



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Master

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Type: PH-Rezoning

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Agenda Section:

In Control: City Council

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Subject:

Final Action:

Title: Consider a request from Central Valley Habitat for Humanity to rezone 628, 648, and 658 Virginia Avenue

Internal Notes:

Sponsors:

Enactment Date:

Attachments: CC Memorandum RZ (628, 648, 658 Virginia Ave (R-2 to R-8)), CC Site maps, CC Application, applicant letter, and supporting documents, PC Memorandum, PC Site maps, PC Application, applicant letter, and supporting documents

Enactment Number:

Contact:

Hearing Date:

Drafter: thanh.dang@harrisonburgva.gov

Effective Date:

Related Files:

History of Legislative File

Ver- sion:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
1	Planning Commission	01/08/2020	recommended for approval	City Council	02/11/2020		Pass
Action Text: This PH-Rezoning was recommended for approval.to the City Council due back on 2/11/2020							
Notes: Chair Colman also recused himself for this item due to conflicts of interest and remained absent from the room.							

Vice Chair Finnegan read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Dang said that 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

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.

Vice Chair Finnegan asked if there were any questions for staff.

Commissioner Finks asked if there was discussion among staff about also making 648 Virginia Avenue conditional, as with the adjoining property to 658.

Ms. Dang said that the Department of Public Works was most concerned with entrances within 100 feet of the intersection. It only affects the first northernmost parcel. They were

okay with the entrances outside of that functional area.

Commissioner Whitten asked if Habitat has built other duplexes within the City.

Mr. Fletcher said yes.

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

David Wenger, Executive Director of Central Valley Habitat for Humanity, came forward to speak to the request. The CVHfH is a non-profit organization with the mission of partnering with individual families to create decent, affordable housing. We do this by teaming with families, organizations, businesses and local governments to keep the costs of housing down where we can. We are all aware of the need for affordable housing within Harrisonburg. There has been a lot of discussion about that need. We are all aware that solutions are sometimes hard to come by. I was encouraged to hear about the R-8 zoning district that has been implemented. I think that it is appropriate that a group, such as CVHfH, team with the City representatives and staff to use the new zoning district that is created to help address affordable housing needs. Thank you to City staff for the recommendation. I am willing to answer any questions and hope that you will recommend approval of our application.

Commissioner Whitten asked how many duplexes versus single-family homes have been built by CVHfH.

Mr. Wenger said that there may be one third to one half. I believe we have completed 16 homes, or eight duplexes. Most of those are within the City. We are in the process of building a duplex on Roberts Court. We have recently completed two other duplexes there, so we will have six homes in that area. That worked out well with the Northend Greenway coming through there. It seemed like a good community for us. Additionally, we have a presence in the area that we are talking about. We have built some single-family homes there due to the R-2 zoning. With this opportunity, we can build some duplexes that will reflect or will be similar to the visual nature of the houses that we have built there. The staff and the committees of CVHfH take pride in the appearance of those homes and think that they will add to the community.

Commissioner Whitten said that she commends CVHfH for their efforts. Our Chair, as well. He has to sit out this one because he is very active on CVHfH. You all do good work. It is a wonderful organization.

Larry Brown, board member of the CVHfH, came forward to speak to the request. This is a non-profit, as you know, with our offices in Bridgewater, VA. I am also the current Chairman of our Building and Site Committee, which is responsible for most of the

recommendations regarding the physical building projects and our planning. As stated previously, we are committed to the creation of affordable, quality, family homes, built in a variety of styles. We do not have a single cookie-cutter plan. They blend well into existing neighborhoods. These homes provide for our families and enable them to become fully contributing members of their new community. They have been built throughout Rockingham County; from Grottoes to Dayton and Bridgewater. Currently, we have a single-family home under construction in Timberville. We have properties that we will be developing in the future. We intend to be County-wide, although based on population, we are most heavily concentrated here Harrisonburg.

