



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

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To: Eric Campbell, City Manager
From: Adam Fletcher, Director – Department of Planning and Community Development and Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date: February 11, 2020 (Regular Meeting)
Re: Rezoning – 628, 648, 658 Virginia Avenue (R-2 to R-8 and R-8C)

Summary:

Public hearing to consider a request from Central Valley Habitat for Humanity to rezone three parcels zoned R-2, Residential District to R-8, Small Lot Residential District. The parcels are addressed as 628, 648, and 658 Virginia Avenue and are identified as tax map parcels 39-Z-14, 16, and 17. If approved, the parcel identified as 658 Virginia Avenue would have one proffer and thus would be conditionally zoned. Staff recommended approval and Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval 6-0 (Colman recused himself from the vote).

Background:

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Neighborhood Residential. These areas are typically older residential neighborhoods, which contain a mixture of densities and a mixture of housing types but, should have more single-family detached homes than other types of housing. This type of land use highlights those neighborhoods in which existing conditions dictate the need for careful consideration of the types and densities of future residential development. Infill development and redevelopment must be designed so as to be compatible with the desired character of the neighborhood.

The following land uses are located on and adjacent to the property:

- Site:** Two undeveloped parcels and one parcel containing accessory structures, zoned R-2
- North:** Single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-2
- East:** Single-family detached and duplex dwellings, zoned R-2
- South:** Single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-2
- West:** Across Virginia Avenue, single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-2

Key Issues:

The applicant, Central Valley Habitat for Humanity (CVHfH), is requesting to rezone three parcels zoned R-2, Residential District to R-8, Small Lot Residential District and R-8C, Small Lot Residential District Conditional. Each parcel is +/- 6,250 sq. ft., thus the total land area to be rezoned is +/- 18,750 sq. ft. The parcels have frontage on Virginia Avenue and are located between 100-ft. and 250-ft. south of the

intersection of Virginia Avenue and 3rd Street. The applicant's letter describes that rezoning the parcels to R-8 would enable CVHfH to increase the number of individuals or families served from three to six by allowing the construction of duplexes on the parcels.

With this request, the applicant has proffered the following (written verbatim):

There shall be no driveway entrances along the frontage of 658 Virginia Avenue (TM39-Z-17).

The above submitted proffer means that 658 Virginia Avenue would be conditionally zoned as R-8C, while 628 and 648 Virginia Avenue would be zoned R-8 with no conditions. The proffer addresses staff's concern about new driveway entrances being constructed too close and within the functional area of the intersection of Virginia Avenue and 3rd Street. Staff is concerned that two new driveway entrances, one entrance serving each of the new duplex units, on 658 Virginia Avenue would be within the functional area of the Virginia Avenue and 3rd Street intersection and would also be located where motorists would be queued or waiting for a red light when traveling northbound on Virginia Avenue. Limiting entrances within the functional area of an intersection helps reduce the number of conflict points and decisions that motorists must make while traveling through an intersection and improves safety in the vicinity of an intersection.

The applicant understands that the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) requires each duplex dwelling unit to have one off-street parking space. Considering the proffer, the only location where the two proposed duplex units on 658 Virginia Avenue will have access to have off-street parking would be to the back, eastern side of the parcel by way of the undeveloped alley that runs parallel to Virginia Avenue between 2nd and 3rd Streets. Staff encourages the applicant to consider improving portions of the alley with an all-weather surface.

The applicant has been made aware that the Comprehensive Plan's Street Improvement Plan and the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) calls for future widening of Virginia Avenue between Gay Street and 5th Street to create a four-lane roadway. When this occurs, on-street parking from Virginia Avenue would be removed and the parallel alleys would be improved by the City so that residents can access off-street parking at the rear of their properties. Until then, on-street parking is allowed along this section of Virginia Avenue.

Since the adoption of the R-8, Small Lot Residential District by City Council on June 25, 2019, until now, no property owners have requested to rezone their property to R-8. The R-8 district is intended for medium- to high-density residential development including, single-family detached, duplex, and, in special circumstances, by special use permit townhouse development. As previously described, the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Guide designates this area as Neighborhood Residential. These areas are typically older residential neighborhoods, which contain a mixture of densities and a mixture of housing types, but should have more single-family detached homes than other types of housing. The Comprehensive Plan goes on to say that this type of land use highlights those neighborhoods in which existing conditions dictate the need for careful consideration of the types and densities of future residential development.

The R-2, Residential District allows single-family detached dwellings and duplexes as by right uses. This neighborhood, however, contains a mixture of housing types including single-family detached units,

duplexes, (some of which are likely nonconforming to lot area requirements of the R-2 district), and nonconforming townhomes and multi-family dwelling units. New development within this neighborhood includes two duplex structures (four duplexes) to be built off of Collicello Street—infilling within undeveloped areas, where the lots would not have public street frontage. The development known as Collicello North is also nearby, which is planned to include single family detached homes, duplexes, and townhomes.

