

## Chapter 2 - Vision & Guiding Values

This comprehensive plan starts with a vision that reflects ideas and priorities from community members. The purpose of the plan is to create a clear path to achieving that vision.

This chapter provides the vision, a set of community-based guiding values, and a decision-making framework to keep the principles of this comprehensive plan consistently in front of decision-makers. The vision and values were developed from the extensive community engagement and refined by residents on the Steering Committee and Planning Commission

### What we heard

Below and beginning each chapter, we share the significant themes we heard from residents, businesses, and other key stakeholders.

#### Northfield

- Small town feel is an asset and a challenge
- Become more welcoming and inviting to all who live, work, and play here
- Retain unique identity - including charming downtown, historic and natural resources, and colleges
- The city's history outside the National Register-listed downtown historic district includes homes and other landmarks, including on the college campuses
- "Northfield's growth is guided by a reflective consideration of its past - Come to Northfield, history is our future."
- "Create a center of gravity in Northfield that leverages the town's unique identity and vibe."

#### Equity

- Some neighborhoods do not see as much investment as others
- There are food deserts and lack [of relevant amenities in] parks, transit in the north and northwest neighborhoods
- Residents need access to good jobs, food, housing, and recreation to ensure economic stability and a good quality of life
- Equitable access to parks and recreational activities
- Address the needs of the most vulnerable residents

#### Climate change

- New jobs must be environmentally sustainable
- Climate and sustainability solutions must be affordable and accessible to residents
- Preservation of trees, wetlands and green spaces is important for the ecosystem and to make the community more welcoming

#### Economic Sustainability

- Smart, sustainable, balanced growth
- Address the high tax rate for residents
- Create new businesses that offer living wage jobs and support environmental sustainability

- Collaborate with colleges to support fair taxation and economic development initiatives
- Public-private partnerships to attract investment
- Historic preservation and the arts are important components of the city’s economic success

## Human Connections

- Publicly accessible, free indoor and outdoor gathering and recreation spaces for youth and community are needed
- Continue to support entrepreneurs and small businesses
- Improve public amenities to facilitate community connections
- The downtown historic district and related citywide gathering spaces are important

## Housing

- Homes are too expensive to buy, and apartments are either too small or too expensive to rent
- Major employers want more housing opportunities built to retain/attract employees
- Not enough affordable housing is in the most walkable areas of the city
- We need ways to build pathways to homeownership and generational wealth

## Mobility

- Residents do not feel safe crossing highways
- Distances to destinations (work, shopping, services) are too long to allow for walking or biking safely
- Transit takes too long, is not direct, and does not operate at hours needed
- Challenges for disabled individuals in accessing employment due to transportation limitations
- Improved infrastructure is needed for sidewalks, paths, and safe crossings

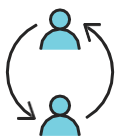
*For a complete summary of engagement activities and results from the comprehensive planning process, please refer to [Appendix X](#).*

## Vision

*Northfield is a welcoming city, providing equitable access to a high quality of life.*

We are a city with a strong identity rooted in history while growing as a diverse, inclusive, and sustainable place. We maintain our integrity as an independent and distinct city shaped by our historic and natural resources, the Cannon River, rural neighbors, and our colleges.

## Guiding Values



Northfield **emphasizes equity** to remedy past decisions creating today’s disparities and to ensure equitable access to housing, services, mobility options, and open space for all.



Northfield will develop **creative solutions to local challenges** by working with the community, ensuring staff understand and use tools to implement the best practices in their fields, and engaging consultants who understand Northfield and its values.



Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to **foster resilience** and **mitigate the effects of climate change**.



Northfield's capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in **economically responsible and sustainable** ways to ensure revenue is sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.



Northfield **promotes safe, stable housing** in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support local business and accommodate residents in all stages of life.



Northfield works to **provide mobility options** so all Northfield residents can get where they need to go with or without a car.



Northfield **fosters human connections** in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts that are inclusive regardless of age, economic status, mobility, gender, or racial and ethnic background.

