



*Master Plan
Discussion on*

NORTHFIELD'S MAIN STREET



Imagine Northfield's Main Street ... sometime in the future, when...

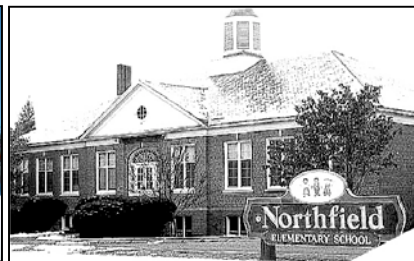
- Historic buildings along Main Street are protected and restored,
- Getting around town is easier and more convenient,
- The former Northfield campus is bustling with activity which has spurred economic development clustered in designated areas.

These are some of the recurring themes heard in recent Master Plan Forums of you, our citizens.

Now, we would like to develop strategies to make this happen. We have invited panelists to consider the public input gathered as well as to assess the potential and possibilities for the future.

We invite you all to come and hear our panelists on

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2013
7:00 P.M.
NORTHFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



Revitalizing Downtown

Benefits of a vibrant Town Center

- A high quality of life
- A place that enriches and inspires a sense of community
- More stable property values
- More stable tax base
- Opportunities to know your neighbors, more meaningful connection to your community
- Increased sales to local merchants due to increase in foot traffic and draw
- Better overall community self image
- More places to go to shop, to eat, to meet people
- Spend less on infrastructure because you concentrate it in already developed areas
- A better place to live, work and play

How does a town recapture its center, making it into the “heart” of the community?

It must make a **place** out of its center in order to compete with malls and big box retail by offering a unique sense of place, a distinct experience and unique products and services. This requires:

- Organizing as a community, including merchants, landowners, town officials, and residents to work together towards a common vision and set of goals.
- Making design improvements including making buildings, public spaces, storefronts, sidewalks, parking, signs, and streets more beautiful and oriented to the pedestrian.
- Promoting the town center as a destination through increasing awareness of its potential, marketing and planning events
- Restructuring the place over time by adjusting the mix of uses, the design of the streetscape, and the overall look and feel of the center.
- Focusing and enhancing the existing assets of the center (e.g. historic buildings, water element, connections to recreational opportunities, etc.)

Planning and Design Principles

Quality of Built Environment.

Design aesthetically pleasing buildings, streets, blocks, parks with some variety, but which tie together in some way to feel like one cohesive and recognizable place.

- Pedestrian Scale
- Building materials
- Sense of enclosure
- Streetscape

Walkability. Make room for the pedestrian.

- Scale
- Sense of enclosure instead of exposure to car and wide open spaces
- Sidewalks and paths
- Safety – lighting
- Pedestrian amenities – street furniture



Bristol, Rhode Island

Connectivity. Connect parking, shops, neighborhoods, parks with pleasing and accessible sidewalks, crosswalks, pedestrian alleys and paths.

Cars. Accommodate the car, but don't let it dominate.

- Parking – break it up, screen it with landscaping, don't put it in front
- Service stations – attractive design
- Traffic calming

Public Spaces. Create outdoor rooms where people can gather, have opportunities to linger and have chance encounters.

- Parks and plazas
- Outdoor seating

Way-finding. Make finding your way around town easy and attractive.

- Signs (type, number, size, location, orientation, illumination, information, aesthetic appeal - materials, fonts, colors)

Mixed Use. Encourage a mix of uses that will attract a variety of people at a variety of times.

- Housing vs. retail
- Daytime vs. nighttime
- Weekday vs. weekend
- High volume vs. lower volume

Visual interest. Provide interesting things to look at.

- Transparent windows and doors
- Activities
- Focal points

GOAL STATEMENT: TO PRESERVE THE HISTORIC CHARACTER AND "SENSE OF PLACE" ON MAIN STREET WHILE AT THE SAME TIME PROMOTING GREATER ECONOMIC DIVERSITY.

