

2020

NORTHFIELD VILLAGE CAUCUS PLATFORM

Ratified on January 23, 2020

Purpose

The Village of Northfield Caucus Platform is a statement of expectation setting out the basic policies and goals for our elected Northfield Village officials and serves as a guide for administering Village affairs. The Caucus develops a platform with views and opinions from residents, and it seeks to create the vision of Village residents on Village direction and administration. The platform is general in nature with the goal of maintaining and enhancing the small-town character of the village as predominately single-family residential community. The Caucus addresses specific actions or policies in the Platform when they find a clear majority of residents surveyed support a particular action or policy. The Caucus expects Trustee and village President candidates endorsed by the Caucus to concur with the Platform prior to slating.

A. Administration

1. Representation and Communication

The Village Trustees should fully inform residents concerning Village affairs (including current studies and proposed projects) through all appropriate communication channels, such as e-news, appropriate social media, newsletters, and press releases, as well as face to face interaction. They should also promptly post notices in public places such as the Village Hall, the Community Center, the Library, and the Village Website. Official notification, meeting schedules, and agendas need to be posted in advance, as provided by law. The Village Board should not post approved minutes in the same location(s) within one business day after approval.

Over time, changing circumstances may create significantly new perspectives and dictate markedly different approaches to issues referred to in this Platform. Prior to adopting any such new perspectives or approaches, the Trustees should solicit the views of the Caucus and the community in general to ensure full understanding of the proposals and identify any unintended consequences in advance. It is important that each Village Trustee as well as the Village President and Village Manager attend a Caucus meeting annually in order to share thinking and seek input from Caucus members and residents on Village issues.

Village Trustees and Village President acknowledge their duty to follow the clear majority opinion of village residents while respecting the rights of all.

2. Financial Responsibility

Residents expect that the Village Board will assure maintenance of the high investment grade quality of Northfield's debt obligations as a reflection of sound fiscal management and to assure continued access to liquidity. This objective is attained through ongoing balanced budgets and strict control of costs without detracting in quality of such essential services as Police, Fire, and Public Works services.

B. Planning, Development, and Land Use

1. Planning and Development

The Caucus strongly encourages the Village Board as well as its various commissions, to follow the Comprehensive Vision Plan, the Village Center Design Study, the Design Guidelines and the Northfield Road Corridor Plan when refining zoning and other requirements, to continue to project the small-town character of the Village.

The Caucus recognizes that a vibrant community must include a suitable combination of work related, entertainment, and residential facilities. The residents support mixed-use, ground-level retail space with office of condominiums above in low rise structures within the central business area. The Edens corridor is seen as appropriate for continued development of taller building thereby increasing commercial office space in the Village. There continues to be great interest in suitably located family-style restaurants, specialty food, wine and ice cream type establishments attractive to worker traffic during the week days as well as to families in the evenings and weekends. Residents are sensitive to higher and larger buildings being close to single family and low-rise housing and impinging on the residential nature of the Village.

2. Building and Zoning Density

Northfield should be dedicated to remaining primarily a residential community. Large commercial developments, such as shopping malls, large and complex mixed use or large chain stores are not appropriate for Northfield, relative to the size of the Village. Buildings should be constructed in a style consistent with neighboring properties. Impact on traffic congestion and local travel patterns (e.g., presence of school children) should be carefully analyzed before building.

The Caucus supports strict enforcement of all building codes and zoning ordinances, and encourages the Board to enforce setback and floor area ratio restrictions that are consistent with neighboring properties. The Board should regulate tear-downs or subdivision of existing properties to maintain the character of the neighborhood and to preserve property values. The Board should enforce property maintenance codes which are violated by abandoned properties and ensure compliance with applicable life safety standards. Significant policy exceptions should be carefully evaluated with a high degree of transparency.

3. Traffic

The Village should continue to explore various ways to enhance traffic flow and make Northfield attractive to pedestrian and bicyclist. Pedestrian safety is the priority.

4. Drainage and Flooding

Replacing, maintaining, and improving Village infrastructure for drainage management and flood prevention are critical to Northfield residents and should continue to be a high priority. The Village Board should comply with the high-level guidance of the current Storm Water Management Plan Report. Since this plan is a living document, timely updates should be performed reflecting changes in problem areas, technology, regulations, potential flood water projects and funding sources. The Village Board should periodically provide a detailed update to Village residents regarding the same. System enhancements should be explored and sources of funding actively pursued for the installment of recommended improvements.

C. Resident Services

In the latest Northfield Caucus survey, a majority of respondents rated the services provided by Village administration, police, fire, public works, and garbage collection as 'good to excellent'. This is a positive reflection on the effort and quality of the work performed by all Village personnel. The Village Board should manage its human resources in order to maintain the existing level of professional service delivery.

The Village Board should actively engage with other governments to identify areas of cooperation and coordination that improve services and/or reduce costs. Any time an issue involves local parks or schools, the Village Board should actively cooperate with the Park District(s) or School District(s) to ensure that the interests of Northfield citizens are protected.