

9. Community Facilities

Organization

- A. Overview
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Purpose

The purpose of the Community Facilities Chapter is to identify current community facilities in Northfield so as to plan for their future renovation or expansion. This chapter will also review the current status of municipal facilities and discuss the comprehensive facility study currently underway.

A. Overview

Community facilities are a public or semi-public use such as government services (administration, police, fire and public works), religious institutions, public schools, libraries, museums, community centers, or other uses that are open to public use for little or no profit. Planning for community facilities is important because such facilities often form a major identity element of a community or neighborhood as well as provide essential services for the community's businesses, employees, visitors and residents. As Northfield grows in population and number of businesses, it is important to plan for the future expansion of community facilities to service the needs of a larger population.

In Northfield, community facilities in the past have been typically located in the downtown area (Library and museum) or integrated into the residential neighborhoods (churches and schools). These important components of the community helped create the small-town, pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood-oriented environment that makes Northfield so unique. However, as the community and the region continue to grow, some of these facilities, such as schools, have recently begun to locate on the edges of town as they face a need for expanded facilities. The choice from a cost and facilities management standpoint is easy, but with respect to a community's livability, an elementary school integrated into a residential area offers benefits that cannot be measured in terms of money. Such a neighborhood school is closer to student's homes, a safer environment and a neighborhood identity builder. Churches are facing similar economic issues when confronted with the prospect of expanding into large-scale uses with a full schedule of weekly activities. Principle 4 of Chapter 4, Land Use, states that: "Community gathering areas will be integrated into new residential areas to promote opportunities for social interaction and public events."

In 2007, the City completed a Municipal Facilities Space Needs Analysis. The location of key City facilities is shown on Map 9.1. The intent of the study was to identify municipal facilities, define their current use, document their location and analyze their programmatic use. Information from this study will be used in the completion of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and comprehensive facilities improvement plan. Simply stated, the charge was to determine if the City has, or will have, enough space in the coming years to adequately conduct city business and provide for the safety and welfare of the community. The core efforts of this study focused

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on primary municipal facilities including City Offices and Council Chambers (City Hall), Police Department, Fire Department and the Library (in 2006, a separate study was completed for the Library). The 2007 study also addressed the Water Department, Waste Water Treatment Facility, Public Works Maintenance Facility, the Municipal Liquor Store, Recreational Facilities, and the Northfield Community Resource Center.

It was determined that the city will have a core deficit of nearly 34,000 square feet of space by the year 2023 and that to accommodate this need, additional remodeling, renovations, and/or expansion and/or reuse must be undertaken, in addition to new construction. A