"When we talk about Main Street, we are talking about real people doing real work in real places to revitalize communities and preserve the character of their downtowns and neighborhoods."

- National Main Street Center¹

A vital, healthy main street is one that provides an aesthetically pleasing, culturally rich, and economically viable place in which to live, work, and play. It is also a desirable place to visit. Highly functioning main streets are ones that have created/achieved the following:²

- Strong Organization – partnerships among various groups that have a stake in the main street, including business owners, civic leaders, community volunteers
- A Positive Self-Image – an image that conveys a sense of community pride and improves investor and consumer confidence
- Strong Design – a distinctive physical character, in both buildings and landscape, that provides a safe and inviting environment for residents, workers, shoppers and visitors
- Economic Diversity – an environment that strengthens existing businesses and encourages and supports growth of new and diverse businesses, and in particular, businesses that support the needs of the local population

¹ www.preservationnation.org/main-street. The National Main Street Center, Inc. (NMSC) is a non-profit subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The NMSC's efforts over the past 30 years to revitalize main streets throughout the country have resulted in billions of investment dollars in job creation and historic building preservation.

² Adapted from the National Main Street Center's "Main Street Four Point Approach," www.preservationnation.org/main-street.

NORTHFIELD'S MAIN STREET TODAY: OVERVIEW OF KEY POINTS

With its collection of well-preserved early 19th century buildings and linear common, Northfield's two-mile stretch from the Route 10/63 intersection northward to the former Northfield School campus has the makings of visually appealing, economically successful main street. Consensus exists, on the part of Northfield residents, that revitalization of Main Street is central to the long term health of the entire town. However, the following conditions in Northfield pose challenges to Main Street revitalization:



Figure 1. Northfield's historic Main Street features several houses built by master craftsman Calvin Stearns.

- While Main Street incorporates a "linear common," it does not contain a "space," such as a town park, to be used for community gathering
- Main Street is currently a State-owned and maintained highway, and traffic-calming measures and improved parking are needed to help

preserve buildings and provide a safe pedestrian environment. The town must take over jurisdiction of Main Street from MassDOT if it wishes to redesign the roadway

- The Town Hall and Elementary School – both major Main Street hubs – are in need of repairs and upgrades
- Historically-sensitive approaches to infill development along Main Street are needed to help insure protection of character and sense of place
- The existing development process, limited to the issuing of special permit, may hinder creative and historically-sensitive approaches to commercial development along Main Street
- The limited infrastructure serving Main Street, especially sewer, places some restrictions on future development/redevelopment
- Sidewalks are currently plowed (inconsistently) by residents

The following opportunities exist for revitalizing Main Street:

- The older homes in Northfield, particularly the Stearns houses, provide primary source material for the study of early American architecture and therefore have the potential to attract a national academic audience
- The legacy of D. L. Moody, rooted in the former Northfield School campus and on Main Street (e.g. Moody's church), holds potential for expanding tourism
- Northfield has adequate infrastructure to support commercial and/residential development along Main Street
- By amending the current zoning bylaw to incorporate a specifically designed commercial district (such as the village commercial district)
- Northfield may proscribe the location, layout, look and nature of future Main Street businesses

- Re-use of the Northfield School campus with an adult population has potential to provide for the town's aging demographic, as well as bolster economic activity
- The library has potential to provide greater opportunities for community gathering
- The existing "Senior Pavilion," located behind Town Hall, has potential for greater use
- Existing commercial establishments, including Mim's, Rooster's Bistro, and Northfield Coffee and Books, provide places for community gathering
- The existing network of sidewalks provides pedestrian connections to portions of Main Street



Figure 2. Parents pick up children from the Northfield Elementary School on a foggy March afternoon.

