

Northfield, Vermont is a community of 6,207 people (2010 Census) located in the heart of Vermont's Green Mountains. Home to Norwich University, the oldest private military college in the United States, Northfield is an easy ten-mile drive from Montpelier, the state's capital, and three hours from either Boston or Montreal. Until 2014, the municipal government of Northfield consisted of two elected boards: a Select Board elected by all eligible Town voters and a Board of Village Trustees elected only by voters residing in the Village. On July 1, 2014 the Town of Northfield and Northfield Village completed a merger to be the Town of Northfield with a new full-time Town Manager. Northfield is home to six covered bridges and the Dog River, a popular fly-fishing destination. The town also has nine churches, three banks, one grocery store, nine restaurants and one bakery among other thriving commercial businesses like Cabot Hosiery Mills, Inc. Northfield is also home to Norwich University, the nation's oldest private military college. Annual local events include the Northfield Labor Day Celebration and the art show showcasing the region's artists sponsored by the Paine Mountain Arts Council.

CATASTROPHIC EVENT

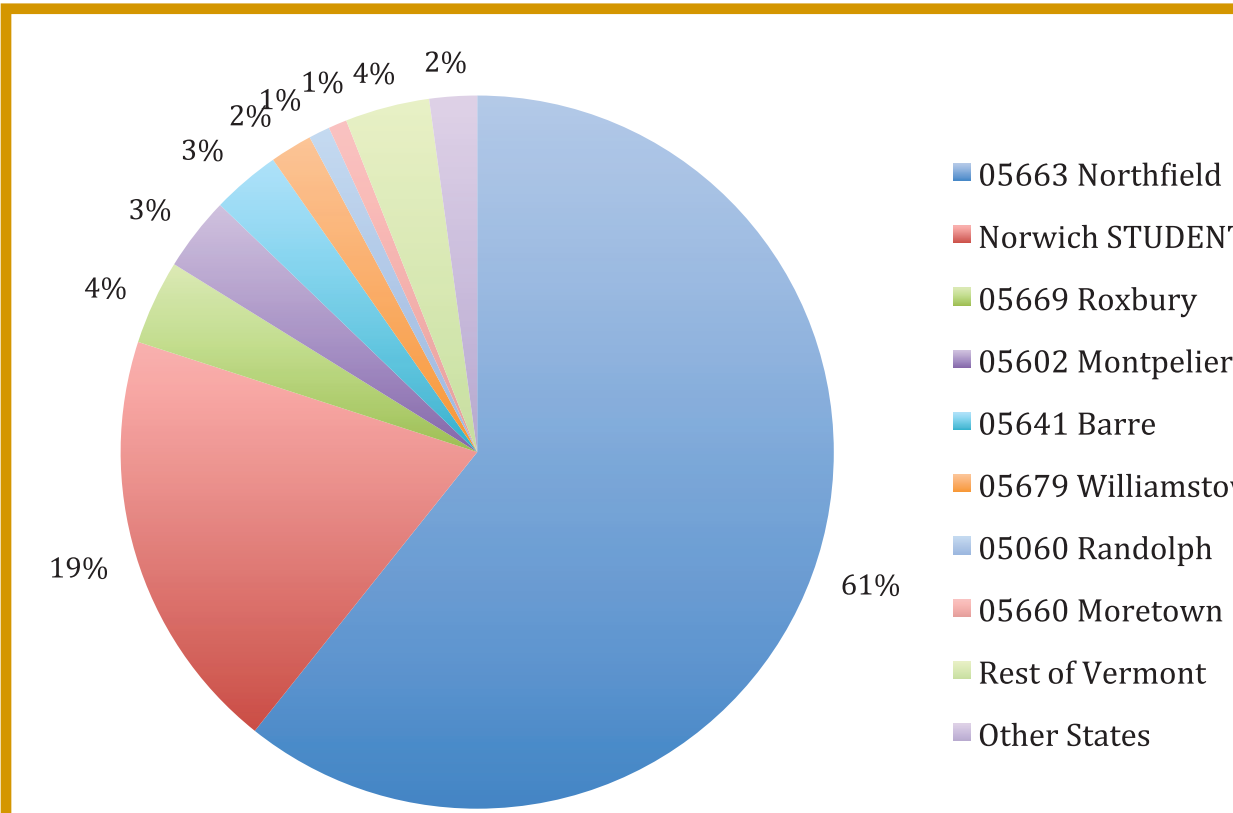
On August 28, 2011, Tropical Storm Irene dropped over 6 inches of rain in 12 hours in Northfield, VT. The peak stage height for the Dog River at the gage in Northfield Falls was 17.26', or more than nine feet above flood stage. Peak discharge was 23,500 cubic feet per second (cfs), whereas the mean flow rate for the Dog River is just 103 cfs. More than eighty homes in the Water Street neighborhood were badly flooded, experiencing up to four feet of water in the first floor. More than a dozen homeowners volunteered for the FEMA buyout program. Kenyon's Hardware store property lost significant portions of streambank behind the building, and the community is concerned about the potential for future damage in this area.