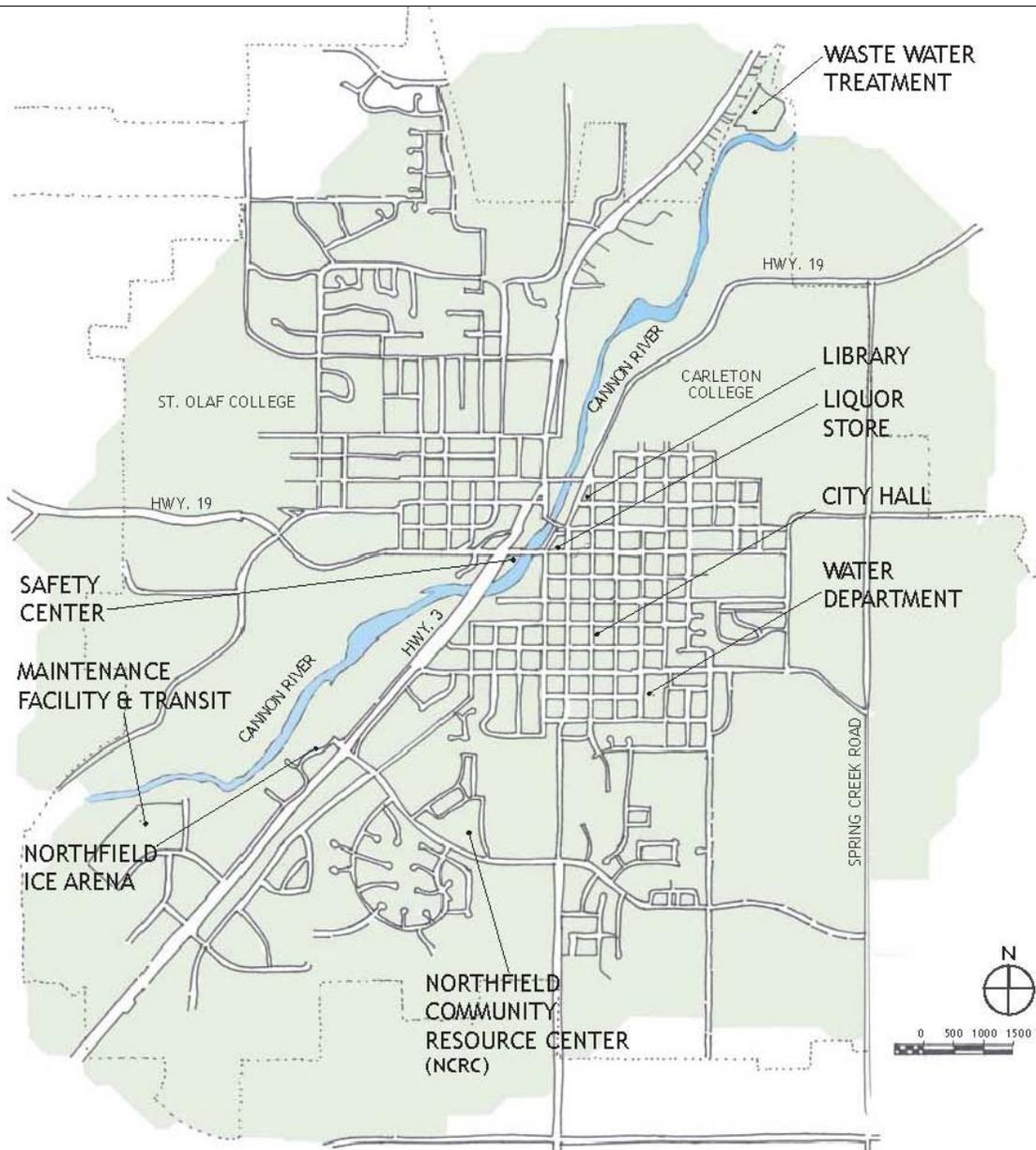
likely need will be to renovate or build over 100,000 square feet of space by the year 2023.

B. Goal

A goal is a policy statement that states a desired outcome in general terms. The goal for community facilities is provided below. The goal was developed by considering key findings related to community facilities, and integrating public input generated as part of the Plan update.

Plan for and prioritize the construction of community facilities

MAP 9.1 NORTHFIELD FACILITIES



Source: Hay Dobbs

so as to provide the greatest benefit to the residents in the most cost-effective manner possible, with the most positive effect on the immediate surroundings.

C. Key Findings

Existing Facilities

City Hall

City Hall houses Northfield’s administrative services and also provides space for Rice County administrative services and miscellaneous community activities. Located in a former elementary school on Washington Street that was constructed in 1954, City Hall has inflexible office space. Figure 9.1 shows the current City Hall. To meet the needs of a growing population and growing demand for administrative services, it is believed that the building will either need to be remodeled or a new building constructed. The Municipal Facilities Space Needs Analysis concluded that parking is ample for the size and occupancy of the use, but the space is very inflexible and departments are space locked. Several scenarios were proposed in the study to either renovate the existing building or construct a new building that may be combined with a new public safety or library facility. No conclusion has occurred on which scenario is being pursued.

Schools

Within the public school system, there are three elementary schools, a middle school and a high school (Table 9.1 and Map 9.2). The community also has charter and private schools. Schools play many important roles within neighborhoods including providing recreational areas (tot lots or playgrounds), providing voting locations, serving as meeting places, and of course providing a place to learn within walking distance of many of its students. The more recent trend in school development is for schools to locate on the edge where there is an abundance of vacant land. Such development in Northfield has occurred south along Hwy 246/Division Street South where Bridgewater Elementary opened in 1998 and where the middle school opened in 2004. The school district has indicated that they do not plan to construct any new schools for the foreseeable future. Therefore, the need to identify or reserve land resources for future school facilities is not apparent at this time.



