Northfield Community Profile

2019

April 12th & 13th







UNH Cooperative Extension brings information and education into the communities of the Granite State to help make New Hampshire's individuals, businesses, and communities more successful and its natural resources healthy and productive. For more than 100 years, our specialists have been tailoring contemporary, practical education to regional needs, helping create a well-informed citizenry while strengthening key economic sectors.



The Community Profile is a process by which communities take stock of where they are today and develop an action plan for how they want to operate in the future. The process provides a method for citizens to affirm community strengths, find collaborative approaches to meet challenges creatively, and manage change. One of the major outcomes of the Community Profile is increased citizen participation in the community.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you!

Thank you to all who made the Northfield Community Profile such a huge success.

NORTHFIELD STEERING COMMITTEE

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COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

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UNH COOPERATIVE EXTENSION STAFF

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The Community Profile model was developed in 2000 with the assistance of:

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; University of Vermont Cooperative Extension; Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs; Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission; Tufts University, Center for Environmental Management, Consortium for Regional Sustainability; New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; Vermont Community Foundation; Sustainable Seattle; University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies; Community Innovations; The Upper Valley: 2001 & Beyond Steering Committee. The Community Profile model has been updated in 2015 to reflect changes in New Hampshire and new components on a vibrant community from the National Civic League.

Summary

The Northfield Steering Committee was formed in the summer of 2018 with the charge of planning the Community Profile event and engaging community members prior to the event. Initial committee volunteers met with UNH Cooperative Extension staff to learn about the Community Profile and discuss ways to attract additional volunteers representing a variety of town interests and perspectives, such as youth, seniors, business community, town officials, and others. The Community Profile event date was set for April 12th-13th, 2019. The Steering Committee met regularly through March to plan, prepare and market the event with UNH Cooperative Extension providing support. The Community Profile was funded jointly the town of Northfield and the Northfield Economic Development Corporation.

The Steering Committee adopted a format using the components of a vibrant community as drawn from the National Civic League and adapted by UNH Cooperative Extension. These components are important to a successful community. Components make a community work well now and sustain the cultural, economic and environmental health and vitality for the long-term future. The components are economic vitality; education and lifelong learning; housing, community spaces, and infrastructure; leadership & community engagement; sense of community, history, and

- Mosaic and vision developed by all participants
- Key Issues: Small group facilitated discussion on 3 component areas where the groups brainstormed the strengths, challenges and desired future. (Friday evening)
- Key Themes: All participants reviewed the 15 key issues from Friday's discussions and agreed on common themes. (Saturday morning)
- 3 Priority Projects or Opportunities: Participants selected a theme they wanted to discuss in small groups where they defined the problem, identified solutions and selected 3 priority projects or opportunities in each group.
- Action Groups: Once opportunities and projects were chosen, participants started the process of putting plans into action by defining the project, determining contact process and planning the next meeting date and time.

Facilitation of the Community Profile

Facilitation is an important component of the Community Profile. Trained facilitators are used in the small group discussions to help the group meet its objectives by guiding it through the Community Profile process. This allows the participants to focus on the issues they came to discuss. The facilitator is trained to provide neutral guidance and help the group arrive at decisions related to the topic discussed.

The Steering Committee and other community volunteers received a two-hour training led by UNH Cooperative Extension on the basics of facilitation and recording or scribing and on the specific facilitation role for the Community Profile.

Trained community volunteers and UNHCE staff facilitated and recorded the small group discussions (Friday evening and Saturday morning). The facilitators established the ground rules for participants; created a collaborative working environment; ensured everyone had the opportunity to participate, and brought closure to each topic so the process could move ahead. Scribes recorded all responses on easel paper for the group to see as the record for the discussion. All responses are documented in the following pages of this report.

Outcome

- Northfield community members participated in the Friday or Saturday session, or both sessions
- Community members committed to working on three new action groups which will begin to implement the projects or opportunities identified at the profile
- Steering Committee members learned new leadership skills and put them into action by organizing the Community Profile
- Community members received training on facilitation skills which can be used in other community settings

The community issues, opportunities, and priorities for Northfield are detailed in this report. Northfield participants demonstrated a strong commitment to their community, creating a vision and working together to create a vision, identify opportunities, and determine a path forward for Northfield.

