



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

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To: Ande Banks, City Manager
From: Adam Fletcher, Director, Department of Community Development and Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date: December 10, 2024 (Regular Meeting)
Re: Preliminary Plat with Variance from the Subdivision Ordinance – 1211, 1225, 1245, 1261, 1311 Port Republic Road (Weston Park)

Summary:

Project name	Weston Park
Address/Location	1211, 1225, 1245, 1261 & 1311 Port Republic Road
Tax Map Parcels	88-F-7, 8, 9 & 10
Total Land Area	+/- 19.66-acres
Property Owner	PRR 1 LLC
Owner's Representative	Valley Engineering
Subdivision Ordinance Variance Requests	10-2-41 (a), 10-2-61 (a), and 10-2-66
Staff Recommendation	Approval
Planning Commission Recommendation	November 13, 2024 Approval (6-0)
City Council	December 10, 2024

Background:

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

Site: Single-family detached dwelling and undeveloped land, zoned R-1

North: Single-family detached dwelling and undeveloped land, zoned R-1

East: Across Port Republic Road, single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-1

South: Single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-1; and Healthy Community Health Centers, zoned B-2C

West: Single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-1

On April 9, 2024, City Council approved two requests, which included:

- Rezoning the subject site from R-1, Single-Family Residential District to R-8C, Small Lot Residential District Conditional, and
- A special use permit to allow townhomes of not more than eight units in the R-8 district.

A copy of the approved 2024 rezoning proffers is attached herein. The approved special use permit included the following condition:

- Attached townhomes of no more than six (6) units.

Key Issues:

The applicant is requesting to preliminarily subdivide +/- 19.66-acres of property by creating 26 single-family detached dwelling lots, 30 duplex lots, 70 townhome lots, four common area lots, and to dedicate public street right-of-way.

As part of the preliminary subdivision process, the applicant is requesting variances to deviate from requirements of the Subdivision Ordinance (SO).

Note that the applicant has submitted proposed public and private street names that are currently being reviewed by staff for compliance with street naming and addressing standards and will be finalized as part of the administrative final platting process. The street names proposed by the applicant include: Weston, Pioneer, Frontier, Colonial, Serene, Serene Valley, and Starlight.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Low Density Mixed Residential and Limited Commercial:

Low Density Mixed Residential

These areas have been developed or are planned for residential development containing a mix of large and small-lot single-family detached dwellings, where commercial and service uses might be finely mixed within residential uses or located nearby along collector and arterial streets. Duplexes may be appropriate in certain circumstances. Mixed use buildings containing residential and non-residential uses might be appropriate with residential dwelling units limited to one or two dwelling units per building. Attractive green and open spaces are important for these areas and should be incorporated. Open space development (also known as cluster development) is encouraged, which provides for grouping of residential properties on a development site to use the extra land for open space or recreation. The intent is to have innovative residential building types and allow creative subdivision designs that promote neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, connected street grids, community green spaces, and the protection of environmental resources or sensitive areas (i.e. trees and floodplains). Residential building types such as zero lot-line development should be considered as well as other new single-family residential forms. The gross density of development in these areas should be around 7 dwelling units per acre and 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.

Limited Commercial

These areas are suitable for commercial and professional office development but in a less intensive approach than the Commercial designation. These areas need careful controls to ensure compatibility with adjacent land uses. The maintenance of functional and aesthetic integrity should be emphasized in review of applications for development and redevelopment and should address such matters as: control of access; landscaping and

buffering; parking; setback; signage; and building mass, height, and orientation. It is important that development within Limited Commercial areas does not incrementally increase in intensity to become similar to the Commercial designation. Efforts should be made to maintain the intent as described above.

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 TIA. Know that during review of the rezoning request, staff and the applicant worked together to plan for the public street network including to connect to existing street stubs as well as to stub public streets to neighboring properties for future connections. The proffered public street rights-of-way and accommodations for pedestrian facilities are shown on the preliminary plat. Requested variances from the Subdivision Ordinance requirements are discussed in the *Subdivision Ordinance Variance Requests* section of this report.