Figure 9.1. Northfield’s existing City Hall and grounds.

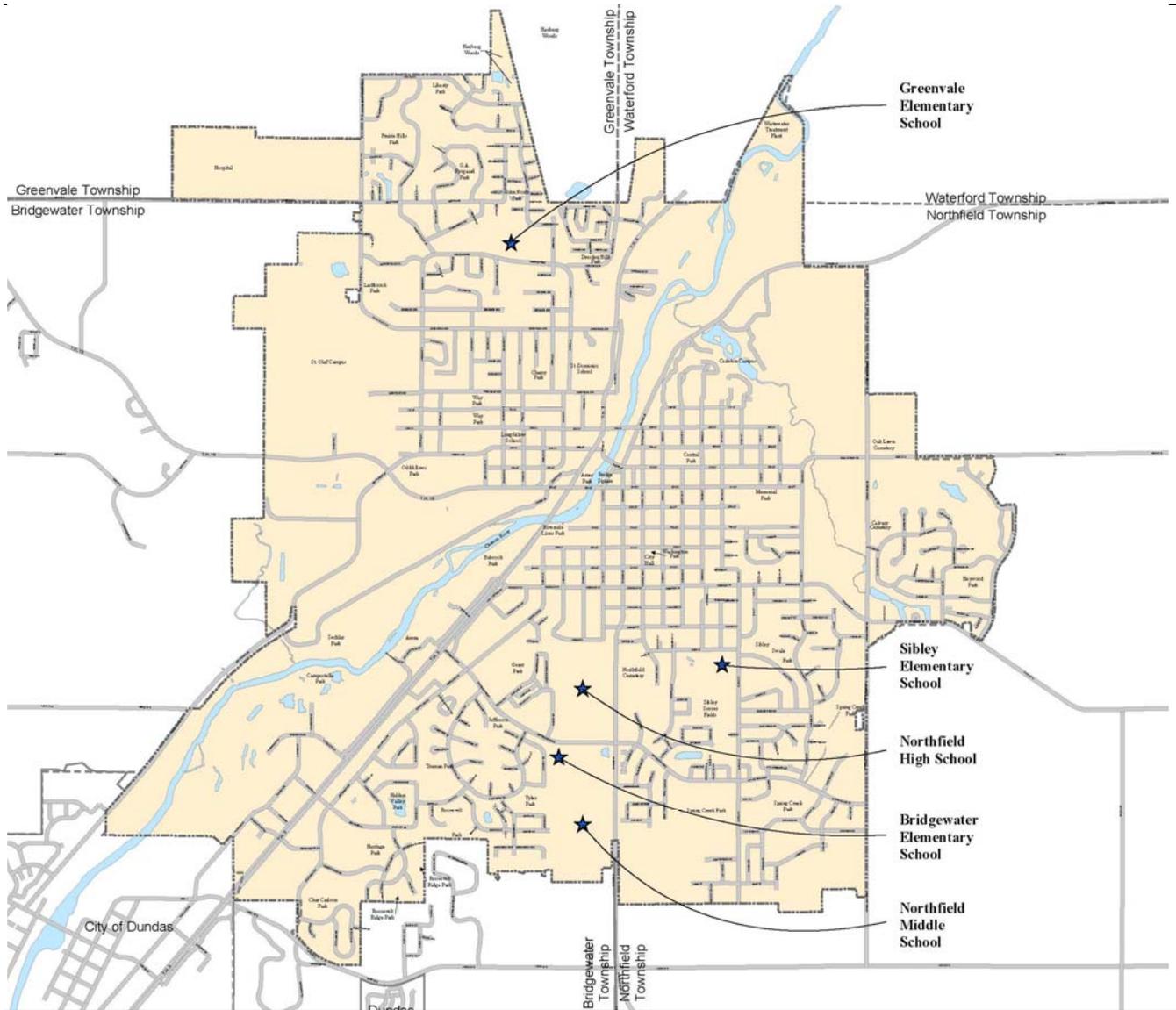
The transportation system around schools is also an important factor. Even when schools are adjacent to residential neighborhoods, if there are no streets or walking paths connecting them, the schools function as separate automobile destinations instead of integral parts of the neighborhood, thus creating a travel pattern that has to be carefully planned and accommodated in residential neighborhoods.