Priority Project Areas

The Community Profile process identified priority projects in Northfield, based on the input of all Profile participants. The following project areas were identified as key themes to begin work. Specific projects within each theme are identified at the end of the report.

- Recreation and Natural Resources
- Business
- Branding and Community Pride

Action Groups

Action Groups made up of Northfield volunteers were identified to work on the above three priority areas. An action group meeting was scheduled for **May 8th at 6:00pm at the Northfield Town Hall** for these three groups and any others who want to work on projects identified at the profile. At that meeting, structure will be provided, next steps discussed, and resources identified to assist each group and Northfield to move forward.



Agenda

5:30 Sign In and Community Supper 6:00 Welcome—Kaitlin Lounsbury, Steering Committee Chair Community Profile Process, Jared Reynolds, UNH Cooperative Extension 6:20 Vision for Northfield, Sue Cagle, UNH Cooperative Extension 6:40 Presentation of Components of a Vibrant Community 6:45 Move into small groups 6:50 Small group discussions 8:10 Small groups report outs 8:30 Preview of next day Adjournment

5:30 pm - 8:45 pm

Saturday, April 13th, 2019 8:45 am – 12:00 pm

8:45 Sign In and Light Breakfast

Friday, April 12th, 2019

- **9:00** Discussion of key issues and themes
 - Present key issues from Friday's discussion
 - Identify key themes to move forward with
- **9:30** Small groups meet for key themes discussion
- **11:25** Large group: report back from small groups
- 11:50 Discuss next steps
- 12:00 Wrap up and adjourn



Mosaic

Northfield 2019 – How we see our community NOW.

Strengths

- Recreation
- Location (near Concord)
- Community feel
- Rural nature
- Caring community members – education
- Advanced manufacturing
- Access to White
 Mountains, lakes, natural
 resources
- Young people
- Good neighbors
- Safe/low crime
- No heavy industry
- Accessible
- Natural resources conservation
- Good access to retail and other services
- Aesthetics of downtown and river
- Good services

Challenges

- Finding young/skilled employees
- Good jobs—high wages, benefits
- Finding volunteers
- Promoting/marketing Northfield
- Housing— affordable, workforce, elderly
- Property taxes
- Fear of change
- Communication with residents

The Mosaic

We spent a few minutes meeting each other, learning how long we lived in town, some history and current demographics. We were then asked to offer descriptions of what our town was like right now and what we would like it to be like in the future. Adjectives and phrases were called out and recorded on easels at the front of the room labeled **NOW and FUTURE**.

Northfield 2019 - How we envision our FUTURE.

- Recreation destination (kayaking, walking trails)
- More restaurants and pubs
- Public Transportation
- STEM education
- Branding/communication strategy
- Beautification, improved Park Street
- More energy, self sufficient
- More craft pubs
- Bigger baseball fields and other infrastructure
- More residents, but maintain character



Components of a Vibrant Community

After we developed a mosaic for Northfield, Jared Reynolds of UNH Cooperative Extension introduced us to the idea of discussing Northfield within the framework of components which can be used to profile a community. These topics, drawn from the work of the National Civic League and adapted by UNH Cooperative Extension, are important components of any successful community. These components make a community work well now and sustain the cultural, economic and environmental health and vitality for the long-term future.



- 1. Economic Vitality
- 2. Education and Lifelong Learning
- 3. Housing, Community Spaces, and Infrastructure
- 4. Leadership & Community Engagement
- 5. Sense of Community, History, & Culture
- 6. Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources, and Recreation

Participants then had a discussion on which three component areas they would like to focus on. They chose Economic Vitality; Quality of Life; and Housing, Community Spaces, and Infrastructure. Participants chose one of the three components to discuss, focused on the below questions.

- What are the strengths of your community in this component area?
- What are the challenges of your community in this component area?
- What would you like to see for the future in Northfield in this component area?

Transcribed notes for each group follow.

