



# CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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October 22, 2025

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

**SUBJECT:** *Consider a request from the City of Harrisonburg to rezone 2410 Reservoir Street*

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING  
COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON: November 12, 2025**

Chair Baugh stated the Virginia State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act requires that I make disclosure, to be recorded in the City records, in any matter in which I am prohibited by law from participating. Therefore, I make the following disclosures:

1. The transaction involved is the item taken up on the October 8, 2025, Planning Commission Agenda as Item 5(b), a request for a rezoning for a property located at 2410 Reservoir Street.
2. My personal interest in this transaction relates to the ethical requirements to which I must adhere as a licensed member of the Virginia Bar.
3. I affirmatively state that I will not vote or in any manner act on behalf of the Planning Commission in this matter.

He then recused himself from the request and left Council Chambers.

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

Ms. Soffel said the applicant is proposing to rezone a +/- 20,479 square foot parcel from R-3, Medium Density Residential District, to R-5C, High Density Residential District Conditional. The property is addressed as 2410 Reservoir Street and is identified as tax map parcel 81-B-1-B. The subject parcel is owned by the City of Harrisonburg and was made available for residential development through the City's Surplus City Property Disposition for Residential Development program in February 2025.

If approved, the applicant plans to buy the property to construct a single-story building with five (5) efficiency units.

#### *City Owned Land and Housing*

The 2021 Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study recommended identifying suitable City-owned parcels for affordable and mixed income residential development. The City assessed several vacant city-owned parcels and after determining there was no further public use for these properties established a process to sell the surplus parcels for residential development. Under the program guidelines, offers below the assessed value could be considered if the discount was tied to housing affordability.

Five parcels were listed for sale in February 2025. Applicants were considered based on established evaluation criteria, including readiness/feasibility, experience/qualifications, and community value. Information about the program is available on the City website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-land-housing>.

Frank Gordon, Trustee of the Valley Housing Trust, proposed to purchase 2410 Reservoir Street for \$74,600, below the assessed value of \$108,700, in exchange for creating five housing units with a 30-year affordability commitment below 80-percent of Area Median Income. The sale is contingent on securing land use approvals and the necessary funding to support development. City Council approved the disposition of the property to Valley Housing Trust following a public hearing held on August 26, 2025 (Public hearing information is available at <https://harrisonburg-va.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7523686&GUID=20C99547-581A-4954-83F6-6881A735FD49&Options=&Search=>).

#### *Proffers*

The applicant has offered the following proffers (written verbatim):

1. Dwelling units on the referenced property shall be one bedroom or efficiency units only.
2. Dwelling units on the referenced property may be occupied by a family or no more than two (2) individuals per unit.
3. A maximum of five dwelling units are permitted.

The conceptual site layout is not proffered.

Regarding proffer number 2, parking regulations require one and a half off-street parking spaces per dwelling unit for one-bedroom multifamily units within the R-3 and R-5 districts, unless the occupancy has been restricted through a proffer with a conditional rezoning. Proffer number 2 reduces the occupancy, allowing for a reduction in the off-street parking spaces to one space for each dwelling unit.

#### *Land Use*

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

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 proposed development conforms to the Comprehensive Plan adding to the variety of housing types and mixed-income housing in the area. The site of the proposed development has existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along its frontage and is located along Transit Route 02, providing multi-modal access to commercial areas and other amenities.

#### *Transportation and Traffic*

The Determination of Need for a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) form (“TIA determination form”) for the proposed rezoning is attached. The TIA determination form indicated that the project would not generate 100 or more new peak hour trips, which is the threshold for staff to require a TIA. Therefore, a TIA was not required for the rezoning request.

Regarding proffer number 3, the existing entrance is in the functional area of the intersection. Staff has determined that the development cannot have more than five dwelling units unless the entrance is relocated to align with the median as a right in/right out. This determination is based on the *Virginia Department of Transportation’s (VDOT) Road Design Manual, Appendix F: Access Management Design Standards for Entrances and Intersections*, which defines “low volume commercial entrances” as:

Any entrance, other than a private entrance, serving five or fewer individual residences or lots for individual residences on a privately owned and maintained road or land uses that generate 50 or fewer vehicular trips per day using the methodology in the Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation.

Virginia Housing Trust desires to keep the entrance at its present location and has proposed a proffer to limit the number of dwelling units to five (5) so that it does not exceed VDOT's threshold for a "low volume commercial entrance."

#### *Public Water and Sanitary Sewer*

Staff has no concerns with the requested rezoning regarding water and sanitary sewer matters.

#### *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*

Based on the Weldon Cooper Center report's calculation, this development's proposed five multifamily residential units are estimated to generate four (4) K-12 students at full build-out. According to the School Board's current attendance boundaries, Spotswood Elementary School, Skyline Middle School, and Rocktown High School would serve the students residing in this development.

#### *Conclusion*

Staff believes that the rezoning request aligns with the City's objectives for affordable housing and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. With the applicant's submitted proffers, staff does not believe that there would be any adverse effect to the area and recommends approval of the rezoning request.

Commissioner Seitz said in visiting the site, yesterday, it became apparent that turning left coming out of that property is pretty much impossible and definitely not safe. Will any restrictions stipulating no left turns out of the property be a part of the site plan approval process?

Ms. Soffel said there will not be an Engineered Comprehensive Site Plan if the disturbed area is less than 10,000 square feet, which is what the applicant plans. However, it will be reviewed during the building permit process.

Commissioner Seitz asked what tools does the City have in the interest of public safety to assure that nobody tries to make left hand turns coming out of that property?

Ms. Soffel said several ways that they have been restricted is with signage. I did send a message to Public Works. I did not hear back from them on that yet.

