

**Draft**  
**Research & Recommendations For**  
**The City of Northfield**  
Web Site Redesign

**By Livefront, Inc.**

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DRAFT

## **Disclaimer**

Recommendations provided in this document are based on research collected from numerous sources inside and outside the community of Northfield. It is important to note that the sources of information are imperfect; data collected do not necessarily reflect the ideas, opinions, or actual needs of the broader Northfield community. Livefront makes no guarantee and no warranty with respect to the recommendations provided herein and specifically disclaims the implied warranties of fitness for a particular purpose.

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# Introduction

The first phase of the City of Northfield’s web site redesign project involved collecting and evaluating requirements, opinions, ideas, criticisms, and hopes for a new city web site. Information was collected from members the community and stakeholders inside the City. The goal of this phase was to develop a strategy by which the City could implement a new, successful web site that fulfills project objectives, meets the needs of the web site users, and is constructed such that items of top priority are built and implemented first.

## Project objectives

The overarching objectives for this project, as determined by the City of Northfield, are as follows:

1. Structure information so that web visitors can easily find that for which they are looking.
2. Create an engaging, professional design that reflects the beauty of Northfield.
3. Make information easy to maintain for city staff.

## How this document is structured

This document explains our process, our findings, and our recommendations. After summarizing the various channels through which we collected information (#1 below), we discuss our macro-level findings—that is, the *purpose* and the *audience* of the city web site (#2 below). Our recommendations (#3, 4, and 5 below) are tempered by, and measured against, the overall *objectives* for the project as well as the *audience* and the *purpose* the site should serve.

### 1. Our Process

From whom did we collect information, opinions, ideas, and criticism?

### 2. Principal Findings: *Audience & Purpose*

The fundamental thoughts that should guide all decisions: What is the purpose of the City’s web site? Who is the target audience?

### 3. Recommendations for web policies

What does the City need to do to make this web site successful?

### 4. Recommendations for the web site

#### a. Framework

Based on the input we received, the research we’ve done, and our experience in the field, what are our recommendations for design, content, functionality, and usability?

#### b. Specifics

How are the above recommendations played out in terms of navigation? What do these recommendations mean for each department?

#### c. Implementation

What does the City need to start doing *now* to ensure successful implementation of this web site?

### 5. Recommendations for the Content Management System

How should content management be structured? What features are necessary?

### **How this document was written**

The document makes recommendations based on the information we gathered from the community and people inside the City over the period of six weeks. To gather this information we conducted public meetings, provided a multi-lingual public survey, provided an internal city employee survey, spoke with members of the community, assembled focus groups comprised of members from the community, did a “competitive analysis” of other city web sites, interviewed department heads within the City, analyzed electronic data from the old web site, and gathered input we received through the online project weblog.

This document reports all of the data collected, but its primary purpose is to make recommendations based on those data. We will not necessarily provide a specific reference or justification for each statement we make in this document. Our recommendations are based on a synthesis of all the data collected and our experience in the field. All meeting notes, interview notes, survey results, comments received, etc—as well as the questions that solicited those responses—are outlined in the appendices.

Throughout this document, “Phase I” will denote the first phase of the *development* process, not the phase concluded by this document. “Phase II” will denote the second phase of the *development* process, etc.

### **Contention**

For every issue, there were people in the community on both extremes. If someone thought the city web site should look good, another would argue it should look bad. We do our best to report both sides. Our recommendations are based on the majority opinion, with consideration as to how that opinion fits into the City’s objectives and overall vision for the web site. The City will not please every community member, and the City should not try to do so.

# Our Process

We collected information from multiple stakeholders through various mediums.

## Public meetings

In cooperation with city staff, Livefront hosted two forums open to the public. The objective of these forums was to gather information from the community at large relating to the web site. The forums, which had 1-2 hour duration, were held on May 23, 2005 and June 14, 2005.

The City of Northfield was responsible for advertising, which it accomplished through posts on Northfield.org, posted flyers in the downtown area, newspaper feature articles, and newspaper advertisements. We (Livefront) featured the public forum dates, times, and locations on the Northfield Redesign weblog (a public web site we maintained throughout the project).

- To review the agenda and/or questions that guided the public forums, see Appendix A.
- To review abridged notes from the public forum, see Appendix B.

## A survey for the community

Livefront developed a survey that was made available to the public. The survey was available online in two languages (English and Spanish). The purpose of this survey was to provide an alternate medium through which members of the community could participate in the requirements gathering process. Livefront developed survey questions in collaboration with the City.

The City of Northfield was in charge of advertising, which it did by placing a link on the current city web site. We (Livefront) featured links to the survey on the Northfield Redesign weblog (a public web site we maintained throughout the project).

The survey was available from June 1, 2005 to June 20, 2005. The City received 54 survey responses (54 English, 0 Spanish).

- To review the survey questions, see Appendix C.
- To review the survey results, see Appendix D.

## A survey for city employees

Livefront helped the City develop survey questions for a survey that was distributed internally among all employees. The purpose of this survey was to provide all employees a means of participating in the web site development process.

The City of Northfield was responsible for compiling, printing, distributing, and collecting the returned surveys, as well as compiling the results.

The survey was distributed on June 12, 2005 and collected June 22, 2005. The City received 20 survey responses.

- To review the survey questions, see Appendix E.
- To review the survey results, see Appendix F.

### **Web site redesign blog**

Livefront developed a simple weblog dedicated to this project. The purpose of this blog was to provide yet another opportunity for city staff and members of the community to be informed about the project. The blog:

- ◆ Advertised public forums
- ◆ Linked to the online survey
- ◆ Provided contact information
- ◆ Served as a way for Livefront to post project updates or solicit comments about a specific idea.

Livefront set up, maintained, and managed this blog at no extra charge to the City of Northfield.

- To review the blog posts and comments, see Appendix G.
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### **Focus groups (“Web Feedback Group”)**

Livefront facilitated discussion among two focus groups comprised of members from the community. The objective of the focus groups was to gather input from a representative sample of users who will be using the city web site. The group was valuable because we were able to ask specific questions and spend more time with them than we could the entire community.

The City of Northfield was in charge of selecting individuals for the focus group. Members of the group:

- ◆ **Joe Hargis**, Carleton College
- ◆ **Dan Bergeson**, Northfield Downtown Development Corporation
- ◆ **Larry Walsh**, Northfield Senior Center Retiree
- ◆ **Denise Griffith**, Director of Technology Services, Northfield School District
- ◆ **Debby Lamb**, Malt-O-Meal
- ◆ **Judy Covey**, Active Citizen
- ◆ **Emily Monaghan**, Active Citizen
- ◆ **Sian Muir**, Center for Entrepreneurial Learning, St. Olaf College

- To review abridged notes from the focus groups, see Appendix H.
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### **Interviews with city department heads**

Livefront interviewed city department heads. The objective of these meetings was to gather information relevant to each department. Meetings had a standard set of questions, but we encouraged parting from that set of questions to discuss specific concerns, suggestions, or needs.

We were scheduled to meet with the following:

- ◆ **Susan Hoyt**, City Administrator
- ◆ **Deb Little**, Exec. Asst./Transit Mgr.  
(Oversees IT, Transit, Admin)
- ◆ **Heidi Hamilton**, Public Works Director  
(Oversees Engineering, Streets, Parks & Facilities, Water, Wastewater)
- ◆ **Howard Merriam**, Resource and Park Planning Director
- ◆ **Brian O'Connell**, Community Development Director  
(Oversees Community Development including EDA, HRA; Building Inspections, Planning)
- ◆ **Gary Smith**, Police Chief

- ◆ **Lynne Young**, Library Director
- ◆ **Stephen DeLong**, Interim Liquor Store Manager
- ◆ **Elizabeth Wheeler**, Human Resources Director

We did not meet with Susan Hoyt because our meeting with her was cancelled. Meetings lasted 1-3 hours. The City of Northfield was responsible for scheduling meetings, and department heads were responsible for deciding who from their department was present and active at those meetings.

- To review the agenda and/or guiding questions for the department head interviews, see Appendix I.
- To review abridged notes from the department head interviews, see Appendix J.

**Electronic data**

To the extent data were available we analyzed various sources of information from the old web site. The objective was to analyze true, objective statistics for which pages were popular and what information was relevant on previous web sites. We would have liked to analyze the following:

- ◆ **Page hits** – which pages were popular
- ◆ **Search hits** – what terms were searched for most
- ◆ **Inquiry information** – what did people call or email about that they could not find?

The only data available were less than a year’s worth of page hit statistics and page path statistics.

- To review a summary of what we learned from the electronic data, see Appendix K.

**Competitor research**

Throughout the information gathering process, Livefront researched other city web sites to understand how they addressed the four interdependent areas for which we will be making recommendations (Content, Information Architecture & Usability, Design & Layout, Functionality). The objective was to “see what works” on current city web sites and apply some of those ideas to the new City of Northfield web site. Throughout the information gathering process, many people made references to other city web sites.

# Principal Findings—Audience & Purpose

Perhaps the most fundamental questions to consider when determining how a web site should be structured and implemented are *Who will use the web site?* and *What is the purpose of the web site?* The answers to these questions should frame the backdrop against which all subsequent issues are decided. **This section can be read as both an introduction and a conclusion to our recommendations.**

## Audience

Most visitors fall into one of seven types.

- ◆ Current residents of Northfield
- ◆ Current businesses/organizations in Northfield
- ◆ City employees
- ◆ Visitors to Northfield
- ◆ Prospective & new residents
- ◆ Prospective & new businesses/organizations
- ◆ Contractors & developers

The first three types of visitors (residents, businesses, employees) tend to seek out similar types of information—standard things most people would imagine when they think “city web site.” The fourth type of site visitor (visitors to Northfield, or tourists) will be looking for a separate set of information pertaining to more general information about the community and links to resources around the community. The fifth and sixth types of visitors (prospective residents and prospective businesses) look for yet another separate set of information about moving and getting established. The seventh type of visitor (contractors & developers) will be looking mostly for data in the planning, housing, and development sections of the web site. The first three types of visitors are by far the majority of web site visitors. Details on how the navigation should be structured to address the needs of various types of visitors will be addressed later.

More than anything else, **visitors are looking for basic information, and they know what they’re looking for before they come to the site.** Almost 56% of survey respondents said they come to the web site to find specific information or look at meeting/minutes and agendas. Focus groups members argued that they—and most people in the community—know what they are looking for when they go to an informational web site like the City’s. Survey results seem to support this. While 27% of users said they come to the web site “just to see what’s new”, a majority (72%) do not. Also, being that 28% of survey respondents “almost never” visit the city web site, and 22% only visit once every couple months, we deduce that when they *do* come to the web site they know what specific information they are looking for.

The web site must cater to all the above audiences, and various age ranges within those audiences. The majority audience (current residents) also has the widest diversity of ages. The City will see visitors aged from early children to seniors.

## The primary purpose

*What is it that the City is obligated to provide citizens? Separating that which would be cool from that which is necessary—separating technology from “technology for technology’s sake”—what is the purpose of the web site?*

At the most fundamental level, when the question of a web site surfaces, the City is obligated to provide *information* to citizens. Many department heads and city staff expressed their perspective in a similar way: “Fundamentally, we’re not about issues. We are about information.”

The City *provides* citizens information, works on ways to *communicate and gather* information more effectively, and works on ways to make *transactions* that result from that information more efficient. The impetus behind any communication or transaction, however, is the availability of information itself.

The *primary* purpose of the city web site, then, is to provide current, prospective, and visiting members of the community with relevant, timely information that is directly related to local city government.

It is important to understand that the *primary* purpose does not mean the *only* purpose. However, the City must prioritize (even if only for budget’s sake). Maintaining a daily post about “what’s new,” enabling online transactions, or listing all the events in the community are ancillary to providing basic information that any person would expect to find on a city web site.

Below we have outlined, in descending priority, the purpose of city web site.

1. Provide basic, persistent information to citizens
2. Provide tools that make communicating with the City easier (one-way interaction)
3. Provide tools that make transactions with the City easier (forms that can be filled out and submitted online, online payments, etc)
4. Provide dynamic, frequently-updated content and a means of public interaction with that content (two-way interaction)
5. Provide or aggregate content from organizations outside the City

Each priority is delineated below:

**1. Provide basic, persistent information to citizens.**

Providing basic, persistent information to citizens means providing them with the types of information they would expect to find on a city web site.

- a. **Persistent.** Most of this information is persistent (or “static”)—in other words, it changes infrequently. There are only a small percentage of people who would look at the web site every day, or even every week. Most people visiting the web site are looking for specific information such as when the compost site is open or how to read their water meter. This information does not change on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis.
- b. **A “switch.”** Much of this information can be obtained from outside resources. As one focus group member stated, the city web site should act as a “switch” instead of a content manager. Comprehensive information exists on the School District web site, the Chamber of Commerce web site, etc. The City should link to those web sites and the information they contain, not attempt to keep that information current themselves.
- c. **Archived.** Much of this information may be “archival” in nature. The City should provide archived information *as well as* current information for things such as meeting minutes. This is discussed in more detail later.
- d. **Informing.** Information should be meant to *inform*, not necessarily *educate* in an exhaustive way. It means showing how to read the water bill, not philosophizing about why water in cities is good. Too much information on *any* web site is bad.

Information and content should be brief, to the point, and entirely relevant. This also is discussed later.

2. **Provide tools that make communicating with the City easier (one-way interaction).**

After basic, persistent information is made available, the second priority for the City should be to make communication easier. Note that providing information on how to contact city staff and city departments falls under *priority #1*: contact information is fundamental, static information that is important and expected by many visitors to any web site. This priority (priority #2) on the other hand, deals with providing means of *easier* one-way communication by use of technology. So instead of just providing the information (priority #1), the City makes *using* that information easier (priority #2) by providing, for example, an online contact form. Other examples include online reporting of problems (such as a streetlamp that is out) or making application forms that users would normally need to download and print available for submission online. (Due to the significant cost and complexity, priority #2 does not include transactional communication, whereby the City must collect fees or monies from the web site visitor.)

3. **Provide tools that make transactions with the City easier.**

This priority is similar to number two, with the exception that it includes transactional sorts of communication. For example, allowing community members to pay parking tickets online, pay their water bill online, etc. This priority goes beyond just providing information (priority #1) and making communication easy (priority #2)...it provides a way for people to do business more efficiently.

4. **Provide dynamic, frequently-updated content and a means of public interaction with that content (two-way interaction).**

The fourth priority involves displaying, maintaining, and moderating dynamic, frequently updated content that may or may not allow for public, two-way communication between the City and community members. An example of this sort of content would a "News & Events" section that is updated daily to reflect happenings in the community, a city weblog that is updated twice a week with updates on the most contentious issues, or a discussion forum available for community members to comment. Items falling under this priority are great ideas and features for a web site, but they are difficult to manage, require more resources, and stray farther from the primary purpose the city web site needs to fulfill.

5. **Provide or aggregate content from organizations outside the City.**

The fifth priority involves managing the process of receiving or collecting information from organizations outside the City and displaying their content directly on the city web site. An example: duplicating information that can be found on the Chamber of Commerce site onto the city web site. Another example: the work necessary to aggregate events and calendar information from organizations around the City in order to maintain a centralized, community-wide events calendar. It should be noted that *linking* to information on the Chamber of Commerce web site, or *linking* to calendars of organizations not related to the City would fall under priority #1 (making information available), and would not be considered aggregating content. Many community members expressed concern for *any aspect* of the web site that could fall under this category. They argued tax dollars should not be spent on aggregating content from around the community because it is not a task for which the City is responsible.

## **Priorities summary**

Again, we will reiterate the importance of understanding the first priority above is not mutually exclusive of the subsequent four priorities. Providing a level of interaction on the city web site is not necessarily less important than providing relevant information, but it is less important *right now*.

We believe the city web site *should* provide means of interactivity with citizens, but from a priority standpoint, most users agree the web site must first be filled with relevant, updated information. In the public forums and focus groups, many people would fervently talk about all the features and functionality they would like to see on the new city web site. Every time this would happen, we would try to back up the conversation and press people to think about what was most important. We'd ask if paying fees online was more important than posting basic information and they would all say "of course not...that's a given." So, the given—the first priority—is making available information people will expect to see.

## **Fundamental, guiding thoughts**

There are numerous ideas that surfaced throughout the information gathering process that should be fundamental in shaping decisions moving forward. These ideas are outlined below.

### **The job of city employees**

The job of city employees is *not* to service a web site, but to do their job. City employees should not be inundated with large amounts of additional work to maintain a web site. Technological requirements of the content management system should not interrupt the work that really needs to be done.

### **Small and done well**

Throughout the data collection process citizens reiterated they would rather see a smaller web site that is done well than a larger site that is not done well. One member of the community said the City should literally start with a one-page web site and see if they can handle it.

Needless to say, there are large expectations placed on the City in terms of keeping an updated, relevant web site. Anything the City sets up it needs to follow through on. If the City decides to have a "what's new" section on the front page, it had better be updated continually. To avoid failure, both city staff and City Council need to understand and agree the web site will require resources to be successful.

### **Drawing people back?**

The city web site is not a corporate web site selling a product. People will come back to the web site *if they find the information they need*. Yes, a front page that has the latest news items (or gossip items) will draw people to the web site, but why? To read the latest news or gossip. This is not the primary job of the City, and it should not be the primary function of the web site. When discussing web sites, many people immediately assume that every web site should work to draw people back again and again. Indeed, we heard these sentiments from the community often. However, the goal of the web site should *not* be to draw people back; the goal of the web site should be to provide the information and resources people need. If this is accomplished, THEN people will naturally come back. As was mentioned above, the focus of the city employees should not be maintaining a web site that is updated every 30 minutes. Their primary focus should be to provide accurate information that users can find when they need it. As

discussed above, a majority of the audience of this web site visit the site to find static information they already know they need (i.e. compost hours, water bill info, etc).

### **What the City shouldn't be**

We heard repeatedly from the community through the focus groups, public forums, and online surveys that *the city web site* should be *the city web site*: it need not mimic other sites in Northfield that already provide great service or functionality for the community. Our impression is that replicating content and/or functionality would be redundant and waste valuable staff resources.

#### The city web site should not be another Northfield.org

The general consensus is that Northfield.org does a great job providing timely, continually updated news items and happenings in the community, providing forums for discussion, and aggregating news feeds and weblogs from around the community. Most people we talked to argued that there is no reason to mimic this service already being provided. Even if it tried, the general consensus was that the City could not do it as well as northfield.org does with volunteers. Rather than attempt to replicate the experience and information northfield.org provides users, the City should link to northfield.org as an information resource.

#### The city web site should not replicate the community information and visitor information found on the Chamber of Commerce web site.

The general consensus is that the Chamber of Commerce provides invaluable information for visitors and prospective residents by maintaining a well-organized, comprehensive list of festivals and events, a business directory, and information about special attractions, parks, recreation, lodging, dining, shopping, churches, and more in the Northfield area. Rather than attempt to replicate the experience and information the Chamber of Commerce provides users, the City should link to the Chamber web site as an information resource.

#### The city web site should not be another news service

The general consensus is that the city web site should not be a news service. It is not the City's job to provide news to the community. It may be the City's job to provide alerts or updates on emergencies, but day-to-day activities, news, and events from around the community need not be a priority. Rather than attempt to replicate, the City should link to news resources like the Northfield News, northfield.org, etc.

### **Moving forward**

All decisions about the web site should be critiqued to ensure they are consistent with project objectives and the ideas outlined in this section.

# Recommendations for web policies

It is not within the scope of this project for us to discuss *policies* internal to the City regarding the management of the web site. However, issues surrounding a need for those policies surfaced so many times throughout the information gathering process, the topic cannot be ignored.

The entire success of the web site project lies in the City's ability to manage the web site and meet users' expectations. Accordingly, this section could very well be the most important.

We firmly believe the city web site will NOT be successful if the issues in this section are not addressed before the web site is launched.

## The concern

One of the primary concerns that emerged through every medium from which we collected data was an overall anxiety regarding the City's ability to maintain a web site. Our impression—and the impression of most people in the community—is that the City is not currently capable of maintaining a web site at a satisfactory level. When asked about content on the web site, many people said “forget the content...if the City can't update the content it doesn't matter...the first priority and the primary concern should be: how is the City going to maintain the new web site?” It should be noted that this concern often surfaced before, and was given more emphasis than, the actual features or functionality or information on the web site.

This should be of utmost concern for the City. If the City indeed does not have both the strategy and resources necessary to maintain a web site, it should not attempt to implement one. Paramount to the success of a new web site is setting expectations correctly and then following through on those promises.

Unfortunately, technology is NOT the answer. We will provide the City a system that allows the web site to be updated easily, but contrary to popular belief this will not solve the problem. If the City is going to be successful, it needs to rethink and reengineer its approach to maintaining a web site.

The following is adapted from Jeffery Veen's article “Why Content Management Fails” (at times word-for-word). Jeffery Veen is a principal for Adaptive Path, one of the most respected user experience and web consulting firms in the United States.

### The CMS Myth

Many organizations think that by distributing content creation they're empowering departments to manage their own areas of the site. They do this hoping that the departments can satisfy audience needs without requesting IT help for every little site change. The idea is enticing, and the City of Northfield has told us they want a system that facilitates this distributed authorship approach. In theory, it's efficient and effective: empowered departments of a city, all publishing content directly to the web site through standard templates. The site continues to grow, but in a controlled way.

In practice, however, it doesn't often work. As Jeffery Veen's essay reports, Jupiter Research uncovered some startling findings. “Of just under 100

companies ... only 27 percent of companies surveyed planned to continue using their web content management systems as they do now.”

So why do these CMS projects almost always fail? People don't like to change the way they work. Department heads for the City of Northfield, for instance, have spent years building strategies to accomplish their jobs, practices that likely date back to study skills acquired during their education. So changing those processes — no matter how valid the provided technical solution — is nearly impossible. Users will rebel, even after substantial training.

### **It's not about technology**

Content management is not a technology problem. Content management is an editorial process problem. The City of Northfield's web site is a publication. The City needs to treat it as one. Here's why the problem needs to be solved with *people*, NOT technology:

- ◆ Publications require editorial expertise. Publishing is a skill set that most organizations have never needed, but one that's integral to producing a quality site.
- ◆ To succeed, you must separate content and process from software. Serving a web site is a technology issue, so IT should manage it, right? Wrong. Would you let the printing press operator be involved in your editorial process? Of course not.
- ◆ Put editors in charge. You need an editor in place to make the content on your site as interesting and consistent as it can be.

### **How it should work**

The City of Northfield needs to assign a new or existing staff resource as an editor. This editor manages all content on the city's web site. That editor is “sent out” to the varying departments and acts like a reporter in the field, working on content, updates, and posts that departments can submit to a copy desk. The content (the “stories”) are then compared against the web site style guides and web policies (discussed later), producing consistent, professional content. Only then does it go online.

### **Why this system works better**

The process suggested above does away with distributed publishing of content in favor of a centralized manager of information. This would work best for the City because:

- ◆ As mentioned earlier, the job of city employees is not to update a web site. A new web site should intrude on their email box, their time, and their resources as little as possible. An editor that takes care of 90% of the web site work would free city employees to do what they've been doing all along.
- ◆ Along those same lines, department heads or their supporting staff have not had the responsibility to make updates to the web site in their time at Northfield. As was explained above: changing worker processes — no matter how valid the provided technical solution — is nearly impossible.
- ◆ We have been told again and again by both the City and the community that consistency is important. Consistency is a very difficult goal to maintain when there are twenty individuals updating different parts of a web site. If consistency in style, tone, length,

relevant content, acceptable content, etc, is to be maintained, a centralized command is the only true solution.

- ◆ A city staff member that is the web “editor” would be held responsible for the web site. Without responsibility or accountability, the web site will not be updated. With a staff member in charge (it is part of his or her job description), they will be personally responsible for collecting, writing, editing, and posting the information necessary to maintain a current, relevant web site.
- ◆ Along those same lines, an editor would be the go-to person for all questions about the web site and its policies. When work does need to be submitted from departments, the editor would be responsible for holding those various departments accountable.
- ◆ An editor dedicated to the site means the City can maintain a controlled growth, oversee the site strategy, and ensure it is meeting the needs of the community. In addition, the City will be able to do many additional things from a features/functionality standpoint if there is a dedicated staff member assigned to implementing and maintaining those web features that require constant human attention or moderation.

We anticipate the City will push back on the idea outlined above due to resource/budget concerns. **We do not recommend this.** If the City does forgo our recommendation above and attempt to implement a distributed authorship process, it will all the more need a **champion for content** and a solid **web site policy**. These two ideas are explained below.

### **A champion for content**

Even if the web site content is managed through distributive authorship, the City needs to designate a champion for content. This champion may or may not be a full-time staff member, but would oversee, and be held responsible for, the relevancy and consistency of content on the web site. He or she would:

1. Be the internal go-to person for all questions related to the web site.
2. Be the internal expert on the web site policy
3. Hold departments accountable for providing content in a timely manner
4. Maintain the overall site vision and ensure content on the web site reflects that vision and is accomplishing objectives for the web site
5. Has the authority to approve or disapprove content
6. Is the point person for city-wide alerts (snow emergency, election results, etc)
7. Is responsible for ensuring that electronic inquiries submitted through the web site are followed up on

### **A web site policy**

The City needs a set of policies against which web content is measured for adequacy. The individual in charge of the web site (the “champion” above) would be responsible for ensuring the web site maintains the standards outlined in the City’s web site policy. The following are a list of subjects this policy needs to address:

1. **Acceptable Content.** This section of the policy discusses appropriate length of content, appropriate use of photographs, appropriate topics, the desired writing style (tone, tense, etc), consistency, etc
2. **Timely Content.** This section of the policy requires all departments to maintain timely and relevant information. For example, it might require that the Economic Development Authority posts meeting minutes and agendas immediately after such events (where immediately is defined as within one day).

3. **Style.** This section of the policy outlines requirements for the look-and-feel of the web site including font type and size, the use of links, etc.
4. **Workflow and/or Editorial Process.** This section of the policy outlines the process by which content must be approved for publication to the web site.
5. **Alerts.** This section of the policy outlines what types of events are acceptable to post on the front page of the city web site as city-wide alerts, how long those alerts may remain active, and who is in charge of posting, moderating, and removing those alerts.
6. **Response Time.** This section of the policy details the acceptable amount of time allowed to respond to inquiries that come through the web site, the consequences of not responding to user inquiries in a timely fashion, etc.
7. **Secession.** This section of the policy details the process (or prohibition) of departments within the City splitting off and creating their own web site that is separate from the city site and its content management system, its editorial process, and its web policies for any reason (they want a different design, they want different features the City isn't willing or able to pay for, etc).
8. **Supported Entities.** This section of the policy lists organizations that are supported by the city web site. This section would be necessary only for items such as a public community-wide calendar whereby the City may begin aggregating content from specific organizations around Northfield. The City needs a strict list of organizations from whom content/events/updates/alerts will be accepted and posted on the city web site. For instance, if the City starts posting content or calendar items from the Northfield Senior Center, the Arts Guild will want information posted as well, etc.
9. **Logos, Banners, and Advertisements.** This section of the policy addresses the City's process of approving logos, banners, and advertisements for organizations outside of the City to be posted on the web site.

