



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Agenda Planning Commission

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

1. Call To Order

2. Roll Call/Determination of Quorum

3. Approval of Minutes

3.a. Minutes from the July 8, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

3.b. Minutes from the July 21, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

4. New Business - Public Hearings

4.a. Consider a request from Caitlin Denbigh for a special use permit at 387 Monticello Avenue

Attachments: [PC Memorandum](#)
[Site Map](#)
[Applicant's Supporting Documents](#)

4.b. Consider a request from VG Harrisonburg Storage LLC for a special use permit at 291 West Wolfe Street and 336 West Market Street

Attachments: [PC Memorandum](#)
[Site Maps](#)
[Applicant's Supporting Documents](#)

4.c. Consider a request to amend the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan

Attachments: [PC Memorandum](#)
[Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan \(2025\)](#)
[Planning Commission Resolution](#)

4.d. Consider a request to amend the Zoning Ordinance to create a new term and definition for "poultry hatchery"

Attachments: [PC Memorandum](#)
 [Current Ordinance Reflecting Recommended Amendments](#)
 [Locations of existing hatcheries according to Virginia Poultry Federation](#)

5. New Business - Other Items

- 5.a. Consider a request from Jose Antonio Lopez Montiel for a variance from the Subdivision Ordinance at 704 North Liberty Street

Attachments: [PC Memorandum](#)
 [Applicants supporting documents](#)
 [Site Maps](#)

7. Public Comment

8. Report of Secretary & Committees

8.a. Rockingham County Planning Commission Liaison Report

8.b. City Council Report

9. Other Matters

9.a. Review Summary of next month's applications

10. Adjournment

NOTE TO THE PUBLIC

Staff will be available at 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 8, 2026 for those interested in going on a field trip to view the sites on the Wednesday, September 9, 2026 agenda.

INTERPRETATION SERVICES

Language interpretation service in Spanish, Arabic and Kurdish is available for Planning Commission meetings. To ensure that interpreters are available at the meeting, interested persons must request the accommodation at least four (4) calendar days in advance of the meeting by contacting the City Clerk at (540) 432-7701 or by submitting a request online at: www.harrisonburgva.gov/interpreter-request-form

El servicio de intérpretes inglés-español está disponible para las reuniones públicas de la Comisión de Planificación. Para asegurar la disponibilidad de intérpretes, cualquier interesado deberá solicitar la presencia de un intérprete al menos cuatro (4) días calendarios antes de la reunión comunicándose con la Secretaría Municipal al (540) 432-7701 o por medio de la página por internet al:

<https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/interpreter-request-form>

NOTE TO THE PUBLIC

Residents/Media will be able to attend the meeting.

The Public can also view the meeting live on:

- The City's website, <https://harrisonburg-va.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>
- Public Education Government Channel 1072

A phone line will also be live where residents will be allowed to call in and speak with Planning Commission during the Public Hearings and the Public Comments portion of the night's meeting. We ask those that wish to speak during the public comment period to not call in until after all the public hearings and public comment on those have been heard. This will avoid anyone calling on any other item from holding up the queue and then being asked to call back at a later time.

The telephone number to call in is: (540) 437-2687

Residents also may provide comment prior to the meeting by visiting this page: www.harrisonburgva.gov/agenda-comments



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Legislation Text

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MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION

July 8, 2026

The Harrisonburg Planning Commission held its regular meeting on Wednesday July 8, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 409 South Main Street.

Members present: Richard Baugh, Chair; Shannon Porter, Vice Chair; KC Kettler; Rob Jezior; and Randy Seitz. Councilmember Laura Dent joined late. Members absent: Heja Alsindi.

Also present: Adam Fletcher, Director of Community Development; Thanh Dang, Deputy Director of Community Development; Nyrma Soffel, Planner; Meg Rupkey, Planner; and Wesley Russ, Deputy City Attorney.

Chair Baugh said Councilmember Dent is out of town and has requested that she be able to participate virtually. I will read the statement. Under our rules we have to vote to agree to let a member participate virtually.

Ms. Dang said Councilmember Dent has not logged in yet, but if she joins late, and you are okay with her joining, I suggest going ahead to read the statement and make a motion to approve.

Chair Baugh read the statement: In accordance with the Planning Commission's adopted policy for remote participation, Councilwoman Dent has requested to participate remotely in this meeting due to travel that prevents her physical attendance. She will be participating remotely from a location in Charlottesville, which is not open to the public. A quorum of the Planning Commission is physically assembled at one primary meeting location, and arrangements have been made for the voice of Commissioner Dent to be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location.

Commissioner Kettler said I so move.

Commissioner Porter seconded.

The motion to allow Councilwoman Dent to participate in the meeting remotely passed by a voice vote (5-0).

Chair Baugh asked if there were any corrections, comments or a motion regarding the June 10, 2026, Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Commissioner Kettler moved to approve the motion.

Commissioner Jezior seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the June 10, 2026, Planning Commission meeting minutes with the amendment passed by voice vote (5-0).

Chair Baugh asked if there were any corrections, comments or a motion regarding the June 16, 2026, Planning Commission meeting minutes.

Commissioner Jezior moved to approve the motion.

Commissioner Porter seconded the motion.

The motion to approve the June 10, 2026, Planning Commission meeting minutes with the amendment passed by voice vote (5-0).

New Business – Public Hearings

Consider a request to rezone and a special use permit at 704 North Liberty Street

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Soffel said the applicant is requesting to rezone a +/- 13,495-square-foot property from R-2, Residential District to R-8C, Small Lot Residential District Conditional and is simultaneously applying for a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-59.4(11) to allow a reduction in required side yard setbacks in the R-8 district. The property is addressed as 704 North Liberty Street and is identified as tax map parcel 40-N-1 and 2. If approved, the applicant plans to subdivide the property into four lots with the plan to retain the existing single-family dwelling, build a duplex along the North Liberty Street frontage, and to construct a new single-family detached dwelling along the West Washington Street frontage.

Rezoning & Proffers

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

1. We proffer a right-of-way along the front of the three properties facing North Liberty Street, for the City to construct a sidewalk in the future. The right-of-way will extend 7.5 ft from the existing back of curb into the properties, as shown on the Rezoning Exhibit, and will be dedicated at minor subdivision. In addition, a 4 ft temporary grading easement beyond the proposed right-of-way will be provided for the City to have sufficient space to install the proposed sidewalk.
2. We proffer a portion of the property to be dedicated as right-of-way along West Washington Street to accommodate the existing City-built sidewalk, as shown on the Rezoning Exhibit.
3. We proffer to provide one shared entrance with a maximum total width of 24 feet to serve the duplex along North Liberty Street.

The conceptual site layout is not proffered.

In Proffer #1, the applicant proposes to dedicate right-of-way and a temporary grading easement along the North Liberty Street frontage to allow for the future construction of a sidewalk by the City. Staff supports the dedication of right-of-way and the temporary grading easement; however, staff recommends rejection of the statement “for the City to construct a sidewalk in the future.” The statement implies that the City, rather than the applicant, would construct the sidewalk and creates ambiguity regarding the Subdivision Ordinance (SO) requirements. If the property is subdivided as the applicant proposes, the SO would require sidewalk construction along North Liberty Street unless a variance is granted by City Council. Removing the statement would preserve the intended right-of-way dedication while avoiding conflict with the SO.

If the applicant does not want to construct the sidewalk, they may request a variance from the requirements of the SO. To this end, the applicant has already submitted a request for a Subdivision Ordinance (SO) variance to not construct the sidewalk, which at this time is anticipated to be presented for review during the August Planning Commission meeting.

Proffer #2 dedicates public right-of-way for the existing sidewalk along West Washington Street.

Proffer #3 requires that the duplex share one entrance, thereby reducing the number of potential entrances on North Liberty Street.

Special Use Permit

The applicant is requesting a SUP to allow reduced side yard setbacks. In the R-8 district, single-family detached and duplex dwellings that are two-stories require a minimum side yard setback of 7-feet and three-story structures require a minimum side yard setback of 10-feet. With an approved SUP, required minimum side yard setbacks can be reduced provided that the buildings are either sprinklered or that any exterior walls facing the property line with a reduced side yard setback are constructed with a minimum 1-hour fire-resistant assembly. If the exterior walls facing the property line with the reduced setback are constructed with a minimum 1-hour fire-resistant assembly, then any openings in those walls must be located only on the first floor, must have a minimum 1-hour fire rating, and must be fixed and inoperable. The applicant is proposing 5-foot side yard setbacks for all four proposed future parcels.

If the applicant were to subdivide in a different way or construct single-family detached or duplex dwellings in a different layout or combination, then, if approved, the SUP to allow reduced side yard setbacks would also apply.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Neighborhood Residential and states:

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 surrounding properties include a mix of housing types. Staff believes the proposed infill development, consisting of one duplex and one single-family detached dwelling, conforms with the Land Use Guide designation and is compatible with the existing neighborhood.

