development strategies and priorities
- Economic impact analysis

Background

The Northwest Area of Northfield covers significant acreage, which is currently zoned agricultural. The land has four owners: Saint Olaf College and three local farmers. See attached map.

In 2009, the City hired consultants to assist with the creation of a Master Plan for 530 acres of this area. The Plan was completed and presented to the City Council in 2011, but The Council took no action.

A Process Advisory Committee is now assigned to recommend a process to revive planning for the Northwest Area.

The Northwest Area Process Advisory Committee presents the following as recommendations for how the City can work toward a shared vision for this area.

City Objectives

The City's goals and policies are established by the City's adopted plans, which include:

1. **City Comprehensive Plan**
2. **City Economic Development Plan**
3. **City Strategic Plan**
4. **City Transportation Plan**

Together, these and other City plans and policies establish goals for Northfield. The Committee thinks that the goal of growing the city's industrial tax base is especially relevant to the NW Area, but the process may lead to other recommended uses.

Values

The process of developing a shared vision should reflect the following values:

- *Environmental, Economic and Social Sustainability*; including:
    - Multi-modal connectedness to the rest of the Community consistent with City bike and pedestrian plans
    - Sustainable and cost-effective infrastructure
- *Transparency* and *Openness* to the many stakeholders, which will include at least the City and its Boards and Commissions, landowners, and citizens.

Recommendation

With these objectives and values in mind, the Committee recommends that the City:

1. Hire a consultant

The consultant would complete the following (a through c):

a. Run a Public Process

The Committee recommends that the development of a shared vision be facilitated through a public process.

b. Recommend and Facilitate a Visioning Process

The Committee recommends that the consultant propose a visioning process coordinated through the Northfield Economic Development Authority, the Planning Commission, and the City Council.

c. Help the City answer the following questions

Q1. How could the Northwest Area best support the City goals of expanding the commercial and industrial tax base?

The City Council has identified a strategic priority to grow and diversify the tax base. The previous consultant studied the possibility of commercial and industrial development for the Master Plan. The Committee recommends a consensus be reached regarding how this area may best support the City's goal of expanding the commercial and industrial tax base. In order to reach consensus, the consultant shall answer these questions:

- Will the Northwest Area support non-retail commercial and/or industrial development? What types?
- What types of these developments would be most appropriate or synergistic for Northfield?
- What additional uses this area would support?

Q2. How can the City most strategically and sustainably use existing infrastructure and extend infrastructure in this area?

What kinds of and amounts of new infrastructure would be required to support the proposed additional development in this area? This should include an analysis of traditional utilities and road networks and also the possibility of extending public transportation modes in this direction from Northfield.

Q3. Would the market support the proposed development uses for the Northwest Area?

- Will the market support the proposed development uses for the Northwest Area?

- At what rate could the market absorb different uses?
- Is one area more likely to develop first?

Q4. How and to what extent do the potential uses support or interact with other City plans or goals?

The consultant will support the city in understanding how potential uses for the Northwest Area could advance the City's goals. The consultant will work with the City to:

1. Assemble relevant goals.
2. Develop performance measures with which the City can assess how potential uses would advance these goals. These would likely include, but certainly not be limited to:

- Cost-effectiveness. Would new infrastructure investments (which would vary by potential use) pay for themselves, or otherwise be 'worth it'?
- Consistency with other relevant plans, including those by Saint Olaf, Dakota County, Rice County, MnDOT and other relevant stakeholders.
- Synergistic impacts that may influence or support other economic development in Northfield.

Q5. Are there aspects of the 2011 Plan that would/should inform our 2018 planning?

Are there aspects of 2011 draft master Plan that should inform the current planning for a narrower objective?

Q6. What is the shared vision for the Northwest Area?

Q7. In order to advance the shared vision, what sequence of planning and development would be recommended for Northwest Area development?

What actions should the city take to

- Advance the vision and set it up for success?
- Prepare to respond to growth pressures that may not be consistent with the Vision?
- How would the consultant recommend that this be sequenced? What should be the first priorities and what should clearly wait for later development?

Q8. What role do other nearby lands play in advancing that vision?

One of the challenges in visioning for the Northwest Area is deciding whether to include other land, such as the land to the east of the hospital, in a broader vision. There are good reasons to do so, but adding land also broadens the scope and with almost certainly cost and time. The answer to this question should inform the answer to Qs 6 and 7.

