

April 6, 2021

To: Mayor Pownell and City Council Members
Cc: Ben Martig, City Administrator
David Bennett, City Engineer
Beth Kallestad, Program Coordinator



From: Save the Northfield Depot

Thank you for the opportunity to again share our annual update on the depot project. Details with images of the past year's progress can be found in our 2020 Annual Report which we are distributing electronically at <https://northfielddepot.files.wordpress.com/2021/03/2020annualreport.pdf>. We are pleased with the progress made despite the difficulties associated with the pandemic, and hope you have a chance to review the report.

This year a more general overview of the project outcomes seems appropriate since the "saving" of the Northfield Depot is close to completion. Below is a concise summary of the project overall goals, execution and plans for the future. Images of what has been accomplished will be shared at the meeting.

Foundation: Community Sense of Ownership and Vision

Community members:

- Formed a non-profit to save the depot when they learned it was scheduled for demolition by railroad
- Responded in large numbers to public workshops to participate in planning. They answered three major questions:
 - Should we try to save the depot?** Yes, definitely (to do so required its being moved from the railroad property).
 - If so, where should it be located?** Preferably close to the tracks in the same general area
 - If so, for what use?** Serve as a multi-use, public resource that includes the depot (Visitor Center, public amenities, events venue, displays of railroad history, and works of local artists); an open pavilion (concerts, art shows, weddings, shelter for transit users); space for sculptures, wayfinding signs, bike racks, and a bike repair station; and a Transit Hub
- Identified Project Goals: (to be expanded upon at the April Council meeting)
 - Historic Preservation:** Protect and preserve a key part of the Northfield heritage and pride of place
 - Economic Development:** Provide a catalyst to the economic development in the city
 - Sustainability:** Reuse existing building as a responsible use of our resources
 - Beautification:** Assure that the depot is appropriately maintained, free of blight, and a visual asset to the community
 - Building Community:** Provide community gathering places to promote opportunities for social interaction and public events
 - Education:** Educate current and future generations about the rich history and role of the railroads and the depot in Northfield

Execution: Collaboration among range of stakeholders

- **Railroads** contributed building (Canadian Pacific) or money (Union Pacific).
- **Community members** including youth contributed their time, money, energy, materials, art, and artifacts.
- **Businesses and professionals** provided at a reduced rate or donated materials and/or time.
- **Local and state media** provided updates on the progress and activities.
- **Local organizations and State/Regional foundations** donated money and/or assisted in fund-raising.
- **City of Northfield Council, Staff and Commissions** donated property for the depot and sculpture garden, provided guidance and advice, and reviewed plans; collaborated in planning Transit Hub.
- **State and National Agencies** provided advice and/or funding (MPCA, DEED, MnDOT, MHS, National Geodetic Agency).

Future

- **Transit Hub.** As the Transit Hub project moves forward we will collaborate with the City on the Transit Hub design and construction schedule, bricks for fence columns, and matching fencing.
- **Depot Use.** *Save the Northfield Depot* remains committed to the public use of the building. Given the current uncertain situation regarding gatherings in the future and the unknown outcome of the pandemic for various entities, the specific combination of public uses is uncertain at this time. Public use is key, however, and includes the possibility that it may include serving passenger rail – again – similar uses as the Red Wing depot.

As we come near the finish line and see the results of the efforts of so many, we reflect on the “village” engagement the project has involved. A key component of the village includes the City staff, Council and Commissions. The staff has been very collaborative and extraordinarily patient with the amateur developers that we are.

We are so very grateful to the many in our village who have generously contributed over the years to rescue the building from demolition and to achieve this attractive, welcoming asset for our community. We look forward to the time when the public can safely celebrate their accomplishment, and experience the ambience of the renovated depot interior, admire the handsome restored exterior, and enjoy the beauty of the sculpture garden. We are grateful to you, and other members of our community.