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 indicates 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.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

Staff does not anticipate issues regarding water service for the proposed development. The applicant has been advised that they will be responsible for completing a study to confirm water capacity as part of the engineered comprehensive site plan process. Any public system improvements required to meet the increased demands resulting from the project will be the responsibility of the developer.

With regard to sanitary sewer infrastructure, there is currently no public sanitary sewer main available along North Liberty Street. For this project, the applicant will be responsible for constructing an extension of the sanitary sewer main to serve this development. At this time, the applicant plans to extend sanitary sewer from West Washington Street to serve the duplex units.

Housing

The City’s Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) places the subject property within Market Type D, which notes that “[m]arket type D has lower market activity as well as lower access to amenities. This could be because the areas are stable residential neighborhoods or because the area is less developed and therefore has fewer sales and fewer amenities. Strategies that would be appropriate in the latter case include concurrent development of the housing and economic opportunities through mixed-use developments to build commerce and housing centers across the City.”

Although the site has limited access to amenities and green space for future residents, the addition of three new dwelling units supports the findings of the Housing Study by contributing to the housing supply.

Public Schools

The City contracted with the University of Virginia’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service to complete a report titled "Population and School Enrollment Projections for the City of Harrisonburg" (April 2025). The report can be found at the following link: https://harrisonburgva.gov/sites/default/files/city-manager/HarrisonburgSchoolEnrollment_2025-04-30_Final.pdf. This report provides overall student enrollment projections through 2034 as well as estimated student generation by housing type for each elementary school attendance zone.

Based on the Weldon Cooper Center report's calculations, this development's proposed three new dwelling units are estimated to generate one K-12 student at full build-out. According to the School Board's current attendance boundaries, Waterman Elementary School, Thomas Harrison Middle School, and Harrisonburg High School would serve the students residing in this development.

Conclusion

The applicant's request is compatible with the Neighborhood Residential land use designation, and the addition of three new dwelling units supports the recommendations of the Housing Study for infill development. Staff recommends approval of the rezoning request; however, staff also recommends that Planning Commission reject the statement "for the City to construct a sidewalk in the future" in Proffer #1.

Staff also recommends approval of the SUP, but only with the following condition:

- The side yard setbacks may be reduced to not less than five feet.

Commissioner Seitz said on the site visit yesterday you said they are going to have a curb cut entry. Is that for both of the duplexes and the house or is that for the two duplexes and the existing one for the house remains?

Ms. Soffel said the existing one for the house remains.

Commissioner Seitz said but the site plan shows a new widened pull off and parking in front of the duplexes.

Ms. Soffel said yes, it is recommended that it be 24 feet wide for that entrance. So they would have to widen the entrance, but only have one.

Commissioner Seitz said okay, so ultimately across the three lots that front the road there will be two entries that serve three properties?

Ms. Soffel said correct. To clarify, one entrance for the single-family dwelling and one entrance for the duplex.

Commission Kettler said I want to state for the record that Councilmember Dent has joined us.

Ms. Dang said she joined at 6:06pm.

Chair Baugh said I just want to be clear because I did not see it up there, that staff's favorable recommendation for the rezoning includes deletion of the language in the proffer.

Ms. Soffel said correct.

Commissioner Seitz said what does that do to their ability to apply for a variance?

Ms. Soffel said if the clause was still in the proffer, it would conflict with the Zoning Ordinance [*sic*] because the Zoning Ordinance [*sic*] requires the applicant to build the sidewalk unless they get the variance.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any more questions for staff.

There was a brief exchange between Chair Baugh and a member of the public in the audience. Chair Baugh explained that the public would have an opportunity to speak during the public hearing.

Chair Baugh invited the applicant or applicant's representative to speak to their request.

Gil Colman of Colman Engineering, applicant's representative, came forward to speak to the request. Good evening. I am here for any questions you may have and also the applicant is here as well. Any questions regarding the applications?

Commissioner Kettler said I have one question. The context of this question is, at our last work session for zoning reform and part of that is touching on alleys and alley access as one way to achieve certain policy ends. I was wondering if that was something you explored in this project or if you had thoughts about that.

Mr. Colman said in terms of the alley is there and its being used for some to access the site. As a matter of fact, one of the lots, the entrance is shared with the alley which is something that has to be worked out with Public Works at the time, whether they can use that entrance or not, or to be separate. And at this point, I do not know the answer to that. The access would be mainly, I think if you looked at the grades, there is maybe this house and some other houses beyond that... at some point there was an interest from the Minick School that used to own the property there to close the alley. And I do not think that was successful at the time. So I do not know how far if the alley goes all the way to, I forget the name of the road, where SVO [Shenandoah Valley Organics] owns, but that was an alley that was considered for closure... And I think at the time, it was denied. So that is a possibility that it could be used that way.

Commissioner Kettler said is there a particular reason why that would or would not be desirable in this case?

Mr. Colman said the main reason is whether the City will install it or whether the applicant would install. In this case, the City is not asking for the alley to be installed. Certainly, it could be used as a driveway. And the maintenance of that will depend also on how it is installed and how it is used, whether Public Works will take it or not. But it could be an opportunity.

Chair Baugh asked if there was anything else.

Mr. Colman said yes, I want to mention this is an opportunity also. As we've done in the past, I think I brought some other small projects like this where it is a great opportunity for affordable housing where you have a property that is owned already by an owner that can be subdivided. And what comes with that are things that makes it uncomfortable sometimes [like] reducing setbacks

and trying to accommodate all that. Trying to accommodate parking for two houses in this case, trying to fit in where we can to provide housing. One of the things that we were talking about was the fact that this is right next to the plant and some of the employees there were asking the applicant where there was any space for them to rent right there.

So, this actually provides workforce housing right where it is needed, in so many ways. That helps to keep some cars out of the street as well. So that is certainly, maybe not a lot, but at least it is right there next to the plant. Seeing the other houses that are next to you, it is an appropriate fit, it would fit well and it's a good opportunity to do some infill development that we want to do, that the City wants to do. I will speak also to the request we put in for a variance on the sidewalk. Like any development, if you are looking at housing, the cost of housing gets more and more and more, and a lot of it is obviously cost of materials, but also the more infrastructure that we have to install the more expensive it gets.

So, as we are looking at this, we are looking at the possibility... okay we can give the city space they need to build the sidewalk, but just putting a sidewalk there increases the cost of these houses. And that would be reflected on rent or whatever way to pay back for it. So that is something to keep in mind that there are reasons why some of those requests are there. So, I also understand safety issues and all that. But in this case, there is a sidewalk on the corner, which by the way, the City built that sidewalk without requesting an easement from the property owner as well. That is something that is not mentioned here, but I will mention it just to say that was done by the City, which in turn created this requirement now that he needs to put in a sidewalk because the sidewalk was put in there without his authorization. So that is something to consider. Also, the City needs to look at how can it be accommodating and not trying to increase requirements on things. Something to think about as we are reviewing the ordinance and all that is what, how are ways that the City can actually help in increasing affordable housing and not just creating more hardship. That is my take on it. Any more questions?

Commission Porter said I just wanted to confirm, the intention is for these to be rental units, correct?

Mr. Colman said correct.

Commissioner Porter said and I guess for the benefit of the question that was in the back of the room. Mr. Colman, when you were looking at your site plan design, why are you requesting the setback reductions?

Mr. Colman said setback reductions are really to make sure the houses that are built there are sizable enough for bedrooms and so on. If it gets too narrow, then it will be difficult to have a house rather than something that would be too narrow to build. It is doable, but it is difficult to do and have something that will be more usable. The ordinance allows us to ask for zero setback. We do not want to do that. As a matter of fact, my recommendation to my client is that even when he builds, to stay inside, not even reach the five feet, but to try to stay inside that. The footprint that we are showing there is just to say that is what could fit here. It is not necessarily what he is going to do. As was presented by staff, there are also requirements when we are less than seven feet to have that fireproof and all that. So there are costs to that. So that may push us back. We might go

narrow, as much as undesirable as it may be, as something that we might need to do. The applicant might need to be able to get that working and more affordable. So, there are some things that. Also, by adjusting the property lines we are providing a further setback to the existing house, which right now has a zero to maybe four feet on one side. So, we are providing more than five feet setback for that existing house as well.

Commissioner Porter said do they currently live in the house that is on the property?

Mr. Lopez Montiel said no. I rent the property.

Commissioner Porter said so that is a rental property currently. Thank you.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any additional questions for the applicant. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and 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 Baugh said one of the things that jumped out at me is that we have commented on a number of times how among the things that hopefully we address in the Zoning Ordinance update is that having created R-8 we found it has been used more for people to do problematic setback issues than what it was intended to do. Which is to be able to take properties like this and legitimately get more residential units on it. So, I am open to comments from the group, but my inclination is when we created R-8, this was the very type of thing we expected to see. And maybe it has been a while since we have seen one of these. Any other thoughts?