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR REVITALIZING MAIN STREET

BUSINESSES ON MAIN STREET IN NORTHFIELD

PRESERVING CHARACTER WHILE ENHANCING ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

- Develop a preservation plan that establishes priorities for historic buildings and landscapes
- Establish a village center district that defines boundaries, building setbacks and dimensions, and uses
- Develop design guidelines for commercial and residential properties
- Develop economic opportunities and cluster commercial activity in designated areas

Business Name	Business Address
LaSall's - N - Things	Main St
Rock Ridge Farm	2 Main St
Jacque's Cleaning	17 Main St, #5
Joshua B Poole Plumbing & Heating	20 Main St
MIM'S Market	60 Main St
Northfield Creamie	62 Main St
J C Woodworking & Artist	66 Main St
Massage for Health, Sports & Neuromuscular Therapy	70 Main St
Northfield Food Mart	74 A Main St
Northfield Barber Shop	74 C Main St
Pamela Veith Real Estate	75 Main St, # 105
Pro/Casual Too	75 Main St
Bobbies Hair & Nail Salon	75 Main St
Lauries Hair	75 Main St
KLMNC D/B/A The Notch	77 Main St
Centennial House	94 Main St
Starlight Creations	105 Main St
Garden Bee Design and Landscape	105 Main St
Northfield Coffee & Books	105 Main St
Greenfield Co-Operative Bank	144 Main St
Matilda & Nunzi's Emporium	180 Main St
Dr Mikes Auto Care	190 Main St
Wave Lengths	194 Main St
Hair by Irene	194 Main St
Institutional Offices	
Northfield Town Hall	69 Main St
Northfield Police Department	69 Main St
Northfield Fire Department	91 Main St
Northfield Elementary School	104 Main St
U. S. Post Office	136 Main St
Mass. Rural Water	168 Main St #2

CREATING A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE

- Increase safety by calming traffic and providing more pedestrian amenities
- Increase connectivity through construction of more sidewalks, bike lanes, and links to adjacent trails
- Beautify the Main Street corridor by introducing more street trees, period lighting, seating, and improved signage
- Increase community gathering places by improving access to existing spaces, and developing new spaces

PROTECTING THE CAMPUS

- Collaborate in redevelopment efforts as a means of supporting town goals
- Work with Campus owners/occupants to preserve the buildings, landscape, and DL Moody story

Source: Registered Business Listing of the Northfield Town Clerk and Infogroup Data Base

OBJECTIVE 4.1 PRESERVE HISTORIC CHARACTER WHILE ENHANCING ECONOMIC DIVERSITY						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.1.1 Develop a preservation plan	Historic structures on Main Street Historic Resource Inventory Active Historical Commission	Work with Historic Commission			LEAD: Historical Commission PARTNERS: Owner of historic structures	
4.1.2 Establish a village center district	Planning Board	Define village center district (including boundaries and dimensions)		District should be deeper than 300 feet in some places, where appropriate, to accommodate building clustering, outdoor pedestrian places and parking in the rear and to the side of buildings.	Historical Commission	
4.1.3 Develop economic opportunities and cluster commercial activity in designated areas	Northfield Business and Tourism Organization Planning Board	Provide more incentives to attract services and amenities Align infrastructure supply with future demand				
4.1.4 Develop design guidelines for commercial and residential properties	Planning Board	Design guidelines should include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • redesign of existing buildings • Roadways and Streetscape • On-street parking and in rear of buildings • Open spaces • Public areas 				

OBJECTIVE 4.2 CREATE A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE ON MAIN STREET						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.2.1 Increase safety	MassDOT Discontinuance Process	Negotiate with MassDOT to take local control of Main Street Reduce vehicle speed by reducing roadway width and providing on-street parking and bike lanes Improve pedestrian crosswalks Improve drop-off/pick-up at school	Chapter 90		MassDOT Town/MassDOT Town Town	
4.2.2 Increase connectivity	Existing sidewalks Existing activity centers	Extend sidewalks north to new college Provide bike lanes/racks Provide/improve connections to other destinations (existing centers of activity such as library, post office, town hall, and trails, recreational areas, campus, etc.)	New College MassDOT/town/college MassDOT		New College MassDOT/ new college MassDOT	
4.2.3 Beautify the Main Street corridor	An intact historic streetscape with many early 19 th century homes, a linear common, and street trees	Bury overhead utility lines Re-plant double rows of shade trees Complete the sidewalk system Install period lighting Add site amenities, such as benches Upgrade signs on commercial property and enforce sign by-law	Utility companies Town New college Town Town Private owners		Utility companies Town New college Town Town Private owners	