## Decision-Making Framework

When making decisions, including those suggested by the implementation section of this Plan, City of Northfield officials, staff, community partners, and residents will ask how the option chosen furthers at least one, if not several of the values, while not damaging the others. The framework provides a template leaders can use to frame discussions to ensure the values of this plan are clearly reflected in the work of the city. The questions and outcomes below are examples drawn from this Plan; the Strategies and Actions in later chapters supplement the material below.

Consistent with best practice, this Framework should be supplemented by setting interim goals and appropriate metrics to measure success through the strategic planning process.

## Emphasize Equity

Northfield emphasizes equity to remedy past decisions creating today's disparities and to ensure equitable access to housing, services, mobility options, and open space for all.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ... improve access to services (City, healthcare, schools, etc.)?
- ... create or enhance parks or recreation opportunities in underserved neighborhoods?
- ... provide a service tailored to those who need it most?
- ... increase opportunities for homes, business, and/or social connections?

### *Outcomes*

- Northfield supports broad and equitable public participation to make better decisions that consider the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the policy requirements of the decision-making body.
- Highways 3 and 19 do not divide the city.
- Northfield prioritizes investment based on creating complete places, filling gaps and supplying missing assets, and ensuring equitable access to destinations.
- Northfield supports its local business community with abundant housing, access to high quality childcare, and comprehensive business development resources.

## Find Creative Solutions to Local Challenges

Northfield will find creative solutions to local challenges by working with the community, hiring staff that understand and use tools to implement the best practices in the field, and ensuring that consultants understand Northfield and its values.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ...test ideas before committing to high-cost projects?
- ...balance professional expertise with lived experience?
- ...improve upon or take advantage of current best practice?
- ...consider multiple pathways to a desired outcome

### *Outcomes*

- The Community and Economic Development department leads the city in public engagement, integrating disciplines, and planning projects with and for the community.
- Board and commission expertise and experience are valued, encouraged and developed.
- Northfield community partners – colleges, school district, Chamber, non-profits – continue to collaborate using the time-tested successful approaches of collective impact and shared accountability models.

## Foster Resilience

Northfield develops infrastructure, policies, and practices to foster resilience and mitigate the effects of climate change and our contributions to the sources of climate change.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ... reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions?
- ... preserve and conserve natural resources and habitat?
- ... decrease reliance on non-renewable energy?
- ... reduce risks associated with flooding and other extreme weather events?
- ... develop policy and practice which incorporates resilience into all city actions?
- ...protect people from effects of heat and other extreme weather

### *Outcomes*

- Northfield grows compactly to conserve land, preserve natural resources, and connect people and places.
- The Cannon River dam is removed, river health improved, and flood prevention measures are taken.
- Infrastructure is designed to manage extreme weather and to build stormwater management into street corridors and parks
- The tree canopy is healthy and dense to provide shade, cleaner air, and stormwater treatment.
- Climate mitigation is managed at the watershed and regional level.
- All new buildings meet or exceed the requirement of the adopted sustainable building policy and/or Minnesota Energy Code, including prioritizing electrification and use of passive solar design standards and/or renewable energy sources for heating and cooling.
- Existing buildings are retrofitted with energy efficiency upgrades.
- All housing is safe and secure in all weather.

## Be Economically Responsible and Sustainable

Northfield's capital planning and budgeting will advance the goals of this Plan in economically responsible and sustainable ways to ensure revenue sufficient to meet the City's needs for the long term.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ... Impact the City's tax levy, debt level, and bond rating?
- ... Affect the sewer, water, electric, natural gas, and transportation systems?
- ... Increase the City's commercial/industrial tax base?

... Reduce surface parking, allocate public space for people, and manage stormwater inflow and infiltration?

... Negatively impact existing infrastructure!

... Support local business development, expansion, and retention?

... Respond to stated resident priorities and address known problems?