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### **Initial Content**

On a separate but related issue, the City needs to thinking about how all the content for the new web site will be written, collected, edited, and published to the web site. The City will most likely need outside help to populate the Content Management System with content from across the entire city. We fear that if this job is left to each individual department, it will not be completed in a timely, consistent fashion. This issue is discussed in much more detail later.

# Recommendations for the web site: Framework

This section discusses our recommendations for the four interdependent facets of a web site: content, functionality, usability, and design.

## Content

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### The relationship between content and pages

Perhaps the most important thing we learned from our meetings with department heads was that nearly all departments want and/or need the ability to present information in a similar way. For example, beyond posting general information in text format, many departments would benefit from a calendar. Many departments want frequently asked questions. Many departments would like to have a “What’s Happening” or “What’s new” section. Many departments need the ability to post meeting agendas and meeting minutes. All departments need the ability to post contact information

This leads us to make a suggestion that is fundamental to the entire organization of the web site and the system that manages content on that site: the City of Northfield web site should be built around *types of content*. Content should be separated from the specific page on which it is displayed. This would allow the police department to add a calendar “module” to one of their pages, and it would allow the EDA to add a calendar “module” to one of their pages. The content from each of those calendars, however, would also be available on the main city-wide general calendar. This type of system allows content to be syndicated across the entire city web site on multiple pages, but requires administrators to update the content in only one place.

### Browse by type of content

The advantage of a system that separates content from the page on which it is displayed is that all content can be browsed by *content type* as an alternate method of navigation. For example, on the home page there could be a list of all the different types of content on the web site (calendar event, meeting agendas and minutes, job postings, maps, frequently asked questions, etc). A web site visitor could click on the type of content, then choose a category (e.g. EDA, Police, Parks & Rec), and see all the content associated with that type for that category. As has already been discussed, we discovered through the public survey and focus groups that most people know what they’re looking for when they go to a city web site. This means that browsing by content type would be much more relevant to display on the home page than a top-10 list of what is most recently accessed.

### Archived

Yet another advantage of a system wherein content is separated from specific pages is that content can be archived easily. Instead of having the same calendar events listed on three separate pages on the web site (and having to type the text for that event 3 times), the actual content item is stored in one central place. By browsing to page dedicated to archived items, web site visitors could find an entire list of back-dated content. For example, the calendar on the police department page might display the three most recent calendar items for the Police. By clicking the “View all items” link below that list, a web site user could be linked to an archive page that displays all 30 archived calendar items for the Police. This type of system would allow

people to access old content in an easy way, but simultaneously allow the most relevant, recent content to float to the top. In addition, it would allow for easy management of the web site because a calendar item need only be added to the system *once*, but it will automatically be syndicated throughout the site on multiple pages and added to the archive list.

### **Types of Content**

Each type of content we recommend the site include is discussed and justified in detail in the next section. Below is a list of those types we suggest for Phase I development:

- ◆ Calendar Event
- ◆ Job Posting
- ◆ Alert
- ◆ Meeting Minutes and Agendas
- ◆ Staff Contact Information
- ◆ Department Contact Information
- ◆ Map
- ◆ What's New
- ◆ Frequently Asked Questions
- ◆ Loans & Grants
- ◆ Licenses & Permit Application
- ◆ Public Notice
- ◆ Board/Commission Staff Report
- ◆ City Budget & CIP
- ◆ City Finance Report
- ◆ City Project
- ◆ Seasonal Highlight

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### **Categories**

Below is a list of categories we propose classify types of content on the web site:

- ◆ Building Inspections
- ◆ Charter Commission
- ◆ City Administration
- ◆ City Council
- ◆ Design Advisory Board
- ◆ Economic Development Authority
- ◆ Engineering
- ◆ Environmental Quality Commission
- ◆ Finance
- ◆ Fire
- ◆ Grace Whittier Fund Committee
- ◆ Heritage Preservation Commission
- ◆ Hospital Board
- ◆ Housing & Redevelopment Authority
- ◆ Human Resources
- ◆ Human Rights Commission
- ◆ Library
- ◆ Liquor Store
- ◆ Motor Vehicle
- ◆ Northfield Community Resource Center
- ◆ Parks & Rec

- ◆ Planning Commission
- ◆ Police
- ◆ Public Safety Commission
- ◆ Streets
- ◆ Transit
- ◆ Wastewater
- ◆ Water
- ◆ Zoning Board of Appeals

### **Easy to get to**

Content needs to be easy to get to both through the site navigation and directly through the URL. Navigation will be discussed later. The city web site should have URLs that make sense to the user and are easy to remember. For example, the calendar should be located at <http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us/calendar>. Additionally, URLs should never break. If there is no content for a specific URL, the system should recognize this and tell the user, not display an error.

### **Brief**

Writing for the web is different than writing for brochures or print. Content on the web needs to be short and to the point. It needs to be less wordy and more relevant. If the writing is too long or poorly written, users will not read it. Reading text on a screen is more difficult than reading it on paper. Thus, the threshold for when a user will “give up” is much shorter.

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### **Accessible**

The City of Northfield web site should be fully accessible to the greatest number of users possible, including those with disabilities. Section 508 is piece of legislation that requires *Federal agencies'* electronic and information technology is accessible to people with disabilities. The criteria for web-based technology and information are based on access guidelines developed by the Web Accessibility Initiative of the World Wide Web Consortium. These standards help ensure web sites are accessible to, among others, people with vision impairments.

Because the City of Northfield web site is not a Federal web site, it does not fall subject to Section 508 requirements. However, adhering to these requirements has many obvious benefits:

1. The City can ensure people with disabilities are able to access content on their web site.
2. The City can prepare for any future date when Section 508 legislation may apply to state and local government web sites.
3. Search Engines will be able to index the city site more effectively, thereby increasing rankings without any additional cost.
4. The City can serve as an example to other city web sites
5. The City can stand up to scrutiny from the media or auditors about how their technology systems cater to all audiences.

### **Cross-browser and cross-platform**

The city web site should be built using web standards. Technologically speaking, the site should be built using validated XHTML and validated CSS. This will allow both old browsers and new browsers on almost any computer running almost any browser to view the web site. Additionally,

it will allow people using many cellular phones or PDA's to browse to, and effectively use, the web site.

### **Printer-friendly**

The city web site should use two CSS style sheets—one for screen media and one for print media. This means that a web browser will style information so that it is optimized for viewing on a computer screen, but when the user goes to print the page, the printer reads from a separate style sheet that is optimized for printed media. The public forums and public survey showed that printer-friendly pages were a relatively high priority.

### **Standard file types**

The City should not post any documents on the web site that require visitors download proprietary software. For example, the City should NOT post Microsoft Word (.doc) files, PowerPoint (.ppt) files, Excel (.xls) files, or any other Microsoft *or* non-Microsoft proprietary file format.

When possible, all content should be entered into the Content Management System (and thus, published on the web site) in plain text format. Only when required should files be uploaded to the system. When files are uploaded to the system they should be in PDF format.

One user commented on the project weblog:

“Do NOT post PDFs unless absolutely necessary, and even then, DON'T.”

Being that PDF format is considered a standard on the web, this is an unreasonable request. We could find no other community member that agreed with this request. A second commenter responded to this non-PDF request by saying

“...I don't think PDFs are a bad idea for certain types of documents. I would much rather see transcripts, council minutes, etc. in PDF format than markup-laden HTML.”

This commenter went on to provide four reasons PDFs are not only acceptable, but sometimes the best solution. He is quoted below:

- 1: The PDF specification is an open format  
([http://partners.adobe.com/public/developer/pdf/index\\_reference.html](http://partners.adobe.com/public/developer/pdf/index_reference.html)).
- 2: PDFs honor accessibility specifications out-of-the-box  
(<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/solutionsacc.html>).
- 3: PDF documents have more printing/saving options as opposed to an HTML document on the web (even better than "printer-friendly" HTML pages).
- 4: PDF typefaces and graphics are anti-aliased and scalable (good for folks with not-so-good vision), HTML is not scalable.

This commenter is correct. PDFs *are* the standard on the web for posting documents. While posting information directly on the web site as text is often optimal, some documents or content pieces are much more efficiently posted by using files. When files are used, they should always be PDF.

## Spanish

There is a growing population of Spanish-speaking residents in Northfield. The City of Northfield should carefully consider how they will meet the needs of this population both on and off the web site.

Feedback from the community was of course on both sides of the spectrum, but most people tended to agree on two things: 1) Spanish is important and is probably a growing need, 2) The resources necessary to translate and maintain content in two languages would most likely be cost prohibitive.

Here's a few excerpts from what people said:

- ◆ "I can't imagine that our Spanish speaking population generally has access to the Internet or would use [the city web site] if they did." (*Survey Respondent*)
- ◆ "Most of the [Hispanic] people I work with wouldn't know to turn to the web. The Spanish-speaking population is growing in computer literacy and may, little-by-little take advantage of information on the web." (*City Employee*)
- ◆ "To encourage new, Spanish-speaking users to turn to our site, perhaps I could create a monthly informational article about some aspect of City government, which would be posted in Spanish on the web. For example, 1) when and why are building permits required; 2) is tap water safe to drink? What does the water department do to ensure its purity? 3) How does the library decide what materials to buy?... ) Then I could send out an email to Spanish-speaking residents of Northfield whom I know to be connected, encouraging them to see the new information on the City's website." (*City Employee*)
- ◆ "I don't think that everything on the website needs to be translated, but select items should be. Additional languages (besides Spanish) to consider: Chinese and Vietnamese. I think we could get Carleton's ACT student volunteers to create these translations. I have found their work to be excellent in the past when they have created translations." (*City employee*)
- ◆ "[The Hispanic population] is growing, but there is the question of resources. It would take an incredible amount of work." (*Focus group member*)
- ◆ "Incredibly expensive to do Spanish....don't think it's practical...can't afford it now." (*Focus group member*)
- ◆ "It would be nice to have, but what we see most Hispanic folks using is email. We don't see them looking for a lot of local information. Periodical information is used by the Hispanic population. In theory it's a good idea. But people are not hooking up to city's web site." (*Representative from the library*)
- ◆ "Full Spanish translation is not needed, but a Spanish language introduction and how to obtain language translation assistance is important." (*Survey respondent*)

Our suggestion for the City of Northfield at this time is to forgo implementing content in two languages across the entire site. We recommend this course of action for a couple of reasons:

1. **Cost.** The cost of translating and maintaining a second language on the web site will nearly double over just one language. After considering points #2 and 3 below, the value provided to the community at this point in time does not justify the cost.
2. **Relevance.** The Spanish speaking population in Northfield is large. But the Spanish speaking population who a) have access to the internet, and b) actually visit the city web site, would be significantly smaller.
3. **Preparedness.** The City of Northfield does not currently provide all printed materials or paper forms in Spanish. It does not make sense to try and post two versions of content and forms on the web site, if the original source is not yet translated.

What we do suggest—and what many people suggested as a compromise—is to have a Spanish page that explains where to find additional resources and additional help finding city information. This page should have a link pointing to it that is very visible on the front page of the web site.

# Functionality

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## Calendar

There are two different options for a calendar on the city web site:

1. A city government calendar. This calendar would display events directly related to the City. For example, public meetings and the meeting dates/times of various boards and commissions.
2. A community calendar. This calendar would attempt to aggregate content and events from around the city—including from organizations that are not owned or run by the City—and display them in a central location on the city web site.

Most people who took the survey thought that both types of calendars were important to include on the city web site. In fact, more people thought a community calendar was Important or Very Important than a government calendar (76% vs. 78%). However, 74% of people thought a government-based calendar was a must for Phase I while only 43% thought a community event calendar was a must for Phase I.

We fear the responses collected through the survey, however, are somewhat misguided. Upon asking the question in our focus groups, we received nearly the same initial response (“yes” to a community calendar). However, in the focus group setting (and in the public forum setting) we had the opportunity to discuss the ramifications of such a calendar and its implementation. All except one member in both focus groups decided that the City should *not* attempt to host a community-wide events calendar. Results from the first public forum were mixed. The second public forum crowd said “no” to the idea of a community calendar. Here’s why some of these groups changed their mind or said no from the start:

### **It hasn’t worked before**

The Northfield Arts Guild has tried to host a community calendar for only arts events in Northfield. This calendar has not been successful. A representative from the Arts Guild told us (and the City directly) about the challenges of maintaining such a calendar. People/Organizations do not just send events as you think they would...they need to be constantly reminded, followed up on, and “chased down.”

### **The City doesn’t have resources**

Most people didn’t think the City has the resources to dedicate to aggregating different types of content from around the community.

### **The City shouldn’t spend the resources**

Many people were concerned about the idea of taxpayer money being used to aggregate events from around the community when, from their perspective, gathering information and events to promote organizations outside of the City is not the City’s job.

### **Endorsement**

There was much concern over endorsement. Which organizations and/or events does the City endorse? The perception to the end-user on the web site (especially those who are non web-savvy) is that anything on the city web site is endorsed by the City. Many people feel there is too much liability associated with this.

### **Expectations**

By implementing a city-wide event calendar, the City is setting up expectations that it will be obligated to fulfill.

Many of these issues surfaced only after the “cool” factor of a public community-wide calendar had faded. We must agree with the concerns above and recommend that the City does NOT attempt to host a community-wide calendar at this time. Perhaps most importantly, the public calendar falls under priority #5—in other words, it is fairly far-removed from the primary purpose the city web site.

### **A better option**

Many people suggested that, as an alternative, the City provide links to calendars from around the community. This way, said one focus group member, the City is acting as a traffic manager instead of a content manager, and, the viewer is self-selecting what it is they want to find more information about. We recommend links be posted below the main government calendar to organizations like The Arts Guild, the colleges, etc. Links to outside resources fall under priority #1 for the purpose of the web site.

### **Future ability**

If the City does find the resources and demand for a community-wide, centralized calendar, it would be fairly easy to implement by having a person inside the City aggregating content and posting it to the web.

### **Our recommendation**

For Phase I development we recommend the City implement a city-event calendar only.

We recommend a **Calendar Event** content type so that calendar events can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

The calendar should be divided into categories so that users can filter what they look at. Certain other content types on the web site (e.g. Meeting Minutes, Public Notices) should display automatically on the calendar. Because the Calendar Event is a content type, it can be used by different departments to display a calendar on their part of the site with only the events relevant to their department.

### **Blogs**

The idea of weblogs on the city web site was a contentious issue. While people’s opinions tended to center on the calendar issue, opinions on the blog issue were generally extreme.

The idea behind blogs on a city web site is rooted in good thought. The sentiment expressed by blogs proponents at one public forum was that the City should work to communicate better with the citizens in the community. Blogs would facilitate better government-constituent relations:

- 1) Blogs would provide a gateway to update citizens and community members
- 2) Blogs facilitate communication on a more personal level
- 3) Blogs facilitate more frequent communication
- 4) Blogs imply forward thinking and could be a great marketing move for the City
- 5) Blogs are a great way to quickly address issues/concerns and keep people informed

Simplistically, there were three viewpoints expressed in the public forums concerning blogs on the public web site:

1. City Council members and department heads should have blogs that are hosted on the web site.
2. The City should partner with someone—either an organization like northfield.org or an outside consultant—to provide blogging functionality for department heads or council members that want to blog. The city web site could then link to those weblogs, which are hosted external to the site.
3. The city web site should not host or link to weblogs because organizations like northfield.org already exist and they do a better job than the City of Northfield ever could.

### **The majority reaction**

Every person in the focus groups was against blogs on the city web site. There were a few strong proponents of blogs at the first public forum; there were no proponents at the second public forum. The public survey showed 41% of people saying that blogs for City Council were Not Important for a city web site. 11% of survey respondents thought blogs were important to implement in Phase I. Two people thought blogs for department heads was the most important feature to implement in Phase I.

The majority reaction to blogs is “no.” This is due primarily to the fact that blogs are perceived as pedestals for personal gain and outlets for subjective criticism. Here’s why we must recommend blogs not be implemented on the city web site at this time:

#### **Perception**

The largest hurdle to implementing, or linking to, blogs on the City of Northfield web site is perception. Contrary to what may actually be reality, blogs are perceived as personal, subjective, and uncontrolled. While this is a facile understanding of weblogs (comments *can* be “turned off”, blogs *can* be used to report only facts, etc), it is the general understanding of taxpayers. Any implementation of weblogs will need to take the education of the community into consideration.

#### **Staff unwillingness**

All but two or three departments said they would refuse to maintain a blog if the opportunity were provided. They argued they simply would not have time to maintain a weblog and that it would distract them from their job.

#### **Walking a thin line**

The primary concern of most people regarding weblogs was the fine line between personal and official information, opinions, endorsements, etc. There was concern over the legality of posting the blogs of individuals on city government web site.

#### **Starting small**

There is not a lot of confidence in the community that the City can maintain even basic information on the web site. As one focus group member said about blogs on the city web site, “There is enough trouble keeping basic information current...don’t even go there.”

#### **Northfield.org**

Many people argued that northfield.org does a great job of aggregating content and providing blogging opportunities. They argued that if department heads or City Council members want blogs, they can set them up themselves and NCO would be happy to aggregate their content on northfield.org.

**Audience**

Only a sliver of the 18,000 people in Northfield would be interacting with blog functionality. The City should be aware, however, that this population is growing and may very likely continue to grow.

**Writing styles**

Not everyone is a writer, and more importantly, not everyone is a good writer. Blogs, and the personal styles with which they're written, are very strongly linked to personality. Clear, effective communication is paramount through any medium presented by the City.

**An alternate option**

Despite the generally negative reaction to blogs, many citizens and many department heads favored (or specifically asked for) a "What's new" or "What's happening" section or module on their part of the web site where they could post brief announcements and happenings that were relevant to what they were doing. We think this is a good idea. It provides a way for department heads to keep the community updated, but in a way that is completely integrated into the site, and in a way that avoids the pejorative idea of blogs on a public web site. Additionally, a "What's new" section could be the bridge that allows for blogs in the future.

**Future consideration**

Despite recommending against blogs for the short-term, we do recommend the City consider implementing some sort of weblog presence in the near future.

Blogging is a growing phenomenon, and as the City works to cater to many different, technologically-advancing audiences, blogging may prove to be very important. The best way to combat the "perception issue" is to follow Eden Prairie's example: they link to personal blogs from the web site, but do not host them directly on the web site.

We recommend the City consider allowing links to blogs, providing there is a disclaimer saying that the City does not endorse the content. Gary Smith is currently the only department head that maintains a personal blog. We think linking to this blog would be acceptable.

Beyond linking to outside blogs, the general sentiment is that the City should focus its money and energy on other things, and consider blogs in Phase III or Phase IV.

**City Code**

We received very little feedback about the current city code. The feedback we did receive was both positive and negative. One person liked the fact that it was hosted by an outside organization and thought the search functionality and browsing functionality was good. The other person requested that the city code be incorporated into the web site directly so that searching and browsing would be an improved, integrated experience.

We tend to agree with the latter opinion: searching and browsing of the city code could be improved by integrating with the web site directly. However, being that there is not a large demand to do so, the City can save money now by addressing this issue in Phase II or Phase III of the development process.

## Job Posting

As Northfield works to make the web site a marketing tool for the City, presenting a technologically sound and helpful experience online to potential candidates for application is important. The City of Northfield is significantly lacking in the employment area of the web relative to other cities of similar size.

The idea of job postings was not discussed at the public forums or in focus groups. Survey respondents ranked job postings as relatively low in priority. Survey respondents, however, were primarily from within the city, not prospective employees or residents of Northfield.

We feel the cost of adding job posting functionality is well justified given the low expense to high value ratio. We recommend the City implement an employment section of the web site that lists the latest job posting and their applications/addendums.

We recommend a **Job Posting** content type so that jobs can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

As will be shown in the “navigation” section of this document, the link to job postings and employment information should be called “Employment.” This is most often what people look for when searching for this type of information. Users should not need to know they must go to “Administration” or “HR” in order to find job listings.

## Alerts

Throughout the public forums, focus groups, interviews, and surveys, people persistently mentioned the desire to find relevant, frequently updated information throughout the web site. They would add that items such as emergency information or other alerts should be displayed on the front page. We think this will be a challenge for the City to maintain, but we think that it should take on this challenge. The idea of alerts or other information being displayed prominently on the front page is good idea. Such alerts could include items such as snow emergencies, power outage information, police alerts, etc.

We recommend an **Alert** content type so that alerts can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

## Meeting Agendas & Minutes

15% of survey respondents said they come to the web site to view meeting minutes for the City Council or a different board or commission. 73% of respondents thought City Council minutes and agendas were Very Important or Important to implement on the web site. 71% of respondents thought board/commission minutes and agendas were Very Important or Important to implement on the web site.

Focus group members affirmed that posting of meeting minutes and agendas are fundamental to business and democracy in the city and should be posted in a timely manner.

We recommend a **Meeting Minutes and Agendas** content type so that meeting agendas and meeting minutes can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

It should be noted that meeting minutes, like all other content types, can be saved and “archived.” In other words, the most recent meeting minutes and agendas will float to the top of the list, but minutes and agendas from past dates will also be available by clicking a link that says “Click here to view all minutes” or something similar.

### **Contact Information**

Providing accurate and clearly visible contact information for all departments and city staff is paramount. People voiced concern through every avenue (survey, public forums, focus groups, etc) with their inability to find contact information on both the old and interim web site.

We recommend a **Staff Contact Information** content type so that contact information for city employees can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

We recommend a **Department Information** content type so that general department information such as phone, address, and hours of operation can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

Because contact information would be a specific content type, different departments from around the City would be able to display a list of contact information for members from only their department, while the City could also easily host a centralized all-department contact list. Again, because the contact information is a content type, it would be updated from a central location but placed in multiple locations throughout the web site.

One City Council member suggested that email links should be encrypted so that Spam bots cannot collect their address from the web site. This is a good idea, although the City can save money by not implementing this feature. The City should evaluate the spam software it has installed, as well as take into consideration that their email addresses are posted on various other community sites without encryption (e.g. Chamber of Commerce) when deciding whether to implement encryption.

### **Maps**

Departments such as Public Works, Parks & Recreation, and Community Development suggested the need for maps on the city web site. Many users in the focus groups and public survey thought maps would be useful as well. We think there was a slight difference in interpretation, however, in what department heads wanted to post on the web site and what citizens would like see.

Citizens, in general, thought a simple map of Northfield that showed the parks, the downtown district, the schools and colleges, etc, would be beneficial to someone wanting an overview of the Northfield area.

In the past, departments have leaned towards posting very large, detailed maps that provide a great amount of information but are useful mostly to contractors and others needing very specific information. Additionally, most of the maps on the current web site are only viewable in AutoCAD—an expensive piece of software that only very few individuals will have. In other words, the current maps are not catered to the general audience of Northfield, but rather engineers.

Of course, having both types of maps on the web site is important. We think the City should continue to post maps as it does on the interim site, but also develop a simple “introductory” map

that overviews the city and is easy to access All maps that are downloadable by the public should be in PDF form, and they should be small. The current Base Map, Zoning Map, and Ward and Precinct Map are much too large. Files of these sizes render older computers unstable.

We recommend a **Map** content type so that maps can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

### **What's New**

Most of the department heads asked for some sort of “What’s New” or “What’s Happening” area of the web site where they could post recent updates, news items, or minor alerts relating to their department.

The general sentiment expressed throughout the public forums, focus groups, interviews, and surveys has been that the City should provide some sort of fresh, relevant content. We think implementing an optional “What’s New” section for each department would provide departments the opportunity to communicate more frequently and more directly with the citizens of Northfield.

A “What’s New” section does not have the presence or impact of a blog, but as was discussed at length earlier, it is a good way to begin addressing the positive reasons to have a blog while avoiding the negative reaction that real blogs would solicit from the community.

We recommend a **What's New** content type so that brief news items can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

Each “What’s New” post should have the ability to have a file associated with it. Multiple departments (Police, Liquor Store, etc) expressed the desire to post their monthly or quarterly newsletters in this way.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Most of the department heads asked for some sort of frequently asked questions functionality. The public survey showed 54% of people think frequently asked questions related to each department was Very Important or Important. 7% thought it was Not Important.

There will be an incredible amount of information on the city web site. Even with an intuitive navigation system, there will be times when people cannot find what they’re looking for. FAQs are a place many people turn. We recommend the City implement frequently asked questions throughout the site.

We recommend a **FAQ** content type so that frequently asked questions can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

Yet another reminder: because of the separation of content from pages, each department or each section of the web site could have their own frequently asked questions, while ALL the questions from the site could be aggregated in one simple location that is accessible from the home page. In other words, the Police Department FAQ section would only display questions relevant to public safety, and the Public Works FAQ section would only display questions relevant to public

works, but “browsing by content type” as was discussed earlier, would allow users to see all the questions in one location.

## **Search**

Search functionality is very important on a city web site. The survey showed 91% of people thought search functionality was Very Important or Important. A request for search functionality also surfaced in the focus groups and in at least one public forum.

In order to provide the best search functionality, the search function must have the ability to search inside of PDF documents. Because proprietary formats such as Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel should not exist on the city web site, support for searching inside these types of documents is optional.

An “advanced search page” is not a requirement. Most people just want to perform basic searches and won’t bother using the multiple fields available on an advanced search. We recommend against implementing an advanced search page due to cost and the marginal benefit the City will receive from the extra expense. An advanced search page can be implemented at a later date.

The City has suggested the implementation of a third-party search tool called dtSearch. Livefront can implement this search tool into the web site, but because we did not develop the functionality, we cannot guarantee its efficiency or quality, and we do not provide technical support for the software. Although we do not recommend *against* dtSearch or any third party search software, we do not specifically recommend dtSearch. Research of 3<sup>rd</sup> party solutions was outside the scope of this document.

## **Discussion Forum**

Despite many citizens wanting to see a more active city government presence on the web site, members of the focus groups were vehemently opposed to a discussion forum, and 54% of public survey respondents thought it was Not Important for a city web site.

The primary reasons to forgo implementing a discussion forum are as follows:

1. It needs human moderation which requires staff time and resources.
2. It doesn’t fall within the top priorities for the purpose of the city site to be included in Phase I (see the beginning of this document)
3. There are other discussion-based forums or lists in the community (e.g. NCO’s ISSUES list)

Concerns were rooted both in the community’s perception of the City being able to upkeep a forum, and the role a discussion forum should play on a public government web site. We recommend against implementing a discussion forum at this time and in the near future. There are other items—even for Phase II—that would provide more value to the community and align more perfectly with the purpose of the city web site.