Councilmember Dent said I have been amused at R-8 as a once size fits all tool, and I agree that it is nice to see it used for its intended purpose of increasing density.

Commissioner Porter said this is exactly the sort of things that I would like to see happening in the City where we are being able to create workforce housing in the right place that really serves the needs of the community and also puts us in a situation where we are able to make better use of the plot and be able to provide more housing. The matter of the ordinance is another matter for sure, but in terms of on its face, the way this is presented, I would have absolutely no problem supporting it.

Commissioner Kettler said I would also like to heap some praise on this. I think it is a great use of an underutilized lot to have some additional small dwellings on it. Got nothing but compliments for that. I am interested, as my question suggests, about how we might be able to incorporate alleys for this kind of thing, because we have one shared drive for the duplex and one of the stated goals of that is to reduce conflict points. And of course, if we have alley access then we have potentially no conflict points with folks walking along that way and potentially more parking access so other uses for the street at that point. And when you are talking about a busier street, that does make a difference. Rear end collisions are the most common kind of collisions. I am not particularly concerned about that in this case.

Commissioner Jezior said I agree with everyone here. I think it is a great use of the R-8 zoning and if it can be workforce housing, even better. You reduce the amount of cars that you will have to put on the property because you will be able to walk to work. I am in favor.

Commissioner Seitz said I move that we approve the rezoning and special use permit with staff's recommended change to the proffer.

There was a discussion amongst the Commissioners on whether the two items should be taken up together or separately.

Commissioner Seitz said I am going to amend my motion to recommend approving the rezoning.

Chair Baugh said would that be as presented by staff?

Commissioner Seitz said so, that proffers pertain to the SUP so we do not address the recommended language change until we address the SUP.

Commissioner Kettler said there is a recommendation to reject a portion of the proffer.

Mr. Fletcher said the proffers are not associated with the special use permit.

Commissioner Seitz said they are with the rezoning?

Mr. Fletcher said could somebody explain to me in what way that is?

Commissioner Seitz said the proffers go with one or the other. So, which one do they go with?

Ms. Soffel said the three proffers go with the rezoning request. And there is also a condition that we are recommending for the special use permit.

Commissioner Seitz said okay. Chair Baugh I understand. But I think it is probably good practice that if there are separate issues and we are going to act on them separately, then they should be listed separately on the docket.

Mr. Fletcher said I think that they are.

Commissioner Seitz said, I am looking at the cover sheet, which is the 45th sheet in the packet.

Mr. Fletcher said you are looking at the staff report. For efficiency purposes in the staff report, we combine them, so we are not repeating the same information in a separate staff report. But for official agenda purposes, they are listed as separate items, which has been staff's consistent approach for a number of years.

Commissioner Seitz said I apologize.

Chair Baugh said no problem. My sense of it, Mr. Russ is welcome to jump in on this too, is that City Attorney would probably take the position that it is cleaner to take it up as they are as agenda items. So, since we have an agenda item 4.a. and 4.b. that you would probably prefer that we vote on 4.a. and then vote on 4.b. And we have made exceptions for that over the years. Sometimes in the guise of efficiency because it is just appears so readily apparent that everybody is either for this or against it and we do not think anybody is going to split their vote so we take them together.

Mr. Russ said yes, I think that is right. And sometimes with a particularly complicated proposal they might be so tied together that it is hard to envision how you could do one without the other.

Commissioner Seitz made a motion to recommend approval of the rezoning with staff's recommended changes to the proffers.

Commissioner Jezior seconded the motion.

Chair Baugh called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Jezior	Aye
Vice-Chair Porter	Aye
Commissioner Seitz	Aye
Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Chair Baugh	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the rezoning with staff's recommended changes passed (6-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on August 11, 2026.

Commissioner Porter made a motion to recommend approval of the special use permit with the condition as presented by staff.

Commissioner Jezior seconded the motion.

Chair called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Seitz	Aye
Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Commissioner Jezior	Aye
Vice-Chair Porter	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Chair Baugh	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the special use permit with the condition as presented by staff (6-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on August 11, 2026.

Consider a request to amend the Subdivision Ordinance

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Rupkey said in 2025, the Virginia General Assembly adopted amendments to Article 6, Land Subdivision and Development, which became effective on July 1, 2025. As a result, the City's Subdivision Ordinance (SO) must be updated to ensure compliance with these changes to state law. These changes generally provide updates to the subdivision review procedures and terminology to improve clarity, consistency, and alignment with current administrative practices under State Code. The relevant State Code sections can be found at the following locations:

- 2025 Virginia General Assembly House Bill 2660 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20251/HB2660>
- 2025 Virginia General Assembly Senate Bill 974 - <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20251/SB974>
- Full State Code Text - <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title15.2/chapter22/article6/>

The proposed amendments primarily serve two purposes: (1) to bring the SO into compliance with amendments to Virginia State Code that became effective July 1, 2025, and (2) to make administrative and housekeeping updates based on current City practices.

Definition Amendments

The proposed amendments include updates to several definitions to improve clarity and consistency with current practices and State Code requirements. Throughout the SO, "Director" has been replaced with "Designated Agent," therefore a definition for "Designated Agent" has been added. The definition of "Subdivision" has been amended to require that when new lots greater than five acres are created, they are subject to City review and approval. The current SO exempts the creation of lots larger than five acres from subdivision review, which staff has referred to as "large lot subdivisions." With the amendments, all newly created lots and subdivisions will be subject to City review and approval regardless of size. Other definitions have been added or revised to align with the changes in State Code. These include "Final Subdivision Plat," "Preliminary Subdivision Plat," "Setback, Minimum," "Subdivision," and "Variation or Exception".

Preliminary and Final Subdivision Plat

The proposed amendments update the preliminary subdivision plat process to align with Virginia State Code amendments. State Code prohibits localities from requiring preliminary subdivision plats for subdivisions creating 50 lots or fewer and requires preliminary subdivision plats to be processed administratively by staff. The City's current SO requires Planning Commission review and approval of subdivision plats that propose the creation of more than four lots.

In addition, the State Code reduces the review time for subdivision applications. The designated agent must approve or disapprove the final subdivision plat within 40 days of application acceptance and must approve or disapprove a preliminary subdivision within 45 days of application acceptance.

Variations and Exceptions

Additionally, the process for requesting variations and exceptions (formally identified as a variance) has been updated. Planning Commission review and City Council approval will continue

to be required for variations or exceptions from the SO or the City's Design and Construction Standards Manual requirements.

Appeals

The appeals section has also been revised to provide clarity regarding the applicable procedures for different types of decisions that are made.

Administrative Waivers

The proposed SO amendments remove the section that previously allowed a waiver of chapter requirements for subdivisions when creating five or fewer lots on parcels of five acres or less (Section 10-2-8). Historically, this provision was intended to provide flexibility for minor subdivisions but did not provide clear guidance on what could be administratively waived. In the past, staff has used this section to waive the requirement for public general utility easements on subdivisions in some developed areas. Staff has suggested amendments that would codify the ability for the designated agent to approve administrative waivers for public general utility easements under specific circumstances in Section 10-2-43.

Other Proposed Amendments

As part of the amendments that are not related to State Code changes, staff has suggested adding a requirement related to identifying floodplain designations. Staff has proposed requiring subdivision plats to include a statement identifying whether any portion of the property lies within the FEMA 100-year floodplain. While staff has requested this information during review, the requirement is not currently codified in the SO. Additionally, staff has proposed for language related to the owner's consent and dedication statement, the surveyor's certificate, and plat approval procedures to be updated. Finally, the amendments would remove requirements that setback lines be shown on all subdivision plats reducing unnecessary platting requirements. Staff believes that including setback lines on subdivision plats can create confusion when zoning districts are amended or when setback requirements change over time as the setback information shown on an older plat may no longer reflect the applicable zoning regulations. During the subdivision review, and depending upon the circumstances, it may be necessary for the surveyor to confirm whether a subdivision impacts the setback of an existing or a planned building.

Future Changes

Staff considered making more substantial changes to the SO, particularly in relation to the City's Design and Construction Standards Manual and other development requirements regulated by the ordinance. However, at this time, staff's priority is to bring the SO into compliance with State Code. Additional amendments will be explored in the future along with any changes that might be necessary due to the Zoning Ordinance re-write.

Conclusion

The proposed SO amendments ensure compliance with State Code and align the ordinance with current administrative practice. Staff recommends approval of the SO amendments.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any more questions for staff.

Vice-Chair Porter said for the purposes of what we are discussing here, who would the designated agent be that would be making these determinations?

Ms. Rupkey said when subdivision plats come in, I am the one who accepts them, reviews, and provides the comments. But Mr. Fletcher is the person who is the official signer of the plat. It is a group decision.

Vice-Chair Porter said so effectively it moves from something that would come before this body to administrative?

Ms. Rupkey said correct.

Vice-Chair Porter said in terms of the decision not to move any further and include anything else in this process, we have to come back and eventually address it. Can I get some basic information as to what changes would be needed for the City's Design and Construction Standards Manual and how that all fits into this process? Why the decision not to include it and what exactly would be the purpose of it?