The R-2 district’s minimum area and dimensional requirements prohibit the applicant from constructing duplexes on each of the existing subject parcels. Each parcel measures 50-ft. wide and 125-ft. deep, with a total lot area of 6,250 sq. ft. The R-2 district requires each subdivided duplex unit to have minimum lot widths of 30-ft. This means the applicant could construct either one single-family detached dwelling on each parcel or they could construct a duplex structure on 648 and 658 Virginia Avenue and a single-family detached home on 628 Virginia Avenue. In either scenario, the existing R-2 district would allow only a maximum of three units. If rezoned to the R-8 district, because the dimensional requirements are less restrictive, a subdivided duplex structure could be constructed on each parcel, thus doubling the number of units that CVHfH could provide for the community. See Table 1 below for a comparison of the duplex requirements in the R-2 and R-8 districts.

Table 1. Minimum Area and Dimensional Requirements for Duplexes in R-2 and R-8

	Min. Lot Area	Min. Lot Width	Min. Lot Depth	Max. Duplex Density
Duplex in R-2	5,500 sq. ft./unit	30 ft./unit	100 ft.	3 structures (6 units)
Duplex in R-8	1,800 sq. ft./unit	25 ft./unit	60 ft.	12 structures (24 units)

The R-8 district has smaller minimum area and dimensional requirements and requires 25-ft. of minimum lot width for each side of a duplex structure. However, the R-8 district also allows up to 24 duplex dwelling units per acre, compared to the R-2 district which allows only up to six duplex dwelling units (three structures) per acre. While this is a significant difference in the maximum density allowed in this neighborhood, given the configuration and sizes of existing parcels in this area, along with the Subdivision Ordinance’s requirement that all parcels have public street frontage, staff does not believe the rezoning would create incompatibility within this block of this neighborhood.

Additionally, staff believes that the requested rezoning to R-8 and R-8C supports efforts to increase the availability of housing that is affordable for low- and moderate-income households. The requested rezoning also supports the following goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan:

Goal 5. To strengthen existing neighborhoods and promote the development of new neighborhoods that are quiet, safe, beautiful, walkable, enhance social interaction, and offer a balanced range of housing choices.

Objective 5.2 To develop approaches to increase the percentage of single-family detached and duplex housing units.

Goal 6. To meet the current and future needs of residents for affordable housing.

Objective 6.1 To promote affordable housing options, including affordable rental properties and affordable homes for ownership.

Objective 6.2 To promote home ownership to increase the proportion of owner-occupied units in the City.

Staff recommends approval of the request.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- (a) Recommend approval of the rezoning request as submitted; or
- (b) Recommend denial.

Community Engagement:

As required, the request was published in the local newspaper twice advertising for Planning Commission's public hearing and twice advertising for City Council's public hearing. The advertisement was published as shown below:

Rezoning – 628, 648, 658 Virginia Avenue (R-2 to R-8)

Public hearing to consider a request from Central Valley Habitat for Humanity to rezone three parcels zoned R-2, Residential District to R-8, Small Lot Residential District. Each of the parcels are +/- 6,250 sq. ft, thus the total land area to be rezoned is +/- 18,750 sq. ft. The R-2, Residential District is intended for medium-density, single-family and duplex residential development. The R-8, Small Lot Residential District is intended for medium- to high-density residential development that includes single-family detached, duplex, and in special circumstances townhouse development. The residential density ranges for R-8 are single-family, 2,800 sq. ft. minimum; duplex, 1,800 sq. ft. minimum/unit; townhouses, 1,800 sq. ft. minimum/unit; and other uses, 6,000 sq. ft. minimum. The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Neighborhood Residential. These areas are typically older residential neighborhoods, which contain a mixture of densities and a mixture of housing types, but should have more single-family detached homes than other types of housing. This type of land use highlights those neighborhoods in which existing conditions dictate the need for careful consideration of the types and densities of future residential development. Infill development and redevelopment must be designed so as to be compatible with the desired character of the neighborhood. The parcels are addressed as 628, 648, and 658 Virginia Avenue and are identified as tax map parcels 39-Z-14, 16, and 17.

In addition, adjoining property owners were notified of the public hearing; the property was posted with signage advertising the request; and a notice was provided on the City's website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends alternative (a) approval of the rezoning request as submitted.

Attachments:

1. Planning Commission Extract
2. Site maps
3. Application, applicant letter, and supporting documents

Review:

Planning Commission recommended (6-0, Colman recused) approval of the rezoning request as submitted.