## **Tell the city about... (Online Report-A-Problem)**

The idea of reporting a problem to the City via an online form was a popular one. The idea is that there is a dropdown list with a half dozen options of potential problems (e.g. “A streetlight is out”). A visitor to the web site can then go and fill out a form that is automatically emailed to the

appropriate person inside the City. 70% of survey respondents thought this was a good thing to implement in Phase I.

As mentioned in our recommendations about policies, it is crucial that people submitting requests or problems be followed up with. Let us reiterate that the City needs to implement a policy regarding this. If users do not receive follow-up, they feel like no one ever saw their message. In time, visitors will stop communicating these things to the City at all.

We recommend the following options be available “Tell the city about...”:

- ◆ Crime information or leads
- ◆ Garbage/Recycling pickup problem
- ◆ Graffiti
- ◆ Housing Code Violations
- ◆ Potholes
- ◆ Sidewalk problem
- ◆ Speed problem (request traffic resources)
- ◆ Streetlight trouble

We recommend the Content Management System support these forms built in to the system. For cost and consistency reasons, these forms will not be editable by city.

### **Online bill payment**

Online bill payment is a popular idea, but people seem to understand the inherent complexity of facilitating these transactions. 43% of people thought bill payment was necessary in Phase I, but 44% of people thought it could wait until Phase II. 13% of respondents thought bill payment was Not Important for the City to include on the web site. Public forum and focus group participants gave mixed reactions. Many thought it would be a great idea, but placed nearly all other features and functionality above it in terms of priority. The individuals that voiced the strongest support of the idea cited the fact that bill payment online would draw many people to the web site again and again. This is true, and is probably the largest benefit of bill payment online. We recommend the City implement online bill payment in the future, but the cost and complications of such a system will most likely be cost prohibitive in the short-term.

It should be noted that the Finance department (the department in charge of collecting information) does NOT recommend implementing a system at this time. They cite concerns over the state of their water meter upgrades, a process which could take a number of years to complete.

### **Subscribe via email**

At first glance, allowing visitors to subscribe via email to updates posted to the web site (meeting minutes, for example) is a logical idea. We found, however, that the demand for this sort of functionality doesn't fully exist, and, the complications associated with this sort of functionality outweigh the possible benefits. The following are reasons we recommend *against* implementing “subscribe via email” functionality:

- 1) **Community Feedback.** 57% of survey respondents thought this type of functionality could wait until Phase II. 23% thought this type of functionality wasn't necessary for a city web site at all. Focus group members, in general, thought it might be “cool,” but they wouldn't use it. They didn't think many people would because email inboxes are already crowded.

- 2) **Administrative problems.** Even with a fully automated system, users that are less technology-savvy stand a good chance at having problems and needing things explained to them. In addition, people may try and call the City to unsubscribe from newsletters instead of doing it themselves online. The City would need to anticipate the additional administrative support needed to maintain an automated email system.
- 3) **Expectations and confusion.** Related to number two above, people may sign up for EDA meeting minutes but have intended to sign up for ALL meeting minutes. Any type of system will bring with it high expectations, and even when the system performs well, those who don't read directions will end up confused, and therefore "let down" even though the City is not at fault.
- 4) **Development time.** Given the reasons above, the time (and therefore cost) requisite to implement such a system would not be justified.

If the City *were* to implement this sort of functionality, it would need to consider the exact protocol and format of the email.

#### **Digest vs. Single**

The City would need to consider the frequency of email blasts. Some users said that if email subscription were implemented, the City should send out digest emails that summarize all changes on a weekly basis as opposed to a single email for each item that was updated. This is a good recommendation but it does have complications. If the City updates five things on Monday and six things on Tuesday, the end user does not want to receive nine emails in the span of two days. However, if that user is subscribed to only City Council meeting agendas, and the agenda doesn't get sent until after the meeting actually takes place, the system was useless for that user.

#### **File vs. Link**

The City would need to decide weather to send a file or a link to a file. Most feedback suggested that an attachment should NOT be sent through email but that a simple link should be provided to download the specified content directly from the city web site.

#### **Breadth of inclusion**

The City would need to decide what items can or cannot be subscribed to, and with what level of granularity. Can a visitor subscribe to only EDA meeting minutes, or must they subscribe to all meeting minutes across the entire city?

#### **Another idea**

Another option suggested by a focus group member for the City to consider in the future is a standard city email newsletter. Instead of having people subscribe to various information items on the web site, they would be able to subscribe to only ONE item: the standard city newsletter.

#### **Subscribe via RSS**

The idea behind subscription to content via RSS is best explained using an example. A web site visitor could browse to the City Council meeting minutes page and click on a little button that says RSS. They would then be provided a link they could paste into a piece of software called an Aggregator. This software, then, would show them all the latest City Council meeting minutes—in real time—from their computer...and they wouldn't even have to visit the web site to see it. RSS is a very popular and growing means of distributing content. It is important the City provide this option to users at some point in the near future.

Subscription to content via RSS is similar to that of email, with a few exceptions. Implementation of RSS on the city web site would be more relevant than email subscription. Here's why:

- 1) Although many people do not know what RSS is or how to use it, it is a growing technology. More importantly, the people who would enjoy receiving constant information in a continual manner are most often those who *do* aggregate content via RSS on a regular basis.
- 2) RSS is more flexible and adaptive than email. Northfield.org and other web sites around the community could “grab” content from the city web site and display it. So, northfield.org for instance, could display a list of the next 5 city government calendar events. All users looking at the northfield.org web site would see recent events from the City.
- 3) The technology is easier to implement and easier to maintain than email subscription. No administrative support would be required.

In summary, RSS would be cheaper to do up front, cheaper to do on a continuing basis, and it is a more relevant, technologically-sound way to serve those who are looking for continual streams of city information. Thus, we recommend this option be implemented long before an email subscription service is implemented. If not implemented in Phase I, the City should definitely implement RSS functionality in Phase II.

### **A list of city contract opportunities and open bids**

Department head interviews, public forums, and focus groups did not discuss this issue. 39% of survey respondents said this functionality should be implemented in Phase I. 41% said it can wait for Phase II, and 19% said it is not necessary on the city web site. It makes sense for the City to include this functionality on some level because contractors and developers will certainly use the city web site as a resource. We recommend, however, that the City do this is on an as-needed basis. In other words, we recommend the City does not have a City Contract content type that would allow for the easy, reusable, archival entry of RFPs and bids. We think this functionality can wait until Phase II. In the meantime, the City can post links to documents on most pages within the site.

### **List of recent city documents**

Some city web sites (e.g. St. Paul) have a section on the front page that lists all the most recent city documents posted to the web site from throughout the organization. Response to this has been negative, the reason being that it “just isn’t useful.” Focus group members said that they typically know what they’re looking for when going to a web site. They would have no need to see all the documents in the City listed in an uncategorized or unorganized manner. 67% of survey respondents said it was only Somewhat Important or Not Important. We agree with the general sentiment, and recommend against posting an uncategorized list of documents from around the City.

### **List of weekly meetings**

The old city web site (and many other city sites) have a list of weekly meetings. We think this is a valuable resource, but we think it can be taken care of by the calendar. If our recommendation is followed, the city calendar will host information about city-related events, many of which will be meetings. Listing the “next 10 events” somewhere on the web site would effectively serve the

same purpose as listing the weekly meetings, and therefore not require the cost of implementing separate functionality or maintaining additional content.

### **Links to other organizations**

Where applicable and relevant, there should be links to outside resources and organizations throughout the city web site. Instead of duplicating content on the web site, the City should instead provide users a link to that information. In this way, said one focus group member, whenever it can the City should act more as a “traffic director” or a “switch” than a content manager. A few resources the City should link to:

- ◆ School District for education information
- ◆ Community Education for community events and programs
- ◆ Chamber of Commerce for visitor and community information

In addition, as was recommended earlier, the City should link to the various event calendars around the community. Instead of attempting to aggregate and manage the content of a community-wide calendar, the City can instead simply provide web site users the ability to look at other calendars directly.

Other suggestions and feedback we received regarding links and external resources:

- ◆ The HR department would like to link to outside resources relevant to employment.
- ◆ One member of the community suggested the City link to other government web sites at the state and federal level.

### **Loans & Grants**

Departments like Community Development (which houses the EDA) have various information and applications associated with loans and grants for businesses in the community.

We recommend a **Loans & Grants** content type so that loans and grants can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to specify a name, description, and associated files for a loan or grant.

### **Licenses & Permit Applications**

Departments like Community Development have various information and applications associated with licenses and permits for businesses and individuals in the community.

We recommend a **Licenses & Permit Application** content type so that licenses and permits can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to specify a name, description, and associated files for a licenses and permits.

### **Public Notices**

The Building Inspections division of the Community Development department issues public notices to the community regarding various issues. They would like to easily post those public notices on the web site.

We recommend a **Public Notice** content type so that public notices can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to specify a name, date, description, and a file for a public notice. This content type would also be listed on the calendar automatically.

### **Staff Reports from boards and commissions**

The Building Inspections division of the Community Development department also issues staff reports to the community regarding various issues. Other boards and commissions may very well produce staff reports as well.

We recommend a **Board/Commission Staff Report** content type so that staff reports from boards and commissions can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to specify a name, date, expiration date, description, and a file for the public staff report.

### **Online Forms**

Online forms were brought up in public forums, focus groups, and on the public survey. There are two different ways to handle forms on the city site:

1. Allow users to complete and submit forms online.
2. Allow users to download a PDF version of the form, fill it out, and send it in.

The first of these options is typically more convenient for the end user. There are, however, multiple types of forms that can be submitted online:

1. Forms that require no payment
2. Forms that require payment

An example of the first type of form (no payment) would be the “Snowbird” form found on the finance portion of the web site (allows residents to tell the City they will be out of town so that garbage service, etc can be stopped). An example of the second type of form (requires payment) is one that allows users to apply for, and pay for, building permits online. Both types of forms can be handled online, but the second type (those that require payments) are significantly more complex and costly to implement and maintain.

Nonetheless, many departments would like to allow visitors to submit forms and permit applications that require associated payment online. With exception of the report-a-problem forms (also referred to in this document as “Tell the city about...” forms), survey respondents were divided for every type of form as to what should be priority. Thus, we propose the City be consistent with the priorities for the purpose of the web site outlined at the beginning of the document. Below are the results from the survey:

	Phase I	Phase II	Never
Online inquiry forms (contact form, etc)	57%	37%	4%
Online 'report-a-problem' forms (potholes, streetlight out, graffiti, etc)	69%	28%	4%
Online reservation forms (Northfield Transit, parks, etc)	36%	57%	8%
Online bill payment	43%	44%	13%
Online application forms (jobs, permits, licenses, etc)	46%	43%	11%
Download forms you complete & return via US Mail to apply for jobs, licenses, permits, etc.	46%	48%	6%

We recommend all forms be posted to the web site via PDF so they are available to all users. We also recommend that many of the PDFs that do not require payment be made available for online submission. This is consistent with the priorities for the purpose of the web site outlined at the beginning of this document.

- ◆ Posting of PDFs falls under priority #1.
- ◆ Turning many of the forms that do not require payment into forms that can be submitted online falls under priority #2.
- ◆ Converting forms that do require payment into online transactions falls under priority #3.

We recommend the following non-payment forms be converted from PDF to a format that can be filled out and submitted online:

- ◆ Request One-time Ride Form (Transit)
- ◆ Request Work Service Ride Form (Transit)
- ◆ Request Youth Summer Pass Form (Transit)
- ◆ Suggestion Box (Library)
- ◆ Ask A Librarian (Library)
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Crime information or leads
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Garbage/Recycling pickup problem
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Graffiti
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Housing Code Violations
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Potholes
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Sidewalk problem
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Speed problem (request traffic resources)
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Streetlight trouble

Due to the cost associated with accepting payments online and integrating with existing city systems to facilitate payment and user registration, we recommend the City not implement any sort of payment processing ability for any forms at this time. **We do recommend the City consider accepting payments and fees for forms/applications/permits/licenses online, but this should be a Phase II or Phase III undertaking.**

### City Budget & CIP

The Finance department releases budget and Capital Improvement Plans to the public and would like to post these documents on the web site in an easy, archival fashion (so that people can go back and see previous budgets as well as the current one).

We recommend a **City Budget & CIP** content type so that budgets and capital improvement plans can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to specify a name, date, and associated files for the city budget and capital improvement plan.

### **City Finance Report**

The Finance department also releases year-end finance (audit) reports to the public and would like to post these documents on the web site in an easy, archival fashion.

We recommend a **City Finance Report** content type so that finance reports can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to specify a name, date, and associated files for the city finance reports.

### **City Project (construction, development, etc)**

The Engineering department and the Community Development department often undertake large projects about which they would like to post information on the web site in an easy way.

We recommend a **City Project** content type so that city projects can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to specify a name, description, project begin date, and project end date for city projects.

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### **Seasonal Highlights**

Throughout the information gathering process, many people in the community thought that fresh, relevant content on the front page would be very beneficial. After sorting through all the requests and ideas, we realized that much the relevant information that could be posted on the front page is seasonal. For instance, people requested information about snow removal, the opening hours of the compost site, pool information, and election information.

We recommend a **Seasonal Highlight** content type so that seasonal information can be easily managed, browsed, and syndicated throughout the web site.

This content type would allow the City to feature information from around the site in a very visible location on the front page of the web site. The City would be able to specify a title, an extended description, and page to link to for more information.

We think this type of functionality on the front page would be very beneficial. The City should realize, however, that someone would need to be responsible for updating this information on a regular and timely basis. The City will come under much scrutiny if “Snow Removal Procedures” are still listed come June every year.

NOTE: This *Seasonal Highlight* content type is different from the *Alert* content type in that an alert should only be used for emergencies.

# Usability & Information Architecture

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## Site Navigation – General

First, navigation on the city web site needs to be organized from the end users' perspective. This means that navigation is not necessarily organized by department. This was a key point gathered from our research and public input. For example, "Employment" should not necessarily be under "Administration" or "HR" even though that is how the City thinks about it. Visitors of the web site do not necessarily know or understand the internal structure or organization of the City. Nor should they have to. Information about the recycling center should not be placed under "departments/public works" because many people will not know—and should not have to know—that public works oversees the recycling center.

Second, navigation needs to be consistent throughout the web site so that people can learn the system, understand where they are, and how to get where they want to go.

## Site Navigation – Layout

We recommend a drop-down system of navigation. The dropdown navigation, however, needs to be very usable, cross-platform and cross-browser compliant, accessible, and built on web standards (per our recommendations earlier in this document). To keep navigation usable and uncluttered, the dropdown navigation should only display first-, second-, and third-tier pages. All fourth or greater tier pages should be displayed on the specific sub-pages on the left-hand side. See the page layout diagrams on page 47 and 48 for a visual.

## Site Navigation – Breadcrumbs

We recommend the city web site use breadcrumb navigation. Here's why:

1. As users are browsing, they can easily see the path they took to get where they currently are.
2. As users experience the site, breadcrumb navigation will help people become familiar with, and eventually learn, the navigation of the web site.
3. Visitors who enter the site on a third-tier page (if, say, their friend emailed them a link to the EDA meeting minutes), they will be able to understand which pages led to the page they are currently looking at.

## Site Navigation – Site Map

We recommend the city web site has a sitemap. A majority of web sites on the internet display a link to their site map at the bottom of the page (in the footer of the page). To be consistent with user expectations, we suggest the City display this where users will be looking for it. This site map should be automatically generated based on the page structure in the content management system. It should not require manual updates.

## Site Navigation – Catering to multiple audiences

The beginning of this document discussed the numerous audiences the web site must serve. Often, the best way to cater to multiple audiences is to employ *intuitive* navigation, not multiple *arrangements* of navigation.

As was discussed earlier, current residents, businesses, and city employees will tend to seek out the same type of information. If information on the site does not assume the visitor has

knowledge of the internal organization of the City and therefore organizes navigation in a way that is logical to all people, even people who *are* familiar with the City will be able to navigate the site easily.

To draw in *visitors* and *prospective residents* or *businesses*, we suggest placing a link on the home page or within the main navigation that highlights these users and points to a page dedicated to the topic. This dedicated page need only be a portal. In other words, this page (for example, the “visitor page”) should provide *links* to information throughout other parts of the site. There is no reason to replicate information and create an entire alternate navigation system for content that is located elsewhere on the web site. By providing a portal for visitors or prospective residents, the City is catering directly to their needs while still focusing its navigation on the primary users of the site (current residents, businesses, and city employees) *and* avoiding the work involved with duplicating or managing additional content.

In addition to providing portal pages for visitors and those moving to Northfield, we recommend the web site *home page* provide a few alternate ways of browsing content on the web site. Our ideas and recommendations are below.

### **Browse by type of content**

As was discussed early in this document, users should be able to browse by content type. This means, for example, a visitor could go to the web site knowing they want to see meeting minutes. They would browse by content type from the home page and immediately find all meeting minutes posted on the web site, organized by category.

### **Browse by name of department**

We suggest users be able to browse for content based on the name of the department. While the primary navigation should not be structured based on department names (because that’s not how users unfamiliar with the City organize it in their mind), there are some users and some internal employees who will be accustomed to the inner-workings of the City and prefer to browse in this way. Each department should have a portal page that links to resources scattered throughout the site. These portal pages should work just like the “visitor” portal page—that is, instead of duplicating information and navigation, the portal page links to information found throughout the site.

### **Browse by popularity of content (“Smart List”)**

Focus groups and surveys suggest that a list of the “top 10” most popular documents is not important. The primary reason is that users typically know what they are looking for when they come to a web site. The argument for this functionality is that it provides dynamic content and updates without user intervention. We recommend the City skip on this functionality in the short term to save money. It certainly would not hurt to implement, but it is a lesser priority in terms of how much value it will add, and how much the community perceives its value.

### **Browse by timing of content**

A better option is to display on the home page a list of the next 10 calendar events. Calendar events naturally demand attention, and placing these items on the home page would be a good way to draw people into the site. The “next 10” list of events should be dynamically generated.

Additionally, the City should display “Seasonal Highlights” or a similar list of items that are relevant for residents and business owners during each season. For example, during the winter the seasonal highlight post might contain information on snow removal, etc.

**Links to external resources**

Links to external resources outside of the immediate City of Northfield web site should open a new browser window. Opening a new window implies a separation from the city web site and allows user to easily return to the page from where they left.

**Furnish Adobe Reader**

Wherever PDF files are posted on the city web site, there should be a link for users to download Adobe Reader, the free software that is required to open PDF documents.

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## **Design & Layout**

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### **Design philosophy**

The web site should not incorporate Flash or java applets or any other functionality or design feature that requires the end-user to download a plug-in. There should be no distracting elements on the home page or inside pages. In other words, no items should be moving around the screen, there should be no blinking, fading, scrolling, or marquee text. The pages should be clean, clear, simple, and engaging. This recommendation is consistent with our experience *and* feedback we received from the user community.

### **Home page...busy vs. simple**

Nearly all people agree that the home page should be bent towards the simple more than the complex. Users do not want to see an extremely busy home page like CNN or Yahoo. Rather, they would like to see better organization and selection of content. We agree with the majority. The home page of the web site should be less cluttered and more clean. See the page layout diagrams on page 47 and 48 for a visual.

### **Consistency**

The City has maintained from the beginning they want all pages across the entire web site to be consistent. Most users (72% of survey respondents, for example) agree with this. As a fundamental philosophy, we firmly agree.

For a few reasons, we do think the City should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a policy that allows certain departments to develop a web site that is separate from the main city web site. The services of some departments (e.g. liquor store, library) naturally fall outside the scope or idea of “city services,” and thus have a slightly different audience base. Separate web sites have been effectively implemented in other communities. There are of course a few drawbacks as well. First, consistent navigation is all but impossible across different web sites. Second, separate web sites do not promote the image of unity and constancy as well as a single, central web site.

For Phase I, we recommend all departments be part of, and consistent with, the main city web site. As the City develops its web policy, it should consider the risk and/or reward associated with allowing departments to develop, manage, and pay for their own web site.

### **Navigation**

As already discussed in the previous section, navigation should be dropdown across the top, and sidebar on the left-hand side.

### **Photography**

Nearly every focus group member, and a majority of department heads, argued that some sort of good-looking, fast-loading photography that displayed the beauty of Northfield was essential to the experience users have on the site. Survey respondents gave mixed response. 58% of people thought a photograph on the home page was Very Important or Important. 24% thought it was Not Important. 43% of people thought that photography on inside pages was Very Important or Important. 31% thought it was Not Important. There was one person who thought the City

should undergo an entire marketing program overhaul to decide which photos exactly should be displayed on the web site.

We think some photography is important. Here's why:

1. Good photography aligns perfectly with one of the three major, overarching goals of this project: *Create an engaging, professional design that reflects the beauty of Northfield.*
2. Most people are visual. They remember a picture more than a block of text. Photography will go a long way towards helping the City create a presence online that is enjoyable, memorable, and engaging.
3. Many city web sites do not use photography well. A good use of photography could act as a point of differentiation for the City.

We recommend the following requirements for photographs on the city web site. Photographs should be

- ◆ Consistently sized and placed
- ◆ Fast-loading
- ◆ Relevant (many focus group members said to shy away from the generic photos of parts of buildings downtown Northfield)
- ◆ Cost-effective (many focus group members suggested that photography is great as long as it is affordable)

*(The following paragraph references the proposed navigation as presented on page 44.)*

While we recommend the City include some good photography on the web site, we also understand the cost of professional photography. We recommend the home page, all first-tier, and *select* second-tier pages have a photograph. Third- and fourth-tier pages can inherit their photograph from their parent page. Concerning second-tier pages, most pages are unique and would require a great photograph (for example, all pages under "City Services"). Other second-tier pages, however (for example, the seven pages under "Housing") would not require seven unique photographs. Although there will most likely be over 100 pages on the site, we recommend 35-45 photographs total be used throughout.

### **Logos, Banners, Advertisements**

To maintain what many people consider a very important simple, clean, elegant look on the Northfield web site, we recommend the City avoid posting logos, banners, or advertisements. Such items are distracting, and they do not align with the primary purpose of the web site: to allow users easy access to government information. Any extraneous graphical or textual items not directly related to the City of Northfield web site and the information or experience it provides should be specifically excluded from the site. This subject should be incorporated into the written web site policy for the City.

Related to this subject, representatives from the "The Decade for Peace" made a presentation at the second public forum asking that their logo be reinstated on the city web site. The logo for this movement was placed on the old city web site under a "Decade for Peace" initiative that was signed by the City in 2002. The implementation of the interim web site saw this logo removed. The Decade for Peace representatives presented their case and asked the City to fulfill what they called the City's obligation to post a logo on the web site.

The City should look at its obligations under this agreement, and make a fair decision despite the design philosophy outlined above.

# **Recommendations for the web site: Specifics**

## **Overview**

This section contains specific information about three major items:

- 1) A recommendation on Information Hierarchy (Navigation)
- 2) A recommendation on Page Layout
- 3) How our recommendations are played out for each department

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# Navigation

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## Primary Dropdown Navigation

Dropdown navigation will be present on every page. To maximize the usability of the navigation system, the dropdown navigation should NOT show every page available on the web site. As a general rule, only the most relevant and/or starting-point pages should be displayed. When possible, an item should be taken out of the navigation. This makes the system easier to navigate (fewer options) and easier to learn (less to memorize). Practically speaking, this means two things:

1. Dropdown navigation should show up to 3 levels ONLY. So, if *City Services* → *Inside Your Home* → *Water* has more than one page under it, it should NOT be displayed in the dropdown navigation.
2. Finding a library book obviously means the user should click on “library” in the main navigation. As such, even if there is a sub-page called “Find a library book”, it does not need to be displayed in the main dropdown menu under “library” because the user can click on library and then find what they are looking for.

All pages, regardless of whether they are displayed in the main dropdown menu, will have a navigation sidebar on the left-hand side of the page. See the page layout diagram for an example inside page for a visual of this (page 48).

**About Northfield**  
Visiting...  
Moving to...  
Resident Info  
Business Info  
Developer Info

**Parks & Rec**  
Parks  
Facilities  
Trails

**Library**

**City Services**  
    Inside Your Home  
        Electricity  
        Natural Gas  
        Water  
        Telephone Service  
        Cable  
    Outside Your Home  
        Garbage/Recycling  
        Drainage  
        Sewer  
        Trees/Yard Waste  
        Snow  
        Streets  
        Sidewalks  
  
    Police  
    Fire  
    Transit  
    Engineering  
    Liquor Store  
    Building Inspections  
    Motor Vehicle Information  
    Emergency Information

**Business**

- Starting a business in Northfield
- Licenses & Permits
- City Contracts / Open Bids
- Economic Development Authority
- Chamber of Commerce
- Property Information

**Housing**

- Moving to/from Northfield
- Building & Remodeling
  - FAQ
  - General Information
  - Inspection Process
  - Permit Requirements
  - Plan review
- Planning & Zoning
  - Licenses & Permits
  - Comprehensive Plan
  - Zoning code
  - Zoning map
- Housing Programs
- Rental Housing
- Property Information
- Special Assessments

**City Hall**

- Agenda/Minutes
- City Code
- Staff Directory
- Departments
  - Building Inspections
  - City Clerk
  - Community Development
  - Economic Development Authority
  - Engineering
  - Human Resources
  - Library
  - Liquor Store
  - Parks & Rec
  - Police
  - Public Works
  - Transit
- Boards/Commissions
- Facilities
- Elections
- Budget/Finance
- City Leadership
  - Mayor
  - City Council
  - City Manager
- Employment

### **Quick Links Navigation**

We recommend the City place a few links in the upper right-hand corner of the web site to serve as a quick way to access commonly requested information. These links are also available through the primary dropdown navigation.

Calendar Employment Contact Information
---

### **Footer Navigation**

Most web sites place their disclaimer (terms of use) and site map links in the footer navigation. We recommend the City follow this model as it is where most users look for this type of information. In addition, we recommend the City place links to XHTML, CSS, and Section 508 validation services on the web site. These links tell people the city web site is built using web standards and is accessible to the disabled.

Terms of Use Site Map  XHTML CSS 508
---

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# Page Layouts

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## Home Page

The layout below implements our recommendations for what should be displayed and emphasized on the front page of the city web site.

(Logo)

Calendar | Employment | Contact Information

About Northfield | Parks & Rec | Library | City Services | Business | Housing | City Hall

(Picture)

Search box

[¿habla español?](#)

**You are here: Home**

Nam varius lectus ut neque. Maecenas ornare. Sed venenatis varius quam. Duis in neque. Praesent ornare aliquam lacus. Morbi quis wisi vitae lectus condimentum molestie. Sed elementum dapibus arcu. Phasellus ipsum ipsum, gravida vel, porttitor vitae, semper id, turpis.

