

POTENTIAL CHANGES TO TOWN PLAN UPDATE WORDING 2 13 2020

Sections of the Town Plan update with recommended changes are below. Please note that **bold underlined blue** text indicates recommended new wording; [~~bracketed strikethrough red~~] text indicates wording recommended to be removed.

Page 1. VISION Statement:

*We will strive to maintain Northfield's small-town character while promoting economic development and village revitalization. We will concentrate growth in our downtown and village areas while protecting the rural character of the town. We will keep the highest level of residential density in our downtown and village areas, **while still recognizing and protecting property owners' ability to continue to reasonably develop and subdivide property in the rural areas of the community.***

*We treasure and will protect the beauty and integrity of our back roads, covered bridges, forests, mountains and streams. **We wish to support our rural traditions and local food production** [~~We want to sustain our rural traditions and support local food production by keeping land in farming and forestry.~~].*

We are proud to host Norwich University, the oldest private military college in the country, and will work with them to promote our mutual interests.

We will pursue universal broadband access, sidewalks and paths, public transportation, renewable energy generation and weatherization projects to reduce our carbon footprint and improve the quality of life in Northfield. We will work to link Northfield Village and Northfield Falls with corridors and paths.

We will pursue housing diversity to attract and retain a broad range of residents. We support our local school system and will seek to expand community activities and involvement. We value transparency and will seek to expand participation in local governance.

Ch. 2. LAND USE

KEY FINDINGS

Page 3. Resource Protection:

Resource Protection. *The overall land use policies and recommendations of this plan strongly support resource protection. Much of the rural land in Northfield has multiple natural resource values. These resources, while known to exist, have not been comprehensively identified, assessed and prioritized. Some of the highest value resource lands are owned by the town or by Norwich University, which offers a degree of protection.*

~~[However, these lands are not permanently protected through conservation easements or similar legal mechanisms. Further, the town currently has limited capacity to further the resource goals, objectives and policies of this plan on land that is not town-owned] This plan recommends that the town continue its efforts to improve the effectiveness of policies and incentives that would help to protect the natural and historic resources in the town of Northfield [This plan recommends various changes to the town's land use regulations to increase their effectiveness at protecting natural and historic resources in Northfield and supports the Conservation Commission's efforts to permanently protect high value resource lands].~~

Page 5. Economic Development:

Economic Development. Northfield is focusing its economic development efforts on downtown revitalization, seeking full use and occupancy of existing commercial and industrial properties, and supporting the growth of existing businesses like Cabot Hosiery. Norwich University will continue to be a significant driver of the local economy, by providing employment opportunities and a critical customer base for local businesses. Expanding tourism and recreation in Northfield would also help support local businesses, and provide new opportunities for owners to generate economic benefits from forest land. Focusing economic activity in existing settlements also furthers the energy and resource protection goals and objectives of this plan. ~~[This plan supports the efforts of the NCDN and calls upon Town Government to move ahead with economic development efforts.]~~

Page 7-8. Working, Conservation, Open Space and Undeveloped Land:

Working, Conservation, Open Space and Undeveloped Land. The Town of Northfield has two tracts of Town Forest totaling more than 650 acres – the former Cheney farm and Paine Mountain parcels to the east of Northfield Village, and Dustin's Pasture to the northeast of Northfield Falls that straddles the Northfield-Berlin town line. The 2019 Northfield Town Forest Stewardship Plan inventories and assesses the resources on the Cheney Farm-Paine Mountain parcels, and makes recommendations for the future management of those lands. That plan is incorporated into this plan by reference. The Cheney Farm-Paine Mountain Town Forest abuts Norwich University's landholdings on Paine Mountain creating a contiguous 1,200-acre block of forest land with an interconnected multi-use trail system open for public recreational use (ATV-use is prohibited). The Cheney Farm property was originally purchased by the Village of Northfield and the Village Water Department as a community water supply source. It currently serves as a partial backup water source for the Town and will continue to do so.

Pages 12-13. Future Land Use Recommendations.

The recommendations for wording changes to specific land use areas in this section of the Plan are below. (Note that those land use areas not mentioned below would remain as they are currently worded in the draft Town Plan update):

High Density Residential. *The high density residential area includes the traditional neighborhoods in Northfield Village that are served by public water and sewer. These neighborhoods feature a grid street network with small lots and shallow setbacks and a mix of single- and multi-family buildings.*

This planning area is more than 200 acres in area. There is potential for small-scale infill that would provide more housing without significantly changing the built form of the neighborhood. Overall density on a block may vary in range [from 4 to 16] of the number of dwelling units per acre based on proximity to downtown/mixed use areas.