Economic Vitality

Small Group Facilitator: Sue Cagle Group spokesperson: Kaitlin Lounsbury



A vibrant community includes access to a variety of environmentally friendly businesses, industries, and institutions that provide reasonable wages and benefits to workers, engage in family-friendly policies, provide workers with opportunities to develop marketable skills, and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

Strengths

- Access to I-93
- Balanced economy & schools
 - recreation and manufacturing
- Good land/space in town for potential development
- Strong sense of community, commitment
- Park Street development
- Businesses are locally owned
- Good support services
 - fire, police, water/sewer, town government
- Work class mountain biking facility
- Ponds/River/River Trail
 - Natural beauty and resources
- People committed to improving quality of schools
- Variety of community programs for children

- Close to affordable higher education
 - NHTI and LRCC
- High school vocational programs
- Diverse offerings in school— AIP, vocation, gifted, etc.
- Northfield ED organization
- Consistent, well-attended boards
 - Pro balanced growth
- Improved communication
- Opportunity to partner/regionalize
 - Tilton/Franklin/Sanbornton
- Blue collar ethos, trades
- Successful small businesses

Challenges

- Competitive wages
- Lack of larger businesses
- Image/perception of community— drugs
- Significant challenges faced by youth— trauma
- Resources are not well known
- Anxiety about changes
- Miscommunication/misinformation
- Not enough affordable housing—mid-level
- Sustainability—limited recycling
- Isolation of business owners
 - Most are single proprietors—limited support or connections
- Lack of variety in businesses
- Lack of defined town center
- No incentives for desired development
- Tying in recreational development with economic vitality
 integrate and leverage
- Lack of branding that highlights natural resources
- Trail are not integrated and connected



Vision for the Future

- Services provided in Northfield (lawyer, doctor, taxes, etc.)
- A clear town center
- Entertainment options
 - Comedy, restaurants, music and art
- Epicenter for blue and white collar jobs
 - Sustainable, recreation, full advantage of natural resources
- Strong agricultural businesses, agri-tourism
- Health culture to draw in businesses
 - Biking, kayaking, etc.
- Access to locally grown food and local businesses (growing, processing, packaging, etc.)
- Sustainable energy— wind and solar
- Community garden
- Active social groups (book club, garden, etc.)
- More student recreation options
 - Skate park, Updated parks & infrastructure, Multi-use facility
- Dog park
- 100 mile mountain bike trail network
- Co-working space
- Public/shared transportation (bike share, Uber, etc.)
- Sidewalks/walkability
- Mentorship opportunities

Housing, Community Spaces, and Infrastructure

Small Group Facilitators:
Juliette Harvey
Melissa Lee
Group spokesperson:
Scott Haskins



The quality and availability of housing, neighborhoods, and community spaces is an important factor in a vibrant community. Housing encompasses the availability, affordability, and location of homes for sale and for rent. In a vibrant community, neighborhoods are welcoming and safe, and there are a variety of public spaces available for the community to gather.

In order for a community to function, it must have essential facilities, services and utilities – public facilities such as municipal buildings, schools, sidewalks, roads, libraries, a recycling center, and cemeteries; services and utilities such as police, fire, ambulance, highway maintenance, water and sewer. These key functions consume the majority of tax dollars and sharply influence the community's quality of life. Broadband internet is a service that is an important part of modern life. High- speed internet connects community members to resources, and is also crucial for economic development.

Strengths

- Library, schools, government buildings are made available
- Library is utilized
- Pines Community Center—integrated in community/youth
- Affordable single family homes for sale
- Housing to land ratio is good—land buffers
- Mix of housing—rural and village area
- Zoning has good guidelines
- Safe intersections
- No traffic lights
- WOW trail
- Trails at Knowles Pond
- Access to Winni River and Route 140
- Snowmobile trails
- Public services— police, fire, water/sewer
- Specific areas zoned for manufacturing

Challenges

- High speed internet
- Affordable housing for the elderly
- Zoning too restricted for affordable housing
- Lack of sidewalks or in poor condition
- Municipal spaces getting crowded as community grows
- No public transportation
- No promotion of commercial development
- No recycling (cost issue)
- Economic development promoting expansion of business opportunities (properties for sale)

Vision for the Future

- Elderly housing
- Commuter train
- Broadband internet
- Destination community
- Recreation
- Revamp of zoning—new Master Plan to meet the demand for "destination"
- Bridge for trail system and continuation of trails
- More housing of all types



Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources, and Recreation

Small Group Facilitator: Geoffrey Sewake

Group spokesperson:Cari Bernash



Parks, recreational activities, and natural resources enhance the quality of life for residents and contribute to creating healthy, safe communities. Recreational activities include sports, outdoor activities, and community facilities such as recreation centers, trails, swimming pools, public parks, basketball and tennis courts, and athletic fields. Natural resources including streams, rivers, trails, working farms, forests, clean air, wildlife, and undeveloped. Climate change and energy usage are major stressors on natural resources. A vibrant community recognizes the importance of protecting its natural resources.