**Browse by Department**

- [Public Works](#)
- [Engineering](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [City Clerk](#)
- [Parks & Rec](#)
- [Community Development](#)
- [Police](#)
- [Transit](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Liquor Store](#)

**Browse by Type of content**

- [Meeting Agendas & Minutes](#)
- [Calendar Events](#)
- [Contact Information](#)
- [Licenses & Permits](#)
- [Job Openings](#)
- [City Budget](#)
- [Seasonal Highlights](#)
- [Alerts](#)

Seasonal Highlights

Tell the city about...

Upcoming events

---

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## Inside Page

The layout below implements our recommendations for what an inside page might look like on the city web site.

(Logo)

Calendar | Employment | Contact Information

About Northfield | Parks & Rec | Library | City Services | Business | Housing | City Hall

(Picture)

Search box

[¿habla español?](#)

You are here: Home / Inside Page / Inside Example 3

Inside Page

- [Inside Link 1](#)
- [Inside Link 2](#)
- [Inside Example 3](#)**
- [Inside Link 4](#)

### Inside Example 3

Nam varius lectus ut neque. Maecenas ornare. Sed venenatis varius quam. Duis in neque. Praesent ornare aliquam lacus. Morbi quis wisi vitae lectus condimentum molestie. Sed elementum dapibus arcu. Phasellus ipsum ipsum, gravida vel, porttitor vitae, semper id, turpis. Nam varius lectus ut neque. Maecenas ornare. Sed venenatis varius quam. Duis in neque. Praesent ornare aliquam lacus.

Morbi quis wisi vitae lectus condimentum molestie. Sed elementum dapibus arcu. Phasellus ipsum ipsum, gravida vel, porttitor vitae, semper id, turpis.

### Contact Info

### What's New

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## Department Specifics

---

### Introduction

This section talks in a bit more detail about how the recommendations made throughout this document play out for each department in terms of what content and functionality they should prepare for on the web.

During the department interviews, some departments provided more detail than others. The tables outlined on the follow pages are divided into “Now”—things that should be implemented in Phase I—and “Later”—things that should be implemented in Phase II (or later). If the item is listed in either table, it was discussed in the interview. It should be noted that this is summary information. Notes from the actual meetings are displayed in Appendix J.

As has been discussed, the navigation will *not* be organized primarily by department because most users do not understand what they need to do on the web site based on the internal organization of the City. Some people do, however, prefer to navigate by department. Thus, we propose that each department have a portal page. Within the navigation system, departments will be listed under *City Hall* → *Departments*. Each portal page will link to resources and information that is posted throughout the web site. Also, it is extremely important that each portal page have contact information for the department it is featuring.

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## Finance

---

### Portal Page (home → city hall → departments → finance)

The portal page should have links to the most relevant information that is distributed throughout the site. This will include the snowbird form, budget information, and information on reading utility bills, etc

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Download Form: Snowbird Form in PDF format	Home → City Hall → Budget/Finance	
Budget documents	Same as above	
CIP documents	Same as above	
Financial Audit Reports	Same as above	
Contact Information	Same as above	
Frequently Asked Questions	Same as above	
Motor Vehicle information and links	Home → City Services → Motor Vehicle Information	
Information on utility rates	Home → City Services → Inside Your Home → Water	
Information on purchasing meters	Same as above	
Information on how to read meters (including codes and a sample water bill)	Same as above	
Information about solid waste (garbage)	Home → City Services → Outside Your Home → Garbage	
Bond rating	Home → City Hall → Budget/Finance	
Information about selling your home and moving	Home → Housing → Moving to/from Northfield	

### Later

Request	Comments
Snowbird Form that can be completed and submitted online (as opposed to just a PDF download)	To save money, just post the PDF online in Phase I.
Online utility bill payment	This topic was discussed at length earlier in this document.

## Clerk

---

### Portal Page (home → city hall → departments → clerk)

The portal page should have links to the most relevant information that is distributed throughout the site. This will include election information, boards and commission information, etc.

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Election: general information	Home → City Hall → Elections	
Election: FAQs	Same as above	
Election: link to precinct finder	Same as above	
Election: links to ward and precinct maps	Same as above	
Election: state election info and judge	Same as above	
City Council member information	Home → City Hall → City Leadership → City Council	
City Council meeting minutes, current agenda, and past agendas	Home → City Hall → Agenda/Minutes	
Boards & Commissions overview with general information and links to agendas, minutes, and contact information	Home → City Hall → Boards/Commissions	
Liquor license: information, requirements, link to state web site, link to PDF form	Home → Business → Licenses/Permits	
Gambling permit: information, link to PDF form	Same as above	
Solicitors permits: provide information, requirements, link to PDF form	Same as above	

### Later

Request	Comments
Solicitors permits: provide form that can be completed and submitted online (as opposed to just a PDF download)	To save money, just post the PDF online in Phase I.

## Human Resources

---

**Portal Page** (home → city hall → departments → human resources)

The portal page should have links to the most relevant information that is distributed throughout the site. This will include information about employment opportunities, frequently asked questions, job applications, etc.

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Info: "About working in Northfield" with welcome information (links to schools, etc)	Home → Employment	
Info: About Benefits	Same as above	This might be a PDF document
Info: About steps to employment	Same as above	This might be a PDF document
Info: FAQs	Same as above	
Link to other government employment opportunities	Same as above	HR would like their section of the web to be a friendly resource
"What's New" or "What's Happening" section that allows the posting of brief news items	Same as above	
Instructions on routing application (mail, drop off, fax)	Same as above	
Web site has a list of job openings. A specific job can be clicked on by web site visitor to get details.	Same as above	Details would include title, department, responsible to, position summary, position functions, requirements, physical demands, work environment, work hours, pay range, and links to application and addendums
Admin can easily post jobs to the web site	n/a	
Admin has the ability to attach a job application to each job post	n/a	
Admin has the ability to attach up to 6 addendums to each job post	n/a	
All links should say "Employment" not "City Jobs" or "Human Resources," etc	Home → Employment and Home → City Hall → Employment	"Employment" will show up under the "Quick Links" at the top of the page (see layouts) as well as under the primary navigation under <i>Home → City Hall → Employment</i>

### Later

Request	Comments
Email subscription: allow users to subscribe to receive future employment opportunities by email	Maintaining an email list is a little work, and to save money we recommend the city web site doesn't collect email addresses at this point. An alternative option would be to have a simple contact form through which users may submit their email address. The HR manager would then manage the list manually (no software would collect and organize the email addresses)

Video library to show jobs	This is possible, but a large project. City staff must know how to optimize the videos for the web. Additionally, videos must be produced and edited.
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## Liquor Store

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### Portal Page (home → city hall → departments → liquor store)

There is no need for a Liquor Store “portal page” because there is already a page dedicated to the Liquor Store under City Services. The navigation that would typically lead to the portal page should redirect to the main Liquor Store page (home → city services → liquor store).

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
General information and mission statement	Home → City Services → Liquor Store	
“What’s New” or “What’s Happening” section that allows the posting of brief news items as well as a quarterly newsletter	Same as above	
Frequently Asked Questions	Same as above	
Contact information, address information, hours	Same as above	
Don’t hide “Liquor Store” in navigation...just link as normal department	Home → City Services	Liquor store will be listed under <i>Home → City Services</i> and <i>Home → City Departments</i>

### Later

Request	Comments
Email subscription: allow users to subscribe to receive newsletters and updates by email	Maintaining an email list is a little work, and to save money we recommend the city web site doesn’t collect email addresses at this point. An alternative option would be to have a simple contact form through which users may submit their email address. The Liquor Store manager would then manage the list manually (no software would collect and organize the email addresses)
Online Form: contact form that submits to an email address	Instead of creating another form that just emails to an address, users can simply click directly on the email address in the contact area.
Post information about specials or wine in general	Extremely easy to do and the system will support it, but we suggest the City start small and then grow. This type of information does not fall under priority #1.

## Transit

---

### Portal Page (home → city hall → departments → transit)

There is no need for a Transit “portal page” because there is already a page dedicated to Transit under City Services. The navigation that would typically lead to the portal page should redirect to the main Transit page (home → city services → transit).

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Information on hours, fares, where to purchase tokens, Jefferson lines, ADA, and customer service guidelines	Home → City Services → Transit	This information could be on one page.
Online Form: “request one-time ride” that emails results	Same as above	Form would send email to the person that does scheduling. Forms would collect time, location, where they’re going, where they’re coming back to, name, phone, email.
Online Form: “work service ride” form that emails results	Same as above	Same as above.
Online Form: “youth summer pass” form that emails results	Same as above	Same as above.
Contact information	Same as above	

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## Police

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### Portal Page (home → city hall → departments → police)

There is no need for a Police “portal page” because there is already a page dedicated to Police under City Services. The navigation that would typically lead to the portal page should redirect to the main Police page (home → city services → police).

Note: This interview also addressed the fire department.

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Ethics/Mission/Statement of Values	Home → City Services → Police	Do not include goals from the old site
“What’s New” or “What’s Happening” section that allows the posting of brief news items as well as a quarterly newsletter	Same as above	
A list of job opportunities	Same as above	This falls under the jurisdiction of HR, but with the CMS as we propose it, the police could list job postings on their site but only HR would be able to modify/add/remove them.
Map that shows where safety center is (with directions)	Same as above	Not an official city map, just a small map. Police dept would need to provide this
Emergency management information	Same as above	
Frequently Asked Questions	Same as above	
Emergency Numbers up front and visible	Same as above	
Online Form: Contact an investigator	Same as above	Part of the larger “Tell the city about...” system.
Online Form: Request Traffic Resources (speed wagon)	Same as above	Part of the larger “Tell the city about...” system.. Need to collect name, contact info, location, reason
Download Form: Application for Volunteer Services (1 for reserves/explorers, 1 for volunteering time/expertise)	Same as above	Police would <i>rather</i> allow visitors to fill out and submit online. However, to save money we recommend posting the PDF online in Phase I.
Police: CLEA accreditation page. Police: STOP program page with class information.	Same as above	Can’t register for anything, but can get information and download forms
Police: Explorer and Reserve information	Same as above	
Police: DARE program information	Same as above	
Police: Safety tips	Same as above	
Police: Neighborhood watch group information	Same as above	

Police: Crime prevention information	Same as above	
Police: Description of divisions, maybe an organizational chart	Same as above	
Fire: contact information	Home → City Services → Fire	
Fire: general information, how the department is grouped, history of the department	Same as above	

**Later**

<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Allow people to view accident reports online. Allow login to view reports.	This would require a system that tracks users and accident reports. Due to the scope and expense of such a project, we suggest this be considered later.
Allow users to pay parking ticket online	This would require a system that tracks users and parking tickets, and then facilitates online payment transactions. Due to the scope and expense of such a project, we suggest this be considered later.
Online Form: convert Volunteer Services forms to online submission instead of PDF download	To save money, just post the PDF online in Phase I.
Online Form: online survey	To save money, just post the PDF online in Phase I.

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## Parks & Recreation

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**Portal Page** (home → city hall → departments → parks & recreation)

There is no need for a Parks & Recreation “portal page” because there is already a section of the web site dedicated to Parks & Rec. The navigation that would typically lead to the portal page should redirect to the main Parks & Rec page (home → parks & rec).

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Information about parks	Home → Parks & Rec → Parks	Pictures, size, amenities, etc. Maybe a park map
Information about facilities	Home → Parks & Rec → Facilities	Address, hours, contact information
Information about trails	Home → Parks & Rec → Trails	Hiking/biking
Information about how to reserve pavilions, including PDF download	Home → Parks & Rec → Parks	Sechlar pavilion, Odd Fellows pavilion, Riverside pavilion. Show shelter, schedule, fees, terms of use.
Link to organized associations in town	Home → Parks & Rec	Community Ed, Soccer Association, etc
“What’s New” section	Same as above	Would like to be able post 2-3 paragraphs on what’s going on in the parks this week. (I.e. expect traffic complications on Jefferson as soccer starts.)
Park Advisory Board information	Home → Parks & Rec → Parks	
Showmobile information	Home → Parks & Rec	
Adopt-A-Park program	Home → Parks & Rec → Parks	No official information, so just give contact information.

### Later

Request	Comments
Reserve and pay for a park pavilion reservation online	This would be an advanced system because not only would it need to handle payments, but also resource scheduling so that multiple parties could not reserve overlapping periods of time for a given pavilion. Due to the scope and expense of such a project, we suggest this be considered later

## Library

---

### Portal Page (home → city hall → departments → finance)

There is no need for a Library “portal page” because there is already a section of the web site dedicated to the Library. The navigation that would typically lead to the portal page should redirect to the main Library page (home → library).

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Ability to change front page with most recent information	n/a	
Contact information	Home → Library	Address, hours, contact information
Library-specific calendar	Same as above	A calendar that lists all library events
Links to outside sites	Same as above	e.g. Friends of the Library
Online Form: Suggestion box	Same as above	Submits to email address
Online Form: Ask a librarian	Same as above	Submits to email address
“What’s New” section	Same as above	Alternative to their request for a blog...same type of functionality

### Later

Request	Comments
Blog	Blogs were discussed at length earlier in this document. As mentioned above, we propose the Library have a “What’s New” or “What’s Happening” section that can mimic the type of functionality they request.
META search engine that is separate from SELCO	This would be a separate project from the web site. It would require a significant amount of back-end programming within the library, and then some programming to interface with the web site.
Several databases online and searchable	This is another project that would be separate from the web site. It would require a significant amount of back-end programming within the library, and then some programming to interface with the web site.
Personalized search page with SELCO	This project involves editing a page for the library that is not directly on the city web site.
Room availability calendar...view-only calendar with email request	To save money, we recommend this be considered later.
Track unique hits that aren’t from internal sources	Technologically somewhat complicated due to changing nature of IP addresses. In our opinion, cost is not worth the value received.

## Engineering

**Portal Page** (home → city hall → departments → engineering)

The portal page should have links to the most relevant information that is distributed throughout the site. This will include information about water, wastewater, public works, etc.

### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Information about how to reserve pavilions, plus downloadable PDF	Home → City Services → Engineering	Sechlar pavilion, Odd Fellows pavilion, Riverside pavilion. Show shelter, schedule, fees, terms of use.
Information about driveway permits and fees, plus downloadable PDF	Home → Housing → Planning & Zoning → Licenses & Permits	
Information about excavating in public right-of-way permits and fees, plus downloadable PDF	Same as above	
Information about ShowMobile, plus downloadable PDF	Home → Parks & Rec	
FAQs	Home → City Services → Engineering	
Project Information	Home → City Services → Engineering	A paragraph or page for each project that has a description of each project, a picture or map, timing information, contact information
Report a problem: Street-light outage	n/a	Emails results. Part of the larger “Tell the city about...” system.
Report a problem: Sidewalk problem	n/a	Emails results. Part of the larger “Tell the city about...” system.
Report a problem: Garbage/Recycling pickup	n/a	Email results. Part of the larger “Tell the city about...” system.
Boards and Commission information, meeting minutes, and agendas	Home → City Hall → Boards/Commissions	EQC and Park Board
Standard Construction Specifications (PDF)	Home → Housing → Building & Remodeling	
FEMA/FIRM information (Federal Emergency Management Agency) (Flood Insurance Rate Map)	Home → City Services → Engineering	
Compost site information	Home → City Services → Outside Your Home → Trees/Yard Waste	
Shade Tree program information	Same as above	
Wastewater plant information	Home → City Services → Outside Your Home → Sewer	General information
Collection system information	Home → City Services → Outside Your Home → Sewer	General information, how to report a problem
New Homeowner information (basic info related to sewer, etc)	Home → Housing → Moving to/from Northfield	
Jetting information (wastewater info)	Home → City Services → Outside Your Home → Sewer	
Sidewalk information –	Home → City Services → Outside Your	General information, how to

complaints, info	Home → Sidewalks	report a problem
Water division: consumer confidence reports (PDF), year-end report (PDF)	Home → City Services → Inside Your Home → Water	
Water division: What's new	Same as above	Public "announcement" info like information about water conservation, lawn care in well-head protection area, etc.
Staff contact information	Home → City Services → Engineering	
Alerts	Same as above	e.g. snow emergency announcement
"What's New" section	Same as above	
Maps	Same as above	Maps of parks, trails, streets/address
Capital Improvement Plan	Same as above	

**Later**

<b>Request</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Reserve and pay for park pavilion reservation online	Accepting online payments on the city web site was discussed earlier in this document. Due to the cost of implementing such a system, we propose this be considered in Phase II.
Fill out application and pay fees for driveway permits and fees online	Same as above.
Fill out app and pay fees for excavate in public right of way online	Same as above.

## Community Development

---

### Portal Page (home → city hall → departments → community development)

The portal page should have links to the most relevant information that is distributed throughout the site. This will include information about building inspections and permits, housing, planning, economic development, etc.

#### Now

Request	Where it should go	Comments
Board/Commission information	Home → City Hall → Boards/Commissions	
Zoning application, handouts, maps	Home → Housing → Planning & Zoning	
Adopted policies	Home → Housing → Planning & Zoning	
Staff Contact Information	Home → City Services → Building Inspections (and other places)	
Applications / Permits	Home → Housing → Planning & Zoning → Licenses & Permits	A lot of these (PDF format)
Links to property and GIS information (property data, dimensional info, etc)	Home → Housing → Planning & Zoning	Will need to know where to link to
Board and commission staff reports and electronic documents	Same as above	

#### Later

Request	Comments
Inspections scheduling: users would see a calendar and be able to fill in open spots, but not override someone	This type of functionality would require a complete system that manages reservations. Due to the complexity and cost of such a system we recommend this be considered later.
Layered GIS Maps	Displaying layered GIS maps on the web is not trivial. Special software must be developed to handle layered maps. The City is not ready to display layered maps, but when they are, they should understand this will incur significant expense and an upgrade to the system.

# **Recommendations for the web site: Implementation**

This section overviews the activities around which the City should be focusing its energy to prepare for a new web site. Do not underestimate the amount of time necessary to write, collect, prepare, and populate content for the web site. Start immediately.

## **Write and implement web policies**

Follow the recommendations regarding web policies at the beginning of this document.

## **Ensure city staff have PDF software and training (if needed)**

We have recommended the City post only PDF files to the web site and avoid proprietary file formats like Microsoft Word or Microsoft Excel at all costs. The primary reason for this, recall, is that many people do not have Word or Excel, and thus, would not be able to view the files. The City of Northfield needs to ensure that anyone who needs to upload files to the web site has the software necessary to convert files to PDF format or save files in PDF format.

## **Take, process, collect, optimize photography**

If the City hires Livefront to do photography, the Livefront team will assign half of the monies to our photographers and half of the monies to another local photographer from Northfield. Assuming the City hires Livefront for photography, the Livefront team will be in charge of collecting, processing, and optimizing the photography for the web site. If the City has any existing photography they would like on the web, the need to provide Livefront with the source files in a timely fashion as these files must be optimized and resized for the web.

## **Get employee sign-off on photography**

Any photograph that includes a city employee will most likely require a sign-off by that employee permitting the City of Northfield to feature the picture on the web site.

## **Write, collect, format, and prepare content**

All content for every page on the web site must be prepared and organized by the City. Keep in mind that some content may need to be written for the first time, rewritten, or edited (for length, tone, consistency, etc). We recommend the City hire an outside resource to manage the content writing, collection, and preparation for the City. We do not recommend the City rely on departments to do the initial gathering, writing, and editing of content unless there is a staff resource within the City dedicated to managing the process, holding individuals accountable, and ensuring compliance with web policies.

## **Add content to the CMS**

Beyond writing, editing, and collecting content for the city web site from various sources, the content needs to be posted to the web site through the Content Management System. This will be a large job. We recommend the City hire outside help to do the initial population of content into the Content Management System. We do not recommend the City rely on individual departments

to post their content in a timely, consistent manner unless there is a staff resource dedicated to helping departments and enforcing departments to post content by a certain date and within the web policy guidelines (yet to be written by the City). With outside help, allow two weeks for this process. A member of the Livefront team may be most efficient with this process because we will have built the system, but the City is of course not obligated to hire Livefront.

### **Gather contact information**

Contact information will be displayed throughout the new city web site for staff, elected officials, and departments. The City will need to ensure they have collected all the most recent, correct contact information.

### **Gather archived information like meeting minutes, etc**

As we recommended in the “content” section of this document, part of hosting a successful informational site is providing easy access to archived information. The City should collect meeting minutes and agendas from previous meetings for the City Council and all boards and commissions to post on the web site. Remember that all documents should be in PDF form.

### **Gather “Tell the city about...” information**

One of our recommendations includes providing “Tell the city about...” forms. An example form would be “Streetlight problem” or “Report graffiti.” Livefront will implement these forms for the City, but needs from the City two things:

- 1) At a minimum, what type of information needs to be collected from the user reporting the problem?
- 2) To whom in the City should the email reporting this problem be sent?

As mentioned earlier, the forms we recommend are as follows:

- ◆ Crime information or leads
- ◆ Garbage/Recycling pickup problem
- ◆ Graffiti
- ◆ Housing Code Violations
- ◆ Potholes
- ◆ Sidewalk problem
- ◆ Speed problem (request traffic resources)
- ◆ Streetlight trouble

### **Gather maps**

The City will need to ensure that all the maps it hopes to display are prepared for uploading to the web site. Remember our recommendations about maps:

- 1) Keep them small so users can download them
- 2) Keep them in PDF format so that users that are not required to have AutoCAD to open the files
- 3) Consider including more basic, introductory maps that outline the general downtown area.

### **Collect forms/applications/permits**

All forms and applications (e.g. for permits/licenses/etc) need to be collected from every department. Remember that all files should be in PDF format. Any forms that will be converted to electronic format (so that they can be filled out online) will be implemented by the Livefront team, but Livefront will need to know to whom the forms should be emailed upon completion by a web site user.

### **Determine user and permission information**

The Content Management System will restrict certain users from updating certain pages or types of content. The Livefront team will do the initial setup of users and security groups for the City. Livefront will need a list of users from the City:

- 1) First and last name
- 2) Email address
- 3) Which security group they belong to

Livefront will also help the City determine which security groups should be set up on the Content Management System. This list will include:

- 1) The security group name
- 2) Which pages the security group is allowed to edit
- 3) Which types of content the security group is allowed to edit
- 4) Which categories of content the security group is allowed to edit

### **Training**

Livefront will provide training to city staff on how to use the Content Management System to update the web site. A member of the Livefront team will conduct the training and will be available for an entire day to help staff get accustomed to the system.

### **Hosting & Technical Implementation**

The City will need to determine where the web site and Content Management Application will be hosted. We can assist in this effort.

### **Short-term maintenance**

Over the short-term (the first two or three months), the City should expect quite a few change requests from departments and the outside. People often don't understand what they want or need until they see it in practice. Many of the changes will most likely be contextual or structural. These types of changes can be made through the Content Management System. Other requests may involve feature changes that lie outside the scope of work for Phase I and the support/maintenance plans. The City should expect that some of these changes may be considered urgent and should be prepared to address these concerns. Livefront provides 3 months of maintenance and support (up to 8 hours) free with the Phase I development. The initial months may require more attention than this.

#### *What does a maintenance plan include?*

A maintenance plan means the City can call or email a member of the Livefront team for help regarding the web site. For example, a city employee might need help adding a page or formatting something the way they would like it. The maintenance plan can also be used for updates. An example: if the City would rather send all City Council agenda

information to Livefront every month to add to the web site so they don't have to worry about it, hours from the maintenance plan can be dedicated to this. Another example: if the City would like to add a page, but would rather not mess with details, the City can have Livefront create the page, enter the data, and do the formatting.

Maintenance plans do not include product upgrades or additional feature development.

Maintenance plans are bought in blocks of hours per month. Half of any unused hours in a given month can be transferred to the next month.

The City can request help or assistance *without* a maintenance plan at Livefront's standard consulting rates.

**Long-term maintenance**

Over the long-term, the City of Northfield should be able to get by with a lesser (or perhaps no) maintenance plan. Our maintenance plan options are available on a separate document.

DRAFT

# Recommendations on the Content Management System

## Structure

The Content Management System should be built around CONTENT TYPES. CONTENT TYPES are, unsurprisingly, types of content the City can post on the web site. Example types of content are: Meeting Minutes and Agendas, “What’s New” Items, and Job Postings.

A MODULE is a specific implementation of a CONTENT TYPE. So, the Police Department may have a “What’s New” CONTENT TYPE and the EDA may have a “What’s New” CONTENT TYPE. Fundamentally, both the EDA and the Police Department are displaying the same *type* of information. But, the Police don’t want to show EDA news items, and the EDA doesn’t want Police news items to show up on their section of the web site. The MODULE, then, controls how a specific CONTENT TYPE is displayed. The Police can say that their “What’s New” MODULE should only display the top 3 news items for the Police CATEGORY. The EDA can say that their “What’s New” MODULE should display the top 4 news items for only the EDA CATEGORY. You can think of CATEGORIES as Departments or sub-departments within the City.

PAGES within the Content Management System should be divided into one or more PANES. A PAGE that has two columns, for instance, would have a left PANE and a right PANE. Each PANE on a PAGE can have multiple MODULES on them. So the main Police PAGE might have only introductory text in the left PANE, but then a list of “What’s New” items *and* a list of Job Openings in the right PANE.

The beauty of this type of system is that the Police could have a Job Openings MODULE on their web site that displays *only* Police job openings (i.e. job openings assigned to the “police” CATEGORY), but the content in that MODULE is actually controlled by Human Resources. Elsewhere on the site, the Human Resources page might want to list *all* job openings ( i.e. job openings assigned to *any* CATEGORY). Without duplicating information anywhere on the site, content can be *displayed* in multiple locations but *managed* from a single location by those who have permission to access it.

## Content Types

The specific types of content we recommend be implemented into the system have been discussed throughout the document and summarized in the “content” section.

## Edit Content Only

To maintain consistency across the city web site, users will be disallowed from editing the layout, structure, or style of pages. Users can, however, control what content goes on which page in which order. This allows the City to maintain control over the consistency of the site throughout.

Each page in the Content Management System will have a template associated with it. Templates define the structure and style of each page. Templates will be built into the system and will not be editable through the system or by city staff. A change in templates means a change in the design of the site, and can be done through Livefront or another consultant.

## **Workflow**

In the policies recommendation section of this document, we recommended the City control content and content approval via people and policies instead of technology. It is of course technologically possible to control the approval cycle with technology restraints. Often times, however, additional layers of technology are not the best solution. Technology rules built into a system are inherently inflexible, and thus, as the City changes, and staff change, and policies change, the technology will be irrelevant and only disrupt the process.

As was discussed at length in preceding sections of this document, the Content Management System and the technology behind it should not be the restraining factor in posting content to the web. Web policies and people should control the content, and the system should only provide the means of posting that content to the web.

## **Security**

City staff who have access to the Content Management System (“users”) will belong to one or more groups. Example groups are Police, EDA, Human Resources, Library, etc. Each group will have permissions associated with it in terms of PAGES, CATEGORIES, and CONTENT TYPES.