TABLE 9.1 NORTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Name of School	Location	Size of Property
Bridgewater Elementary	Jefferson Pkwy/Hwy 246	13.5 acres
Greenville Park Elementary	Lincoln Parkway	14.6 acres
Sibley Elementary	Maple Street	15.5 acres
Northfield Middle School	Division Street South (Hwy 246)	61 acres
Northfield High School	Division Street South (Hwy 246)	36 acres

Source: City of Northfield

MAP 9.2 PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Source: City of Northfield

Houses of Worship

Some of the community’s religious institutions are integrated into residential areas and form cornerstones in their respective neighborhoods. The churches close to the downtown area also present good examples of popular architecture of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Because many churches enjoy growing congregations and draw members from both Northfield and rural areas surrounding Northfield, they are being forced to consider expansion or relocation alternatives similar to those faced by the school system. New or expanded church facilities will be part of the future land use and development pattern of the city. Similar to schools, churches are a welcome component in

residential neighborhoods, but due to larger traffic volumes can be disruptive if careful and effective measures are not applied.

Library

The Public Library, constructed in 1910 as a Carnegie Library (with a major addition in 1985), is located in downtown Northfield, and is currently considering options for expanding (See Figure 9.2). A study completed in 2006 indicated a desire to significantly increase the size of the existing Library building. An expanded library facility may be possible at its current downtown location with additional space built to the south of the existing building. If that site does not offer enough space for an adequate expansion, another



Figure 9.2. City of Northfield Library.

downtown location should be used, consistent with the land use principles in Chapter 4, Land Use, that identify the Public Library as a key component in a vital and historic downtown district.

Museum/Theater

The old City Hall is now the home of the Arts Guild and currently houses a gallery, shop, and studio. Located just west of downtown, the Arts Guild Theater is an attraction both for tourists and Northfield residents. The Historical Society Museum, a popular attraction for tourists interested in such historic events as the Jesse James/Cole Younger raid in 1876, is also located downtown. Discussions have been held about the possible development of a downtown community cultural center to provide areas for various resources: performances, retail, studios, gallery, library, meeting spaces and organizational offices.

Public Safety (Police and Fire)

Police and Fire protective services are located in the same facility, known as the Public Safety Center, on the southeast quadrant of 5th Street and Hwy 3. The building

was constructed in 1971 (See Figure 9.3). The Public Safety Center also houses the Emergency Operations Center and Rice/Steele County Combined Dispatch Center Backup Unit.



Figure 9.3. The Public Safety Center.

The Fire Department is currently 100% volunteer and in addition to serving Northfield, serves adjacent townships. Emergency response times within the community are generally under 10 minutes, but limited river crossings and only one grade-separated crossing at the railroad tracks can create problems for responding to emergencies. As Northfield and adjacent townships grow, additional demand is placed on the Fire Department to provide fire protection. Also important to the fire station is the ability to draw additional volunteer firefighters. Recent trends across the country have found it increasingly difficult to find volunteers.

The Police Department authorizes 23 licensed police officers. This equates to a ratio of 1.21 sworn officers per thousand persons in Northfield. The average ratio of sworn officers per thousand persons in cities of 10,000 to 25,000 persons is 2.32 sworn officers. Police calls in Northfield are usually “quality of life issues” and domestic calls.

The Municipal Facilities Space Needs Analysis concluded that the building is landlocked on a busy intersection with one outlet for fire and the public. The facilities are not compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and police detention does not meet Minnesota Department of Corrections requirements. Several scenarios were proposed in the study, including renovating the building for Fire Department use and relocating the Police Department. Other options include constructing a new building that may be combined with a new City Hall or Library facility. The ability to influence the community identity with the redevelopment or expansion of a Public Safety Center is an opportunity that must be recognized by the City.

Northfield Community Resource Center (NCRC)

The NCRC is a 58,451 square-foot facility completed and opened to the public in 2000. The multi-million dollar building, funded through a variety of public and private funding sources and conveniently located on Jefferson Parkway just west of the Northfield High School, has four wings: the Youth wing, Human Services wing, Shared Services wing, and the Senior Center wing. The facility is open to the residents of Northfield and the surrounding communities and houses a wide variety of service and educational organizations, including the Northfield Senior Organization, the Community Action Center, Food Shelf, Clothes Closet, continuing education center, Head Start, Three Rivers Community Action, and a daycare.