Ms. Rupkey said that is a more involved process that we will need to work with other departments, looking at other codes and standards manuals...

Mr. Fletcher said there are many things in the Design and Construction Standards Manual that not only planning and engineering staff in Community Development, as well as, Public Works that are looking at many different issues to change in the DCSM. For example, there is healthy internal debate about street widths, about requirements associated with private street standards, requirements associated with turnarounds, length of streets, entrances...

Ms. Rupkey said distance between entrances.

Mr. Fletcher said yes, there are access management standards we want to change. There are a number of issues.

Vice-Chair Porter said so at this point, once we enact this, we will be in full compliance. There is nothing a part of that process that would put us out of compliance with the state currently.

Mr. Fletcher said to the best of our knowledge, the answer to that is yes. And I want to expand upon the question you were asking earlier about who is doing this. Know that there are many subdivisions that occur throughout the year. We have an internal process for review. There are multiple people that review that. It goes through a sequence to make sure that everybody is looking at the different specifics about a particular plat. When we review Planning Commission items, what the public does not see is that we have multiple people reviewing. It's not just the faces you see in this room. So, the Department of Public Works and their team look at it. It is a team approach. The Fire Department, the Public Utilities Department for water and sewer. Public Works is also looking at sanitation, not just streets and access. HEC, Verizon, Columbia Gas. There are so many people looking at this. We will probably do some kind of modified version of that for our preliminary plat review because it is changing some sequences. We have a different timeline that

we need to abide by. We have already begun thinking about these procedures and internal processes.

Vice-Chair Porter said thank you.

Councilmember Dent said replacing the single term “variances” with “variations and exceptions”... what is the difference, if any?

Ms. Rupkey said the state code refers to what we call “variances” as “variations or exceptions,” specifically for subdivisions. So when some requests a variance, typically in planning you go to the BZA [Board of Zoning Appeals] to request that type of variance. This is a different variance that BZA would not be a part of.

Councilmember Dent said does variance as we currently use, it is being replaced by these. But instead of going to the BZA, it goes to the designated agent in this case. Is that the change?

Ms. Rupkey said no. The change of term to “designated agent” is now the reviewer instead of the Planning Commission for preliminary plats. Final plats staff would still continue to review those. But then the variation and exception versus variance is primarily a terminology thing. But variation and exception is what the State Code uses to describe subdivision variations or exceptions to our code. So to match the language the State Code is using.

Councilmember Dent said so there is no real difference. Thanks.

Chair Baugh said let me take a stab at it because it will help me confirm if I am understanding this. It actually makes it clearer. What it is, is that in Harrisonburg, we have used the term variance to cover... A bunch of stuff that goes to BZA, those are called variances. But we have used the term “variance” for these Subdivision Ordinance exceptions and all these other things, which at times is confusing to the public.

Ms. Rupkey said correct.

Chair Baugh said why did this not go to the BZA? Well, it’s not that kind of variance. So I think that I am correct. Is that what this is doing? The State Code had made that distinction, and we are catching up. So, going forward, variance is the term you use for things that go to BZA, and these other things that we have been calling variances are the ones that are going to get the new terminology. And hopefully that makes that distinction clear.

Councilmember Dent said thank you.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any additional questions for staff. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and 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.

Vice-Chair Porter said this effectively just brings us in compliance with the State Code and amendments that have been made. So, it seems like a very direct, straightforward thing. I would

like to go ahead and make a motion that we recommend the approval of the Subdivision Ordinance amendments as presented.

Councilmember Kettler said second.

Chair Baugh said if you do not do it, then all you are doing is your ordinance is not in compliance with state law. We know who wins that contest. And it looks like as part of the other question that got asked, staff identified a few matters, and you are not in a position right now to tackle everything, but there was some low hanging fruit that made sense to go in there. Any other discussion?

Vice-Chair Porter said and it may streamline the process slightly for folks. If staff can address it a and not have to wait for a hearing or go through that whole process, I think it is also something that is probably very helpful to whatever applicant is participating in that process.

Chair Baugh said I am mildly curious. Most of these things have been handled as minor subdivision. My impression is that most of what we get are the minor subdivision.

Ms. Rupkey said the subdivisions you had previously are what we had been calling preliminary plats. Also, since this had been enacted, we have been following the State Code and meeting the State Code. It was just not reflected in our ordinance. So, you have not seen a preliminary plat for a year. You might have noticed that. But the preliminary plats beforehand were for lots that were larger than four individual lots and five acres. We had a process that was a minor subdivision, if they are smaller, then it was just reviewed internally.

Chair Baugh said the point I was trying to make is, it is not like staff is being asked to do anything new. It is that staff is adding to itself without any involvement from Planning Commission because we were already doing minor subdivisions administratively.

Ms. Rupkey said correct.

Chair Baugh said and I assume that in the overall percentage, the major subdivisions was always a very small percentage. Maybe not?

Mr. Fletcher said in recent times, yes. If you go more than a decade ago, we had a number of them. Typically, you are seeing when we talk about older subdivisions, preliminary plats, major subdivisions, it is when somebody is dedicating a public street, they are subdividing multiple single-family home lots or townhome lots. Oftentimes, with those, those are subdivision ordinance variances or now we call them variances or exceptions. You will not see those anymore, unless they are asking for a variation or exception. So, if there is a situation where somebody wants to do a townhome community and they want to do lots that do not front on a public street, you will continue to see those. But anything outside of those parameters, if it is 50 or fewer, we will handle that administratively. Big picture here is that, I believe the intent, whoever the legislator was that proposed that, was to increase the amount of time, potentially reduce costs because it is not coming before this body, you do not have to go through the sequence.

Ms. Rupkey said I want to be clear that 50 or fewer and 50 or more will all be administrative. Everything will be administrative. They will not see preliminary plats, except for anything with the variation or exception.

Chair Baugh said I thought you said at one point that 50 lots or more might still come back to us.

Ms. Rupkey said they will not come to you all. If I misspoke, I apologize for the confusion.

Councilmember Dent said did I just hear that not fronting on a public street will still come back to us?

Ms. Rupkey said correct.

Councilmember Dent said that is one of the things I have been proposing that we address in the Zoning Ordinance. Because townhouse complexes always have that; private streets within them. So, we will deal with that when we get there.

Chair Baugh called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Vice-Chair Porter	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Commissioner Seitz	Aye
Commissioner Jezior	Aye
Chair Baugh	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the Subdivision Ordinance amendments passed (6-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on August 11, 2026.

Consider a request to rezone at 435, 445, 457, 473, 483 & 495 South Main Street and 282, 288, 294 & 298 South Liberty Street

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Dang said the applicant is requesting to rezone a +/- 2.75-acre site consisting of 10 parcels from R-3, Medium Density Residential District to B-1C, Central Business District Conditional. If the request is approved, with recent proffer changes the applicant is now proposing to construct a four-story multi-family building consisting of a maximum of 180 units (which is about 65 units per acre), between 2,500 to 5,000 square feet of non-residential space, and a five-level parking garage consisting of a minimum of 320 off-street parking spaces.

Planning Commission and City Council have previously reviewed requests to rezone the subject property in 2025 and earlier this year. Most recently, on April 28, 2026, City Council tabled the request. Due to substantial revisions to the proffers by the applicant following the April 28th meeting, the rezoning request must return to Planning Commission for public hearing. Previous

meeting minutes, staff memorandums, application materials, and public comments are available at the following links:

- July 9, and August 12, 2025 - <https://harrisonburg-va.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7507770&GUID=BCCA5060-6091-4F84-B392-674CDE97EBE5&Options=&Search=> and
- March 11 and April 28, 2026 - <https://harrisonburg-va.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7991334&GUID=05131103-00F1-40F8-BC7D-5007058D6DE2&Options=&Search=>.

Changes to Proffers

For the most up-to-date full list of proffers, please refer to the attached file “Applicant’s supporting documents,” which includes a document titled “Rezoning Request Proffer Statement.”

Since the April 28th City Council meeting, the applicant has amended proffers I.b., c., d., e., f., g., and h.; II. e.; III.a. b., c., d., and f.; IV.a.; and V.a..

The applicant has:

- Reduced the maximum number of dwelling units from 250 to 180 (Proffer I.b.),
- Reduced the maximum number of bedrooms from 555 to 440 (Proffer I.b.),
- Reduced the minimum number of studio or one-bedroom multi-family units from 110 to 72 (Proffer I.c.),
- Maintained the previously planned maximum number of four-bedroom units at 85 (Proffer I.d.),
- Reduced the proffered minimum number of structured parking spaces from 480 to 320 (Proffer III.a.),
- Reduced the proffered minimum number of electric vehicle charging stations from 14 to 10 (Proffer III.c.),
- Reduced the minimum number of secure indoor/covered bicycle storage spaces from 120 to 90 (Proffer III.d.), and
- Maintained the proffered minimum number of exterior bicycle parking spaces at 16 (Proffer III.d.).