OBJECTIVE 4.2 CREATE A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE ON MAIN STREET						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.2.4 Increase community gathering places		Identify public and privately owned spaces used for gathering (e.g. library, Mim's, Rooster Bistro, Northfield Coffee, etc.) Improve access to center pavilion Develop pocket parks Consider creating additional space for gathering such as a public park Support and promote creation of "third places" in commercial establishments	Town	"Third Places" are locales for community gathering that differ from the usual sites of home and workplace.	Town	

OBJECTIVE 4.3 PROTECT THE CAMPUS BUILDINGS AND LANDSCAPE						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
4.3.1 Collaborate in redevelopment efforts to support town goals	Existing zoning bylaw Former Northfield Campus Campus Collaborative Committee National Christian Foundation	Amend current zoning bylaw to promote desired uses Align with organizations (colleges) that support town goals Actively promote design uses, tourism, recreation, senior housing				
4.3.2 Preserve campus buildings and landscape to extent possible		Establish a local historic district for the campus and adjacent related historic properties Place preservation restrictions on campus buildings with the greatest historic significance (restrictions to be held by the Town of Northfield) Nominate the campus to the National Register of Historic Places Seek designation for the campus as a National Historic Landmark			Northfield Historical Commission Massachusetts Historical Commission National Christian Foundation/new occupant/new owner	

Businesses on Main Street in Northfield

Business Name	Business Address
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Sources: Registered Business Listing of the Northfield Town Clerk and Infogroup Data Base

Businesses that look like homes



GOAL STATEMENT: TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOWN-WIDE BY PROMOTING A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

Economic development provides a community with jobs, increases its tax base, and creates opportunities for a wide range of goods and services that can be of benefit to, and enjoyed by, residents and visitors. In order for such development to occur, local resources must be assessed, and market potentials, public financial means, and other forms of assistance evaluated. This section of the implementation plan proposes a set of attainable goals and objectives with the associated strategies and actions needed to enhance local commercial and industrial activities.

“Economic development—jobs, income, and community prosperity—is a continuing challenge to modern society. To meet this challenge, economic developers must use imagination and common sense, coupled with the tools of public and private finance, politics, planning, micro- and macroeconomics, engineering, and real estate.”

- *Economic Development Quarterly: The Journal of American Economic Revitalization*

NORTHFIELD’S ECONOMY TODAY: OVERVIEW OF KEY POINTS

In a number of public forums, Northfield residents have repeatedly expressed a desire to increase the tax base and to have more “places to go,” especially retail establishments and restaurants. They believe that it is equally important to preserve town character while, at the same time, increasing economic development and expanding the local economy. The following existing conditions pose **CHALLENGES** to expanding the Northfield economy:

- While Northfield has a median household income 18% higher than that of Franklin County as a whole, the town has steadily lost employment since 2002 and is now down to 877 jobs (second quarter of 2012). Educational services have suffered the most serious decline, due primarily to the closing of the Northfield Campus of the Northfield Mount Hermon School.



Lane Construction, located in West Northfield, is one of the town’s largest employers.

- While an estimated \$20,000,000 is spent annually by Northfield residents on retail purchases, and \$3,500,000 on services, almost all this money is spent out-of-town. Northfield loses a significant proportion of its purchasing power to surrounding towns because it has so few retail and services businesses.
- The town has very little commercial office space, and lacks clusters of offices that often develop around post offices, town halls, court houses and other public buildings.
- Northfield lacks a large “anchor” business, such as a manufacturing operation or large retail store.
- The town’s zoning allows industrial and commercial uses to be located anywhere (with special permits); economic development can potentially occur on any or all of the available vacant land. The bylaw does not include a specific industrially-zoned district or districts.