Vice Chair Porter 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.

Frank Gordon, Trustee, Valley Housing Trust, came forward to speak to the request. He said I am the contract purchaser of 2410 Reservoir Street. I would first like to thank Ms. Soffel for an excellent summary of this. There is much I can say about this but, in interest of time, I am going to focus on the rationale for the rezoning with the understanding that I would be happy to expand further if desired and answer any questions you have regarding my request on behalf of the City of Harrisonburg which is the owner of the property. One of the things that I would like to call attention to, that Ms. Soffel did not present, is that there is a large City sewer easement in the first front half of this property which restricts the practical building area of this lot to the front. If it is left R-3, I could, on behalf of the City, request a reduction in parking. However, if that is done then I would have to show an area that would allow for future expansion of parking, if deemed necessary by the City. If that were required, then there is a minimum width of the access that would have to be behind the building. The building must be forward due to the sewer easement and the parking would have to be behind that. That has a minimum width to that aisle. If the minimum width was constructed, then it would reduce the number of units from five to four. Reducing the number of units would disqualify it for funding under Virginia's Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) guidelines. The recent Shenandoah Planning District Council's (sic) Regional Housing Study recommended using state funds to leverage the limited amount of local funds to provide additional affordable housing in our community. I assume that I do not need to convince anyone on this panel of the need for an expansion of affordable housing. I would be delighted to expand on these comments further and answer any questions that you have. I hope to have an opportunity to respond to any concerns that are brought up.

Vice Chair Porter asked if there were any questions for the applicant.

Commissioner Seitz said I would affirm and acknowledge the need for affordable housing and appreciation of the effort that you and the Valley Housing Trust and the City are trying to make in this regard. It is an intricate dance of you are here on behalf of the City, there is a back and forth to it. Just a simple question, one of the conditions was having the funding in place, is the funding in place? I assume all of the approvals and this sequence of things that has to happen is completed. Is it shovel ready at that point?

Dr. Gordon said yes, as a part of the application I provided proof of funds on hand from Valley Housing Trust to complete this project if additional state sources of funding are not obtained. However, I believe in accordance with the regional housing plan that was brought out by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Council (sic), it would be prudent for me and other people interested in expanding affordable housing in Harrisonburg to take their advice to leverage state funds where possible. My experience, which is not extensive but is not nothing in that arena, suggests that each of these funding organizations wishes to be the very last person to add the last ten dollars that makes a huge project possible. Establishing a capital stack for a project like this is a challenge and on a project of this size, I have to admit to some internal debate over whether that is even necessary. To directly answer your question, if state funding is not pursued or is not obtained, Valley Housing Trust has the funds on hand to complete this project.

Councilmember Dent said the state funding you are going for requires it to be five units and if you had to cut it down to four because of the layout of the zoning it would not qualify, is that what you said?

Dr. Gordon said the Department of Housing and Community Development's program requires a minimum of five units in multifamily projects. If it went to four, it would not qualify to apply for DHCD funding for multifamily affordable housing.

Councilmember Dent said, again, threading the needle for where you get the best funding.

Dr. Gordon said I liken it to a series of pieces of swiss cheese which need to be aligned so that you can shoot your pointer laser through it all at one time.

Councilmember Dent said I like what you say about the capital stack. Everybody wants to be the last to fund it.

Vice Chair Porter said Dr. Gordon, it is your intention to apply in the spring when DHCD opens the housing trust fund up again?

Dr. Gordon said that would be the round in which I would apply for. Last year, they had all funds distributed in one round. Based on feedback from a number of stakeholders across the state, they agreed to hold back a small portion of funding for a spring round. Needless to say, that would be a highly competitive round. If I apply to DHCD's Affordable and Special Needs Housing (ASNH) program, that would be the round I would first try for.

Vice Chair Porter asked if there were any more questions for the applicant. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and invited 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.

Commissioner Seitz said just an appreciation for Valley Housing Trust and Dr. Gordon being willing to go through the Byzantine process of making something important like this happen.

Commissioner Kettler said I would like to thank the applicant for bringing an affordable housing project before us. I would also like to thank the City certainly for this opportunity. In the absence of some sort of subsidy it makes it a whole lot harder to actually build housing that is affordable. Making it at reduced cost for the land certainly helps. I also appreciate proffer two which permits there to be less parking required. Often times in affordable housing, not quite as much parking is required and that is going to be more cost on the renter.

Vice Chair Porter said I will add to the admiration society. The reason why is because there is nobody else in our community, that I am aware of right now, that is doing this. The types of units that you are building, and the fact that you are making them affordable, is extremely valuable to our community. We need many, many more developments like this. As you have probably heard many times before, Frank, we appreciate the fact that you are stepping into this gap and making this sort of development. I certainly wish you the very best of luck with the ASNH [Affordable and Special Needs Housing] funding cycle. I think that you will have an excellent application.

Commissioner Seitz moved to recommend approval of the request.

Commissioner Kettler seconded the motion.

Councilmember Dent said I just wanted to chime in on the admiration society that I really appreciate a small local developer bringing forward incremental small affordable housing units the way you have been doing. That is great. That is a lot of what we need. We need lots of those and at all scales. The small scale that you are doing has a more homey feel than a public housing approach. Thank you for all you are doing.

Vice Chair Porter called for a roll call vote.

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|----------------------|-----|
| Commissioner Seitz   | Aye |
| Councilmember Dent   | Aye |
| Commissioner Alsindi | Aye |
| Commissioner Kettler | Aye |
| Vice Chair Porter    | Aye |

The motion to recommend approval of the rezoning request passed (5-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on November 12, 2025.

Upon conclusion of this item, Chair Baugh returned to the meeting.