For example, the Police Group could be set up so that its members could edit only police-related PAGES, and add only the CONTENT TYPES “What’s New” and “Calendar Events” for the “Police” CATEGORY.

Set up like this, a member of the Police Group would NOT be able to add a “What’s New” item to the “EDA” CATEGORY because the police security group she belongs is not allowed to add or remove content associated with the “EDA” CATEGORY (only the “Police” CATEGORY).

Another example: a member of the Police Group would NOT be able to add a “Job Posting” to *any* CATEGORY because the police security group she belongs to does not have permission to add/edit/delete the “Job Posting” CONTENT TYPE.

## **Multi-Language**

Based on our recommendations throughout this document, the Content Management System does not need to support multiple languages. This will save the City a considerable amount of money in the short-run, but it should be understood that a future upgrade would involve considerable complexity and cost.

## **Spell Check**

For cost reasons only we recommend the City forgo a spell-check feature in the Content Management System. While this feature would be a nice “extra,” we do not think it is necessary for a few reasons:

1. Much of the content on the web site will be uploaded to the web site in the form of documents. These documents can be spell-checked prior to being uploaded to the system. Even with spell-check in place, the Content Management System would not be able to check the spelling inside of documents.
2. Of the content that is NOT uploaded in PDF documents, a majority of it will be entered when the web site is first made available online. After the first two months, most of the content in the system will not change, and when it does, only pieces of it will change.

3. Because most content will be written using a word processor, it can be spell checked before entering into the Content Management System. A Content Management System is not a word processing system, and it should not be used as one. Most of the content entered into the web site will be written outside of the system using the standard editing process (which may included multiple versions, sign-off, etc per the web policy). Only after it is in its final form does content get entered into the system.

## **Forms**

Online forms for inquiry or applications will be developed as part of the Content Management System. As outlined throughout this document, these forms will include the following:

- ◆ Request One-time Ride Form (Transit)
- ◆ Request Work Service Ride Form (Transit)
- ◆ Request Youth Summer Pass Form (Transit)
- ◆ Suggestion Box (Library)
- ◆ Ask A Librarian (Library)
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Crime information or leads
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Garbage/Recycling pickup problem
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Graffiti
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Housing Code Violations
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Potholes
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Sidewalk problem
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Speed problem (request traffic resources)
- ◆ [Tell the city about...] Streetlight trouble

These forms will not be editable by users of the Content Management System. Any change to these forms will require Livefront or another consultant.

## **Expiring Content**

We have found that very little content needs to expire. Most content should *not* expire and should be archived so people can go back in time and see past data and records. We propose only the following content types have an “expire” option:

- ◆ Alerts
- ◆ Board/Commission Staff Report
- ◆ Public Notice
- ◆ Seasonal Highlight

## **Detailed Specs**

Exact specifications and more detail concerning the specific CMS implementation will be developed as part of the *Scope of Work* document after Livefront discusses numerous options and strategies directly with the City of Northfield.

# Next Steps

## Phase I

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The City of Northfield should consider the recommendations made in this document and move forward with the development of a new city web site. Pricing for the web site and Content Management System recommended in this document will be outlined in a separate *Scope of Work* document.

## Phase II

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### Overview

If our recommendations are followed, most of the content, features, and functionality that fall under priority #1 and priority #2 of the primary purpose of the web site will be implemented in Phase I. Recall the first two priorities were:

1. Provide basic, persistent information to citizens
2. Provide tools that make communicating with the City easier (one-way interaction).

Phase II development for the City of Northfield should focus on implementing the functionality that falls under priority #3 of the purpose for the web site. Recall priority #3 was:

3. Provide tools that make transactions with the City easier (forms that can be filled out and submitted online, online payments, etc)

This means the City should focus primarily on making more transaction-based services (bill payment, forms with fees, etc) available online. The City will need to implement a system that can process credit card payments so that fees and credit card transactions can be securely captured, processed, and stored on the web.

### Department requests

The following is a list of requests by departments that we recommended be implemented outside of Phase I. The City should consider these for implementation in Phase II:

Request	Department
Online utility bill payment	Falls under Finance department, although they did not request it (citizens did)
Snowbird Form that can be completed and submitted online (as opposed to just a PDF download)	Finance
Solicitors permits: provide form that can be completed and submitted online (as opposed to just a PDF download)	Clerk
Email subscription: allow users to subscribe to receive newsletters and updates by email	Liquor Store AND Human Resources
Bring additional databases online	Library
Online Form: online survey	Police
Online Form: convert Volunteer Services forms to online submission instead of PDF download	Police
Allow users to pay parking ticket online	Police
Allow people to view accident reports online. Allow login to	Police

view reports.	
Fill out app and pay fees for excavate in public right of way online	Engineering
Fill out application and pay fees for driveway permits and fees online	Engineering
Reserve and pay for park pavilion reservation online	Engineering AND Parks & Rec
Inspections scheduling and/or tracking	Community Development

### Other features

The following is a list of additional features and/or functionality the City should consider for implementation in Phase II:

- ◆ A *City Contracts / Open Bids* content type
- ◆ Encrypted email addresses on the *Contact Information* content types.
- ◆ Spanish translation for each page (requires an upgrade to the Content Management System)
- ◆ Migrate the City Code from a third-party application service provider to the internal city web site so that it is searchable within the site
- ◆ Consider a policy that allows the city web site to link to weblogs of City Council and/or city staff blogs
- ◆ Enable visitors to grab RSS feeds from all content types on the web site
- ◆ Enable visitors to browse the web site by the top 10 most recently accessed documents (a “Smart List” that is updated dynamically)

### Pricing

An estimated range of cost for items mentioned above will be addressed in a separate *Scope of Work* document.

### Considerations

As the City decides what to implement in Phase I, II, and perhaps III, there are a few things to consider.

#### Longevity of site

Technology—especially technology on the web—improves and changes significantly every year. At a minimum, the content, navigation, and most likely the design and layout will need to be updated every three to five years to reflect internal policy changes, organizational changes, community needs, design trends, web standards, internet technology platforms, and progress in the field concerning usability.

#### Cost now vs. then

Implementing features in Phase I (while the system is being built) is cheaper than implementing those same features later in Phase II or Phase III (after the system as been built).

# Appendix A: Public Forum

## Agenda, guiding questions

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### Agenda

- ◆ We introduce ourselves and our company
- ◆ We give a brief agenda for meeting
- ◆ We introduce the project and the process (including objectives)
- ◆ Inform audience of blog, survey, other forums
- ◆ Inform audience of project “givens” and reasoning (e.g. 508 compliance, consistent across all pages)
- ◆ We explain why the forums are an important part of this process
- ◆ We explain “what’s next” (we give recommendations to City in Phase I deliverable)
- ◆ We guide the “discussion” with questions
- ◆ Q & A

### Guiding questions

- ◆ What type of information do you want to **find** on the city site? (e.g. meeting minutes, meeting agendas, etc)
- ◆ What kinds of things do you want to **do** on the city site? (e.g. view calendar, look for library books, check transit schedule, etc)
- ◆ **Who** do you believe will use the city site the most? For whom should this site be designed?
- ◆ What information, features, or services are the most important? In other words, what should be displayed on the home page?
- ◆ Do you use the city site now? If yes, for what? If no, what would make you want to use it? As a resident of Northfield, what is important?
- ◆ How important is ‘community interaction’ on the new site? In what ways would you want the site to be interactive? (e.g. calendar, contact us forms, email subscriptions, discussion forums, blogs, etc)
- ◆ Are there specific web sites—or specific features on certain web sites—that you are impressed by or that are, in your opinion, “must-haves” on the new city web site?
- ◆ What are some things you dislike about web sites in general? Can you list a few examples?
- ◆ Are you familiar with other city sites? Which ones? Do you think they are effective? Why or why not?
- ◆ How do you most often find information on web sites?
- ◆ In other words: Do you prefer to search? Do you prefer to navigate via department (e.g. click here for *Economic Development Authority*)? Do you prefer to navigate based on who you are (click here if you’re a *Business Owner*)? Do you prefer to navigate based on what you need to do (click here if you want to see *Loan Applications*)?
- ◆ Other comments, ideas, or suggestions?

# Appendix B: Public Forum

## Abridged meeting notes

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### Meeting #1: May 23, 2005

#### **What's important?**

General feeling is that people would like to see accountability on behalf of city  
Current documentation  
Hot topic  
Massive phone book  
Compost hours  
Pool hours  
Some people want photos of staff, others don't at all

#### **Calendar**

Calendar – some people said to use one central city calendar, others said to let everyone use their own calendar. 1 person said to have city develop calendar module and let people install it on their own web sites. Some people about letting everyone have their own and grabbing whichever RSS feeds they want from around the community

Events calendar – people subscribe with RSS, iCal, email

1 person from the City reminded all that an advanced calendar is probably Phase II.  
That same person thinks we should have sub-categories for the calendar.

1 person said each department should be able to have their own calendar.  
Another person said you should be able to click on past dates and it shows you meetings and the related agenda / meeting minutes

1 person said you should be able to search for things on calendar

At each point, provide RSS feeds so people can pick and choose.

#### **General Project**

2 people think everything should be open-source, all-natural, organic code. No proprietary technologies.

#### **On subscription stuff**

St Paul does a bad job at email subscription...get emails with attachments every time something is updated. Should aggregate into emails and send once a day with LINKS to documents...even if signed up for different categories

#### **Standards**

1 person said use HTML And PDF...no DOCs or PUBs, etc.  
2 people said URLS should be easy to get to – URI's should be permanent

#### **Library**

1 person (representative from library) wants everything open-ended, wants developed on PHP/Apache, and threatens the library will do whatever they want to if the City doesn't do it for them.

#### **City Code Migration**

1 person would like to see the city code migrated from Application Service Provider

**PDF's**

1 person thought PDF's are a good standard.

Another person agreed but stated that you can't link to sections within PDFs from blogs, so he'd like to see them broken out into HTML with anchors, or, provide 2 versions (PDF and HTML).

**Autonomy**

Half of the group said to minimize autonomy among depts., etc

Half of the group said to maximize autonomy among depts.

**Services**

Services that were mentioned:

Transit map

Transit passes

Online bill pay

Pay parking ticket

In terms of priority, at least three people said a calendar was more important than online bill payment

**Example sites**

1 person said to look at Ridgewoodnj.net – site is searchable, city codes are searchable

Another person said to look at coj.net

**Blogs**

1 person thought all department heads should have blogs

Blogs should be linked from dept head web site and easy to set up because city should install software on server so it's ready to go

The other side of the issue: another person said there should be separation between issue-based stuff and information. 1 person thought northfield.org does a good job with issues, why try and replicate?

NO BLOG opinion expressed by 2 other people b/c "how do you separate?...what is posted on city site by an individual becomes what the City stands for."

All agree that a minimum level the City needs a blog policy.

Fuzzy line between personal issues and CoN issues....2 people thought it's just a policy issue and that the technology should be implemented with the policy to follow.

Another person brought up the point that you don't need to have "comments" turned on

*3 perspectives on blogs expressed by people*

1. Northfield.org handles it, so city doesn't need to

2. Partner with someone...city shouldn't be choosing hot topic

3. If hosting forum face-to-face what's the difference if it's online?

**Priorities**

Basic info of city

Calendar

Blog

Online services

**Navigation**

Be able to go to site and say "I am a ...."

Multiple forms of navigation

**Home page**

Search box

Content

Department listing

#### Navigation

Clutter vs clean? CLEAN – no CNN/yahoo

#### Photographs

Clean version of logo

Announcements (snow removal)

Top 5 items auto vs. generated -- both opinions expressed

Next 5 public works issues at top of dept page

1 person argued that the City needs something to bring people back to the page. City admin/mayor leadership is reflected on what's on homepage for that day.

2 other people rebuttal: it's only going to be updated every 10 days...the City is not a newspaper

A third person agrees: northfield.org handles itself...this is a city site...I want to get info and GO.

#### Spanish

Adam brought up having a focus group of immigrants who don't speak English

Spanish conversion was mentioned

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## Meeting #2: June 14, 2005

#### Photography / Design / Presence

1 person said visuals are helpful...need something that changes weekly or monthly. Pictures as well as what's important now in City Council, etc... We need ease of understanding where to go to find public information... Consistent visual is good too.

3 people said look and feel is important

Another person said don't make the site really busy on the front page. Put good, important content on the front page and make the visual great. Perhaps a picture of bridge square or of Jesse James days. Need to have some sort of emotional impact first. Mix of both official information and a good looking design.

#### Front page

Another person joined in: everything mentioned has been good...I think we need to emphasize, however, that the homepage should direct to all information. I don't want to read about Northfield's history or the Mayor's personal story before I can find the information I actually want.

Front page might include minutes, agendas, a list of city departments, contact information.

Fresh content is important to return to the site. City site shouldn't mimic northfield.org, though. Fresh on the city is...City Council agendas, street closings, snow removal, seasonal information, police alerts, advertise for public forums, etc.

#### Navigation

Departments need to be represented, but navigation should be organized from the users' perspective

#### Content & Information

1 person said: Frequently Asked Questions are important. Example: how do I reserve park space? Make them "Questions Previously Asked" so that they are actually relevant.

Everyone agreed: Make sure that the forms work and that when I submit a request or inquiry, my feedback is actually followed up on. Otherwise, people won't come back and they won't use the service.

Everyone agreed: Contact information should be readily available: we would go to the web before the phonebook to look up city numbers. Have contact information for key contacts.

2 people said that new people want fresh content. A target user of this web site is new and prospective residents.

1 person said the City should provide a link to the school district. We should be able to pay fees, fines, parking tickets.

Another person said: New and long-term residents: how do I get involved? List of boards and commissions with their vacancies.

1 person said: what will bring me back is if I can find the information that I am looking for.  
Another person added: there should be a feature on the web site that guides you to help if you can't find what you're looking for.

1 person said the City should include links to other government sites: community action center, law enforcement, representatives and state senators

### **General Project**

1 person said Web standards and cross-browser compatibility is key  
Also, the web site needs to be fast. Load the text before the pictures, no movement (Flash), make pictures optional.

2 people presented about the Decade for a Culture of Peace. They would like their logo to be reinstated on the new web site (it was on the old web site but was removed from the interim site).

### **Commission / Board items**

1 person (a representative from the Human Rights Commission) wants/needs  
Commission members, vacancies, link to applications (apps are the same throughout the City)  
Agendas  
Minutes  
Calendar for meetings  
"Issues" or "What's New"  
Work Plan: 1 ½ pages of text  
Committees: MLK, Public Education Committee, Hate Crimes Committee (Maybe just a page with a list of committees list)

Another person said there needs to be constant management of the commissions and board items via the Content Management System.

### **Calendar**

1 person said the calendar should be a phase III thing. Ideally, an entire-community calendar is great, but not practical. Remember that this is public money.

### **Blogs**

1 person said: Don't want to stomp on northfield.org. Exist in tandem. Northfield.org does a good job aggregating content, calendar, etc...let them do it. City should be mostly for information...be resources for each other.

Added: city blog is a fine line. City site should not link to citizens' blogs. Someone would have to check for accuracy on all blogs.

A different person said: No blogs. Perhaps linking to the personal blogs of department heads is okay, but with a disclaimer.

Another person said: Blogs can't be funded by the City if there is any sort of personal gain that could be extracted from them...it's too fine a line.

Everyone agreed: Information should be the priority...not interactivity.

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# Appendix C: Public Survey

## Survey questions (English)

### Survey Introduction

The City of Northfield is collecting information from around the community to better understand what IS important and what IS NOT important as they update their web site. Please expect this survey to take 10-15 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time! Click 'next' to continue.

### Survey Questions

**1. How often do you visit the city web site?**  
 Almost never  
 At least once every couple months  
 At least once a month  
 At least once a week  
 Once a day

**2. What's the primary reason you visit the city web site?**  
 To access City Council meeting agenda/minutes  
 To access a specific Board or Commissions meeting agenda/minutes  
 For information (what are the compost site hours, when is the next City Council meeting, etc.)  
 Just to see what's new  
 I never go  
 Other (please specify)

**3. CONTENT & INFORMATION**  
 Please rank the importance of including the following types of information on the city web site:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know
City Council Agenda/Meeting minutes					
Boards/Commissions information (News Items and Agenda/Meeting Minutes)					
Business and housing development resources					
Calendar -- City government activities					
Calendar -- City government activities and other community related activities					
City Code					
City Directory (phone numbers and email)					
City History					
City Information (demographics, religion information, transportation information, etc)					
City Services information (water, garbage, recycling center, etc)					
City Department information (Engineering, Economic Development Authority, etc)					
Emergency information					
Information on education					
Job Postings					
Library information / resources					
List of all city documents					
List of weekly meetings					
Maps					

Northfield "Points of Interest" information						
Parks & Recreation information						
Public Safety information						
Recent News Items						
Transit information						
Frequently asked questions related to each department						

**4. FEATURES, FUNCTIONALITY, & INTERACTIVITY**

Understanding that everything has a budget, please help us understand the ranking in importance of the following:

	Is a must for Phase ONE	Can wait for Phase TWO	Is not important for the city web site	I don't know what this is
A calendar that lists city events (Council meetings, etc)				
A calendar that lists all community events				
Search functionality				
Blogs for City Council				
Blogs for City Department Heads				
A moderated discussion forum				
Library resources				
A list of city contract opportunities and open bids				
A 'Featured Item' or 'What's New' area on the home page				
Online inquiry forms (contact form, etc)				
Online 'report-a-problem' forms (potholes, streetlight out, graffiti, etc)				
Online reservation forms (Northfield Transit, parks, etc)				
Online bill payment				
Online application forms (jobs, permits, licenses, etc)				
Download forms you complete & return via US Mail to apply for jobs, licenses, permits, etc.				
Ability to 'subscribe' to calendar events and/or new information with an email address so that you are notified when a new event is posted				
Ability to 'subscribe' to calendar events and/or new information via RSS or similar technology				

**5. From the question above, what are the two most important items?**

**6. USABILITY**

Please rank the importance of including the following items on the city web site:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know
Search functionality					
A list of top 10 accessed documents					
"Print this page" button for printer-friendly pages					

Two versions of all content to include Spanish language					
---	--	--	--	--	--

**7. DESIGN & LAYOUT**

Please rank the importance of the following design considerations:

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know
Home page is packed with information (prefer a "busy" design over a "simple" design)					
Home page is NOT packed with information (prefer a "simple" design over a "busy" design)					
Consistent "look-and-feel" on every page					
Consistent navigation on every page					
Photograph on the front page					
Photography on inside pages					

**8. Please select up to 5 things you think should appear on the FRONT page of the new city web site:**

- A photograph of Northfield
- Search box
- A link to a calendar
- A list of the top 5 upcoming events
- A list of the top 5 most popular city documents
- A "What's New" section that outlines recent city activity
- "I am a..." navigation
- A list of all departments in the city
- A "Welcome to the City of Northfield...." paragraph or other introductory text
- Other (please specify)

**9. Please list up to three adjectives that should describe the new city site (examples: clean, friendly, formal, casual):**

- Adjective 1
- Adjective 2
- Adjective 3

**10. Are you familiar with any other city web sites? If so, which ones? Do you like or dislike them? Why?**

**11. Do you have other comments or suggestions?**

## Appendix D: Public Survey

### Survey results (English & Spanish)

1. How often do you visit the city web site?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
Almost never		27.8%	15
At least once every couple months		22.2%	12
At least once a month		25.9%	14
At least once a week		18.5%	10
Once a day		5.6%	3
<b>Total Respondents</b>			<b>54</b>
(skipped this question)			0

2. What's the primary reason you visit the city web site?			
		Response Percent	Response Total
To access City Council meeting agenda/minutes		13%	7
To access a specific Board or Commissions meeting agenda/minutes		1.9%	1
<b>For information (what are the compost site hours, when is the next City Council meeting, etc.)</b>		<b>40.7%</b>	<b>22</b>
Just to see what's new		27.8%	15
I never go		7.4%	4

Other (please specify)		9.3%	5
<b>Total Respondents</b>			<b>54</b>
(skipped this question)			<b>0</b>

3. CONTENT & INFORMATION Please rank the importance of including the following types of information on the city web site:						
	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know	Response Average
City Council Agenda/Meeting minutes	<b>54% (29)</b>	19% (10)	20% (11)	7% (4)	0% (0)	<b>1.81</b>
Boards/Commissions information (News Items and Agenda/Meeting Minutes)	<b>45% (24)</b>	26% (14)	21% (11)	8% (4)	0% (0)	<b>1.91</b>
Business and housing development resources	<b>41% (22)</b>	30% (16)	22% (12)	7% (4)	0% (0)	<b>1.96</b>
Calendar -- City government activities	<b>51% (27)</b>	25% (13)	21% (11)	4% (2)	0% (0)	<b>1.77</b>
Calendar -- City government activities and other community related activities	<b>43% (23)</b>	35% (19)	17% (9)	6% (3)	0% (0)	<b>1.85</b>
City Code	<b>39% (21)</b>	26% (14)	22% (12)	11% (6)	2% (1)	<b>2.06</b>
City Directory (phone numbers and email)	<b>58% (31)</b>	23% (12)	15% (8)	4% (2)	0% (0)	<b>1.64</b>
City History	9% (5)	<b>34% (18)</b>	<b>34% (18)</b>	21% (11)	2% (1)	<b>2.67</b>
City Information (demographics, religion information, transportation information, etc)	30% (16)	<b>34% (18)</b>	26% (14)	8% (4)	2% (1)	<b>2.12</b>
City Services information (water, garbage, recycling center, etc)	<b>52% (28)</b>	28% (15)	17% (9)	4% (2)	0% (0)	<b>1.72</b>
City Department information (Engineering, Economic Development Authority, etc)	36% (19)	<b>42% (22)</b>	15% (8)	8% (4)	0% (0)	<b>1.94</b>
Emergency information	<b>50% (27)</b>	22% (12)	17% (9)	9% (5)	2% (1)	<b>1.85</b>
Information on education	13% (7)	31% (17)	<b>33% (18)</b>	20% (11)	2% (1)	<b>2.62</b>
Job Postings	26% (14)	11% (6)	30% (16)	<b>33% (18)</b>	0% (0)	<b>2.70</b>
Library information / resources	31% (17)	<b>35% (19)</b>	22% (12)	11% (6)	0% (0)	<b>2.13</b>
List of all city documents	22% (12)	11% (6)	<b>37% (20)</b>	30% (16)	0% (0)	<b>2.74</b>
List of weekly meetings	<b>41% (22)</b>	22% (12)	22% (12)	15% (8)	0% (0)	<b>2.11</b>
Maps	<b>46% (24)</b>	27% (14)	21% (11)	6% (3)	0% (0)	<b>1.87</b>
Northfield "Points of Interest" information	19% (10)	22% (12)	<b>43% (23)</b>	17% (9)	0% (0)	<b>2.57</b>

Parks & Recreation information	33% (18)	<b>35% (19)</b>	24% (13)	6% (3)	2% (1)	<b>2.02</b>
Public Safety information	<b>37% (20)</b>	33% (18)	22% (12)	7% (4)	0% (0)	<b>2.00</b>
Recent News Items	30% (16)	<b>31% (17)</b>	26% (14)	11% (6)	2% (1)	<b>2.19</b>
Transit information	<b>39% (21)</b>	20% (11)	31% (17)	7% (4)	2% (1)	<b>2.08</b>
Frequently asked questions related to each department	29% (15)	25% (13)	<b>33% (17)</b>	13% (7)	0% (0)	<b>2.31</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b>						<b>54</b>
(skipped this question)						<b>0</b>

4. FEATURES, FUNCTIONALITY, & INTERACTIVITY Understanding that everything has a budget, please help us understand the ranking in importance of the following:

	<b>Is a must for Phase ONE</b>	<b>Can wait for Phase TWO</b>	<b>Is not important for the city web site</b>	<b>I don't know what this is</b>	<b>Response Average</b>
A calendar that lists city events (Council meetings, etc)	<b>74% (40)</b>	24% (13)	2% (1)	0% (0)	<b>1.28</b>
A calendar that lists all community events	<b>43% (23)</b>	41% (22)	17% (9)	0% (0)	<b>1.74</b>
Search functionality	<b>59% (32)</b>	35% (19)	2% (1)	4% (2)	<b>1.40</b>
Blogs for City Council	11% (6)	<b>46% (25)</b>	41% (22)	2% (1)	<b>2.30</b>
Blogs for City Department Heads	11% (6)	<b>45% (24)</b>	42% (22)	2% (1)	<b>2.31</b>
A moderated discussion forum	7% (4)	37% (20)	<b>54% (29)</b>	2% (1)	<b>2.47</b>
Library resources	<b>51% (27)</b>	38% (20)	9% (5)	2% (1)	<b>1.58</b>
A list of city contract opportunities and open bids	39% (21)	<b>41% (22)</b>	19% (10)	2% (1)	<b>1.79</b>
A 'Featured Item' or 'What's New' area on the home page	<b>48% (26)</b>	37% (20)	15% (8)	0% (0)	<b>1.67</b>
Online inquiry forms (contact form, etc)	<b>57% (31)</b>	37% (20)	4% (2)	2% (1)	<b>1.45</b>
Online 'report-a-problem' forms (potholes, streetlight out, graffiti, etc)	<b>69% (37)</b>	28% (15)	4% (2)	0% (0)	<b>1.35</b>
Online reservation forms (Northfield Transit, parks, etc)	36% (19)	<b>57% (30)</b>	8% (4)	0% (0)	<b>1.72</b>
Online bill payment	43% (23)	<b>44% (24)</b>	13% (7)	0% (0)	<b>1.70</b>
Online application forms (jobs, permits, licenses, etc)	<b>46% (25)</b>	43% (23)	11% (6)	0% (0)	<b>1.65</b>
Download forms you complete & return via US Mail to apply for jobs, licenses, permits, etc.	46% (25)	<b>48% (26)</b>	6% (3)	0% (0)	<b>1.59</b>

Ability to 'subscribe' to calendar events and/or new information with an email address so that you are notified when a new event is posted	21% (11)	<b>57% (30)</b>	23% (12)	0% (0)	<b>2.02</b>
Ability to 'subscribe' to calendar events and/or new information via RSS or similar technology	15% (8)	<b>49% (26)</b>	21% (11)	15% (8)	<b>2.07</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b>					<b>54</b>
(skipped this question)					<b>0</b>

5. From the question above, what are the two most important items?			
		<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
->		<b>100%</b>	<b>47</b>
->		<b>100%</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b>			<b>47</b>
(skipped this question)			<b>7</b>

