



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

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To: Planning Commission
From: Department of Community Development
Date: February 14, 2024 (Regular Meeting)
Re: Preliminary Plat with Variances – 44 and 81 Wilson Avenue (Northside Village)

Summary:

Project name	Northside Village
Address/Location	44 and 81 Wilson Avenue
Tax Map Parcels	48-B-8B & 32
Total Land Area	+/- 5.23-acres
Property Owner	Northside Development Partners LLC
Owner's Representative	Colman Engineering
Subdivision Ordinance Variance Request	Sections 10-2-41 (a), 10-2-42 (c), 10-2-43, 10-2-61 (a), 10-2-66
Staff Recommendation	Approval
Planning Commission	February 14, 2024
City Council	Anticipated March 26, 2024

Background:

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

Site: Undeveloped and vacant parcels, zoned R-5C and R-8C

North: Across Mt. Clinton Pike, industrial uses, zoned M-1 and M-1 with the Technology Zone Overlay, and vacant property, zoned B-2C

East: A single family detached dwelling, zoned R-2; and undeveloped property fronting along North Main Street, zoned R-2 and M-1

South: Community Services Board property, zoned B-2 and B-2C

West: Industrial property, zoned M-1; and undeveloped parcels, zoned R-2

In December 2022, City Council approved the following requests associated with the subject site:

- A rezoning of a +/- 3.8-acre site from R-2, Residential District to R-8C, Small Lot Residential District Conditional and a rezoning of a +/- 1.44-acre site from R-2, Residential District and M-1, General Industrial to R-5C, High Density Residential District Conditional.
- A special use permit per Section 10-3-55.4 (1) of the Zoning Ordinance on +/- 1.44 acres to allow multiple-family dwellings of more than twelve (12) units per building.

- A special use permit per Section 10-3-59.4 (1) of the Zoning Ordinance on +/- 3.8 acres to allow attached townhomes of not more than eight units within the R-8, Small Lot Residential District.
- A request to close a +/- 5,529 square foot portion of Wilson Avenue adjacent to tax map parcels 42-B-32, 33, 34, & 36, and a portion of 42-B-9A. The portion to be closed is +/- 10 feet wide and +/- 553 feet in length.

Note that the street closure has not been finalized, but the applicant recently submitted documents to complete the closure.

A copy of the approved 2022 proffers are attached herein.

Key Issues:

The applicant is requesting to preliminarily subdivide +/- 5.23-acres of property by creating 58 townhome parcels, one multifamily parcel, and two common area parcels. The applicant plans to construct 58 townhomes and three multifamily buildings containing 34 multifamily dwellings. The preliminary plat also includes requests for variances to deviate from requirements of the Subdivision Ordinance.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Mixed Use and states:

The Mixed Use designation includes both existing and proposed areas for mixed use. Mixed Use areas shown on the Land Use Guide map are intended to combine residential and non-residential uses in neighborhoods, where the different uses are finely mixed instead of separated. Mixed Use can take the form of a single building, a single parcel, a city block, or entire neighborhoods. Quality architectural design features and strategic placement of green spaces for large scale developments will ensure development compatibility of a mixed use neighborhood with the surrounding area. These areas are prime candidates for “live-work” and traditional neighborhood developments (TND). Live-work developments combine residential and commercial uses allowing people to both live and work in the same area. The scale and massing of buildings is an important consideration when developing in Mixed Use areas. Commercial uses would be expected to have an intensity equivalent to a Floor Area Ratio of at least 0.4, although the City does not measure commercial intensity in that way.

Downtown is an existing area that exhibits and is planned to continue to contain a mix of land uses. The downtown Mixed Use area often has no maximum residential density, however, development should take into consideration the services and resources that are available (such as off-street parking) and plan accordingly. Residential density in Mixed Use areas outside of downtown should be around 24 dwelling units per acre, and all types of residential units are permitted: single-family detached, single-family attached (duplexes and townhomes), and multi-family buildings. Large scale developments, which include multi-family buildings are encouraged to include single-family detached and/or attached dwellings.

Transportation and Traffic

The Determination of Need for a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) form (“TIA determination form”) for the proposed development was completed during the rezoning process and indicated that the project would

not generate 100 or more peak hour trips, which is the threshold for staff to require a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA). Therefore, a TIA was not required for the rezoning request.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

As required, all lots would be served by public water and public sanitary sewer. The preliminary plat illustrates where water and sanitary sewer lines would be provided so that each new lot would have access to public water and sewer.