In addition to the above details, the applicant has reduced the cash contributions for:

- Traffic-calming improvements from \$60,000 to \$45,000 (Proffer I.e.),
- Parking enforcement or enhancements from \$30,000 to \$22,500 (Proffer III.f.), and
- Affordable housing from \$93,738 to \$70,000 (Proffer V.a.).

The applicant describes the cash contribution reductions as “generally proportionate to the number of units and bedrooms proffered for the Project.”

Table 1, attached to this staff report, summarizes the evolution of the proffers specifically associated with the number of units and bedrooms and how they have changed throughout the different public hearings in August 2025, April 2026, and for July 2026.

With regard to building height, Proffer I.h. has been revised to restrict building height to 52-feet. Without this proffer, the B-1 district allows buildings and structures to be a maximum of 75-feet in height by right. The proffer also clarifies that building height will be measured from the midpoint of the curb along the Paul Street extension, consistent with the Zoning Ordinance’s methodology for measuring height from the curb of a public street, private street, or travelway in front of the building. Depending on how the site is graded, the building height measured from the ground may be taller on the northern side since height is measured from Paul Street. Existing ground contour data indicates an approximate 10-foot drop in elevation from the southern to northern side of the property. Additionally, Proffer I.h. allows rooftop structures such as solar panels, HVAC units and other mechanical equipment, and parapets to be up to 55 feet in height so long as those structures are screened from public view.

With regard to non-residential uses, the applicant has increased the proffered minimum square footage from 2,000 to 2,500 but retained the maximum of 5,000 square feet along the southeast corner of the building at the proposed Paul Street and South Main Street intersection (Proffer I.e.). The proffered 5,000-square-foot maximum reflects the largest non-residential space evaluated in the Traffic Impact Analysis.

The applicant previously proffered to restrict occupancy in a way that staff believed would be overly restrictive in certain circumstances for non-student living arrangements. Staff believes that shared housing scenarios for the City’s non-student population can at times make housing attainable for some residents. In response to staff’s concern, the applicant removed previous proffer I.f.

Also note the previously proffered Parking Agreement with the City to reserve up to 65 parking spaces for municipal/public uses in the parking garage has been removed.

While the language of Proffer I.a. has not changed, there are some changes to the Concept Plan referenced in that proffer. Previously, the parking deck was separate from the mixed-use building and the west and east courtyards were slightly larger. While the general locations and footprints of the parking deck and mixed-use building have not significantly changed as they are viewed from the public streets and from City Hall, the footprint of the mixed-use building has been expanded within the center of the development.

Land Use, Downtown 2040 Plan, and Housing Study

The applicant has stated they plan for a mixture of one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom apartments. The revised proffers require a minimum of 72 one-bedroom units and continues to permit up to 85 four-bedroom units. Staff encourages developers to provide a balanced mix of bedrooms per unit so that such buildings can serve a variety of needs. There can be disadvantages to providing too many four-bedroom/four-bathroom units, which the applicant states is their intended design. Such designs typically best serve college students and can be difficult to accommodate for non-student users. However, staff continues to recognize the advantages of providing student housing in close and walkable proximity (about ¼-mile) to the JMU campus as well as to the downtown area. Providing college housing in such locations can help reduce daily vehicle trips on City streets—especially Reservoir Street and Port Republic Road, off of which many college students currently reside.

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.

Staff continues to believe that the proposed uses, with the submitted proffers, generally conform with the Mixed Use area designation.

Additionally, the proposed development would support the Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 Plan goal to “Grow Downtown as a Neighborhood.” The development would further support the following two action items from the same plan:

- #16: Encourage mixed-use and residential development in key clusters (page 58) and
- #17: In the long-term, seek opportunities to add density and improve the urban design at key Downtown sites (page 58).

The Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 plan describes that “[w]hile the number of housing units and residents have grown Downtown, there is need for more housing to support local businesses.” Additionally, the subject property is within a key cluster area for potential residential development identified as “South Downtown.” The Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 plan is available at the following link: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/downtown-2040>.

The Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) identified that there is strong demand for expanding rental housing inventory at the lowest and highest income spectrum because the number of households in the lowest and highest income groups significantly exceed the number of housing units available for and affordable to them. The Housing Study is available at the following link: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/housing-study>.

James Madison University’s campus strategic plan

On April 24, 2026, the James Madison University (JMU) Board of Visitors endorsed the campus strategic plan (The Madison Promise, <https://www.jmu.edu/madison-promise/index.shtml>). The strategic plan states that JMU plans to grow overall enrollment and to build more on-campus housing to house approximately 60% of the students on campus by 2040. In a JMU Breeze article, President Jim Schmidt is quoted saying that “JMU currently only houses 28% of students” and “[t]he goal is to build 1,000 beds per year for 10 years¹² Table 2 below summarizes current conditions and planned future conditions.

Table 2. Current and Future JMU enrollment, number of students on campus, and number of students off campus

	Current (Fall 2025)	Future (2040)	Change
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² Newsom, Alexa. “President Schmidt outlines strategic plan at SGA meeting.” *JMU Breeze*, March 11, 2026. https://www.breezejmu.org/news/president-schmidt-outlines-strategic-plan-at-sga-meeting/article_edcc8b9e-212c-4e61-90bd-74e8ed3d18b8.html.

JMU enrollment	23,157³ (Undergraduate & Graduate)	30,000⁴ (per draft JMU strategic plan)	+6,843 (30,000-23,157)
Students residing on Campus	6,484 (28% ⁵ of 23,157)	18,000 (if 60% of students live on campus per JMU strategic plan)	+11,516 (18,000-6,484) Or +10,000⁶
Students residing off Campus	16,673 (23,157-6,484)	12,000 (30,000-18,000)	-4,673 (12,000-16,671)

If JMU executes its recently proposed strategic plan targets by increasing the student population to 30,000 and housing 18,000 students on campus, the total number of JMU students residing off-campus would decline by roughly 4,673 students. Given this anticipated decline in the off-campus student population, staff questions the need for continued growth in off-campus student-oriented housing over the long term.

Conclusion

As JMU increases its supply of university-managed housing, demand for off-campus student-oriented housing is expected to change. Staff believes that such changes will not affect all off-campus housing equally: student-oriented housing located further from campus may see a greater shift toward vacancy or non-student households, while student-oriented housing that is easily walkable to campus and that provides convenient access to services such as those located downtown, would be better positioned to continue having students reside there. For this reason, staff believes the subject site is among the more appropriate locations in the City for student-oriented housing. Its proximity to campus and downtown supports walkability and may help reduce reliance on personal vehicles compared to student housing located further away and in less accessible areas.

³JMU Facts & Figures: <https://www.jmu.edu/about/fact-and-figures.shtml>, accessed on July 1, 2026

⁴ The published JMU strategic plan (The Madison Promise) website's frequently asked questions page states a guidepost goal to "[g]row overall enrollment" (<https://www.jmu.edu/madison-promise/faqs.shtml#guideposts>). However, the website does not state a goal of 30,000 students by 2040, but this number was available in prior drafts (https://www.jmu.edu/pair/strategic-planning/docs/jmu_strategic_plan_final_draft_april2026.pdf).

⁵ Newsom, Alexa. "President Schmidt outlines strategic plan at SGA meeting." *JMU Breeze*, March 11, 2026. https://www.breezejmu.org/news/president-schmidt-outlines-strategic-plan-at-sga-meeting/article_edcc8b9e-212c-4e61-90bd-74e8ed3d18b8.html.

⁶ Newsom, Alexa. "President Schmidt outlines strategic plan at SGA meeting." *JMU Breeze*, March 11, 2026. https://www.breezejmu.org/news/president-schmidt-outlines-strategic-plan-at-sga-meeting/article_edcc8b9e-212c-4e61-90bd-74e8ed3d18b8.html.

Staff also recognizes that the geographic distribution of student-oriented housing is an important community policy question that extends beyond this rezoning request. As JMU's housing strategy advances and off-campus demand patterns shift, the community will need to consider where student-oriented housing is most appropriate, where broader community housing needs should be prioritized, and how those decisions align with future land use and other City and community goals. Staff believe that discussion would be best addressed through a focused initiative on that topic.

In conclusion, staff believes rezoning the property to B-1C has more advantages than disadvantages and it generally conforms with the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 Plan.

Staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any more questions for staff.

Vice-Chair Porter said as it relates to the change in language on the proffers related to the design standards, switching from substantially conforming to generally conforming, in terms of enforceability and what that actually means, can you provide us with some insight as to what that change in language, in nomenclature, how that impacts the proffer and our ability to be able to enforce it?