- Broadband services currently reach only a portion of the town’s businesses and residences.
- Without a department/dry goods store and/or large food market, gas station, and pub, Northfield falls short of sustaining its residents’ retail needs.
- The limited infrastructure serving the Town, especially sewer, places some restrictions on future development/redevelopment.

Despite these challenges, Northfield has significant resources that can be seen as **OPPORTUNITIES** to support economic development.

- Northfield has a skilled and well educated labor force.
- The town has 300 acres of vacant unused, unforested land as well as 428 acres of open land, brushland, transitional and utility right-of-way land that could be used for economic development.
- Northfield has assets that favor industry such as access to an interstate highway and an interstate rail line; and flat, well-drained relatively inexpensive land.
- Northfield has adequate infrastructure to support some new economic development, including roadway access to available developable land; adequate water supply; wastewater treatment capacity; electricity (including solar-generated power); broadband communications to a portion of businesses and homes.
- There is a potential to capture some of the consumer expenditures with further development of stores, shops and offices in town.
- Opportunity exists to create appealing mixed-used (residential and commercial) establishments in a way that would fit in with the town’s historic and rural character (for example, in the form I-shapes or squares, with pedestrian-centered landscapes between the buildings). Some of Northfield’s existing buildings could become nuclei of mixed-use type developments.



The Northfield Creamie, one of the town’s most popular retail establishments, should be promoted and protected.

- The newly-created Solar Overlay Zone, located west of the Connecticut River, has potential to bring industry to Northfield, in the form of solar and other alternative energy firms.
- With its extensive holding of prime farmlands, Northfield has potential to expand agriculture *vis-a-vis* recent trends in farm-to-table restaurants; in homes with niche market type garden vegetables; through agri-tourism.
- Redevelopment of the former Northfield Campus holds the largest potential for economic growth, as both a major employer, as well as a generator of associated commercial, service, retail, and housing activity.
- Northfield’s natural and cultural resources -- including the Connecticut River, miles of hiking trails, the Schell Bridge crossing, Native American history, and legacy of Calvin Stearns and D. L. Moody -- offer opportunities to develop a lucrative tourism-based economy.

In summary, employment in Northfield has slowly declined over the last decade. The town's employment base continues to be dominated by educational services, even with the sale and shut down of the Northfield Campus of the Northfield Mount Hermon School. Other categories of employment show some diversity, but they are very small, and many of Northfield's businesses are conducted at home. Building construction and agriculture are important in the town's economic activities, but a large amount of purchasing power is lost surrounding towns because there are few retail and service businesses in town. Potential exists to increase economic activities through retailing, services, tourism (including heritage, agriculture, and recreation), agriculture and solar energy-related businesses.



SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

PROMOTING A FARMING ECONOMY

- Promote existing farming
- Promote development of new farms and farming activity
- Promote development of agriculture-related businesses and services

INCREASING INDUSTRY AND MANUFACTURING

- Develop a pro-industry/manufacturing or industry/manufacturing-friendly environment

SUPPORTING RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Provide more parking on Main Street
- Visually enhance the Main Street streetscape
- Encourage establishment of businesses that serve community needs
- Provide design guidelines for Main Street to help new businesses meld aesthetically with the character of Northfield
- Establish greater control over truck traffic on Main Street
- Promote small, locally-owned business development

PROMOTING RECREATIONAL, HERITAGE AND ECO-TOURISM

- Rehabilitate/reconstruct the Schell bridge to create a pedestrian/bikeway connection across the Connecticut River
- Promote long-distance bicycle tours
- Develop a Native American cultural center/museum of Native American heritage
- Promote the Dwight L. Moody story
- Promote the Stearns houses story
- Develop and promote agritourism