RECOVERY

To date, Northfield has done significant recovery work. The Common Plan developed in 2006 is currently undergoing phase-two work. Additionally, buy-outs of homes on Water Street are close to completion and demolition was completed in 2014. Significant streetscape improvements were completed along the Depot Square replacing asphalt sidewalks with concrete, new curbing, and ADA accessibility. Norwich University funded the purchase of a new ladder truck for the Town of Northfield.

The Vermont Downtown Action Team (V-DAT) was selected by the State of Vermont, Department of Housing and Community Development, Vermont Downtown Program to conduct a community planning and economic development charrette in Northfield on April 7-9, 2014. The V-DAT was comprised of experts in architecture, planning, landscape architecture, historic preservation, economic development, organizational structure, landscape architecture, engineering and community branding.

The V-DAT planning charrette operates on three key tenants: utilizing an asset based approach, addressing the community in a holistic manner, and conducting the exercise in a public forum.



MARKET STUDY

Ten Northfield businesses conducted a customer zip code survey that documented 828 customer visits from 41 unique American Zip codes representing 10 states. The chart indicates that Northfield's downtown has a market that serves as a true community center with 61% of the business from Northfield residents and another 19% from Norwich University Students. Regional customers rounded out another 15% of visits while "visitors" accounted for 6% of customer visits. There are opportunities to grow the visitor base to downtown while also reinforcing its role as a community shopping and dining destination that also caters to students.



PHYSICAL PLAN

The primary components of the master plan are organized around four primary geographic areas including the Gateway Areas (gateways leading into downtown); the Downtown Core, the Dog River Corridor and the Norwich University Area.

Gateway Areas: The gateway areas include the north gateway into downtown in the vicinity of Vine and Main Streets and the south gateway in the vicinity of Slate Avenue and Main Street. The V-DAT team focused its recommendations on the north gateway area where infill development and existing business enhancement opportunities, coupled with streetscape enhancements could energize this approach into downtown.

Downtown Core: The downtown core is the Depot Square area, the Northfield Common and East Street area of downtown. The downtown core is well defined with a strong sense of place. Strategies here focus on minor enhancements to the Common (building upon work done to date), creation of a unique district along East Street, infill development opportunities in place of underutilized properties behind the Mayo Building.

Dog River Corridor: This area includes the portion of the Dog River corridor south of Wall Street and includes the proposed park along Water Street where a significant amount of flood devastation occurred, proposed community gardens and neighborhood open space within the Water Street neighborhood, environmental enhancements, pathway connections between downtown and Norwich University and streetscape enhancements along Wall Street, better linking the new park with the Commons.

Norwich University Area: This area includes the neighborhood between the University and downtown core, centered on Central Street and the Norwich frontage along South Main Street. Norwich University is implementing its master plan; however, there are opportunities to enhance physical connections between the University and downtown. These enhancements include improved pedestrian access and safety along South Main Street and sidewalk improvements/repair along Central Street.



RIVERSIDE PARK

Northfield's plans to address the devastation along Water Street through the creation of a significant new park will provide Northfield with an outstanding recreational amenity that will protect the floodplain, offer green infrastructure improvements, and enhance the livability and resiliency of the community.



WAYFINDING SIGN SYSTEM

Wayfinding signs are likely to be a multi-year project with many different goals and objectives. Northfield should pursue funding for wayfinding as a critical need to direct visitors to the amenities throughout the community. The sign system designed as part of the branding package identifies primary and secondary trailblazers for vehicles, signs directing visitors to public parking, and pedestrian oriented signs. The pedestrian signs are designed to be casually implemented signs that direct visitors to additional shopping, dining, parks, and gathering spots in Northfield.

BRAND

The V-DAT team recommends that Northfield adopt a consistent identity program to market the community, its events, and its organizations. The community should contemplate a consistent system that can be incorporated into marketing pieces, banners, special events, and wayfinding signs.



FIND DIRECTION.
EXPLORE LIFE.

Northfield
VERMONT



BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

The V-DAT team worked with a number of property owners on building improvements that showed how simple façade improvements could increase the visibility and attractiveness of buildings and businesses in Northfield.

WE ARE NORTHFIELD

To many, life is a road. A road worn smooth by all those who have traveled it before, always moving, but never progressing.

But to a special few, life is a trail, fresh cut through the greens and blues of beautiful surroundings. On this trail, it never matters which direction you head, your always moving forward. Northfield, Vermont is on this trail, nestled by the waters of the scenic Dog River.

For nearly 200 years, leaders and heroes have traveled this trail on the grounds of Norwich University, the nation's oldest military college. At Norwich, students expect challenge, and achieve distinction.

As we look to the future, it is filled with a brightness that blends commerce and creativity, culture and community. We invite you to come back and experience our historically progressive energy as we take ownership of our future. Stand alongside us, and together we can begin our quest for the American Dream.

These trails come together on the green of the common where we celebrate life in the Green Mountain State. We are an authentic community with a rich past, deep connections to the land around us, and a promising future ahead.

Come explore this trail, uncover our bridges, enjoy our river, and experience the warmth of our people.

We are Northfield, Vermont
find direction. explore life.