Subdivision Ordinance Variance Requests

Section 10-2-42 (c) of the Subdivision Ordinance requires all parcels to have public street frontage. Seven of the townhome lots would have public street frontage while the remaining 51 townhome lots would front along private streets, thus requiring approval to deviate from Section 10-2-42 (c). This Subdivision Ordinance variance has been approved multiple times throughout the City for many existing townhome communities and staff has no concerns for this project.

The second variance request is to Section 10-2-43 of the Subdivision Ordinance, which requires a 10-foot-wide public general utility easement along front lot lines and any lot adjacent to public right-of-way and requires at least a 10-foot-wide public general utility easement centered on the sides or rear of lot lines. Sheet 2 of the preliminary plat illustrates the proposed locations of 10-foot-wide public general utility easements, where some of the locations are modified. Public general utility easements are provided for utilities, including water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, electric, natural gas, television cable, telephone cable, and others deemed a utility by the City. The proposed public general utility easements would not preclude utility companies from negotiating alternative easements with property owner(s). The requirements, as specified in Section 10-2-43, are intended to ensure that necessary areas are reserved for the needed utilities in traditional subdivisions. Staff does not have concern with the proposed development deviating from this section of the Subdivision Ordinance.

The final three variances being requested are from Sections 10-2-41 (a), 10-2-61 (a), and 10-2-66, which are associated with public street design standards. Specifically, Section 10-2-41 (a) states that “[p]roposed streets shall conform to the standards and specifications outlined in the Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) except that variances to the standards for streets, alleys, blocks, easements, sidewalks, and all such related features may be approved on a case-by-case basis by the city council when” particular objectives are met. Section 10-2-61 (a) states that “[t]he subdivider is required to make all such improvements to streets, including grading, subgrade, surface, and curbs and gutters, in accord with the requirements of the city's DCSM.” And Section 10-6-66 states “[a]ll utility, street and alley improvements shall be provided in each new subdivision lying wholly or partly within the corporate limits of the city in accordance with standards and specifications of the city.” In particular, the applicant is requesting to deviate from DCSM Sections 3.1.9.2, to allow for an alternate paved “tee” turnaround and Appendix F, to allow reducing vehicular travel lanes on Wilson Avenue from 15-foot-wide lanes to 10-foot-wide lanes, and to reduce the public street right-of-way width from 50-feet to 40-feet. The applicant has submitted supporting documentation explaining the reasons for the requested variances.

Staff supports all of the variances that have been requested.

Housing Study

The City's Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) places the subject property within Market Type D, which has "neighborhoods [that] are characterized by the lowest growth of any market type and low housing volume turnover." Additionally, "[i]ncomes in different pockets vary greatly. Median household incomes across block groups in these neighborhoods have the broadest range: \$20,000 to \$91,000. This could point to a divergence of two conditions found within these neighborhoods: one of stable, high-income, low turnover neighborhoods and one of lower turnover in lower income neighborhoods.

Public Schools

The student generation attributed to the proposed 58 townhomes and 34 multifamily dwellings is estimated to be 52 students. Based on the School Board's current adopted attendance boundaries, Waterman Elementary School, Thomas Harrison Middle School, and Harrisonburg High School would serve the students residing in this development. Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) staff noted that schools are over capacity in three of the six elementary schools. Note that the City has been planning for the purchase of land for a 7th elementary school for a number of years as such a project continues to be listed in the City's Capital Improvement Program.

Recommendation

Aside from the variance requests as described herein, the preliminary plat meets all other requirements of the Subdivision Ordinance. Staff supports the variance requests and recommends approval of the preliminary plat.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- (a) Recommend approval of the preliminary plat and variances as requested;
- (b) Recommend approval of the preliminary plat and variances with conditions; or
- (c) Recommend denial of the request.

Community Engagement:

As required by the Subdivision Ordinance, a sign was posted giving public notice to the request for a variance to deviate from the standards of the Subdivision Ordinance.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends alternative (a) approval of the preliminary plat and variances as requested.

Attachments:

- 1. Site maps

2. Application and supporting documents
3. Approved 2022 Proffers

Review:

N/A