The overall wellness of a community is a reflection of the physical, social and emotional health of its citizens. This includes access to health care, as well as preventative measures such as healthy eating and active living. Through recreation programs and other healthy activities, community members improve their health and wellness, learn to compete and cooperate, build relationships, and become more involved in community life.

Strengths

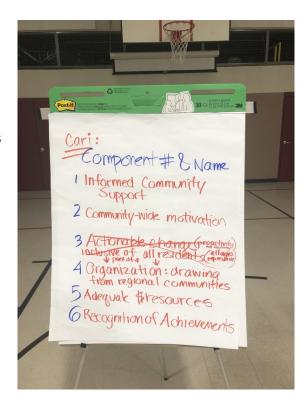
- Highland Mountain
- Open spaces, natural environment, and beauty
 - Outdoor recreation and green spaces
- Respectful community
- Location—neighboring communities
- Trail system, rail trail
- Centralized location, balance of outdoors and work opportunities
- Access to great resources (educational)
- The Pines, Merrimack River, and Winni and Pemi Rivers, shoreland/access to water source
- Potential for regional collaboration
- Sandogardy Pond—access and upkeep
- Open Spaces Committee
- Incoming campground
- Northfield Economic Development Committee (NEDC)
- Accessible Board of Selectmen
- Good community for a family
- Police force works well with community and residents

Challenges

- Design and facility at The Pines
- Lifelong recreation activities and involvement
- Activities (AIP) that appeal to residents with disabilities and special needs
- Infrastructure development
- Positive engagement with juvenile population
- Youth retention and appealing to young professionals
- Educating public about existing natural resources and increasing awareness
- Access spaces (green, rivers, safety, and parking)
- Interlinking trail system with Highland Mountain
- Municipal communication with residents
- Easily accessible information
- Recruiting new volunteers
- Vocal few are drowning out many positive voices
- Getting more businesses

Vision for the Future

- Make Northfield similar to Kingdom Trails in East Burke, Vermont
- Expand trail system (well-marked) and interlinked (inclusive)
- Build brand (cohesive identity
- Center of Awesomeness
- Centralized business locale (Park Street)
- "The Pines" revitalized gateway to the community
- Informational Hub
- Improved wayfinding
- Community appropriate public transportation allowing access to amazing resources
- Beautification
- Consistent signage within the community
- Logo
- Engaged community and leadership
- 2-way communication with local government
- Consistently low level of crime
- Retain small town feel (character) with economic and population growth
- Skilled workforce
- Historical and cultural activities that engage broad range of residents
- High level of volunteerism and community engagement
- Continue excellent relationship with town businesses
- Town Chamber





Northfield participants chose to form 3 small groups to discuss strengths, opportunities, and a vision for the future. The small groups adjourned to various rooms where community trained facilitators led the groups in their discussions and scribes made notes on large tablets. Each group considered the definition of their component and examined the statements to be considered for their component to begin the discussion. Participants were asked to list the strengths of Northfield as they saw them, and then to list its challenges. Next the groups gave some thought to the problems and issues they thought were important to the town's future. Finally, each group was asked to identify five key issues that need to be addressed by the town. These were brought back to the whole group and presented to all Community Profile participants.

