



# CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

OFFICE (540) 432-7700 • FAX (540) 432-7777

February 6, 2023

**TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

**SUBJECT:**

**EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING HELD ON: January 11, 2023**

Chair Finnegan read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Rupkey said The City of Harrisonburg purchased 1111 North Main Street, which is a +/- 3.68-acre property with an existing 6,730 square-foot two story building, with plans to use this property to create a permanent space for a low-barrier emergency shelter and to use the building as a centralized hub for service providers who assist individuals experiencing homelessness. Information about the project is available on the City website at: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/homeless-services-center>.

The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as mixed use. The Mixed Use category 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.

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

Site: Public use, zoned B-2 and M-1

North: Data center, zoned M-1

East: Commercial use, zoned B-2; and across Tyco Street, vacant parcels zoned B-2 and M-1

South: Across North Main Street, residential uses, zoned R-2

West: Single family residential and commercial uses, zoned B-2 and M-1

The City of Harrisonburg is requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Sections 10-3-91 (16) and 10-3-97 (15) to allow public uses to deviate from the requirements of Title 10, Chapter 3 of the Zoning Ordinance (ZO). Specifically, the request is to deviate from parking requirements that the ZO requires for a homeless shelter and support services facility.

Section 10-3-91 (16) and 10-3-97 (15) are SUP options within B-2 and M-1, respectively, that allow for any use defined as a “public use” to deviate from any requirement of Title 10 Chapter 3, which is the City’s ZO. A public use is defined by the ZO as “[a]ny instance where a lot or parcel of land, or any improvement on a lot or parcel of land, is used by (1) the city, or (2) another governmental entity having a contractual relationship with the city for the use of such lot or parcel or improvement.”

In the past, City staff determined that a homeless shelter would be considered a "transient accommodation" within the B-2 district per Section 10-3-90 (3): “Hotels, motels and similar types of transient accommodations. Nontransient housing facilities are not permitted nor may existing housing facilities be expanded” and that the off-street parking calculation would be based on the number of beds using Section 10-3-25 (9): “Hotels, motels and similar transient housing: One (1) parking space for each sleeping room or suite plus one (1) parking space for each four-seat capacity of dining and/or assembly spaces. In addition, one (1) parking space per employee.” For the shelter, the number of beds in a shelter is used to represent the number of sleeping rooms.

MTFA Architecture, a consultant hired by the City for the shelter project, explains in an attached letter that Harrisonburg does not have specific off-street parking requirements for homeless shelters. They further noted that, for individuals experiencing homelessness in Harrisonburg they estimate that 1 in 7.5 guests have personal vehicles and that other parking would be for support staff and volunteers on-site.

There is 5,000 square feet of space that will be used for office and clinic space, as well as 88 beds for shelter use. Using the City’s parking requirements for business or professional offices, which requires one off-street parking space for each 300 square feet of gross floor area, and the ratio of 1 off-street parking space for every 7.5 beds, in their letter, MFTA calculated that approximately 29 off-street parking spaces should be required and recommended no more than 30 off-street parking spaces.

Staff recommends approval of the request with the following condition:

The special use permit shall be applicable only to a homeless shelter and support services facility. The minimum off-street parking required for the homeless shelter and support services facility use is 29 spaces. Any future expansions to provide more beds shall comply with the ratio of 1 space per 7.5 guests. Any future expansions of the support services or for any new uses that might operate on the site shall comply with the Zoning Ordinance's off-street parking requirements, unless another special use permit to deviate from the minimum number of parking requirements is approved.

Chair Finnegan asked if there were any questions for staff.

Chair Finnegan asked if this is just about parking, if it get denied, that does not change the use of the building, correct?

Ms. Rupkey said correct.

Chair Finnegan said City Council has already purchased that building. This is just about parking spaces.

Chair Finnegan asked if there were any more questions for staff. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and invited the applicant or applicant's representative to speak to their request.

Amy Snider, Acting Deputy City Manager, came forward regarding the request. I am the project lead for the Homeless Services Center project. Thank you all for your service as Planning Commissioners and for your consideration of this request. Staff has outlined well the rationale for our request. I am happy to answer any questions.

Chair Finnegan asked if there were any questions for the applicant's representative. Hearing none, he asked if there was anyone in the room or on the phone wishing to speak to the request. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Chair Finnegan said I do want to recognize that we did get at least one email in opposition to this request. It came through today.

Ms. Rupkey said yes, I got one email today.

Chair Finnegan said it was from the owner of the Dollar General that is next door. That was against the request. As we discussed earlier, denying this request would not do anything regarding the use of the building. It would only change the shape of the parking lot. I am in favor of this request. The City has already purchased the building for this purpose. A lot of what we do behind this dais has an impact on the housing that gets built in the City. Homelessness is one of the many symptoms of communities that do not have enough housing. I would be in favor of this request.

Commissioner Byrd said I do not see a reason to have more parking spaces than necessary, especially when the property has so much grass. I am also in favor of this request.

Commissioner Byrd moved to recommend approval of the request, as presented.

Commissioner Orndoff seconded the motion.

Chair Finnegan called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Armstrong	Aye
Commissioner Byrd	Aye
Commissioner Orndoff	Aye
Commissioner Washington	Aye
Chair Finnegan	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the SUP request passed (5-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on February 14, 2023.