

# *Chapter Nine*

## *Community Facilities*

### **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 neighborhood or community 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, 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 full schedules of weekly activities.

In 2007, the City completed a Municipal Facilities Space Needs Analysis. The intent of the study was to identify municipal facilities, define their current use, document their location and analyze their programmatic use (**attach Hay Dobbs map – existing locations for city-owned facilities**). 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 on primary statutory 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. Community Facilities 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 so as to provide the greatest benefit to the citizens of Northfield in the most cost-effective manner possible, with the least negative 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 an old elementary school on Washington Street that was constructed in 1954, City Hall is not energy efficient and has inflexible office space. 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 space needs study concluded that parking is ample for the size and occupancy of the use, but the space is very inflexible and departments are landlocked. 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.

**Schools**

Within the public school system, there are three elementary schools, a middle school and a high school (Table X and Map X). 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 developments is for schools to locate on the edge where there is an abundance of vacant land. Such development in Northfield has occurred south along County Road 246/Division Street 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.

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.

Table X

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

### **Churches**

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 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **Library**

The 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. A study completed in 2006 indicated a desire to significantly increase the size of the existing library building. One of the options being discussed would relocate the Library, freeing up the existing site for reuse opportunities. The community's land use principles in chapter 4, however, suggest that the Library is an important element of a vital downtown. .

### **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 story, is also located downtown.

### **Public Safety (Police and Fire)**

Police and Fire are located in the same facility, known as the Public Safety Center, on the southeast quadrant of 5<sup>th</sup> Street and TH 3. The building was constructed in 1971. The Public Safety Center also houses the Emergency Operations Center and Rice/Steele County Combined Dispatch Center Backup Unit.

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 of 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 space needs study 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.

### **Northfield Community Resource Center (NCRC)**

The Northfield Community Resource Center (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, Shared Services, and the Senior Center. The facility is open to the citizens 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 its new facility in 2003, is located along North Avenue in the northwest area of the community. The Hospital is a 37-bed facility with an attached long-term care center that serves approximately 80,000 area residents who live in Rice, Dakota, Scott and Goodhue counties. Recently, the Hospital expanded its operations with an 18,000 square foot clinic and hospital addition.

### **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 park employees, as well as large maintenance equipment.
- Water department building, constructed in 1978, houses Staff and wells #1 and #2. Office spaces 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.
- Waterwater Treatment Facility was constructed in 1980 and serves both Northfield and Dundas. Continued population growth indicates the treatment facility will need to be updated and expanded in 15 years. The facility works well, although there is a need for more garage space.
- Transit Facility, built in 2002, houses office space, 5,871 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 space needs 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.

## **Objectives and Strategies**

Outlined below are \_\_\_ objectives and \_\_ 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**

#### **Plan for the renovation and or replacement of key city facilities.**

- 1.1 The City's Capital Improvement Program should include funding for future building renovations and/or new construction.
- 1.2 The City should prioritize which facilities will be renovated and/or replaced.

### **Objective 2**

#### **For those community facilities considering relocation, ensure that new facilities have a positive impact on surrounding neighborhoods.**

- 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.
- 2.2 Locate and retain community facilities within the downtown area where appropriate and possible.
- 2.3 Construction or renovation of publicly-owned buildings should promote energy efficiency.

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