Ms. Dang said I think that the language is appropriate. The two different terms being used in two different contexts that they have. The substantial conformance is used in proffer I.a. and refers to the concept plan. So it is more rigorous and restrictive in terms of the footprint and this is what we expect that the site would look like. The general conformance proffer is used when describing the proffer that has to do with building elevations and the renderings. The first word that comes to mind, it is a little more squishy, but I am trying to think of a better word to describe it. It is talking about the general idea of architectural features and things that we would see, and then there is also that flexibility built in that building materials... I am trying to pull up the proffers here... is subject to availability of materials and other things like that, so it will not look exactly the same. So substantial conformance being more strict and general conformance less strict. But you know, we have a Zoning Administrator who would be responsible for ultimately making that interpretation when the time comes. Is there anything else any staff would like to add to that?

Mr. Russ said I think that is good.

Commissioner Seitz said I have a question about one particular email that we were sent. There was an email that expressed concern about... it was sent to us by Mr. Tennyson. He made reference to concern about the Paul Street configuration. He says I am ready to formally object to the apparent use of the subdivision ordinance process to approve elements of the proposed Paul Street extension that would otherwise require a variance, and I do not know if that is the right use of variance or back to variations and exceptions, under the City's zoning and development standards. I mean, we are not really approving any specific confirmation of Paul Street if we recommend this, correct?

Ms. Dang said that is correct. I respectfully think that there is some... the point made earlier in the prior conversation about the Subdivision Ordinance, the term variance is confusing in the way that we are using the same term for zoning variances that go to the BZA and subdivision variances that would go to you all and City Council. I think that there is a bit of confusion in his email. You are correct that if City Council were to approve this rezoning, the applicant still would have to come back through this body and City Council to ask for the variations and deviations from the Subdivision Ordinance for reduced street widths or other things related to the street things that do not meet the basic standard.

Commissioner Seitz said and we saw that recently in the proposed extension of Franklin Street.

Ms. Dang said that is correct. That is a good example. And that was discussed in a prior report. It was documented in the March and April 2026 staff report. There is a paragraph that explains that the applicant will have to come back through the process.

Commissioner Kettler said this may or may not apply to that particular comment or other comments, but I would generally say that relying on AI in creating public comments is often not the most helpful input. There are a couple of comments which have the telltale signs that they could be produced by AI. I am not particularly interested in hearing what AI has to say. I am very interested in hearing what the public has to say. I will leave it at that.

Commissioner Jezior said on the cash contributions, the changes in the proffers. I know in the past meeting for The Link there was a certain amount for the affordable housing per resident. The \$93,738 was calculated based on per resident. Are all the other changes in there, is there any specific reason why they would be reduced or was that just a decision that the developer made based on...

Ms. Dang said I will defer that question to the developer when they come up.

Chair Baugh said are we okay with staff at this point?

Commissioner Seitz said I want to express appreciation for the analysis that was done in the staff report, the comparison of bedrooms and units and the tables. It was very helpful.

Vice-Chair Porter said it has been a lot of changes.

Ms. Dang said thanks for the feedback.

Chair Baugh invited the applicant or applicant's representative to speak to their request.

Todd Rhea, local land use attorney with Clark and Bradshaw, 92 North Liberty Street, representing the applicant said with me this evening is Seth Roderick with Monteverde Engineering our local traffic and civil engineer. For efficiency, I will be making the applicant presentation this evening. Mr. Roderick is available to field questions in relation to his area of expertise including traffic, streets, engineering, height of building, those types of questions. The land use considerations of

The Lindsey project would appear to be fairly well settled at this stage given its recommendation for approval three times by city planning professionals and twice by this body. While not presuming a further recommendation in advance, there appears to be no land use justification to depart from prior recommendations of approval. Planning staff have detailed how the present application meets the Comprehensive Plan, the 2040 Downtown Plan, and related city goals to increase density in downtown to activate redevelopment areas for higher economic use and to locate sorely needed customers in walking distance of downtown businesses.

The zoning justification letter in your packet and posted for public review focuses on the revision to the project since your consideration in March. My presentation will largely focus on those revisions and comments received since that hearing. The applicant has been consistently proactive and responsive over the past 12 months, from the complete redesign of the project's exterior appearance to align with those found downtown, the addition of the gateway clock tower element, changing the unit mix to provide much needed one-bedroom downtown apartments, providing street activating commercial space along South Main Street, providing extensive cash proffer commitments consistent with project generated impacts, to finally the removal of two full stories and over 20-feet of height from the structure, going from a maximum of 75 feet to 52 feet. In direct response to community and Council concerns, there are some who will not support an urban style apartment project on this site no matter the scale. They are entitled to that view. But for many others, Timberwolf's commitment to making responsive changes to the project based on community feedback has been recognized. From the Lindsey family's perspective, having their name on the project is meaningful given their century-long ownership of the property. Both the City and the Lindsey family have been discussing redevelopment of the site for over a decade, and the family intends to see it developed. There has been some discussion [unintelligible] to have the City reach into its coffers to spend millions of taxpayer dollars to turn it into a larger public park and event venue. That is an expensive proposition not supported by the Lindsey family and represents a move beyond requesting changes to the existing Timberwolf proposal to something entirely different which does not respect Timberwolf's investment and collaboration in bringing this project to the City.

In fact, there is a fantastic public park and concert venue planned right next door and integrated into The Lindsey project. The Build Our Park leadership has worked tirelessly over a decade of planning and fundraising to make that park a reality with city support. We would encourage those who desire a downtown park to consider contributing privately to that effort or lobby the City for additional funding for the Build Our Park plan. Even with the reduced height and unit count, The Lindsey project will create an ongoing income stream to the City to maintain City budgetary priorities. Removing The Lindsey income stream and replacing it with a major park capital project not in the CIP [Capital Improvement Program] and ongoing operational expenses would simply create additional funding challenges for the City budget. Let me also share that the predecessor organization to Build Our Park, namely Greener Harrisonbrug, had the Lindsey property under an option to purchase for 18 months in 2013 and 2014.

At that time, City funding was not available to provide the park committee the fiscal support to make that purchase and fund a larger downtown park project. Today, the City arguably has much less room or appetite to fund an expanded downtown park at the expense of the substantial tax benefits and critically needed downtown residents that The Lindsey project would provide back to

land use. The primary consideration of this commission as highlighted by staff, the Lindsey Project has been guided by the 2040 Downtown Plan. The 2040 Plan is the adopted City plan for downtown land use and redevelopment goals. In this slide, an overarching goal of the Downtown 2040 Plan is the pressing need to increase population within walkable distance at the city center through density initiatives. Simply stated, downtown needs more residents and more residential density is needed to help support downtown businesses. Those of us who work and live in downtown Harrisonburg know that need from the small business community.

The plan also recognized the City's running out of old buildings to remodel and focused on areas where new and dense residential construction should be directed. South Downtown containing The Lindsay site is highlighted in the 2040 plan as one of those targeted areas ripe for reinvestment to accommodate the goal of encouraging mixed use space and residential developments in key clusters of underutilized space. Zooming in closer, the Plan calls for integrating new housing close to City Hall to activate the area south of Turner Pavilion. This slide specifically shows urban scale residential buildings on the Lindsey site that could not be built under the current R-3 zoning classification.

I have talked extensively during these presentations about the last 15 years of development patterns which have pushed almost all new growth and permitted residential units into Rockingham County near the City limits. As the recent Peach Grove student housing project's public discussion and tonight's staff report confirms, placing students closer to downtown in realistic bike-walk distance of campus and away from autocentric corridors is an expressed city goal that the Lindsey property aligns with and supports. As the staff report states, the Lindsey site is among the more appropriate locations in the city for student-oriented housing. The new Lindsey concept plan shows a project that fits neatly on the site with natural separation and buffering on the east and west from Main and Liberty Streets on the north from the existing city parking lot and on the south from the Baptist church parking lot and the new Paul Street extension, it has natural buffering.

This building does not loom over anybody. It does not press up against anybody. Just giving the natural improvements around it. The project also provides significant upgrades to bike and pedestrian connectivity, through the Liberty Street cycle track, through installing wider sidewalks along its main frontages, and public seating space in south downtown along the major street corridors. That is an important proffer. It has not been touched on in these hearings so much, but this is an activated area around this building. Finally, a large drop-off area is designed along the Paul Street extension to serve all ride share delivery and related needs for the property purposely moving those stops off of Main and Liberty Streets.

The applicant's architectural team has retained the updated traditional appearance of the building, utilizing finished colors and elements such as brick and greystone materials, townhome style elements to break up the massing of the building, traditional balconies and signage, cornices, varied foundation materials at pedestrian level, and a signature clock tower element as a gateway to downtown. All suggestions received and responded to through the public comment and discussion process. The building has been reduced to a maximum of 52-feet finished roof height with some small leeway for the clock tower and roof screening via architectural elements. The height of the building now aligns with the height of City Hall. The natural curve of Main Street as you can see on this picture and the lower height of the northeast corner of the building - you can

see a little bit of a setback there on that corner and that area on the other side of the drive aisle is a little bit lower - is intentional to provide additional visual clearance for City Hall. And City Hall, as you can see, is oriented and aligned. Looking out toward the street, it doesn't face directly into the back of The Lindsey building. Exterior design is a subjective process. It is not governed by existing City ordinances, but as is evident from the traditional redesign and the lowering of building height, The Lindsey project team has listened to feedback and invested significant time and resources in the evolution of this proffered design.