Group 1: Economic Vitality

- Integrated town center with diverse options, businesses, and connections
- 2. Use of natural resources and recreation to stimulate the economy
- 3. Homegrown businesses
- 4. Affordable mixed housing/workforce
- 5. Healthy/outdoor/sustainable lifestyle

Group 2: Housing, Community Spaces, and Infrastructure

- 1. Housing—variety, zoning, lack of inventory
- 2. Public transportation—lack of
- 3. Zoning- too restrictive
- 4. Internet-broadband too low
- 5. Sidewalk and infrastructure beautification

Group 3: Quality of Life: Healthy Living, Natural Resources, and Recreation

- 1. Informed community support
- 2. Community-wide motivation
- 3. Organization: drawing from regional communities
- 4. Adequate financial resources
- 5. Recognition of achievements



Saturday morning opened with 3 easels from the Friday night small groups displayed across the front of the room, each bearing a list of the key issues or opportunities for that topic area. The 15 key issues that were identified were

Five Key Themes emerged:

- 1. Housing
- 2. Infrastructure
- 3. Natural Resources and Recreation
- 4. Community Pride, Image, and Branding
- 5. Business



The group discussed the overall themes to determine where they wanted to focus the conversation for Saturday morning. They decided to focus on three themes— **Natural Resources and Recreation; Community Pride, Image, and Branding; and Business**. Members attending the Saturday portion of the Community Profile split into these three groups to define the problem, identify solutions, determine the impact and feasibility of different approaches, and determine next steps for moving forward.

Each of the small groups retreated to their rooms and following self-introductions the group went to work to more clearly define the issue or opportunity. Next, they identified goals and what they wished to accomplish, followed by a list of potential projects or solutions. These potential projects were then listed individually on sticky notes, and one-by-one were evaluated, and following consensus, were placed on a grid indicating their potential impact as well as their feasibility. Finally, again through consensus, the top 3 goals or opportunities were listed for presentation to and voting by the entire group of participants.

Branding and Community Pride

Small Group Facilitator: Geoffrey Sewake

Group spokesperson: Judy Huckins

Brainstorming

Defining the theme/opportunity

- Keep character
- Focused identity
- Hidden Gem
- Not Tilton zip code
- Town gateway
- Communication Community-wide- Awareness, Motivation, Communication
- Get folks to know about town as a destination
- Beautification (i.e. pine trees to improve a park)
- Need new volunteers, more community involvement, better communication
- Better engagement
- Specific action items for Branding such as signage at The Pines
 - Cubs & Eagle Scouts
- Communication
- New volunteers & engagement



Goals

- Specific action-oriented projects
- Improve signage
- Focus on The Pines
- Pride of ownership
- Beautification
- Collaboration with schools to engage with actions and branding
 - Ag program at the high school
 - "Interact Club" with the Rotary

Branding and Community Pride

Projects and Solutions

- Reaching our new residents with a "welcome package"
- Incentives for community involvement (barn dances, craft beer). Need to have rewards for community involvement gift certificates, parties, immediate and long range rewards
- "The Pines" to a park pine trees taken down and turned into a gazebo. Could be a place for a farmer's market
 - Focus on Pine Community Center need big classy sign and an info booth (gateway to community), Create excitement
- Doing an online interactive map to engage (Story Map) ("I love Sullivan" model)
- Five minute story for communities ("Heart & Soul" idea)
 - Incentives such as gift cards
- Open up Northfield News to businesses for advertisements, etc. (positive outlet for Northfield News)
 - Improve engagement with folks beyond municipal basics
- Form a sub-committee to do these projects (like The Pines), but more collaboration (NEDC), more communication & collaboration between organizations, municipalities and groups
- Celebrate accomplishments
 - Recognize achievements
- Beautification (more than The Pines)
 - Form beautification and open space committees
 - Need landscaping where we have parking for resources

Business

Small Group Facilitator: Sue Cagle

Group spokesperson: Bridget Puffinburger

Brainstorming

Goals

- Increase visibility of businesses
- Connect businesses
 - -Increase diversity and number of businesses, in particular mid-sized
- Help grow existing businesses
- Increase business accessibility
 - Location and signage

Projects and Solutions

- Communication and Business Networking
 - Business Map
 - Town Website
 - Newsletter
 - Communication committee
- Zoning and Ordinance Changes
 - Special zone on Park St.
 - Village district
 - Signage
- Tax Incentives
 - Educate about current incentives
 - Expand incentives for new businesses



Recreation and Natural Resources

Small Group Facilitator:
Jared Reynolds
Scribe:
Stephen Meno
Group spokesperson:
Greg Bernash

Brainstorming

Priorities

- Camping
- Doing things outside
- Low to no cost
- Affordable and accessible
- Year-round
- Attracts visitors from outside
- Driver of local economy

