

City of Northfield - Land Development Principles

Unanimously Approved by the City Council of Northfield and adopted into the City of Northfield 2008 Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code.

A detailed outline of each of the following Land Development Principles follows on the next pages.

- 1. The small town character will be enhanced.**
- 2. The natural environment will be protected, enhanced and better integrated in the Community.**
- 3. The preference for accommodating future growth is in in-fill locations, then redevelopment opportunities, and then on the edge of existing developed areas.**
- 4. New and redeveloped residential communities (areas) will have strong neighborhood qualities.**
- 5. Environmentally-sensitive and sustainable practices will be integrated into new developments and redeveloped areas.**
- 6. Places with a mix of uses that are distinctive and contribute to increasing the City's overall vitality are preferred.**
- 7. Neighborhood serving commercial will be small scale and integrated with the residential context.**
- 8. A wider range of housing choices will be encouraged - in the Community as well as in neighborhoods.**
- 9. Rural character of certain areas of the Community will be protected.**
- 10. Streets will create an attractive public realm and be exceptional places for people.**
- 11. Places will be better connected, in part to improve the function of the street network and also to better serve neighborhoods.**
- 12. Opportunities will be created to walk and bike throughout the Community.**

A full outline of these Development Principles is provided on the pages that follow.

Land Use Principles – City of Northfield

Unanimously Approved by the City Council of Northfield, Minnesota

Principle 1: The small town character will be enhanced.

Northfield’s built environment is defined by a distinct land use pattern and architectural character that includes a mix of traditional residential neighborhoods, a compact commercial shopping district and well-defined business and industrial areas. This character, referred to as “Old Northfield”, is cherished by local residents and distinguishes the Community in a regional context setting it apart from Twin City suburbs and bedroom communities.

- a. Northfield’s character will be defined by “Old Northfield” that includes the downtown core and older historic neighborhoods.
- b. Future areas for growth and development will reflect the essential elements of “Old Northfield” with respect to the form and pattern of development.
- c. New development and redevelopment will be sensitive to pedestrians in terms of scale and walkability.
- d. Mixed-use will be the preferred development approach when accommodating retail and office uses.

Principle 2: The natural environment will be protected, enhanced and better integrated in the community.

Northfield’s natural environment has a variety of ecological systems, and open spaces. Residents have a strong environmental ethic and support the protection of critical environmental areas and desire open spaces for recreation and peace of mind.

- a. The Cannon River is a defining natural feature of the City of Northfield. The City will commit to protecting and enhancing the river corridor and when development or redevelopment occurs the corridor will be integrated in development or redevelopment design plans.
- b. The Cannon River will be integrated into the downtown and surrounding areas by creating quality public spaces that connect people to the River.
- c. Convenient and accessible recreational opportunities will be provided for all ages on parkland and greenspaces. These areas will be enhanced, and new areas set aside that connect people to the natural environment, and promote recreational opportunities to support active and healthy lifestyles.
- d. The green spaces will be protected and enhanced as cherished Community assets.

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Principle 3: The preference for accommodating future growth is in infill locations, then redevelopment opportunities, and then on the edge of existing developed areas.

The existing pattern of development has been to grow outward at the edge of the city or fringe areas especially for residential development. This continued outward pattern of development is compromising the rural character of the Community. This outward growth creates a disconnected development pattern that is auto-oriented, while increasing the demand for infrastructure and Community services.

- a. Priority areas for future development will be identified for all three areas (infill, redevelopment and greenfield). It should not be implied that infill and redevelopment capacity must be consumed prior to support for any Greenfield development.
- b. When new development occurs at the edge of the Community through annexations, it will be done with great care by creating well defined residential neighborhoods, a green edge or a well designed place for commerce, so as not to compromise the rural landscape or the small town character.
- c. When infill or redevelopment occurs it will be done with great care so as not to compromise the quality of life for existing residents as a result of inappropriate building placement or size, unreasonable traffic impact or other identifiable negative consequences.
- d. When new growth occurs on the edge of the community through annexations, it will be done with a planned growth pattern which minimizes infrastructure and community services.

Principle 4: New and redeveloped residential communities (areas) will have strong neighborhood qualities.

The trend of residential growth has been to create subdivisions with a single use and building type. Typically these subdivisions are not human-scaled or walkable and are often defined by wide streets in a pattern that does not connect residential areas to each other, or the greater Community.

- a. Neighborhoods will be walkable with pedestrian friendly streets containing sidewalks that accommodate automobiles at lower speeds and volumes that provide for bicycle mobility on the street and give priority to the pedestrian experience.
- b. Community gathering areas will be integrated into new residential areas to promote opportunities for social interaction and public events.
- c. Basic retail service may be located nearby (accessible via walking and/or biking) or integrated with residential areas in the form of neighborhood centers.

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Principle 5: Environmentally-sensitive and sustainable practices will be integrated into new developments and redeveloped areas.

The Community has a high level of environmental awareness, which is reflected in local energy choices. Residents want to continue to employ creative and innovative choices to reflect the Community's commitment to sustainability and healthy living

- a. New construction will employ context sensitive design to reduce impacts on the natural environment.
- b. Compact/cluster subdivision design will be the preferred pattern of residential development in edge areas.
- c. Environmental sensitivity and sustainability will be reinforced by an effort to attract environmental technology businesses which represent one of six business and industry niches that are ideally suited to be recruited to Northfield.