1. *MAINTAIN the traditional scale and built form of the residential neighborhoods in Northfield Village through revisions to the land use regulations to ensure future development is compatible in form and scale with the existing built form.*
2. *EVOLVE the mix of housing by allowing a range of housing types and residential densities that are compatible with the existing built form.*

Moderate Density Residential. *The moderate density residential area includes neighborhoods along Route 12, in Northfield Center and Northfield Falls, and in Northfield Village further out from downtown. These areas feature a less regular street network (often responding to terrain) with moderate sized lots, more greenspace and predominately single-family homes.*

This planning area includes nearly 400 acres with ample opportunity for additional housing where infrastructure can be provided. Overall density on a block or in a neighborhood may vary in range [from 2 to 8] of the number of dwelling units per acre based on proximity to downtown/mixed use areas, availability of infrastructure and natural resource constraints.

1. *MAINTAIN the traditional scale and built form of the residential neighborhoods through revisions to the land use regulations to ensure future development is compatible in form and scale with the existing built form.*
2. *EVOLVE the mix of housing by [allowing] considering a range of housing types and residential densities that are compatible with the existing built form.*
3. *TRANSFORM the infrastructure and services in Northfield Falls to promote opportunities for increased development in and near the village center [Northfield Falls and facilitate infill housing by extending infrastructure that will support higher-density development in and near the village center].*

Rural Moderate. *The rural moderate area includes about 6,400 acres outside the village centers currently developed at an average density of 1 dwelling per 14 acres. This land is suited for low density rural residential housing due to proximity to existing road network, soils with moderate to marginal suitability for on-site septic, and few to moderate natural resource constraints. To protect rural character and working lands, a large percentage of the land should remain used for agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation and open space to protect the rural character of the area. Housing types and lot sizes may vary, but development should be low-density in this land use planning area [~~density should not exceed an average of 1 dwelling per 3 acres within this planning area as a whole~~].*

1. MAINTAIN and discourage fragmentation or conversion of productive farm and forest land.
2. MAINTAIN the rural character and a low-density development pattern.
3. MAINTAIN the existing pattern and density of rural residential development.
4. MAINTAIN opportunity for rural housing in areas already served by public infrastructure.

Rural Low. *The rural low area includes about 5,300 acres outside the village centers currently developed at an average density of 1 dwelling per 61 acres. This land is not well suited for residential development due to distance to maintained road network, poor soils for on-site septic and significant natural resource constraints. These lands are and should remain dedicated primarily to agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation and open space uses. Housing types and lot sizes may vary, but development should be very low-density in this land use planning area [~~density should not exceed an average of 1 dwelling per 10 acres within this planning area as a whole~~].*

1. MAINTAIN forest cover in the upland portions of the watershed to protect wildlife habitat, water quality and scenic character.
2. MAINTAIN and discourage fragmentation of large tracts of farm and forest land.
3. MAINTAIN forest cover, rural character and a very low-density development pattern.
4. MAINTAIN existing public rights-of-way but avoid expanding the amount of publicly maintained road in remote areas.

Ch. 8. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Page 48. Resources. 4th paragraph (remove):

~~[There is a recognized lack of economic development resources and focus at the town level in Northfield as compared to the staff and organizational capacity for economic development in nearby communities. This puts Northfield at a disadvantage when trying to attract or retain businesses. The town would benefit greatly from a dedicated economic development staff focused on the needs of the existing businesses in the community and on the business opportunities Northfield presents for the future.]~~

Ch. 10. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM: Action Statements

Page 53. Priority Action 5 (remove):

~~[Adopt a minimum rental housing code and implement a rental registry and inspection program to ensure that rental units meet basic health, safety and energy standards. A minimum rental housing code enforcement program would include maintaining an annual apartment registry, collecting rental unit registration fees (which would be used to fund the program), conducting periodic inspections of rental housing units, enforcing minimum housing standards, and issuing violation notices and certificates of compliance to landlords.]~~

Page 54. Priority Action 9.1. :

Establishing an advisory role in the local permitting process for the Conservation Commission to review and comment on applications for land development and subdivision in the rural areas of town that could have adverse impacts on the natural resources identified in this plan.

~~[Establishing a formal role for the Conservation Commission in the process of reviewing applications for land development and subdivision in the rural areas of town that could have adverse impacts on the natural resources identified in this plan.]~~

Page 58. Long-Term Action 5:

Continue to implement the recommendations of the Dog River Corridor Plan and the 2019 Northfield Town Forest Stewardship Plan, and protect and conserve the lands and current uses of the Northfield Town Forest and the Dog River Park [including using conservation easements to ensure the long-term protection and conservation of the lands and current uses of the Northfield Town Forest and the Dog River Park].

Page 58. Long-Term Action 9 (remove):

~~[Hire an Economic Development Director as part of a coordinated economic development program for the town with partners including Northfield Community Development Network and Norwich University.]~~