Goals

- Leverage world-class resources to highlight other town assets
- Brand Northfield as a recreational destination "Come, Stay, & Play"
- Utilize recreation to improve quality of life, stimulate economy, support robust local businesses
- Recreation still is accessible & affordable to town residents
- Coordinate with other communities



Recreation and Natural Resources

Projects and Solutions

- Better parks for children
- Add pump track to Surette Park
- Add dog park to Surette Park
- Frisbee golf area
- Add softball field to Surette Park
- Create brochures that include town map
- Connect WRTA trail to Tilton (build bridge)
- Connect rail networks within Northfield
- Connect Highland to Rte 132 or Park Street
- Use WRTA year round except 4-wheelers
- Promote current open spaces
 - Walking trails, horse trails, kayak
- Inventory all open spaces
- Promote, advertise, recruit for open spaces committee
- When register car, dog, Town meeting, Local papers
- Create regional recreation committee with Tilton, Franklin, Sanbornton, Northfield, Canterbury
- Connect with larger organizations (i.e. regional recreational trail groups)
- Update town website showcasing outdoor recreation
- Utilize social media for branding
- Utilize trusted websites for promotion Increase internet presence
- Update town slogan to emphasize outdoors
- Partner with businesses with established Internet presence
- Workshops/trainings/support for businesses to sue and advertise Internet/Social Media
- Advertise at Common Man Restaurant (on menus, especially Tilton Diner)
- Intro mountain bike course to teach local residents; Partner with Highland by starting with easy trails
- Develop local trail building team like snowmobile club
- Presence at Old Home Day for Open Space Committee
- More community events & social networking such as Highland Community Day
- Open Space committee participate in Old Home Day parade
- Identify open-forum, task-limited volunteer opportunities
- Utilize "Nature Groupie" to advertise and recruit volunteers
- Network/contact larger "enviro" organizations such as Forest Society, AMC, etc.
- Inventory available grants
- Identify & contact model towns

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

AND EVALUATION:

Project Identification and Evaluation

The task of each group was to think about problems that existed in each topic area and then to brainstorm possible solutions/answers to the issue identified. We did that by thinking out loud for half an hour or so about "problems" and "goals." Then we suggested solutions, from practical to fanciful to idealistic. The next step was to evaluate the potential of each possible solution/project using the impact/feasibility grid.

The Impact/Feasibility **IMPACT:** Grid How much will it We copied each of our proposed matter? solutions onto sticky notes. For each solution, the group decided together what the feasibility and impact of the solution would be. Then we placed the sticky note in the appropriate box. **FEASIBILITY:** How possible is it in our community

Based on brainstorming and incorporating the impact/feasibility grid, each group chose key projects to present to the large group. Some groups chose only proposals with high impact/feasibility ratings, while others chose projects from a variety of ratings. Small projects, which were highly feasible but of low impact, were favored by those who wanted to start small and accomplish something quickly. Long term, difficult projects had advocates who were willing to commit to longer struggles with high rewards.

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION

Projects or Solutions: Each small group on Saturday morning returned with their top projects (below) to propose to the larger group to move forward with.

Recreation and Natural Resources

- 1. Improve Surette Park by diversifying its amenities using information from Open Spaces survey.
- 2. Formalize a regional recreation group and establish a social media presence.
- 3. Have a table at Old Home Day to recruit volunteers and advertise future events.
- 4. Host a recreation-focused day.
- 5. Identify model recreation-focused town and identify available resources for Northfield.

Branding and Community Pride

- 1. Town beautification including Pines, Park Street, Sandogardy Pond, Knowles, The Rivers, etc.
- 2. Increase communication and collaboration.
- 3. Community celebration and incentives.

Business

- 1. Communication Business Network Group
 - Business Map
 - Town Website
 - Newsletter
 - Communication committee
- 2. Zoning/Ordinance changes
 - -Special zone on Park Street
 - -Village district
 - -Signage
- 3. Tax Incentives
 - -Educating about current incentives

NEXT STEPS

There will be a follow-up meeting on Wednesday May 8th, 2019 at the Northfield Town Hall. All Northfield residents and individuals that will support project implementation are welcome to attend this meeting, regardless of whether or not they attended the Community Profile. At this meeting, participants will identify timelines to move forward implementing the above projects.