Northfield Hospital

The Northfield Hospital, which opened a new 60-acre medical campus in 2003, is located along North Avenue in the northwest area of the community. At that location, it offers 37 acute-care beds for inpatient care, a 40-bed long-term care center and a full range of outpatient services. In 2007, the Hospital further expanded its operations with an attached 18,000 square foot multi-specialty clinic and hospital addition. It also developed clinics in Lonsdale in 2006 and Farmington and Lakeville in 2007. Separate from the main campus, the Hospital also operates the large Center for Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation, the Orthopedic and Fracture Clinic of Northfield, Northfield Homecare, and Northfield Emergency Medical Services (ambulance).

Because of its outreach efforts, as well as continued growth of the local Allina Clinic, the Hospital expects to serve a growing portion of the approximately 80,000 residents who live in its Rice, Dakota, Scott and Goodhue Counties' service area. As its base of patients grows, the Hospital plans to develop an extensive array of new health care services on its main campus. Its present employee staff of well over 500 people will continue to expand, as will the volume of its outpatient services. Taken together, these factors are expected to lead to significant growth of the campus over the next 15-20 years, and to increase traffic in Northfield, with a significant amount arriving from the north.

Other City Facilities

Other facilities owned and operated by the City include the following:

Public Works Maintenance Facility, constructed in 1994, is an approximately 20,000 square foot building that houses streets and parks employees, as well as large maintenance equipment.

Water Division Building, constructed in 1978, houses City staff. Office space is ample. However, there is a need for more cold storage for off-season equipment. There is little room for expansion due to its residential location.

Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) was constructed in 1958 and serves both Northfield and Dundas. Continued population growth indicates the treatment facility may need to be enlarged, with a study to determine this by 2015. The facility works well, although there is a need for more garage space.

Transit Facility, built in 2002, houses office space, 5,871 square feet of heated garage, and 920 square feet of cold storage.

Municipal Liquor Store was constructed in 1957. Profits from the store directly support public services and projects. Currently, the City is considering relocating the store to accommodate more room for parking and operations.

Northfield Ice Arena was constructed in 1975 and sold to the City in 1984. The present arena was built by local citizens and has housed many teams. The Municipal Facilities Space Needs Analysis study concluded that the current facility is no longer keeping up with current demands. Issues relating to ADA accessibility requirements, locker rooms, and seating capacity need to be resolved to adapt to future needs. Local citizens are currently working to see if a new facility could be constructed.

City Owned Parcels that are vacant are located throughout the community. Most of these parcels are too small to accommodate future public facilities. However, there is a five acre parcel located near the Transit Facility and a 2.5 acre parcel located near the intersection of St. Olaf Avenue and Water Street North that might be able to accommodate a future facility.

D. Objectives and Strategies

Outlined below are two objectives and seven strategies. The objectives indicate a specific policy direction and help organize strategies. Strategies are detailed actions necessary to initiate or complete an objective such as a program, policy or a project.

Objective 1: Provide key facilities that reflect the community's values and needs, and support the functioning of those who serve the public.

CF 1.1 The City's Capital Improvement Plan should include funding for future building renovations and/or new construction.

CF 1.2 The City should prioritize which facilities will be renovated and/or replaced.

CF 1.3 City-owned facilities will add to the community's sense of place through high-quality architectural design and site orientation that follows the land use principles of Chapter 4.

Objective 2: For those community facilities considering expansion or relocation, ensure that new facilities have a positive impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

CF 2.1 Expansion of such facilities should be closely monitored so that facilities do not negatively impact (with excessive parking, traffic, and noise) the character of a neighborhood. New facilities should reflect, whenever possible, the character of the existing neighborhood.

CF 2.2 Locate and retain community facilities within the downtown area where appropriate and possible.

CF 2.3 Construction or renovation of publicly-owned buildings should be environmentally-responsible and energy efficient.

CF 2.4 Whenever possible, the City should encourage civic uses such as schools and houses of worship to locate as part of a residential neighborhood.