<p><b><u>“First most important item” responses:</u></b>  17 Calendar  8 Search  3 Council Agenda/Minutes  3 Online bill payment  3 Online forms  2 “What’s New” area or current news  2 Blogs for dep’t heads  2 City contact information  2 List of city meetings  2 Report a problem forms  1 Library  1 List of contract opportunities  1 Public safety information</p> <p><b><u>“Second most important item” responses:</u></b>  12 Calendar  8 Search  6 Online Bill Payment  4 Report a problem forms  3 Online applications, forms, services  2 Subscribe to calendar events  2 Online inquiry forms  2 Downloadable forms  2 Contact information  2 Board Agenda/Minutes  2 Blogs for department heads  1 City staff members dedicated to responding to form inquiries in a timely manner.</p>	
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1 Discussion forum	
1 Library	

6. USABILITY Please rank the importance of including the following items on the city web site:						
	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know	Response Average
Search functionality	65% (35)	26% (14)	4% (2)	2% (1)	4% (2)	1.40
A list of top 10 accessed documents	12% (6)	19% (10)	38% (20)	31% (16)	0% (0)	2.88
"Print this page" button for printer-friendly pages	32% (17)	30% (16)	19% (10)	17% (9)	2% (1)	2.21
Two versions of all content to include Spanish language	19% (10)	22% (12)	30% (16)	28% (15)	2% (1)	2.68
<b>Total Respondents</b>						<b>54</b>
(skipped this question)						0

7. DESIGN & LAYOUT Please rank the importance of the following design considerations:						
	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know	Response Average
Home page is packed with information (prefer a "busy" design over a "simple" design)	2% (1)	20% (10)	6% (3)	66% (33)	6% (3)	3.45
Home page is NOT packed with information (prefer a "simple" design over a "busy" design)	40% (21)	30% (16)	8% (4)	17% (9)	6% (3)	2.02
Consistent "look-and-feel" on every page	46% (25)	26% (14)	17% (9)	9% (5)	2% (1)	1.89
Consistent navigation on every page	67% (36)	26% (14)	7% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1.41
Photograph on the front page	28% (15)	30% (16)	19% (10)	24% (13)	0% (0)	2.39
Photography on inside pages	13% (7)	30% (16)	26% (14)	31% (17)	0% (0)	2.76
<b>Total Respondents</b>						<b>54</b>
(skipped this question)						0

8. Please select up to 5 things you think should appear on the FRONT page of the new city web site:			
		Response Percent	Response Total
A photograph of Northfield		55.6%	30
Search box		85.2%	46
A link to a calendar		66.7%	36

A list of the top 5 upcoming events	33.3%	18
A list of the top 5 most popular city documents	16.7%	9
A "What's New" section that outlines recent city activity	38.9%	21
"I am a..." navigation	11.1%	6
A list of all departments in the city	64.8%	35
A "Welcome to the City of Northfield...." paragraph or other introductory text	57.4%	31
Other (please specify)	22.2%	12
<b>Total Respondents</b>		<b>54</b>
(skipped this question)		0
<b><u>"Other" responses:</u></b> 6-10 most frequently asked questions language selection option a link to archived documents City officials contact information Clean, simple, easy navigation phone #, No filler: Mayors pic, letter etc. junk access to agendas & minutes calendar sunscription [sic]/RSS links What is an "I am a..." navigation? links to other organizations Comp Plan and other planning docs		

9. Please list up to three adjectives that should describe the new city site (examples: clean, friendly, formal, casual):			
		<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
	<b>Adjective 1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>46</b>
	Adjective 2	93.5%	43
	Adjective 3	80.4%	37
<b>Total Respondents</b>			<b>46</b>
(skipped this question)			8
<b><u>Adjectives (alphabetical order):</u></b> accessible accessible accurate artistic beautiful casual casual CLASSY (attractive & inviting)			

clean  
Clean  
Clean  
clean  
clean  
Clean  
Clean  
clean  
clean  
CLEAN (easy to navigate)  
clean layout  
clear  
clear, to the point  
colleges  
colorful  
consistent  
contentment  
Cost-effective  
cows  
current  
current  
current  
Designed for residents, not developers or contractors  
dynamic  
Easily understood  
Easy  
easy  
easy access  
Easy to navigate [sic], XHTML compliant [sic]  
easy to navigate  
Easy to navigate  
Easy to navigate  
easy to navigate  
Easy to use  
easy to use  
easy to use  
Education and opportunity  
Effective  
elegant  
emgaging [sic]  
esthetically pleasing [sic]  
Fast  
Formal  
fresh  
Friendly  
friendly  
friendly  
friendly  
friendly  
friendly  
friendly  
friendly  
Friendly  
Functional  
functional  
Functional  
growing  
Growing with style  
HlStoric character [sic]  
honest  
informative [sic]  
important links  
information

<p> Informative  Informative  informative  informative  informative  intuitive  intuitive  inviting  inviting  inviting  logical  low bandwidth  Modern  navigable  navigable  navigable  Navigable  No Java or Flash  not too formal, but not casual  professional  professional  progressive  quick to upload  searchable  Sence of history [sic]  sexy like Mike  Shallow navigation (two or three clicks to any piece of information)  Simple  simple  simple  simple  Simple  small town  Smart  soon  standards  standards-compliant  susinct [sic]  Timely and current  unique community  Up to Date  updated  updated  updated  Useful  useful  USEFUL (current &amp; timely info)  user friendly  user friendly  user-friendly  user-friendly  User-friendly  usable [sic]  Vitality  welcoming  welcoming </p>	
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10. Are you familiar with any other city web sites? If so, which ones? Do you like or dislike them? Why?

Total Respondents	18
(skipped this question)	36
<p><b>Responses:</b></p> <p>Library site is used daily.</p> <p>Duluth. Pictures and introduction to the City take too much space AND TIME TO LOAD, especially on home page,etc.</p> <p>I looked briefly at Faribault's site (which I don't like - too busy and no obvious organization) and Apple Valley's site (which I like - more blank space, clear categories and clear navigation and comprehensive content).</p> <p>I am not familiar with the City's current websites or information. However, getting this survey makes me think that I should start reviewing the Web site.</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce -- I like the information contained there. It's easy to find and their Calendar of Events is a very comprehensive guide to all sorts of city-wide events. And the large number of links included makes it easy to find other sites in Northfield.</p> <p>Northfield.org -- There's a lot of information contained there, but I find the site very annoying to look through and search. Too busy -- and sometimes too much info from "busybody" types.</p> <p>Eden Prairie - somewhat like Egan - busy Burnville - cookie cutter haven't really seen any city sites that I like</p> <p>no</p> <p>Lakeville, Mn Sequim, Ore San Francisco, Cal these are easy for me to use</p> <p><a href="http://www.owatonna.info">http://www.owatonna.info</a> Great library website. Navigation Very user/patron focused. Finding relevant information most important. Simple Clean Design</p> <p>northfield.org I love this site. Nice clean easily navigatable. easy to plug in info about events, great coverage on what's happening.</p> <p>Familiar with many. Honestly, most are horrible. I think it would be huge if Northfield "set the stage" on how municipal sites should look, feel, work. Many may follow suits using Northfield as a model.</p> <p>Most city sites are horrible in my opinion because the home page is cluttered with text &amp; links. I don't find this inviting at all. The only site that comes close to my preference is: <a href="http://www.cityhpil.com/index_orig.html">http://www.cityhpil.com/index_orig.html</a> It is clean (with just the right # of attractive photos so the download isn't slow), yet you are able to access a great deal of info (Site Map).</p> <p>Chaska, MN - Love their site</p> <p>I am not familiar with other sites</p> <p>As a member of the planning commission, I regularly look at other city sites looking for their zoning codes, zoning permit information, etc. The best ones are easy to navigate, have few slow-to-load graphics, provide up-to-date and relevant information including links to ordinances, official maps, and on-line application forms.</p>	

<p>Yes. They are initially visually attractive and interesting and then easy to access the desired information.</p> <p>I have occasionally searched a city website for various code provisions, etc. I do not recall any that I liked or disliked any more than others.</p> <p>City of St. Paul has good information and navigation.</p>	
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11. Do you have other comments or suggestions?	
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>26</b>
(skipped this question)	28
<p><b>Responses (NOT edited for grammar, spelling, etc):</b></p> <p>As more and more people, across the socio-economic spectrum, gain access to computers and the Web, a city website needs to be a tool for inclusive community-building. For example, full Spanish translation is not needed, but a Spanish language introduction and how to obtain language translation assistance is important.</p> <p>The library functionality is already there - they seems to be waiting for the city to catch up.</p> <p>Make sure commission membership and meeting information is current. Make it easy for people to find requirements and applications for applying for commission appointments.</p> <p>Make it fast by keeping it simple. No movement. Not everyone has a 4 gig processor. Photos should be limited. Load text before photos, locate photos below text, make photos optional, or give the ability to skip photos. Have all pages consistent, with "next", "return to home page" etc. in the exact same locaton on each page. SPECIFICS FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION Have pages for the following. Human Rights Home, members, agendas, minutes, work plan, application for membership, issues, Hate Crimes Committee, Martin Luther King Committee, Public Education Committee</p> <p>Please remember the archiving function of a web site and continue to store documents and reports. It would be particularly wonderful to be able to access all of the plans now in progress (like the surface water management plan, etc.) as well as the older versions of these plans (like the innumerable transportation studies). Perhaps an intern could scan these older documents if they are not available in native electronic format.</p> <p>The city Website should be more than just information and facts, it should provide services to the users to make their lives easier and it should be updated regularly to encourage people to return.</p> <p>An email news bulleting similar to the Arts Guild would be great. Don't just make a website just because everyone else is. Do it because it is cheaper, more useful, or more efficient than the way it is being done. Don't design it for those people who could just as easily get the information someplace else. For example, I can't imagine that our Spanish speaking population generally has access to the Internet or would use it if they did. Decide whether it is going to be a promotional tool or an information tool. If it will be a promotional tool, then the City should involve organizations like the Arts Guild, Chamber, or other groups who have a vested interest in promoting Northfield.</p>	

I would suggest including just the information that pertains to city government and services, trying not to duplicate information found elsewhere (such as on the chamber's calendar of events). Most important, decide on your target audience(s) and structure your information to their needs. The site does not have to be all-encompassing to everyone. Include a Links page so that visitors can easily be referred to sites that will answer their questions (Chamber of Commerce, the colleges, the Sesquicentennial site, etc.)

Make it fast, effective, and easy to get what you need.

no

The terms 'busy' and 'simple' are not adequate to describe an effective city website. A good design can incorporate many details and some simple designs are simplistic and boring. So the important thing is to have a very appealing first page with information that is immediately helpful and with link connections to other more complex details.

hopefully the pages will look organized, not cluttered, colorful

the old site, bad as it was, at least had access to basic info that not's available now. Get on with the project. Get more info out there and then worry about making it fancy. The first two questions of the survey were totally useless (how often, what's the primary purpose) because so little is available.

I could picture the header as a sepia photograph of Jesse James and gang blending into a color photo of Northfield now.

Keep up the good work. Thanks for the survey and public forum opportunity. I'm confident in Livefront's abilities. Stay open to suggestions (even after new site launches), and stay open/available to fix bugs after both phases.

Please avoid the "technology for the sake of technology" temptation. The website doesn't have to have everything. It should, however, have many resources carefully organized so as not to overwhelm the most technologically illiterate visitor. Keep it professional-no unofficial or personal blogs.

Regarding question six above, I would rank "Printer-friendly pages" as a very high priority for the city website. For usability reasons, the user should not be required to click a special button to get printer-friendly pages. In many cases, a user will not see this button and will choose to print from the browsers' file menu. An alternative is to build the website using CSS positioning and include a separate stylesheet for print. This method is less costly to develop, less costly to maintain and more usable. Also, I am surprised to see nothing about accessibility on this page of the survey. For a city website, I would rank accessibility as an extremely high priority. This is an often misunderstood issue, so please email as I would love to discuss some of these comments further. Thanks. This survey is a great tool! [rodlives@hotmail.com](mailto:rodlives@hotmail.com).

Don't jam clutter in the pages ~ keep them clean with links to details. Stay away from flash. Might be fun to (someday) set up a live streaming cam outside J. Grundy's Rueb'n'Stein that shows the downtown activity.

Showing the beauty, friendliness, and "heart" of the city is paramount for the front page. I moved to Northfield because I saw how accurately it was reflected online from so many organizations. Northfield.org was a great resource! Also, Northfield used to have the Peace is in Our Hands logo on its front page too. Northfield's city council passed a resolution in 2002 based on petitions from numerous groups and people to be a participant

in UNESCO's Decade for a Culture of Peace. Northfield has reported from no less than eight organizations, including the City (mayor Lee Lansig submitted a report), in their mid-decade report. Click the link below and scroll to the bottom for United States. <http://decade-culture-of-peace.org/cgi-bin/ib3/ikonboard.cgi> The emblem hangs in council chambers. Many of us believe that this aspect of our culture in Northfield deserves a sustained presence on the Northfield website. The logo was once displayed on the front page until the redesign plan began. The main page for this Decade of Peace movement is here: <http://www3.unesco.org/iycp/> I may come to the open meeting on Monday June 13 to give more information, logos, materials, if you like. -Scott Schumacher, [scotts@holisticgeek.com](mailto:scotts@holisticgeek.com), 612-756-2671

It is crucial that the site balance functionality with an attractive image.

A good functional website should not need Macromedia Flash or other add-ons. It absolutely should not require Adobe Acrobat, it should stick to HTML and Javascript. Avoid plug-ins of any kind.

Keep it simple, user-friendly and updated regularly (the last is most important).

Some city websites have "dead ends". When you go down a path to access a piece of information, you can't "back up" and have to restart the whole search process all over again. This is not a good use of people's time.

It would be nice to have a search field on every page. I would really like it to look something like the EDA site.

Ease in searching the City Code is one feature that would be important to me. I would also like to be able to get information regarding building codes and restrictions within the City (setbacks and other requirements) and to obtain building permit forms so I can complete and file them online. I also frequently refer to the listing of employees, their departments and contact information.

More important than specific features/functionality is the internal processes and procedures that the city has to ensure the web site is indeed updated and current.

# Appendix E: Employee Survey

## Survey questions

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### Survey Questions

- ◆ How often do you use the City web site for work?
- ◆ For what kind of tasks?
- ◆ How often do you use the City web site while at home or away from work?
- ◆ For what kind of tasks?
- ◆ How do you think the City's web site should be used?
- ◆ Do you seek information inside the City on a regular basis via phone calls or email to other departments that could be made available on the web?
- ◆ Do you ever seek information on the current or old web site? Do you find what you are looking for? By what means do you find that information?
- ◆ Do you ever receive calls or field questions that could have been answered via the web site? If so, what types of information?
- ◆ To what extent will a new web site affect your day-to-day role with the City of Northfield?
- ◆ Do you think the new City web site could make your job more effective or efficient? If so, how?
- ◆ Other Comments

DRAFT

# Appendix F: Employee Survey

## Survey results

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### Survey Results

#### How often do you use the City web site for work?

- Never
- Monthly
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- A couple times per week – Would use it more if there were additional kinds of information available
- Never
- Less than once per week
- Hardly ever
- Hardly ever
- Once or twice per week
- Seldom
- Not often
- A couple times per week
- I would love to use it if it were there
- Not very often

#### For what kind of tasks?

- Checking on employment ads
- City code
- To look up information for clients or for projects
- To see what's listed under the Police Department
- To find city council actions or other departmental information
- Help library patrons find government information
- Code information
- Review council activity, look up codes
- City event schedules
- Looking up city ordinances through the 'municode' link
- City maps
- To see what's new
- To refer customers and show them the site
- If somebody calls looking for a something specific that I know is on the website, I will jump out there to find the information

#### How often do you use the City web site while at home or away from work?

- 4 times/year
- Rarely because I am not a resident
- Rarely
- Never
- Rarely
- Rarely
- Infrequently, used the site when applying for my current position with Northfield
- Hardly ever
- Never

- Never
- Once
- Never
- Never
- I don't anymore because it has been essentially useless
- Never

**For what kind of tasks?**

- Check job postings
- To find hours and locations for facilities, telephone numbers
- To find information about the city when deciding if I wanted to work here
- Job applications
- Mainly to see what department to visit for a certain errand to get done
- Employment opportunities
- Department and activity information, council and commission schedules

**How do you think the City's web site should be used?**

- Mainly for citizens looking for general city information, such as codes, contacts, employment, etc
- Schedule of City meetings (Council, boards and commissions) and hours of operation of services or activities such as ice arena, pool, DMV, Books and Stars
- Online payment of water bills, parking tickets, assessments
- Maps of the city and its parks.
- Downloadable city forms such as: applications for boards or commissions, registration for library programs, building permit forms, homebuyer assistance forms, park reservation forms
- It would be nice if parks could be reserved online, although if this is offered, provision should be made for those who don't have a credit card. Reserving online could be beneficial to them, too, even if they still have to come in person to leave their payment.
- Minutes for all public City meetings should be posted on the website.
- Answers to FAQs for each department.
- I think the city web site should a user-friendly, comprehensive guide to city services and government information. It should be available 24-7. There will always be people who want to talk to a person, but the web site could limit the amount of receptionist time taken up in answering basic service questions, and it would be available when a person is not. It can also be a very helpful site for business people who are interested in locating a facility in the community and, of course, for individuals interested in moving here.
- To provide information about city services
- To obtain information about the city, NOT as a communication vehicle
- Provide information for people moving into Northfield
- Provide information about happenings in the city
- To give more in depth information to what is available for shopping, activities and events going on in Northfield. To help the population know what is available for medical, recreation and businesses within the city
- Public announcements, event promotion, and as a contact to all the city departments
- I think it should be useful for both city employees and the general public. It would be great to have it as a full info resource with information on where to get postal service, the park system, city happenings (ie. Jesse James Days, etc.)
- I would like to see annual budget information added to the site
- I think it should have all the information that citizens get when they walk into of call City Hall or any other department. The who, what, where's and why's. How do I get a building permit? What times is the compost site open? What will the garbage driver pickup at my stop? Why are they digging up my street? I think it should show examples and also who they would need to speak with if need be
- For people trying to get information regarding what the City of Northfield has to offer

**Do you seek information inside the City on a regular basis via phone calls or email to other departments that could be made available on the web?**

- No
- Yes
- Yes, and because people call me to get information in Spanish from other departments, it would be helpful if I could turn to the web so as not to have to make 3 schedules coincide (i.e. the customer/resident's, mine and the person from another department who can answer the question.) Too often, the customer/resident has had to leave me a message, when I reach him/her, I make a three-way call and then the other staff person is not in. I leave a message and when the other staff person gets back to me, the customer/resident isn't in. When I reach the customer/resident, the answer given to me to pass on by the other staff person leads to more questions, necessitating another go 'round trying to reach the staff person again... The web could reduce this.
- Not that I'm aware of
- Hours of facilities, staff telephone numbers, information on property values (possibly a link to the county?)
- Building code and enforcement information
- Yes, primarily from Public Works. The website cannot substitute for face to face or voice to voice communication
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No, information sought is usually too detailed for public viewing
- Sometimes
- No, information I need would probably be best placed on an intranet portal, rather than on the web
- Not often

**Do you ever seek information on the current or old web site? Do you find what you are looking for? By what means do you find that information?**

- Yes. Yes. Through the links provided
- Occasionally I seek and find information on the web. If I don't find information, I call the appropriate department.
- No
- Yes, but it doesn't have park, pool or compost site information
- Seldom, if ever
- No
- No
- Yes, review council activity, look up codes
- No
- Yes, the links to services available are helpful
- The old site had some good stuff on it, it just lacked updating. I think we need to bring back what we had and then go forward and add more detailed information
- No
- Yes, city code

**Do you ever receive calls or field questions that could have been answered via the web site? If so, what types of information?**

- Yes. Compost site hours, telephone numbers, employment opportunities, codes, etc
- If/when this happens, it's likely that if the information were available on the web, the person would still call me because most of the people I work with wouldn't know to turn to the web. The Spanish-speaking population is growing in computer literacy and may, little-by-little take

advantage of information on the web.

- STOP CLASS questions
- Yes, I would say development information (everything from what's being build on such-and-such street to how do I apply for a building permit or how do I get my neighbor to cut their lawn). We're asked about who owns various parcels of property and how much those parcels are valued. We're asked about other city services, hours of operations, what's going on at the pool
- Economic development incentive information, zoning information
- No
- No
- Yes, mostly about garbage collection services
- Very seldom
- No
- No
- Yes, what are the garbage rates, water rates, sewer rates, how do I set up or cancel services, what can I do with my utility bill if I leave for the winter?
- Hours of compost site, city staff contact information, company used for gas and electric, telephone companies that serve the city, post office phone number, where to get marriage license and passport, cancellation of an event
- People ask about paying for parking tickets, paying their water/sewer/garbage bills, seeing what services are available, getting information about the Departments

**To what extent will a new web site affect your day-to-day role with the City of Northfield?**

- Very little
- It will help in fielding general phone calls and inquiries
- I'm not sure, because I don't know what will be on it. I would think and hope that it would enable me to obtain information more on the spot for people.
- None
- The library is supposed to be an information provider. I hope that a content-rich, easy-to search web site would help all of us to provide more accurate and complete government information. If such a web site exists, we can use it to provide information to those who ask us, but we will probably be asked less often as people will be finding it themselves
- Not a great deal, May require more attention to keep information current
- Probably won't
- Would help me be more aware of what there is to offer in the city and be able to share this in much more detail with my Patrons at the library
- No measurable effect
- Unsure
- Not sure
- Anticipate that more questions from the public will occur if budget information is added
- Not sure, if it has good information it might slow the incoming phone calls
- It would be nice to advise people to check that for current and accurate information
- Probably not significantly, unless people automatically check it before they call City Hall

**Do you think the new City web site could make your job more effective or efficient? If so, how?**

- Yes, it will provide information that I can pass on to citizens that inquire over the phone
- I'm not sure, because I don't know what will be on it. I would think and hope that it would enable me to obtain information more on the spot for people
- No, people still want to talk to a live person
- Yes, I think so. One way to make it more efficient AND effective is to enable us to search council minutes on line. I know the council minutes have been digitized, but the search engine that was used to find topics was very poor. Perhaps library staff could employ some of their indexing skills to improve access to the minutes IF we can't afford a better search mechanism
- Yes, frequently asked information can be made more readily available
- No

- Yes, would allow me to be more specific with answers to Patrons inquiries
- No
- Not for my current assignment. Most of the information I deal with, I need to speak directly to an individual. The one exception would be tips or other information provided by witnesses to the website
- Not for my area of concern
- Yes, downloadable forms for snowbirds, people moving in/out requesting service, information on how to read the bill and where to pay the bill
- Yes, if the site is a standard and open one
- Yes, since I answer the main telephone coming into the City of Northfield, I receive a lot of calls from people looking for general information. I think a lot of FAQ could be answered via the website

**Other Comments**

- To encourage new, Spanish-speaking users to turn to our site, perhaps I could create a monthly informational article about some aspect of City government, which would be posted in Spanish on the web. (For example, 1) when and why are building permits required; 2) is tap water safe to drink? What does the water department do to ensure it's purity? 3) How does the library decide what materials to buy?...) Then I could send out an email to Spanish-speaking residents of Northfield whom I know to be connected, encouraging them to see the new information on the City's website.
- I don't think that everything on the website needs to be translated, but select items should be. Additional languages (besides Spanish) to consider: Chinese and Vietnamese. I think we could get Carleton's ACT student volunteers to create these translations. I have found their work to be excellent in the past when they have created translations.
- Please think about ADA requirements as the site is built. It's the law and it's an important access issue

# Appendix G: Weblog

## Entries & comments

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### **What is this weblog about?**

Posted by Mike on May 10, 2005

Welcome. The City of Northfield has selected our web company, Livefront, to gather information and requirements necessary to build a new and improved City web site.

This weblog exists to give Northfielder's (and others who may be interested) an easy way to keep updated on the redesign project. In addition, members of the community may ask questions, give input, and post comments in response to any of our entries on this web site.

Our deliverable to the City of Northfield will be a document outlining specific recommendations regarding the design, content, information architecture, usability, and functionality for a new city web site. From that document, the City will determine what content and functionality will be included on the new web site.

We will be gathering information necessary to write our recommendation by conducting public meetings, providing a public survey, speaking with members of the community, assembling a 'web feedback group' comprised of members from the community (more on this later), doing a 'competitive analysis' of other cities' web sites, interviewing people within the City of Northfield, analyzing electronic data from the old web site, and gathering any input we receive through this online weblog.

This weblog is maintained and moderated by Livefront.

Thanks for visiting!

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### **Who is Livefront?**

Posted by Mike on May 12, 2005

Livefront is a team of designers and developers committed to building the best web sites possible. The team dedicated to the City of Northfield project consists of Mike Bollinger (founder), Paul Larson, Ryan Bonnell, and Mike Hill.

Find out more about Livefront at <http://www.livefront.com>. You may contact us at [info@livefront.com](mailto:info@livefront.com).

If you have questions, suggestions, or you want to share your ideas with the City, please contact Deanna Kuennen at the City of Northfield: 507-645-3069.

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### **Contact Information**

Posted by Mike on May 13, 2005

If you have questions, suggestions, or you want to share your ideas for a new web site with the City, you may call or email Deanna Kuennen at the City of Northfield. Phone number 507-645-3069. Email [Deanna.Kuennen@ci.northfield.mn.us](mailto:Deanna.Kuennen@ci.northfield.mn.us).

(You may contact Livefront by emailing us at [info@livefront.com](mailto:info@livefront.com).)

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### **Public Survey coming soon**

Posted by Mike on May 15, 2005

In addition to our public forums, we are collecting ideas and thoughts about content, navigation, usability, design, and functionality through a public survey.

The survey will be made available on this web site by June 1.

We'll post another blog entry when the survey is available.

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### **Share your ideas**

Posted by Paul on May 16, 2005

Come share your ideas for a new city web site at the City of Northfield Web Redesign Public Forum coming up on Monday, May 23rd at 7:00pm. The event is located in room SS103 of the Northfield Community Resource Center. [Click here for directions](#) (be sure to scroll down).

Can't make it to this one? We are hosting the exact same forum on June 14th at 5:30pm at the City Hall. Mark it on your calendar now!

#### Comments

[Chip Cuccio](#) on May 20, 2005

Sharing my ideas:

Stick with standards.

Validate your code.

Be platform/browser independent.

No funky client-side scripting.

Be accessible.

Don't overuse tables (IE: for layout)use tables for presenting tabular data (what a concept).

No funky image mouseovers.

Keep the pages light and fast-loading.

Be smart about URI's - keep them friendly and permanent (see <http://www.w3.org/TR/chips/#uri>).

Don't bloat the HTML code with markup...use CSS - separate the markup from the structure/content.

\$0.02 banked.

[Bruce Morlan](#) on May 22, 2005

\* Reach out to everyone, keep pages small and to the point.

\* Keep navigation simple.

\* Stay in HTML, avoid client-side scripts and really avoid Java-like fatstuff.