[Referring to the powerpoint presentation] This initial view shows the building from the southeast corner near the Paul and Main Street intersection looking northwest. The clock tower feature in the middle, the commercial area under the clock tower and along South Main with sidewalk patio, a more traditional mounted sign above the main entrance off Paul Street and building design elements and colors are clearly shown. The gateway corner under the clock tower contains a wide pedestrian circulation and seating area at its base in front of the commercial shops. The second elevation from the northeast looks toward south toward the back of the building. This view provides an example of how parking garage screening through muralization can provide a palette for natural or other art installations which are proffered to a 60% coverage level by the applicant. It also shows how the South Main Street sidewalk is widened and landscaped as an attractive and activated pedestrian corridor.

Activating South Main Street is a key goal of the Downtown 2040 Plan. The third elevation is from the southwest corner of the property looking north up Liberty Street. This view shows the new Paul Street intersection, the Liberty Street cycle lane, and additional views of the transformed exterior building design elements. This view along Liberty [Street] gives you a great view of the very greystone foundational element at pedestrian level seen with many older structures in town. You can also see an example of street level landscaped space and pedestrian seating along Paul Street. I will briefly discuss project impacts that I more thoroughly covered in previous presentations.

First, transportation improvements. Despite the reduced size and unit count, The Lindsey continues to fund the full installation cost of the Paul Street public street extension and provides City Public Works directed transportation calming funding for the Paul Street Corridor. Parking. The project continues to be designed to meet its resident parking needs within an onsite parking garage. Timberwolf plans to charge separately for parking as an economic incentive to promote bike, walk, and transit options. There are transit stops on Main and Liberty [Streets] close to this site today. The parking garage will be built over what is largely today surface parking, greatly increasing the parking efficiency of that space without taking up new land for parking spaces. The garage will offer EV charging stations for resident use at a level which are in line with EV charging station standards adopted for City public projects. The removal of two levels of the parking garage to reduce structure height while maintaining resident parking ratios does mean that the applicant will no longer be able to provide dedicated City parking spaces in the structure. The project continues to provide improved parking solutions and circulation for the Baptist Church parking lot. It continues to provide a parking impact cash proffer for City utilization and continues to proffer full-time onsite management to address any overflow parking concerns. Finally, affordable housing. During the community engagement process and past public hearings, affordable housing needs were stressed by citizens. The Lindsey team took the initiative to develop an affordable housing

cash proffer supported by legal and financial analysis prepared by Virginia Proffer Solutions. In the absence of an affordable dwelling unit City ordinance as authorized by the Virginia Code and the lack of a local housing trust or other dedicated fund, Timberwolf has provided that affordability cash proffer, legally supported under existing laws and ordinances. The concern has been consistent. Hey guys, what you proffer, make sure it is legal and enforceable. We have taken the steps to do that.

The good thing is the current entitlement process, lengthy as has as it has been, has raised awareness and public input into the work to be done in this critical area of need. Given the range of demonstrated benefits of the Lindsey Project and its consistency with City land use plans, we hope that a recommendation for approval will not be withheld on affordable housing grounds where the City itself has much remaining work to do in order to legally facilitate higher levels of affordability support from new market rate projects. I want to thank the Commission for its time and consideration this evening. There are obviously political considerations outside the purview and scope of Commission consideration. The Lindsey site application has certainly taken a unique path to come before you for the third time and the fifth time for Councilmember Dent. We realize that the nature of compromise means that folks on all sides of this project may not get their full desired outcomes, but we are comfortable that this final proffered plan represents Timberwolf's best efforts in arriving at both an economically viable and politically approvable project. As discussed at the beginning of my remarks, the land use decision before you is clear and compelling with the reduced height. The project is now below the midpoint between allowable R-3 and B-1 heights, a challenging but reasonable compromise. We ask the Commission for its continued vote in support of the project on land use grounds consistent with the renewed recommendation of approval by planning staff as we continue forward with the process to move The Lindsey back before City Council for consideration and hopefully resolution in late August. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chair Baugh said thank you. Questions for the applicant.

Commissioner Jezior said same one that I brought before for Ms. Dang. What was the thought process in the reduction in the cash proffers?

Mr. Rhea said cash proffers are based upon identifiable impacts from the property. These are all offsite proffers; they are not within the building or the site. So, as the building reduced its resident count, bedroom count, and parking space count, those cash proffer impacts were reduced proportionately to those reductions. Again, not a scientific process but well within what was supportable, and we have gone through how those were calculated on affordable housing through the VPS report on the traffic calming measures through other similar type improvements, traffic humps, speed cameras, stop signs and that nature. So again, it was what we believe as a fair and proportional reduction based on similar reduction in the number of residents there.

Commissioner Kettler said in terms of the internal layout change and like the atrium area there, what was the thinking behind that?

Mr. Rhea said it was an ability while we were losing roughly one-third of our building height - buildable area from six floors to four floors - we were able to add back a little bit by adding a

couple wings internal so you would not see those additional units from the street. They are all hidden internally and it allowed us to attach the building itself to the parking garage so that there would be direct resident access from the garage into the full area of the building on site.

Commissioner Jezior said a question that came up at public comments that I want to bring up. I know there was some concern that the four stories were not proffered and that there might be a way to fit five stories within 52 feet.

Mr. Rhea said we have heard that concern. The elevations are proffered; they show four stories. If you look at City Hall and you look at the backside of City Hall, when you come in the entrance out here, it is three stories. On the backside of City Hall, it is four stories because there is an exposed below grade area. The roof will be flat. So, people visually looking for whatever impacts there are, it will be at that capped at that 52-foot height. Why we came up with Paul Street is the City has a very technical definition of “building, height of” and where you measure that from and how it is measured. That is our primary entrance for this building; it has been from day one. So that is the most consistent area. It is not the most favorable nor the least favorable for the project. It is kind of a midpoint for fairly measuring that height.

Commissioner Kettler said what costs are associated with a delay of a project of this size. So, I'm thinking, financing or other additional costs over a period of time, like months here.

Mr. Rhea said there is certainly a cost to the City of delaying a project like this. Although there have been substantial material changes to this project that could be justifying that delay, costs go up over time. Generally, it is going to be more expensive to build tomorrow than it is today unless we have deflation and deflation of building materials, which we have not seen for quite some time. Interest rates are more variable, they go up and go down. That is kind of the luck of the draw as to where you are in the economic cycle and the rate cycle when you lock in your rates. So that could go up or down but, but generally the cost of things continues to go up. So, delaying it does make it more expensive.

Commissioner Kettler said in terms of the layout. It is an overall reduction in the number of residential units. So, I'm wondering on the ground level, are there intended to be more residential units or any residential units on the ground level that were not there before in previous iterations?

Mr. Rhea said the commercial space has remained the same. The ground level will still be primarily used as office space and recreational space. There may be some more on the ground level. The question again came up relative to Mr. Seitz's question about substantially versus general conformance. One of the most challenging things is this has been the most detailed proffered project from an exterior design appearance in my experience in the City, but we have not gone through construction documents yet. And so, when you go through the construction documents there is some variation with that, but the intent is to be consistent with those elevations that were provided. The concept plan, the city knows what it gets if it approves this project.

Vice-Chair Porter said could you speak to the process with the transportation changes and the communications related to Harrisonburg Baptist Church. Since the last time we have seen you, has

there been material discussions between you and the church? Have you reached some accommodation?

Mr. Rhea said there have not been. I do not think they have objected to what we have proposed with respect to their parking lot. It remains completely optional to the church if they want to leave their parking lot as it is today. So there have not been specific conversations regarding that because I do not think there has been a specific objection to that portion of what is being proposed. That remains within the Baptist church decision. If they want to close that, Timberwolf will pay for extending the sidewalks and closing in those ends and giving them the entrances onto the new Paul Street extension as that is constructed.

Vice-Chair Porter said I also want to have you speak on the rationale and the decision-making as it relates to the reduction in the number of bedrooms, the rationale behind that and also the mix that you chose. You know, I have given you a hard time about the four-bedroom units, and I still have concerns about four-bedroom units and that has been well trodden ground, but that percentage has gone up significantly as the project has changed and you have reduced one-bedroom units and significantly reduced two and three-bedroom units. So, I am just curious what the rationale was.