OBJECTIVE 3.1 TO PROMOTE A FARMING ECONOMY						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
3.1.1 Promote existing farming	Existing farmland and farms "Right to Farm Community" designation Local tradition CISA CSA Program	Enact APRs				
3.1.2 Promote development of new farms and farming activity	Existing open space suitable for farming "Right to Farm Community" designation CISA					
3.1.3 Promote development of agriculture-related businesses and services	Existing farms Vacant space on Main Street Local demand	Establish a food co-op Create a town-run "clearinghouse" for the collection and distribution of farm products (e.g. to schools, restaurants, etc.) Promote farm-to-table restaurants				

OBJECTIVE 3.2 TO INCREASE INDUSTRY AND MANUFACTURING						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
3.2.1 Develop a pro-industry/manufacturing or industry/manufacturing -friendly environment in Northfield	Town Building Inspector	Prepare a permitting guide for applicants to steer them through the process; streamline the process as much as possible. Expand Broadband service throughout town				

OBJECTIVE 3.3 TO SUPPORT RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
3.3.1 Provide more parking on Main Street	The existing very wide right-of-way on Main Street	Work with MassDOT to take over ownership of the Main Street portion of Route 10/63 through a phasing process. Attract a larger "Anchor" retail use		Phase One of taking over ownership of Main Street would involve a ¼ to one mile segment centered on the Town Hall area.		
3.3.2 Visually enhance the Main Street streetscape	The existing extensive linear Town Common	Bury overhead utility lines Plant street trees Introduce traffic-calming measures Enhance street crossings Install period street lights		See Goal #4		
3.3.3 Encourage establishment of businesses that serve community needs (pub, gas station, "anchor business," etc.)	Vacant space on Main Street Eager residents/ready market Greater Northfield Business & Tourism Association Planning Board	Streamline permitting process Expand infrastructure, including broadband				

OBJECTIVE 3.3 TO SUPPORT RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
3.3.4 Provide design guidelines for Main Street to help new businesses meld aesthetically with the character of Northfield	Planning Board Model sign by-laws from other communities	Prepare and adopt design guidelines for Main Street Develop and enforce a clear and attractive sign by-law				
3.2.5 Establish greater control over truck traffic on Main Street		More intense speeding ticketing for trucks, including more surveillance by State Police, since it is a State Highway				
3.2.6 Promote small, locally-owned business development	Greater Northfield Business & Tourism Association	Add part-time economic development officer responsibilities to an existing staff position or create a volunteer role Expand Broadband				

OBJECTIVE 3.4 TO PROMOTE RECREATIONAL, HERITAGE AND ECO-TOURISM						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
3.4.1 Rehabilitate/re-construct the Schell Bridge to create a pedestrian/bike-way connection across the Connecticut River	Schell Bridge and its heritage Historical Society/Museum	Form a "Friends of Schell Bridge" to actively promote its rehabilitation/reconstruction	FHA/MassDOT	Bicycle access could enhance commuting to a new industrial park on the west side of the River	LEAD: MassDOT PARTNERS: Friends of the Schell Bridge Select Board Historical Society/Museum	
3.4.2 Promote long distance bicycle tours	Scenery Quiet roads	Install bike lanes on roadways where shoulders are in adequate				
3.4.3 Develop a Native American cultural center/museum of Native American heritage	Native American sites throughout town Artifacts at the Dickinson Library Historical Society/Museum	Work with heritage preservation groups and Native American groups to publicize the importance and relevance of the sites and their commemoration				
3.4.4 Promote the Dwight Lyman Moody story	Northfield Campus Moody birthplace, Homestead, and burial site Rustic Ridge				Green Pastures/CS Lewis Foundation	

OBJECTIVE 3.4 TO PROMOTE RECREATIONAL, HERITAGE AND ECO-TOURISM (CONTINUED)						
Strategy	Existing Resources	Actions	Funding	Notes	Lead & Partners	Priority
3.4.5 Promote the Stearns houses story	Stearns houses throughout town Historical Society/Museum					
3.4.6 Develop and promote more agritourism	Farms and farm stands CISA	Conduct an annual agricultural fair				