- \* Do NOT post PDFs unless absolutely necessary, and even then, DON'T.
- \* Even if all you do is print the forms out, start providing online support for requests. Even if the user has to print it and bring it in to hand it (and perhaps a check) in, start supporting online submission.
- \* INSIST ON AND CONFIRM that your system is well-documented so you can keep it even if the contractor goes away. It can be VERY MUCH worth it to hire a secondary contractor to do nothing but track this aspect of your site.
- \* Did I say not to use PDFs as a workaround?
- \* Add support for blogging by key officials, train them in using blogs to explain and discuss decisions (see my Planning Commission blog at <http://nfld.us/blogs/morlan/> for an example).

[Chip Cuccio](#) on May 23, 2005

Well said, Bruce.

But I don't think PDFs are a bad idea for certain types of documents. I would much rather see transcripts, council minutes, etc. in PDF format than markup-laden HTML.

- 1: The PDF specification is an open format ([http://partners.adobe.com/public/developer/pdf/index\\_reference.html](http://partners.adobe.com/public/developer/pdf/index_reference.html)).
- 2: PDFs honor accessibility specifications out-of-the-box (<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/solutionsacc.html>).
- 3: PDF documents have more printing/saving options as opposed to an HTML document on the web (even better than "printer-friendly" HTML pages).
- 4: PDF typefaces and graphics are anti-aliased and scalable (good for folks with not-so-good vision), HTML is not scalable.

Personally, I say, "use PDFs where appropriate".

Balance: \$0.04 :-)

[Bridgett S](#) on May 31, 2005

Website suggestions.

If you are serious about having a city website, I think it is good to have someone to monitor and respond to questions and comments on a daily basis.

Additionally, it should be easy to navigate, attractive, and provide information in a timely manner.

If the website states that something will be added by a certain date, then that date should be adhered to, or if the thing cannot be accomplished, then post another date, don't just leave it hang. Real people are watching and waiting.

In other words, run it like an professional office would be run, and not something deviod of substance,

just because you cannot be seen or heard as you would be in person or on the phone.

[Michael Christopherson](#) on June 04, 2005

I'd like to thank Livefront and the city of Northfield. This community is full of people who are passionate about web design, web development, and most importantly, Northfield. I'm pleased to see that you are making an effort to involve them in this project. I'm talking about the survey, the forums and the blog. All great. Keep up the good work!

I just want to expand on some of the excellent points that Chip made in his May 20 post. I think I'll start with his first point and go from there.

Stick with Standards

What are standards?

Short answer: recommendations and guidelines established by the WC3, an international organization, about how web sites should be developed.

Long answer: an entire web design philosophy intended to make websites browser independent, faster loading, less costly to develop, less costly to maintain, more accessible, more internationalized and more future-proof.

Why should we follow the guidelines established by the WC3?

Long answer: the WC3 does a pretty darn good job of representing the best interests of individual web users

Short answer: it is either the WC3 or Microsoft

If standards are so great, why doesn't every website use them?

In the past, browser support for web standards was limited and inconsistent. Thus, it just wasn't practical for web designers and developers to focus on standards. Also, there are several myths about standards-based websites (they are boring, difficult to develop, they all look like blogs, etc). For more info about these myths, visit [The Way Forward](#).

Are standards really necessary for Northfield's City website?

Well they would certainly help to make it less costly to maintain, more accessible for people with disabilities, more internationalized (English/Spanish) and more future-proof.

How can I learn more about the benefits of web standards?

You can start by visiting [The Way Forward](#), or if you thirst for knowledge, you can read a book about it. I recommend Jeffrey Zeldman's "[Designing with Web Standards](#)".

### **Thanks for participating**

Posted by Mike on May 25, 2005

Thanks to those who attended the Public Forum on Monday night. The City of Northfield appreciates your input and participation in this process!

We are looking forward to the next Public Forum on June 14, 5:30pm at in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Please contact Deanna Kuennen with any questions.

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### **Take the online survey!**

Posted by Mike on June 01, 2005

The City of Northfield is collecting information from the community to make an improved web site. One of the ways they are collecting information is through an online survey.

[Click here to take the survey.](#)

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### **¡Participe en la encuesta cibernética!**

Posted by Mike on June 13, 2005

La Ciudad de Northfield está recopilando información del pueblo para mejorar su sitio cibernético. Una manera de recopilar información es a través de una encuesta cibernética.

[Haga un clic aquí para participar en la encuesta.](#)

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### **Public Forum Tonight**

Posted by Mike on June 14, 2005

DRAFT

There will be a public forum tonight (Tuesday, June 14) at 5:30pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Please contact Deanna Kuennen with any questions.

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### **Public Forums complete**

Posted by Paul on June 15, 2005

Thanks to all of those who attended the City of Northfield's public forums regarding a new city web site. Our team was able to collect a lot of great information.

Between the focus groups, the public survey, the public forums, comments from this weblog, electronic data from the old web site, and interviews with stakeholders inside the City, we have an incredible amount of data from which we can make recommendations to the City.

[It's not too late to take the survey! Español or English.](#)

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### **June 20: Last day to take the SURVEY**

Posted by Mike on June 20, 2005

This is the last day to take the online survey.

### **What's Next?**

Posted by Mike on June 23, 2005

The Livefront team will present a document to the City of Northfield on July 8, 2005. This document will outline specific recommendations regarding the design, content, information architecture, usability, and functionality for a new city web site. The document will also make recommendations as to what should be implemented now (Phase I) and what can wait for later (Phase II) when and if monies become available. We will provide recommendations; the City itself decides the actual scope of the project moving forward.

The document we present will make recommendations based on the information we gathered from the community and people inside the City across the last 6 weeks. To gather this information we conducted public meetings, provided a public survey, spoke with members of the community, assembled focus groups comprised of members from the community, did a 'competitive analysis' of other cities' web sites, interviewed people within the City, analyzed electronic data from the old web site, and gathered input we received through this online weblog.

The City hopes to have their new web site up and running by the end of the year (at the latest).

DRAFT

# Appendix H: Focus Groups

## Abridged meeting notes

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### Meeting 1: 3 members

#### Navigation

**P1:**

Elderly population—most successful thing is something that looks like tabs.

#### Search

**ALL:**

Search feature is important

#### Photography

**P2:**

I like the idea if it doesn't add a lot of cost and it doesn't take away from layout. A picture of Lee and Kathy Lansing might be a cool idea. Photos of local things would be important (e.g. bridge square photo)

**P3:**

I like the idea, so that the site can look clean, inspire confidence, etc.

**P2 & P3:**

Definitely necessary to make the site more personal

**P1:**

Anything that's straight-forward...clarity, cleanness, and ease makes tax-payers feel good. Don't want to do fancy things. The City may be able to direct to other web sites that look good or have pictures, etc.

#### Blogs

**ALL:**

City should be information only – not a discussion forum or blog. That's a whole another group of people...only a sliver of the population would be interacting on that type of functionality. If it's going to be considered, do it in Phase 3 or 4.

**P3:**

It definitely is a tension because we try and cater to the millennial group. But City staff will have the freedom to post through CMS...don't need interactive comment-based stuff.

**P1:**

Bloggging is a cultural phenomenon...tax-payer dollars should not go towards that. If, as part of their job descriptions, they blog, that would DEEPLY concern me. By doing their job, they put information out by posting on a page. But bloggging is different.

**P1:**

I'm all for blogs, but in a different setting. It's "fraught with danger" when it's a public thing. The City should act as a switch to get you to those places. And those places should have links back!

#### Email Subscription

**ALL:**

We wouldn't want content slamming into email. We would NOT prioritize it and not read it. In general, if people are interested in something, they'll go look for it.

**P3:**

Current school district doesn't do an email subscription type of thing, but my old district did. I wouldn't be interested.

**P3:**

It gets to be confusing for non-tech people and then they get mad that they're subscribed to only a few things.

**P1:**

Instead, put energy into making site easy to use and navigate.

### **Standards**

**P1:**

Site does need to be designed with idea that people may be pulling data up on cellphone or PDA

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**P2:**

A Frequently Asked Questions section would be good.

### **Feedback/Comment Form**

**P2:**

“Do you have a question or comment for the mayor? Click here.” Invite people to give feedback.

**ALL:**

Feedback should be one-way.

E: If you have questions or comments, call here. Feedback mechanism

### **Comments about online transactions**

**P1:**

Need to address security and identity theft....some sense of confidence that nothing of personal nature is being captured. Encrypted on the way in and the way back and how it's stored. If it's in phone book, it doesn't need to be encrypted (name, email, phone).

**P3:**

The school district uses revtrack to handle credit card transactions and similar things.

### **General Comments**

**P1:**

The web site should have the aroma of malt-o-meal and sound of waterfalls!

### **Online forms, payment processing**

**P3:**

Any online payment processing or online forms would require a huge back-end system.

**P1:**

Yes, just have forms to download, print, and send in. Collecting data live will take too much money. (ALL agrees.) Maybe do it in phase 2.

### **Maps**

**P1:**

One of the most useful things I've found is a map....need a good map. Downtown, parks, churches. Basic map on how to get to Northfield, but also basic map of downtown, hospital, college, historic downtown. Maybe link to chamber of commerce.

**P3:**

Direct link to district map.

### **Calendar**

**P2:**

I think a community calendar is really important.

**P1:**

No, whatever tax payers pay for should be on city site. There are issues with a calendar that lists events from all over the city. Does city endorse those events? How many organizations get to be listed?

**P3:**

Yes. Who does marketing? Who does city endorse? The perception to the end-user (especially those non web-savvy) is that anything on the city web site is endorsed by the City. There is too much liability there.

**P2:**

Given issues, maybe a city-wide calendar is not the best option given the liabilities associated.

**P1:**

It is possible to do something fairly attractive...show what city offers and then below that simply link to other organizations' event calendars. Then viewer is self-selecting what they are interested in. The City should be a traffic manager as opposed to content manager...also provide disclaimer. Perhaps the City can aggregate content from the Northfield News bi-weekly calendar?

### **Spanish**

**P3:**

This is something extra, but essential...large and growing Latino population. We are not addressing needs of Latino residents. Pages that could be viewed in Spanish.

**ALL:**

It is growing, but there is the question of resources. It would take an incredible amount of work.

**P3:**

Also draw events from Latino population in addition to just translating.

### **General Project**

**P1:**

Largest problem is web pages that are out of date.

**P1:**

Whatever city does, don't let scope creep. Whatever you do, do it well.

**P3:**

My advice is to start small but do it really well.

**P1:**

Northfield problem: lots of unemployed extremely bright (opinionated) individuals...Of all things nice to do, what is achievable or reasonable?

That said, Northfield does have a tremendous volunteer ethic...

**P1:**

For this project to succeed in the long-term, it requires a city communications person. If we had one, could justify it by saying we have increased business in town or x number of merchants have come, etc.

### **Visitors page:**

**ALL:**

There is an opportunity for the City to draw visitors.

As city works to attract visitors, it makes sense to have a big visitor button.

### **Newcomers Page:**

**P2:**

It would be cool to list all the things a 3-year old could do in this town, senior activities, mom's groups, sports organizations. Contact name and person.

**ALL:**

But, someone would need to aggregate content.

### **Volunteer page:**

**P2:**

It would be cool to have a list of projects and volunteers.

**ALL:**

Once again, someone would need aggregate content.

### **Senior Center**

**P1:**

Ideally, the senior center would have a calendar of events. Also, would ideally be able to register online with credit cards, etc... A senior center calendar of events is the single most important thing along with basic information of service.

### **Community Ed**

**P3:**

Link to the Community Ed home page. Users can register there online for community events.

### **School District**

**P3:**

Just link to the district web page. We have been updating the District web site in the last year.

## **Meeting 2: 3 members**

### **General Project**

**P1:**

I want to be assured that there is a real commitment on behalf of city council to make this site a priority.

**P2:**

It's possible to do this without adding people to staff. Lf can give us the software for dept managers to update their portion with pertinent information...but it still takes commitment on part of administrator that it would be a priority to this.

**P3:**

If they can find a resource that really has a passion for this type of thing...people will find it fun and they will do it.

**P1:**

There needs to be someone in charge who is designated as leader/coordinator. There is a technology person.

**ALL:**

Focus one what the City needs to do

Focus on what city OWES the community.

NEED COMMITMENT FROM CITY STAFF

### **Spanish**

**P1:**

Incredibly expensive to do Spanish...don't think it's practical...can't afford it now.

**P2:**

Ideally, it would be great knowing that 10% of population...however, how many families have internet access...very few. Some would want to use at library.

**P1 & P3:**

Compromise...basic info and static information in Spanish.

### **Calendar**

**ALL:**

Overall community events – NO because the City will build expectations that will never be achieved. That would take additional staff.

**P3:** it would be VERY difficult.

**P1:** link to outside sites

**P2:** city has calendar for IT's own events... arts guild calendar is proving my point: if people don't contribute it won't be complete

**ALL** agree.

**P1:**

City just can't update that stuff.

**P2:**

Just link to calendars...St. Olaf, Carleton, link to public-access calendar, chamber calendar.

**P2:**

People do not call you up and tell you what's going on...person updating calendar has to call.

**P2:**

Calendar of city-specific stuff is really important. When does HRB meet? Library board?

## **Blogs**

**P2:**

Only Gary would actually do it. Phase II or Phase III. There's enough blogging going on in Nfld ... I don't think it would be necessary for the City to get into that game.

**P1:**

I don't think the City web site for a place for blogs. Because blogs are totally uncontrolled. No way to guarantee accuracy... If city council people want a blog, they can make their own personal blog. City shouldn't have one because they can't control it --- no opinion pieces. Against all blogs.

**P2:**

Blogs and writing style are so strongly linked to personality. Not everyone can do it wants to do that. It's a case of expectations...is Susan going to do it? I don't think so.

**P2 & P1:**

There is enough trouble keeping information current. Don't even go there. Have to be careful not only to put options but SUBSTANCE...what he CHOOSES to put up is an opinion in and of itself.

**ALL:**

The City web site should be pure. Northfield.org takes care of it...let's just keep it like that. Perception of the blog is important...people associate it with opinions. We need to allow different groups to be unique (ie calendar, blogs)

## **Consistency**

**P1:**

Something that is clear and simple rather than jam-packed. Consistent look-and-feel on every page.

**ALL** agree. Print clear and good quality. Not necessarily identical.

## **Photography**

**ALL:**

Certain amount of photography if it loads fast, is good, and isn't expensive.

**P2:**

Some photography on the home page. Be simple, consistent. Whatever you want to portray is what you need to do. Malt-o-meal wants to present family-friendly, value so pictures of family-friendly. Easy to navigate. People like visuals.

**P1:**

No picture of city hall!

## **Navigation**

**ALL:**

Everyone really likes Moorhead navigation.

"I am a..." is not really important...wouldn't use that to navigate.

## **Email Subscription**

**P2:**

Email subscription good if you can opt-in to.

**P3 & P1:**

Nice-to-have but not a top priority.

**P2:**

All-or-nothing thing. Determine top 5 things and on a weekly basis or bi-weekly basis things get sent out. These meetings will (or have) take place. Overall, nice to have but not essential.

## **Forms**

**P3:**

Make you a user of the site. Some might like to download OR fill out online. Some people might not want to do it that way.

**P1:**

Some does you can't do because of signatures.

**P2:** Forms are important online. . Idea: Sechlar pavilion.

**P1:**

Needs verifications...acknowledgement that it was received.

**ALL:**

Ranks pretty high.

**ALL:**

At a minimum have forms download, ideally be able to download.

**P2:**

Initial investment to make that happen, but it might make things more efficient.

**P1:**

I like the thought of paying utility online.

### **Visitor Site**

**P2:**

LF needs to be aware about CVB web site. Winona has developed all components together....portal. we're going to have northfield.org, visitingnorthfield.com, ... not going to come in through one entry point, but should be able to go to other ones easily.

**DL:**

City should link to CVB web site. Link to other areas.

Integrate city web site with northfield.org and chamber of commerce.

CVB web site will be online July 1 – devoted to tourism.

CVB is part of the Chamber of Commerce.

### **Meeting Minutes**

**P1:**

One thing Scott Neal thought was important was a web site as an archival resource. I'd like web site to be really easy to use on one level but also use deeply to access archival.

### **Information**

**P1:**

Important: Job postings, public safety info, emergency info,

Mixed feelings about 'recent news items'

On election night it'd be great to find out updates.

**ALL:**

Transit information is important.

**P1:**

Maps are important. Not necessarily zoning but maps of parks.

**P2:**

Photographs of parks.

### **Online report-a-problem**

**P2 & P1:**

Online report-a-problem forms: excellent, curbs, sidewalks, graffiti.

But you have to have city on board...have to acknowledge that they received it.

### **Front page**

**P2:**

Should be something on front page that changes weekly ...an interest item. Feature of the week (employee, citizen, new construction project, new EDA project, etc). Something that is of interest for both citizens and people looking to come here.

Need a reason to go there for "the hell of it."

**ALL:**

Make it look alive.

### **Target Audience**

**P1:**

City staff uses web site as a working tool. Evidently city staff uses web site to look up ordinances. So it

has to be two-pronged design. One that will be clear and useful to city staff and one that will be useful to someone who wants to know city pool hours. City staff looks at technical kinds of things...

### **Meeting 3: 1 member**

#### **General Project**

Web Site is a communication tool.

There can't just be a temp job in charge of marketing/communication on the web site, or no one will go to it

Important: don't just look at next year, look at 5 years from now.

- Communication manager that oversees web development

- Somebody that has responsibility

- Only as good as whomever updates the site

#### **Blogs**

Initially said no to blogs, but then said that the City needs to put itself in a position to direct communication...need to handle the stuff on northfield.org

Some sort of blog or interactive component...more than a news release, but less than a free-for-all.

#### **Information & Content**

Meeting minutes are less important

Easy to navigate, easy to access

When is the dump open, recycle leaves, trash

Calendar – aggregate content

One-stop place for community info (link to chamber)

Calendar

Biz services – water bill, permits

Clear priority goals is communication

Calendar and blogs BEFORE biz services

Communicate city goals and objectives effectively

Too much communication is on the heels (in a defensive nature)

#### **Functionality**

Target audience?

Video enhancements of meetings

Web cam meetings

Multimedia approach to the site

Register for park/rec stuff

#### **Home Page**

Highlights from city council meetings should appear on front page

Feature section → profile on city people, or, 'what's the EDA?'

Calendar

Polls

Next big community event that may or may not be city-sponsored

Downtown businesses

Blog questions: get in front of interactive, there is stuff happening in other places

Never visits site because he can't find anything (specifically, can't find heidi's phone number)

Front page needs to be a gateway – navigation categorized how people think

#### **Other city sites**

Carleton site is good...serves multiple audiences, built on gateway approach, based on what the audience knows

Maybe redwing  
A few in Iowa were good

**Usability**

Searching is important  
Navigation options geared towards people (don't assume they know what the EDA is)  
10 most accessed questions (is the recycle center open)

**Design**

Well-designed but simple and clean  
Very strong photos  
Design is as important as what is written

**Meeting 4: 1 member**

**Blogs/Discussion Forums**

Northfield org thoughts:  
If I'm just coming to nfld, then am I going to be interested in blog stuff? No. Skip the politics I just want information. If I'm a resident I will want a little bit of interaction about things contentious. City issues....role is not whether we should get a new art galleria. Discussion forums it's really easy to post things that are not the persona of the City. Someone that moderates the community....censorship. public forum about things the. Northfield.org issues she agrees with...unless they're calling for input on an issue. "We're intending to do this...what do you think?" type of things. For purposes of city web site, make it one-sided and they're providing information on certain things.

**Email Subscription**

Email subscription would be cool, but wouldn't do it personally.  
Electronic newsletter would be more interesting...meeting minutes  
Worthwhile to consider an electronic newsletter...would subscribe to that.

**Calendar**

Events on city calendar. It would be someone's role to submit items to the web site. It would be reactive. CEL would like to post. I don't see it as such a big deal...not-for-profit events and community events. Then you won't muddy the waters so much. It would be in organizations' interest to send submissions to the City.

Links would be better than nothing. People go to the official city site to get info about what's going on in town. Purpose of the web site is to sell the City to people.

**Design & Photography**

Design and photography is vital. Can't just have a page of text. I think the important thing is constant drill-down to more information.

**Spanish**

It's tricky to do Spanish for 5% of population. Ordinarily I would say yes, but I think its important to make sure your representing a big enough sample size of those people going to the web site. What is Hispanic internet usage? I would need more information.  
Expense is really great...PC roots say you should, but it doesn't seem feasible.  
If it was 30%, yea. But how many use the internet?  
But we do need to reflect the ethnicity of the City.  
Maybe a page in Spanish.

**Online Bill Payment**

If you put online payments it would draw people to the web site more. It's up there, but if the site isn't navigable or nice to look at, you don't want to add people.

**Online Forms**

If it costs more to type it in online, PDFs are fine...

**Front Page**

Front page: calendar events. Bookmark site for that reason.

New community developments---you like to think you're in a progressive town that is doing different things.

**Usability**

Links: links should be a window that pops up if you're going to an outside site.

DRAFT

# Appendix I: Interviews with Dept Heads

## Agenda, guiding questions

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### Agenda

- ◆ We introduce ourselves and our company
- ◆ We give brief agenda for meeting/interview
- ◆ We introduce the project and the process (including objectives)
- ◆ Inform everyone of project “givens” and reasoning (e.g. 508 compliance, consistent across all pages)
- ◆ We explain “what’s next” (we give recommendations to City in Phase I deliverable)
- ◆ We guide the ‘discussion’ with questions

### Guiding Questions (department-specific)

#### Message & Audience

- ◆ What is the primary message you wish to convey to your audience with your area of the web site?
- ◆ What are the secondary objectives you hope to achieve?
- ◆ What are the top 3 goals you have for your area of the new web site?
- ◆ How has the City web site had a positive affect on your department?
- ◆ Who makes up your current online audience — do you know? Describe your typical site visitor in regard to age, gender, education, and any other relevant descriptors.
- ◆ Who makes up your target online audience?
- ◆ What do you think users of your site will want to accomplish online? Why?
- ◆ What are the most common user scenarios? How will your site most often be used?
- ◆ How have visitors responded to the current web site? (comments, questions, etc.)

#### Perception

- ◆ Use three adjectives to describe how the are of the site should be perceived by the user (e.g. *conservative, friendly, formal, casual*).
- ◆ Is this different than current image perception?
- ◆ How is your department currently perceived? Do you wish to carry the same kind of message through the site?
- ◆ List any sites you find compelling. What do you find most interesting about these sites?
- ◆ List sites of competitors site and briefly state what you like and dislike about their overall site.
- ◆ How does you department differentiate itself from departments in ‘competing’ cities?

#### Branding & Design

- ◆ The City has decided, with our support, that all pages in the new web site will have a consistent look-and-feel, navigation structure, etc. What do you perceive to be the benefits and/or drawbacks of this?
- ◆ How important do you think having photos of Northfield are?
- ◆ How about photos of your specific department. For instance, the Transportation department could have a photograph of the Transit buses, the Police Dept could have photos of a real Northfield officer, etc.

- ◆ What websites have you seen, including those outside your field, that have a “look and feel” you would like for your website? Is this what your users would like?

### **Usability**

- ◆ Tell me about good navigation. Are there certain web sites that stand out to you that you think do navigation extremely well?
- ◆ Do you have any strong feelings about certain types of navigation (either positive or negative)?
- ◆ How important is speed?
- ◆ What speed connection do you usually use?
- ◆ What size text do you consider difficult to read?
- ◆ How do you rank the importance of providing 3 options for text sizes on the web site?
- ◆ How do you rank the importance of developing a standards-based web site that is accessible to people with disabilities?
- ◆ How do you rank the importance of ‘print this page’ functionality?
- ◆ How do you rank the importance of email subscriptions to news items or meeting minutes? What about RSS feeds to the same items?

### **Content, Features, & Functionality**

- ◆ What are three things you would change on your department’s old web site today if you could?
- ◆ How will the content for your department on the new site expand, contract, or differ from that on the current site?  
What types of online offerings (services and content) are provided on web sites of your competitors?
- ◆ What types of online offerings (services and content) would you like to provide visitors? From that list, what is “need-to-have” and what is “have-to-have.”
- ◆ Describe the visitors experience to the City web site, their experience on a page managed by your department. What do you want people to see and know?
- ◆ Describe the structure of pages that you perceive would be the best organization of information from the end-user’s perspective. Structure/organization
- ◆ What types of content do you want to display on the web (e.g. meeting minutes, documents, maps, job postings, etc)?
- ◆ Think about the most common requests for information you receive over the phone or via email. How many of these could you answer on the web instead?
- ◆ What publications could you post online (for archival purposes, to reduce mailing expenses, etc.)? Which ones could also provide content for other areas of the site?
- ◆ Which items on your current site are unnecessary?
- ◆ Other than photographs, are there any images on the site (logos, seals, etc.) that will need to be replaced or added? Perhaps banners to advertise upcoming events?
- ◆ Which of the following advanced features will you require (search, email subscription, rss subscription, contact us, sign-up form, etc)? Of these, which do you consider “nice-to-have” and which do you consider “need-to-have”?
- ◆ How do you rank the importance of providing alternate language options on the web site?

### **Maintenance**

- ◆ Is the information on the current web site regarding your department and services accurate, useful, and timely?
- ◆ How much time do you (or someone in your department) spend on maintaining your web site? How often are changes made to the site?

- ◆ Will your department use existing content? If not, who will be responsible for developing content?
- ◆ Do you intend on keeping this site updated? If so, how often?
- ◆ What information is static which information will need to be updated a lot? How often?
- ◆ What resources do you have to maintain the site? Who will be responsible for updating and adding to the site? (Keep in mind everyday things like fixing links and adding news items as well as major changes.)
- ◆ The new City site will be using a Content Management System. Who from your department will need training on this system?

### **Guiding Questions (general site)**

- ◆ How do you feel about the current Northfield Web Site in general? Think in terms of aesthetics, ease of use, navigational structure, usefulness of information, completeness of information,
- ◆ How do you feel about your Department's or Division's portion of the website?
- ◆ What aspects of the current web site are least successful? Most successful?
- ◆ How do you think your department fits into the greater City of Northfield web site?
- ◆ As a resident of Northfield, what services and/or information would you like to see included on the City's website?
- ◆ Do you find that the current navigation structure is confusing at any time?
- ◆ Do you find that the search features provide accurate results?
- ◆ Do you feel comfortable at the site? Is it somewhere you like to come to and browse around for information? Does the site become imprinted in your mind at all? Do you feel like you want to come back and look for updated information? Why, why not?
- ◆ Does it accurately portray Northfield and that we have to offer potential business and potential residents?
- ◆ Does our site stand out from our "competitors"? Consider taking a look at the following sites: (list here)
- ◆ Do you find that information on the website is updated? Do you feel that there is a sufficient depth and breadth of information on the site?
- ◆ How important do you feel the "look-and-feel" of the web site is? (think in terms of citizens, businesses, prospective businesses, and prospective residents)
- ◆ What would you like to see on the front page of the site (what would you like most easily accessible?)
- ◆ What do you think the best navigational structure for the site would be (Department and/or Topic, etc)

# Appendix J: Interviews with Dept Heads

## Abridged meeting notes

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### Clerk & City Admin – Deb Little

#### Overview

Clerk things run over into admin/council/etc

Clerk is official keeper of records – responsible for uploading meeting minutes, agenda, etc

Related docs: Resolutions, motions

#### Content & Features

##### *Elections*

FAQs – when is filing open, which positions are going to be open? What requirements are there?