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 public sanitary sewer.

Subdivision Ordinance Variance Requests

Section 10-2-42 (c) of the Subdivision Ordinance (SO) requires all parcels to have public street frontage, however the applicant is requesting a variance to allow most of the townhome parcels to not have public street frontage. Most townhome parcels will only have frontage along Private Streets A, B, and C as illustrated on the preliminary plat. This particular 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 10-2-61 (a) of the SO, which requires the subdivider to make all improvements to streets in accord with the City’s Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM). This variance is being requested to allow the developer to dedicate public street right-of-way without building the actual street. This is shown as Public Street C, opposite Westmoreland Drive. Among other things, proffer #5 from the 2024 rezoning requires the applicant to dedicate public right-of-way and temporary construction easements to allow for the future extension of Westmoreland Drive through the northern corner of the property. The staff report for the rezoning described that “[i]t is expected that the applicant will request a variance from the Subdivision Ordinance to not construct the future extension of Westmoreland Drive and that the construction will be the responsibility of future developers.” This dedication of public right-of-way sets up a new public street serving future development to be in alignment with existing Westmoreland Drive.

The remaining requested variances are from Sections 10-2-41 (a), 10-2-61 (a), and 10-2-66 of the SO. These sections 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 finally, Section 10-2-66 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.” The applicant’s letter provides further details and rationale of each deviation requested. In particular, the applicant is requesting the following deviations from the DCSM for all proposed public streets:

- Sections 3.6.2.3 and 3.6.2.4, which are associated with vertical curves, and
- Section 3.6.3, which is associated with design requirements for designated street classifications.

The street vertical curves and design requirements will be designed to meet the Virginia Department of Transportation’s requirements for local street design, which are less stringent than the City’s design standard, and which would allow the development to follow existing topography to the greatest extent possible.

The applicant is also requesting deviation from the DCSM:

- Section 3.6.4.1, which is associated with typical street sections as illustrated in the DCSM Appendix F, and
- Section 3.6.4.3, which is associated with reduction in street width.

These deviations would allow the reduction of vehicular travel lanes on public streets from 15-foot-wide lanes to 10-foot-wide lanes, with the requirement that no on street parking is allowed.

Finally, the applicant is requesting a deviation at the end of Skylark Lane from DCSM Section 3.10.1.3, which is associated with maximum grades within a permanent or temporary cul-de-sac.

In a letter submitted by the applicant, they explain the existing topography at this location exceeds 10% and flattening the cul-de-sac to 5% would create an unnecessary amount of fill should the neighboring property extend the street.

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 site within Market Type A. Among other things, this Market Type is characterized by high population growth. The study notes that Market Type A has “above median overall access to amenities such as public transit within walking distance, full-service grocery stores, and multiple parks and recreation facilities.” The study also notes that “policies that are appropriate to Market Type A areas include an emphasis on increasing density through zoning changes, infill development and housing rehabilitation to maintain the quality of housing.”

Public Schools

Staff from Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) noted that based on their student generation calculations, the proposed 26 single-family homes, 30 duplexes, and 70 townhomes is estimated to result in 36 additional students. Based on the School Board’s currently adopted attendance boundaries, Stone

Spring Elementary School, Skyline Middle School, and Rocktown High School would serve the students residing in this development. HCPS staff noted that four of the six elementary schools exceed effective capacity.

For total student population projections, the City of Harrisonburg and HCPS both use the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service's projections. These projections are updated annually and are available at: <https://www.coopercenter.org/virginia-school-data>.

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. Approve the preliminary plat and variances as requested;
- b. Approve the preliminary plat and variances with conditions; or
- c. Deny the request.

Community Engagement:

As required by the Subdivision Ordinance, a sign was posted giving public notice to the variances requested 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. Extract from Planning Commission
2. Site maps
3. Application and supporting documents
4. 2024 Approved Rezoning Proffers

Review:

Planning Commission recommended approval (6-0) of the preliminary plat and variances as requested. (Vice Mayor Dent was absent.)