2. Establish a Timeline

The Northwest Area Process Advisory Committee recommends the following timeline be approved by City Council:

A. Selection of a consultant/facilitator – May 31, 2018
B. City Council, EDA and Planning Commission visioning process completed – July 31, 2018
C. Public review completed – September 30, 2018
D. City Council approval of shared vision – October 16, 2018

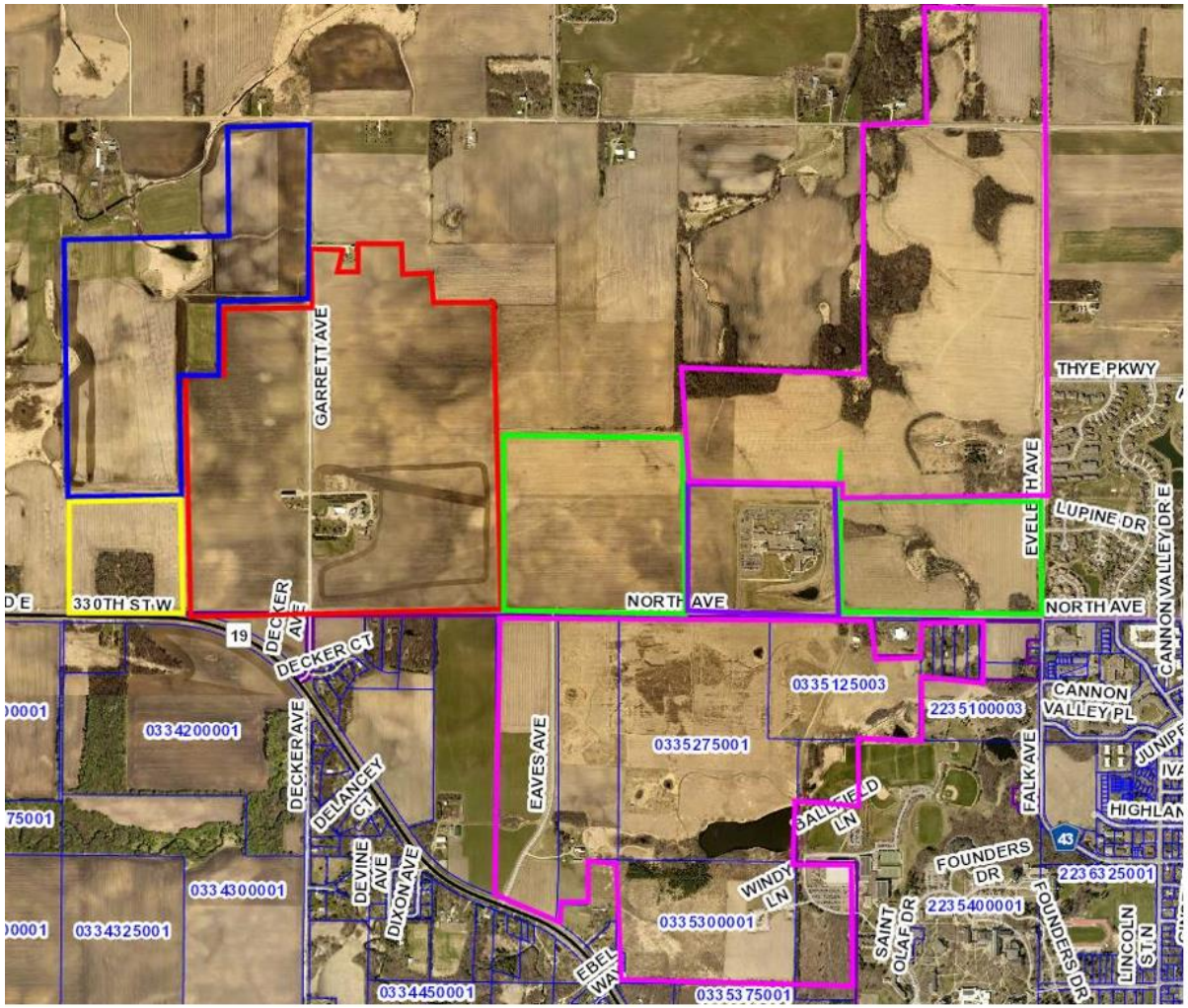
3. Decision Making Structure

The Northwest Area Process Advisory Committee will complete the following tasks prior to hiring the consultant:

A. Solicit and review consultants
B. Invite an additional EDA Board member to participate on the Process Advisory Committee
C. Recommend financing options for consultant process
D. Recommend consultant to City Council

Northwest Area Map

St. Olaf property in City limits to the east of the hospital is zoned residential and totals 63 acres. St. Olaf property in City limits to the west of the hospital is zoned agricultural and totals 90 acres with 40 acres currently occupied by solar farm on most northern edge. All other properties located within City limits are zoned agricultural.



Northwest Area Property Owners & Acreage

City Limits

- Sorem – 265 acres
- Fink – 135 acres
- Lysne – 40 acres
- St. Olaf – 153 acres
- Hospital – 58 acres

Outside City Limits

- St. Olaf – 604 acres