Principle 6: Places with a mix of uses that are distinctive and contribute to increasing the City's overall vitality are preferred.

The local identity defined as "Old Northfield", which includes a variety of uses mixed together on the same block, or same building, reflects positively on the community. Over the last fifty years land uses have been segregated from one another, which detracts from this identity.

- a. Mixed-use centers, places that mix small-scale retail, residences, offices and civic uses will become part of the new development pattern, where applicable, in the City
- b. New opportunities will be created for residents to live and work in and around the downtown.
- c. Mixed-use centers will be compatible in scale and character of surrounding uses and develop in a form that reflects "Old Northfield" including such elements as building mass, placement and orientation to the street.
- d. Districts will be designated for business and industrial uses that are not appropriate in a mixed-use setting. Business and industrial development is vital to distinguish Northfield in the larger regional context. The creation of jobs and the expansion of the business and industrial tax base will continue to set Northfield apart from the suburban residential communities of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This will also support the City's economic development agenda as outlined in the Economic Development Plan of 2006.

Principle 7: Neighborhood serving commercial will be small scale and integrated with the residential context.

Neighborhood serving commercial will occur in Northfield in a pattern that contributes contextually to the surrounding neighborhood district and street. Neighborhood serving commercial will not be designed to be single-use and auto-oriented with parking in front and building disconnected from the streetscape. Neighborhood serving commercial buildings will reflect the form and character of the neighborhood vernacular or historic context of the community.

- a. Neighborhood serving commercial development when located in a residential context will reflect the qualities of the residential context with respect to form, scale and character.
- b. Neighborhood serving commercial will be sited in a manner that is pedestrian-friendly.

Principle 8: A wider range of housing choices will be encouraged – in the Community as well as in neighborhoods.

Housing developments have been developed with homogenous unit type and pricing. This has created a monotonous character to residential developments and has segregated residents socially and economically. Housing developments have also catered to larger families with above average household incomes (which does not reflect demographic trends) thereby limiting more affordable housing opportunities.

- a. New residential development will offer a variety of housing types and prices, including affordable and workforce housing.
- b. Housing diversity will be integrated into the fabric of the neighborhood.

Principle 9: Rural character of certain areas of the Community will be protected.

The rural character is a defining element in creating Northfield's identity. It provides the setting for the "small town" character. The primary elements that make up this character are the rural roads, expansive agrarian views, and rural architectural vernacular.

- a. The open space and land currently in agricultural use in the Community will be strengthened, and protected where appropriate.
- b. Public investments, e.g. roads, will be improved in a manner that strengthens the rural character.
- c. Initiatives will be pursued (i.e. Preservation Land Trusts, Development Easements, Conservation Design Development) to protect the rural character.

Principle 10: Streets will create an attractive public realm and be exceptional places for people.

The local streets are wide and are designed primarily to facilitate the movement of automobiles (e.g. ignore the needs of pedestrians and cyclist). The wide nature of the streets encourages a higher rate of travel for motorists, and increases the distance between building fronts, which detracts from the pedestrian experience and quaint small town character.

- a. Roadways and streets are important elements of the built environment and will strengthen the character of the setting.
- b. Roadways and streets will be given greater consideration as part of future development to ensure they contribute to the neighborhood character and people-oriented functions.
- c. The City will take great care in protecting the rural roadway character on the edge of the Community.
- d. Buildings will be situated on their site to define a high quality streetscape.

Principle 11: Places will be better connected, in part to improve the function of the street network and also to better serve neighborhoods.

Streets that are disconnected limit the flow of traffic in the Community by forcing traffic onto major and minor arterials, which can create traffic congestion. Encouraging an interconnected street pattern will create more travel options for residents to arrive at destinations, thereby decreasing travel time/distance, thereby decreasing travel time/distance, reducing congestion and improving wayfinding.

- a. The street pattern will be improved to keep local traffic off major arterials, and high-speed through traffic off local streets.
- b. A better connected grid or modified grid street system is the preferred network for future development and redevelopment.
- c. The development or redevelopment along commercial corridors will incorporate traditional patterns reflected in “Old Northfield”, which emphasizes pedestrian mobility and the relationships of buildings to one another and the public realm.
- d. The connections between Northfield and the regional transportation systems, including State Highways 19, 3, and 47 and County Road 1, among others, that support future development will be preserved and enhanced.

Principle 12: Opportunities will be created to walk and bike throughout the Community.

A large percentage of residents prefer to make trips via walking or biking for recreation or other uses, and desire to recreate on multi-use paths. Currently there are limited opportunities for walking and cycling, which encourages more trips being made via the automobile. This contributes to local congestion and decreased air quality, while limiting healthy lifestyle choices for residents.

- a. The design of local streets will encourage pedestrian and bicycle movement through features such as sidewalks, bike paths, narrower street widths, and quality planter and buffer strips to protect the pedestrian.
- b. Sidewalks, walking trails and bike paths will be connected to public parks and other destinations, including shopping and entertainment areas.
- c. Biking and other alternate forms of transportation will be provided as a viable form of transportation.