Around election time – post election results the night of the election.

Link to a precinct finder – state web site

##### *License/permits*

1) Liquor licenses application form, requirements, link to state web site...CITY form, but is a spin on a STATE form. (Requires signature.)

2) Gambling permits – (goes through council process)...it's a STATE form.

3) Solicitors permits – (goes through council process) – CITY form

IDEAL is you can do everything online. AT LEAST and FAQ about the stuff if we can't provide application

##### *Links important (from old site):*

Ward and Precinct Map – ideally maps are under “maps” and “clerk”

State Election Info and Guidelines

Become an Election Judge!

##### *Navigation*

Elections/Voting is word people think of...not that things are filed under CLERK. So,...no FAQs for just CLERK.

##### *City Council Members*

Bio, contact info, photo, term info

##### *Meeting minutes, current agenda, past agenda*

Agendas have a ton of files linked – see old site

Weekly meeting notice list – could be taken over by calendar

##### *Boards/Commissions*

What they do, when they meet, how to contact, agenda, minutes, etc...no pictures.

##### *Mayors page/City Administrator's Page*

Would need to ask Lee and Susan about this.

##### *City-wide FAQs*

See most asked questions document from Deb Little

#### Overall Site Considerations

*Alerts*

Close for severe weather...meetings are cancelled, transit cancelled, etc. Alert box only for emergencies – controlled by admin

*City Map, Tourist info*

Decent city map you can print out on your own computer

Areas where people can go to see hotels, restaurants ... linking to chamber of commerce.

Great falls, Montana does hotel stuff.

## **Community Development – Brian O’Connell**

### **Overview**

The web site thing has been in hamper for almost 2 years. EDA is paying for all of this. Technology stuff mired process...wanted to focus on design, user experience.

City needs to market Northfield. Ideas: marketing potential that a developed web site can accomplish: appearance, and ease of use.

World-Class. Demonstrate that this place is worthy of taking in...really attractive, inviting appearance. Easy site to use and move around and get information. There are cost limitations...

Web, evolving technology – don’t want to do something today that would prevent us from moving to the next level. We need to develop the foundations so that it can evolve to be more attractive, more user-friendly, etc, as time goes on.

--

Our department does five things:

Community dev

Planning

Building inspections

Housing

Economic development

Those 5 programs touch the lives as much as any other department. We deal with property, money, housing, building stuff, high degree of focus by the public.

Good example site is Bloomington’s Building Department

### **Content & Functionality**

#### *Board and Commission Info*

Agendas and minutes for all boards/commissions for both current and archived setting.

Date of meeting, date of deadlines

Meeting schedules and deadlines

#### *Other Information*

Zoning applications

Zoning handouts

Zoning map

Link to Rice County Promap site and to Dakota count site

Building monthly permit summary

Adopted policies (ex. Roadway Addressing & Naming Policy)

HPC guidebook

Permit requirements

Upload inspection information

*Staff contact information*

*Applications / Permits*

Applications posted online in read-only format (PDF) that people can download. Have many applications and these will grow to be more in time. (example: Porch addition application) Ideally, would have some of these ecommerce, but many can just be transactional (print out and send in PDF)

Permits, loans, grants...

*Documents*

Automatically post date

Ability to break large documents into smaller files

Ability to put entire packet (PC, HRA, EDA, HPC, etc) online

Ability to have people comment (not blog) one-way with the City

*Inspections Scheduling*

Ability to schedule inspections online—users would see a calendar and be able to fill in open spots, but not override someone

*Property/GIS information*

Links to property and GIS information (property data, dimensional info, etc)

*Staff Reports*

Board and commission staff reports and electronic documents

Staff report for items....expire. – ideally you put it into one file and upload it.

It would be good to accept comments on staff reports... contact the City...not public comments.

*Public Notices*

8x11 typed style that says public hearing notice. Show on calendar.

*Navigation*

in relation to how community dev is organized:

- ◆ building, planning, housing, eda....you have application kind of things
- ◆ variance, zoning, condition to use: planning;
- ◆ Building permit: building

*Nav stuff*

Building and planning side: “permit” is meaningful

Housing, eda: assistance application, loans, financial assistance

*Stuff considered, but probably won't include*

List of open lots needs to be changed every day, so not a good idea to post on web at this point.

Population data

Current board and commission member list and contact information

*Maps*

Put some disparate maps on the site, but want to do layered in the future (but city is a couple years out from doing that).

Support GIS technology. Contain or accommodate GIS. In the future, support GIS system and other database stuff.

**Overall Site Considerations**

*Blogs*

Desire to have city web site communication forum...absolutely say we should **not** do that---should not be a communication medium, should be an Information medium. Blogs should not be on a public web site. System should allow you to get and convey information...not a microphone. Not convinced that it's an appropriate function for the government. More important needs that demand our resources. Conveying information but drawing a line.

*Photography*

Photography: not saying this is the right way or wrong way: old city got to the whole concept of branding... had logos, colors, key phrases. Had a PIO to make sure information was current, topical, etc. City of Northfield should come to grips with how we want to “brand” – want to be consistent. City should have a talk or discussion about how to brand ourselves.

*Spanish*

Relevant in two program areas ... but mainly “housing” language is becoming increasingly important. But, since we are so involved with property, building division and housing division will need to provide info in a different language. Our department inspects rental properties...residents could be ethnic background. Should we do it? Yea. But how far do you go into it? Housing population – Hispanic is the biggest ethnic. City should advance itself more in terms of conventional information sharing instead of web site to begin with. Yea it's important, but don't know where to draw the line or where to start.

*Structure of web site, CMS*

Government is not deep when it comes to staff resources... To maintain web site, this city has a lesser ability to assign resources than community he came from. So...ability of city of Northfield to update web site—require a task, then we won't be able to perform the function. The web site shouldn't create unreasonable demands on the organization. Our job is not to service a web site, it is to hold a public forum, etc

Don't want to have to create public hearing notice...document should navigate seamlessly...doesn't like the idea of having to log in to system.

*Documents*

No Word documents

**Engineering – Heidi Hamilton**

**Overview**

Engineering has 4 divisions:  
Wastewater – collection system and facility  
Water division – water towers, tanks  
Engineering –  
Operations department – streets, parks, facilities

From users' perspective, streets and parks should be separated:

Wastewater  
Water  
Engineering  
Streets  
Parks

Most important thing is to make doing business easier.

## **Content & Features**

*Park reservations, permits, and associated fees.*

**Highest Priority** is the four main things:

- 1) park pavilion reservations,
- 2) driveway permits and fees,
- 3) excavate in public right-of-way permits and fees.
- 4) Showmobile

Submit and pay for those online

If can't do payments, might as well just do PDF that they print. U of Minnesota does this.

*Frequently Asked Questions*

*Project Information*

A page for each project that has a paragraph about each project, a picture or map, timing information, contact information

*Questions contact form*

*Report-a-problem form*

Street-light outage form that is emailed

Sidewalk problem

Collection system

*Board and Commissions information*

EQC and Park Board (under Howard). Need agenda and minutes.

*Information*

Standard Construction Specifications (PDF)

FEMA/FIRM information (Flood insurance rate map) (federal emergency management agency)

Compost site information – hours, contact info

Shade Tree program information

Wastewater plant information – service information, general info

Collection system information – how to report a problem.

New Homeowner information (basic info related to sewer, etc)

Jetting information (wastewater info)

Sidewalk information – complaints, info

Water division:

consumer confidence reports (PDF),

year-end report (PDF)

public "announcement" info like information about water conservation, lawn care in well-head protection area, etc.

staff information

*Alerts*

Snow emergency announcement.

*Contact information*

Not just for department itself, but for all staff in the department

*What's new section*

An area to make maintenance activity announcements for information about "what's happening"

*Policies and procedures*

Don't necessarily want a page because no one will read it...but this information should be incorporated into

FAQ's, etc.

*Maps*

Maps of parks, trails, streets/address, Capital Improvement Plan

*Links*

Soccer, baseball fields – links to people who DO program those links (city doesn't deal with scheduling fields) community ed.

Links to community ed for ballfields and recreation

Links to NSA for soccer info

**Overall Site Considerations**

*Blog*

Blog – I would not want to do a blog

*Photography*

Must have real photos of Northfield – graphics to make it interesting --- strategically placed, great photos that show what photo is beyond historic downtown.

*Calendar*

Calendar – the City is not the person to keep the community calendar... it is bound to fail. Set yourself up for criticism. Who gets to be on the calendar? The White Supremacist group? Napa and local businesses have events...where is the line drawn? There will be groups we don't want to put on calendar. Any thing related to city functions, etc should go on calendar! Even stuff that is pseudo-city.

*Spanish*

Park reservations 75%

Spanish would be awesome – probably pieces more important than anything else.

*Other city sites*

Minneapolis has a bad web site. Not intuitive.

Bunch of stuff out there is super generic...things need to be changing, etc. Information needs to be current, changing, relevant.

*Easy to change/manage/update*

Ability to change in-house easily and quickly

*Info vs. Education*

Web site should be about information not education.

*Contact information*

Site-wide: Not just for department itself, but for all staff in the department

**Finance – Brian Grimm**

**Overview**

Main functions are payroll, utility billing, accounts payable, accounts receivable, investments, special assessments, debt management, and other accounting functions for the City including the annual audit.

The finance department gets many calls inquiring about utility billing, and says this is the main area in which a web site can help them out.

## **Content & Features**

### *Content*

The finance department would like to see a lot of information about utilities such as instructions on how to read water meters, etc.

### *Snowbird Form*

The Finance department has a 1-page “Snowbird” form that people submit when they are leaving for extended periods so that the utilities are managed correctly. The Finance department would like to see a PDF download of this form that web site users can print out and send in or drop off. Alternatively, the idea of an online form that submits to an email address is intriguing. The Finance department receives a couple hundred of these form submissions each year.

There are no other significant forms for the finance department.

### *3 financial documents*

The main three documents available to the public are:

- 1) Budget documents
- 2) CIP documents
- 3) Financial Audit Reports

The budget and CIP documents are related and can be uploaded together and posted on the same page. Budget and CIP documents are one document each. The Financial Audit Reports are separate from the first two documents and should have their own page. Financial Audit Reports and Budgets come as multiple documents, but are (or can be) coalesced into a single PDF.

### *Contact Information*

Want contact info and hours on the page.

### *Frequently Asked Questions*

Want FAQ page.

### *Information*

Utility rates

Purchasing meters

Auto-read meters vs. self-read meters (how to read self-read meters, etc)

Solid waste (garbage) information

Brief discussion of the fact that the City received the Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement from the 2003 financial report. This is the highest award that the City can receive on its financial statements.

Bond rating

Selling your home and moving

Service codes and rates (helping people read the bill)

Sample water bill (helping people read the bill)

### *Motor Vehicle*

Contact number and brief description of services provided (links to an outside sites)

### *Utility Billing*

The water, sewer, and storm drainage charges are sent as one bill to Northfield residents. The finance department is in charge of utility billing. They do not recommend moving forward with paying utility bills online because they are currently working on upgrading meters...once approved it's a 3-year project with the vendor. They say that it doesn't make sense to implement billing now because they will want to integrate with new system when that becomes available.

## Human Resources – Elizabeth Wheeler

### Overview

Web site we have now with HR does not project a very good image of the City from an employment perspective. No online applications...only thing they can do is post job...help desk has to do that which is ridiculous. People email assistant for an application request. Not a good image of the City...so far behind other cities. Not technologically advanced to have applications online.

She works with other cities from an HR perspective....just hr not necessarily other parts. Studied those and talked to people and taken parts of sites and put them together. Structure an HR web site as part of the City's web site so that a visitor's first impression is "wow...they know what they're doing and all my questions can be answered."

Addendums need to be attached to each job application...the number and type depend on the job. Expired job openings are a problem...need a site that is easy to update.

### Content & Functionality

#### *Navigation*

Organize it from a user's perspective: Go on to a lot of good web sites is that it isn't called human resources....Stuff shouldn't be lumped into Human Resources or Administration. Apple Valley does it great. Employment, current openings, and Application. Organize from the users' perspective.

Don't call it **City Jobs**,.....call it **Employment**

Don't stick it under "Administration" or another Department...stick on front page.

City of Mpls: GREAT LINKS: about Minneapolis jobs, about benefits, steps of employment, FAQs. Those links show up after you click on employment (They are sub-links of employment).

#### *Organization*

Apple Valley: Separate out between full-time and part-time, seasonal. If had to give something up, that would be it, though. Other thing I like is "other government employment opportunities" .... I would like Northfield to be a friendly resource. Don't be afraid to put down other opportunities.

#### *Videos*

MPLS: VIDEO library to show jobs. Way down on the list, but really, really cool.

#### *Other considerations*

Make sure to furnish adobe reader.

#### *Frequently Asked Questions*

FAQs are important. Mpls is a great example.

#### *Welcome information*

BLOOMINGTON: offered employment sites, the county they're in, info for people looking to move to the area. Good, nice way to say welcome. Wants to say hey, before you get employment with us, we want to help you out. Link to community web sites: School districts, chamber.

#### *Make it easy*

Eden Prairie....applications can be submitted in the following ways: mail, drop off, fax

#### *Email subscription*

Burnsville: subscribe to receive future employment opportunities by email. Thought this was really cool and thought it won't be too hard.

### *Application*

Waiting to change city's application to match what we put on the web.  
Each application has multiple addendums.

### *Addendums*

Addendums need to be attached to each job application...the number and type depend on the job. There are typically 3 standard addendums + a job description + a possible job profile attachment + a voluntary survey. The total number of addendums never exceeds 6.

### *Structure*

Show list of jobs, click to get details that tells department, shows link to application, addendums, deadline. (example site: Bloomington)

For each job: Title, department, app, addendum, deadline, expire date.

City of Eagan has good format for detail page... title, department, responsible to, position summary, position functions, requirements, physical functions, requirements, physical demands, work environment, work hours, pay range.

### *What's New*

Would use a "what's new" section to post Q&A types of information.

## **Overall Site Considerations**

### *Blog*

If managers are coached in how a presentation should happen, and then coached on legalities of whatever they're writing...I would use from q & a standpoint ... a way to display city employees...reward, incentive. I would do it...a good thing but focus on the web site first.

### *Photography*

Photography: nice for people looking for work...**no pictures of employees unless they have a sign-off.**  
Don't download slowly.

### *Contact Information*

Problem with web site: put peoples names as contacts...HR should take care of names,

Not everyone understand **data practices act**...if you talk about employee even if you're excited, etc, that employee can come back and get you.

### *Spanish*

Not necessarily ready for that from an HR perspective. Fireman, custodian, etc all need to speak English.

## **Library – Lynne Young**

### **Overview**

We would like to look professional, provide info about what the library has to offer. They use city site to find meeting minutes for people. They use search functionality a lot for their customers. They use City Code a lot.

### *Separation Issue*

Would rather have "home" mean home of library. The library has a different feel when you're dealing with kids vs. adults. Library is especially different from things like wastewater treatment.

Autonomous...as many web sites are. There are ton of people in town who use web but go directly to library...different group of people they are serving.

If we can't have flexibility then we should be separate.

Bought a different domain name – northfieldmn.info – points to the library directly.

Most frustrating when they couldn't do anything. How do you meet needs of new people...how can we from web site meet the needs of people who just surf the web...

### **Content & Features**

#### *Navigation & Layout*

Popular things at front of the page. Eliminate layers.

*Other library sites that have features they like:*

Hennipen county <http://www.hclib.org/pub/>

Owatonna

Albert lea

Faribault

Lainsboro: <http://www.selco.info/lpl/blog/>

James' old job web site: <http://www.wscal.edu/library/library.html>

#### *Ease of use*

James: Ability to change front page to priority...what's going on. Tax forms, summer reading program...what's hot, what's not.

#### *Contact information*

Phone numbers, hours, address

#### *Calendar*

#### *Links*

Links to friends of the library

#### *Inquiry forms*

Suggestion box,

Ask-A-Librarian box

#### *Blog*

BLOG is a good idea. Or just updating it on things coming in Lainsboro does this... 'what's new' section type of thing...no comments

#### *Long-term wish list:*

- Meta search engine would be great (separate from SELCO)
- Several databases online and searchable (separate from SELCO)
- Personalize search page on SELCO
- Room availability calendar...view-only calendar with email request
- Track unique hits that aren't from internal sources

### **Overall Site Considerations**

#### *Search*

Disappointed in search capabilities.. We often get questions about city council things. Can you find me the minutes for that... there was a search button but didn't work.

#### *Meeting minutes*

Meeting minutes archives need to be available and really searchable...  
New site should have old meeting minutes posted for archival purposes.

#### *Blogs*

BLOG is a good idea. Or just updating it on things coming in Lainsburo does this... 'what's new' section type of thing...no comments

#### *Spanish*

Nice to have, but what we see most Hispanic folks using is email. Don't see them looking for a lot of local information. Periodical information is used by Hispanic. In theory it's a good idea. But people are not hooking up to city's web site.

#### *Overall*

Got to keep it current and looking nice.

## **Liquor Store – Stephen DeLong**

### **Overview**

The main reason people would come to the liquor store part of the web site is to see basic information like hours, contact information, and address. A lot of the content would be static. They are very comfortable making changes themselves, but don't want any advanced features that require a lot of updating because they don't want to create extra work for themselves. Stephen would be writing and updating content for the liquor store.

### **Content & Functionality**

#### *Information*

Old page was uninformative. Would like to see a mission statement, hours of operation, address, and phone number. Want to answer the question: "Why are we in liquor business?" They have thought about posting information about wine in general, but this would be a static page that is not updated often. Have thought about posting bulletins about specials and promotions, in-store tastings, etc, on the web site, but this also would be a static page. They do not want to do anything with ecommerce. They like the Lakeville liquor site.

#### *Quarterly Newsletter*

Would like to post quarterly newsletter to the site.

#### *Email signup*

Would love to see an email signup to send out quarterly newsletter PDF.

#### *Navigation*

City home page, under departments is liquor store

Don't hide it – respect that position, but advise to show under department

#### *Frequently Asked Questions*

FAQs – didn't mention but I suggested and he said "yea..."  
Senior discount

#### *What's New*

"What's new" section – as they build a new store they keep up to date.

#### *Contact form*

Would like a contact form that submits simple results to an email address.

## **Overall Site Concerns**

*City web sites he likes*

Edina –

*Photography*

Classy photo of wine bottles – ranks really high (probably above e-services and Spanish)... functional but look nice...need to grab attention

*Spanish*

Hispanic – internet—good amount of customers, but don't know how much they use internet...no Spanish speaking workers at his store.

*Blogs/Interactivity*

Everyday stuff is out there – northfield.org so that stuff is not as important. A lot of the same people go to the City Council meetings – not so important cause it's the same crowd every week.

*Design*

DESIGN is really important. Web site should be informational but image is super important.

## **Parks & Rec – Howard Merriam**

### **Overview**

Macro and micro scale to dept – parks. Does design & planning and gives to public works to build it.

We manage parks and infrastructure (arena, pool, property)...but don't run the parks programs...community ed runs that – which is through the school district. They run those services under contract with the City. We do NO programming of recreation ... we reserve park structures and pavilions.

### **Content & Features**

*Park reservation*

3 parks – sechlar pavilion, odd fellows pavilion, riverside pavilion – rent for minimal fee – picture of each shelter, schedule, fees, terms of use. Barb does that right now through public works. Minority population uses the structures a lot – they might not have internet....how do you merge walk-in reservations with online reservations?

*Links*

Organized associations in town – sechlar has all baseball field stuff, softball and babcock, nfl hockey assoc at arena, ever-expanding nfl soccer assoc at spring creek park. Just make people aware of what's going on – do they have web sites or links...

- We need to be linked to Community Education web sites / school district

Perfect world people could get first-hand info about who's using parks...citizens could know what's going on in parks that are owned by the City. (Just link to the group.)

*What's New*

There needs to be a "what's new in city's resource and park planning" section--- 2-3 paragraphs on what's going on in the parks this week. (I.e. expect traffic complications on Jefferson as soccer starts.)

*Information*

Park page that has size, amenities,

Facilities page – address, hours, contact information

Trails – bike/hike trails ... maybe link to college arb

Park map with identification of facilities – GIS-based map that is a PDF

*Park Advisory Board info*

Identify the park and rec advisory board – meeting minutes and agendas – identify as a gatekeeper for anything to do with parks **and open space**.

*Showmobile*

*Youth Programs*

No info about “youth programs” because community ed handles it – but verify this

*Adopt-A-Park program*

No information there cause we make it up as we go: “Contact Us for more info” for now.

**Overall Site Concerns**

*Design*

The city web site needs to 1) be useful and 2) look good. The design needs to position the City as a design and arts community, but still be cutting edge. “The design should be clean and zingy.” Argues that style and substance is where we will get hung up: what do we look like? We can all agree on content, but design will be contentious.

Be bold and consistent in messaging – canon river.

Where I come from, images that are important.

*Blogs*

No blogs – let northfield.org do what they do ... we are not a news service. But, we run the City. Link over to Griff – partner with northfield.org

*Photography*

Good, visual medium – It’s all how it’s done.

**Police – Gary Smith**

**Overview**

Is representing Police and Fire. Thinks fire presence is important, especially for recruiting purposes, even if they don’t realize it.

Recruiting – esp for fire department, and for police explorers, reserves, officers

Education – pdf files, forms, brochures

Informing – up to date... upload call log, etc

**Content & Functionality**

*Online forms*

Contact an investigator: simple text field that submits to investigator email address

Report an Abandoned Vehicle

Request Traffic Resources (speed wagon)...need to collect name, contact info, location, reason

Application for Volunteer Services. 1 for reserves/explorers, 1 for volunteering time/expertise.....would like to do it online instead of download PDF.

*Online Survey*

Police Survey (how are we doing?)

*Emergency Numbers*

Visible and up front  
Also, Tip line information

#### *Information pages*

Police: CLEA accreditation section.  
Police: STOP program. Class information...can't register but can get information and forms.  
Police: Explorer posts  
Police: Reserve posts  
Police: Section about DARE program (STATIC)  
Police: Safety tips (STATIC)  
Police: Neighborhood watch groups – built-in board thing for block captains.  
Police: Crime prevention info...most are just descriptions with links and a phone number, sometimes a document to attach.  
Police: Description of divisions – org type of chart  
Police: A lot of static content about what everyone does.  
Fire: Fire dept does fire inspection, etc...works with building inspectors closely.  
Fire: Fire dept does education stuff for kids, fire prevention for month,  
Fire: History of Fire Department, pictures  
Fire: Clarify fire, rescue, rural fire

#### *Frequently Asked Questions*

#### *Navigation*

The City doesn't have a "public safety" department... so have police and fire as their own links.

#### *Things on old site that should not be included*

Request Street Sign Repair -> public works  
Report Lost/Found Animal -> not doing it anymore  
Product recall stuff

#### *Emergency Management Information*

Emergency management part of things...severe weather planning, etc. FBI bulletins come in PDF, etc. Police ALERTS.

#### *Around the block*

Take content from Around The Block... or post the whole document.

#### *Accident reports*

Far thinking – people get copies of accident reports online. Or, literally, instead of having to get report, they would enter case number to get full, finished accident. Build open system so we can expand.

#### *Parking ticket online*

Understands this is later on.

#### *What's Happening or What's New*

Section would be good

#### *Job applications*

HR won't let them post job applications, but could have an interest form so they can forward that to HR.

#### *Map*

Small map as to where the police station/public safety center is. Link to directions

#### *Ethics/Mission/Statement of Values*

Page for this stuff, but take off goals from old site

*Future ideas*

10 most wanted gallery  
Visual tour of police car

**Overall Site Considerations**

*Photography*

Has some great photography and thinks it is very important. Visual depiction is important.

*Blogs*

Eden Prairie blog style. Don't link to non-government ones.

*Pay water bill online*

Give people a reason to go to web site.

*Content timeliness*

Don't want press releases or news items to be visible for more than 30 days in case they are negative.

**Transit – Deb Little**

**General comments**

Try and make it a marketing piece so they're not the best-kept secret in town.

**Content & Functionality**

*Forms*

- 1) request one-time form (dial-a-ride)
- 2) work service ride form
- 3) youth summer pass form

All the above forms would email to the person that does scheduling. Forms would collect time, location, where they're going and where they're going back to, name, phone, email.

*Information*

Hours information (also when NOT open...holiday),  
Fares  
Where to purchase tokens,  
Connection to Jefferson lines,  
ADA information: buses have lifts, TDD phone number, etc.  
Customer service guidelines

# Appendix K: Electronic data

## Summary results

### Introduction

Electronic data for the old and interim web sites were sparse. Macro trends were difficult to analyze because the data we did have were available only on a per-month basis. The most important and relevant statistics we analyzed was the number of page views (page popularity).

### Page views

The table below shows the popularity (rank #) of different sections on the old web site, and later, the interim web site.

	Old Site (2004)					Interim Site (2005)					
	aug	sept	oct	nov	dec	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun
Home Page	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1
Library (URL 1)	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2
Library (URL 2)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Employment	5	5	6	5	6	4	4	4	4	4	4
Maps		10	9			5	5	5	5	5	5
Council Agenda						10	8	8	8	7	6
EDA						6	6	6	6	6	7
Council Contact Info						8	7	7	7	8	8
Library Reference							10	10	10	9	9
Weekly Meetings							9	9	9	10	10
Community	4	4	4	4	4	7					
Departments	6	6	5	6	5	9					
Citizen Info	7	7	7	7	7						
Public Facilities	9	8	8	8	8						
What's New	8	9		10	9						
Your Govt			10	9	10						
Development	10										

### Summary

For both the old site and the interim site, the home page and the library pages were most popular. It should be noted that the library data is biased because the computers in the library default to the library page directly. We do not know the extent of this bias.

Notice how clearly different the most viewed pages were with the old web site. The old web site had much more information available than the interim site. When this information *was* available, things like Departments, Citizen Info (links to staff contact info, city code, ordinances, etc), Community (links to other sites in the community) were viewed much more than things like maps, the council agenda, weekly meetings, and the EDA. Once the popular information was removed from the site, however, these less-popular items moved up the list.

The table above is helpful because it reveals the relative importance of various sections on the web site. It also shows that information was missed! When the interim site was taken down, a majority of the most important information was taken off the site.