#### *Outcomes*

- Planning, capital improvements, and public works are integrated for outcomes which meet multiple priorities.
- Northfield measures the fiscal impact of all large developments to determine which, if any, adopted metrics are met.
- Northfield prioritizes those developments and initiatives that meet or exceed adopted metrics, considering innovations not previously contemplated.
- There is broad stakeholder support for, understanding of and application of heritage and cultural preservation planning tools and resources.
- Short-term strategic planning outcomes clearly demonstrate how they advance the strategies in this Plan through quantifiable metrics.
- Northfield has established a clear and transparent method to determine when capital projects must be subject to a referendum.

## Foster Human Connections

Northfield fosters human connections in our increasingly diverse community through well-designed neighborhoods, gathering places, and business districts. City services will be designed and delivered to meet the needs of all community members.

#### *Questions - How does this Action...*

... eliminate barriers for people with disabilities?

... improve services for all community members?

... design for walkable and proximate parks and gathering spaces?

... create opportunities for human interaction (indoors or outdoors)?

... make City Hall and other city facilities inclusive, visitable, and welcoming?

#### *Outcomes*

- Northfield facilities and projects employ universal design principles.
- Northfield builds complete neighborhoods.
- Northfield's municipal buildings and infrastructure projects are supported by and support public art and placemaking.
- All City materials, web information, and signage are available in English and Spanish.
- City meetings and events welcome all people by providing translation, interpretation, childcare, convenient and accessible locations, and helpful staff.

- Northfield supports and sustains small business development by local entrepreneurs from start-up to expansion, and beyond.
- The rich artistic and cultural activities important to Northfield's identity are supported and expanded upon.
- Northfield is recognized as a leader in the use of best practices associated with an equitable and sustainable approach to the preservation, conservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction of the city's historic and cultural resources.
- The Cannon River riverfront is a connected, accessible space for the entire community with culturally relevant and appropriate facilities, a mix of activities, and great design.
- Northfield's communications seek to reach everyone, bring all voices to the table, and are designed to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities, including decision makers.

## Promote Safe and Stable Housing

Northfield promotes safe, stable housing in a wide variety of types, sizes, and ownership models, to support residents in all stages of life.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

- ... affirmatively further fair housing?
- ... increase the supply and variety of needed housing types?
- ... improve housing conditions?
- ... address housing affordability and supply?
- ... promote inclusive neighborhoods?

### *Outcomes*

- All residents in Northfield, especially those who are cost-burdened, live in safe, healthy, and affordable housing that meets their stated needs.
- Northfield's existing and future workforce faces fewer barriers to moving to and living in Northfield to be close to their place of employment
- There is a healthy supply of housing at each price point to meet residents' wide variety of needs and life stages.
- Residents can afford to own or rent a home in Northfield and stay in their housing through hardships.
- Local housing needs are met at a greater scale by leveraging existing public and private resources, partnerships and authorities.

## Provide Travel Options

Northfield plans development and services for proximity so people are closer to where they need to go; Northfield designs streets for safe and convenient trips however people choose to travel.

### *Questions - How does this Action...*

... allocate public right of way to connect people to places?

... improve connections between neighborhoods?

... reduce demand for driving and parking?

... facilitate transit improvements?

...consider transportation affordability as part of development and street design?

### *Outcomes*

- Northfield plans for and measures access rather than mobility (how freely traffic moves) in all street and development projects including street connectivity.
- Northfield has planning and engineering staff who prioritize working together to use human-centered metrics, solve problems to connect people, and guide consultants to design for Northfield residents according to our values.
- All members of the community have equitable access to destinations.
- The City, School District, and other partners collaborate so all children can get to and from school and activities safely and independently.
- Street rights of way are allocated and designed for the greatest public benefit through consideration of all users and modes of travel appropriate to the surrounding land use including access for people with disabilities, pedestrian scale lighting, green infrastructure, and shade trees.
- The City and community partners collaborate to provide frequent and reliable transit services
- The City maintains its streets, sidewalks, bikeways, and trails for year-round safety in all neighborhoods.
- Highways 3 and 19 no longer create a safety hazard that divides the city.