One of the major costs in our budget is the cost of the lot and the utility hookups that are necessary to support the finished structure. By approving this rezoning application, the Planning Commission would be taking a very decisive step in supporting the goal of increased affordability and housing options for those parcels. Obviously by doubling the number of homes or houses for families, the land component costs are, in essence, cut in half. For those six families, it represents a major improvement in the affordability and an impact on what will be the finished price of that home. CVHfH has a lot of experience in the construction of efficiently designed duplexes, having previously built duplexes for sixteen families over its 31 years of existence in Rockingham County. In total, we have helped more than 65 families into their personally owned, private, family structures. With your support, we believe that we will be able to add six more to this goal at the conclusion of this project. I thank you for your time and consideration.

Aaron Yoder, local contractor and developer, came forward to speak to the request. I am a local contractor and developer, with over ten years of doing projects in the City. I am the past President of the Shenandoah Valley Builders Association, former board member of CVHfH and current friend and adamant supporter of the CVHfH. I am excited about the application that CVHfH has applied for and am fully in favor of it. I ask that you consider recommending approval. I think it is the perfect opportunity, and what the new R-8 zoning district was designed to achieve. Our City is not growing out. Our City is not growing up. But our City is growing. This new zoning, for the types of projects that I do and for the types of projects that CVHfH does, is very important. I think it is a wonderful opportunity to apply that correctly to this project. As mentioned before me, there is a serious need for affordable housing. Residential contractors, like me, struggle to meet that need. CVHfH is very well positioned to meet that need, specifically with this project and with this rezoning. Thank you for your consideration of it. I hope you approve it. I look forward to seeing more CVHfH on Virginia Avenue.

Jennifer Howard, Harrisonburg resident and EMU graduate, came forward to speak to the request. I am a former employee of the City of Harrisonburg and current employee of the Virginia Department of Health. I am also a Habitat family partner. I want to speak from the perspective of the families that could possibly be in these dwellings. It is extremely important to offer affordable housing. It gives families, like mine and others, the opportunity to live and work within the City of Harrisonburg, to contribute to the revenues through

taxes, and cut down on commute times for those of us who do not want to move out into the County to find more affordable housing. Clearly the Comprehensive Plan is in line with what CVHfH is asking. I hope that the City continues their goals for affordable housing.

Vice Chair Finnegan asked if there was anyone else wishing to speak to the request. Hearing none, he closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Commissioner Finks said that this is a perfect example of what he was envisioning for the R-8 zoning district. We all know that there is a desperate need for affordable housing in the City of Harrisonburg. As a resident of this neighborhood, I can say that this completely fits with the character of the neighborhood. There is a lot of R-2, duplexes, and apartments. This rezoning on Virginia Avenue makes sense for this neighborhood. It is needed in the community. I am in strong support of this request.

Commissioner Way said that he agrees. From the perspective of building up more complete neighborhoods, this helps. Anything that we can do to facilitate the infill of these neighborhoods makes a lot of sense, in terms of increasing compact traditional neighborhoods.

Commissioner Whitten said that that most encouraging thing about it is that it is going to strengthen the neighborhood and bring people that will have huge aspirations and goals for homes and for being neighbors. That is what we want in the friendly city.

Commissioner Finks said that talking about our neighborhood, in general, Commissioner Finnegan and I happen to both live in this neighborhood, it is a neighborhood that is set up for walkability. We have a grocery store within walking distance, and multiple restaurants. There are not a lot of neighborhoods that are set up to fit the mold of a walkable neighborhood. Looking at this neighborhood to become denser and finding places for infill makes the most sense.

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

Commissioner Whitten seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Finnegan said that this is his neighborhood. My house showed up on the corner of that map. I echo what Commissioner Finks said. There are a bunch of empty lots right there between Collicello Street and Virginia Avenue. It is a very walkable neighborhood and within walking distance of downtown. It has a very good school.

Commissioner Romero said that he is a big fan of CVHfH. I have been in conversations with Mr. Brown and Mr. Wenger in the past. I am very excited. I have seen the benefit that this has provided to individual families in my neighborhood and around the City. I look forward to this project and any future projects in the City.

All members voted in favor of recommending approval (6-0) of the rezoning, as presented. The recommendation will move forward to City Council on February 11, 2020.

Commissioner Colman returned to the meeting room at the conclusion of this agenda item.