Mr. Rhea said that is economically based. The four-bedroom student housing component to this building is a key part of what makes it economically viable to be constructed with all the proffers and bells and whistles that go along with getting the project approved. We were very intentional about not raising the amount of four-bedroom units, so there are not any more there now than when you all considered this back in March. If you look at a lot of other downtown student-oriented projects along West Main Street in Charlottesville, the project formerly known as The Standard, it is called something else and was sold last year, that is 90% four-bedroom and five-bedroom units. So, this has been an intentional mix. We have had conversations with City officials. We have done our best to provide a project that works and maintaining that one-bedroom scale that young people really are clamoring for. There are people who live at the Ice House, there are not that many units there, they are all the all one-bedrooms. It is where the young professionals want to live. That is who we want to see downtown. I think in terms of opportunity, the ability to live without having a car at that age. Still being tied to the university scene in your twenties, but not being a student there.

Vice-Chair Porter said that is a fair answer.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any additional questions for the applicant. Hearing none, he opened the public hearing and asked if there was anyone in the room or on the phone wishing to speak to the request.

David Bernstein, 521 Ott Street said I will be very brief because a lot has changed since your last discussion of this proposed zoning change and it is clear that you should now oppose it. It is not needed and it is counterproductive. We now know that JMU plans to construct dorms and have 60% of its students live on campus. If the student body does not grow, remains at 23,000, this will amount to an increase in on-campus students of about 6,400 to about 14,000, which is a decrease

in off-campus students of 7,300. If the student body does grow to 30,000 as planned, it will still lead to a decrease in off-campus students of about 4,700. In other words, the City and surrounding County could see a decrease in demand for student housing of between 4,700 and 7,300 bedrooms. That is, we have plenty of student-oriented housing. We also now know for sure that The Lindsey will be a student-oriented complex. The most likely configuration consists of 85 four-bedroom units between nine and 14, two- or three-bedroom units and 72 one-bedroom units. This means that out of a total of 440 bedrooms, 340 or about 77% will be in four-bedroom units. Twenty-eight, about 6% will be in two- or three-bedroom units and 72, about 16% will be in one-bedroom units. The four-bedroom units, as we have all discussed, is attractive only to students and ultimately this means the entire complex is going to be attractive only to students. Hence, we will soon have plenty of student housing and there is no need for The Lindsey. There is, however, need for other kinds of housing. According to the 2020 Harrisonburg Housing Study, 94% of owner-occupied units are traditional single-family homes. In other words, the City has a clear need for other kinds of housing, exactly the kind of housing that is likely to be built if the zoning remains R-3. In conclusion, there should not be a change in zoning. What is best in Harrisonburg is to leave these lots at R-3. Thank you.

Lynn Adams, 906, Circle Drive, said I have been here for 45 years. My husband and I, before we retired, were very involved in the building industry of Harrisonburg and depended on it. That helped our family grow. But as things have changed, so have certain needs, I feel, for downtown Harrisonburg. One thing that concerns me is the future of the ownership of The Lindsey. How long does Timberwolf plan to hold onto it before it sells? Then, will it maintain its beautiful pictures that we are seeing today? That is an entrance to our historic city, which is a very important thing. Four-bedrooms, if it goes as the gentleman before me said to where we do not need student housing as much as they are saying we need it now and it goes to families that need to live in things like that, a four-bedroom, four-bath, one will be too expensive for a normal family to afford. So that is one concern and as JMU goes to living on campus, we have an awful lot of housing for students off campus now. That is not going to change by building this here downtown closer. They are still going to want to be off campus but not under the thumb of downtown restrictions. Parking is going to be affected. I am not sure how the surveys and the tests and all that were done. Anybody, if you talk, I talk to a lot of people downtown, and I am downtown quite a bit. The people that come into our area, one of the big things they bring up is parking. Where do you park? I cannot find a parking space. These students, and I do not know how many of you have young children or teenage kids or grandkids like we do, they are not going to leave their cars at home. They are going to bring their cars and, if you try parking on any of these streets that are the 10-hour-parking during the week, Monday through Friday, they are all student cars that are taking up all those. And when you bring more students living at The Lindsey, there is not going to be any parking that is available for the people that are going to come down, the residents that live here 365 days a year, to shop downtown. They are not going to be able to park. So, I think, I hope that you consider the long-term effects that we are going to have to deal with after Timberwolf sells the building and moves on to the next town. Thank you.

John Mansfield, 505 South Mason Street said I certainly want to compliment Ms. Dang and Mr. Rhea for their presentations and also Timberwolf for their efforts. I think one question I would have is if the majority of city residents really believe that what appears to be purpose-built student housing is preferable over a festival center that might have other benefits both culturally and in the

long term. I also wonder, in considering a festival center, if you are looking at the value as opposed to just the cost. Well, thank you. I appreciate having been able to meet with a number of you and also hopefully you have read some of the emails that I sent. Thank you.

Todd Alexander, Paul Street, said Parking. We are 120 parking spaces short. We already have parking issues on Paul [Street]. We brought it up to City Council. They sent police officers out and for two weeks they patrolled it, ticketed, towed, did all the things that they needed to do. We appreciated that. But that is a two-week period, you know, this is going to be every day. We are going to have 120 cars and when they cannot park in the parking garage, they are coming into the Old Town Neighborhood. We already have issues. And if you think that JMU students are not going to own a car, you are not thinking correctly. If the developer is in the proffering stages and they are so certain that parking will not be an issue, they are going to cover all the parking, then let them pay to add onto their parking garage when it is a problem. Let them proffer that, if they are so certain that their parking is correct, it should not be an issue because they should not have to build it. We still do not have a clue what the price of these units are going to sell for or rent for because they have never told us. We have no clue how expensive the parking is going to be. If you go and look at The Standard, which they keep referring to, you will find that the reviews are not good. Parking is high. Outrageous, they say. But they still park there because they have no choice. They say that their parties are so loud in the hallways that they do not sleep at night, that people are throwing up in the elevators and throwing up in the hallways and it takes weeks to get it cleaned up. Now those are student reviews, good, bad or ugly. That is what they are. But if you are going to make references to that, then you are going to have to take the good, the bad, and the ugly with it.

What is the plan to address the future problems with traffic? The developer is going to give a small sum of money for traffic calming. What are you going to do with the rest of it? How are you going to fix that? Because once they walk out, it is done. Then we, the taxpayers and the City, are paying for this. Developer is not paying for it anymore. They gave their small amount of money and they are done. So once again, if they are so certain that it is not going to be an issue, let them proffer to pay for that. Look at the study a year later and they can pay the expenses to fix that. I do not know what else to say about that. Four-bedroom units are difficult, almost impossible to convert and in 10 years we are going to be stuck with a whole building full of them. What are you going to do then? Water. We have not even talked about water.

Water, next 25, 50 years. I mean we have water today because the City Council had the foresight long time ago to buy multiple sources of water. We need that same foresight today. Especially if the answer is to rely on the Shenandoah River where there are environmental concerns. The river is at record low. I have never seen the river this low in my entire life, and we have property on the river.

I am still confused. Maybe you guys have the answers to this. I do not understand why you can build a six-story structure with 62 feet, but it takes 52 feet to build a four-story structure. If you

have answers, I am listening. It seems to me that a four-story structure should be 42 feet. It still has not addressed affordable housing. Adding rental units does not automatically mean that you are increasing the working... The residents, the young professionals, families, seniors, nobody can afford that housing. You are just not going to be able to do it.

Some of the proposed developments are now described and are less necessary because of changes on the JMU campus housing. Why is that reasoning basically applied selectively? We apply it in one area, but we do not apply it in the other. I think we need to apply it in all areas, not just one or the other. We need housing for young professionals, working residents, people who want to live and invest in the community year-round, not just part of the year. We already have plenty of that. If you walk downtown now, you can actually walk down the sidewalk without having to walk out into the street to get around. You can see the difference, which is just going to compound that. The housing study has been referenced in this for some reason. The Housing Study says that there is an increased need for rental housing, but I do not understand why it is now being used to justify recommendations that and why it has not been followed with the same urgency for all the other things. We just chose to apply it to this. What is going to be built on the property? We have an idea, but we do not because things are generally this. I think we need specifics. These are not minor details. They are basic questions about infrastructure, affordability, transportation, water, and neighborhood character.

A zoning change or major developmental approval should not move forward just because we need revenue. The City is like, oh, we need money and this is great money for us. I do not think it is. I think you should look at some of the other projects from this developer and see how much revenue is generated from that. I think that would help you a lot. And so, I would ask if it is not your job as Planning Commissioners to protect citizens' quality of life, then what is the responsibility and who is responsible to protect our quality of life? We are depending on you guys to do that. I ask the Planning Commission to require clear, concise answers to this and many other questions and ensure that the public input is not treated as an obstacle, but as an essential part of responsible planning. Harrisonburg deserves thoughtful growth, not growth that leaves residents with unanswered questions and multiple costs. We are going to get stuck with all these costs as the residents. I ask you to protect our quality of life. Thank you very much.

Carl Larsson, 47 South Mason Street, said I have lived in Harrisonburg for 10 years now and I absolutely love our city. I share in the desire of many in this room to have greater density and more neighbors living in and around our downtown. And yet I am here to respectfully ask that you vote no tonight on recommending approval of the rezoning as a first step toward a better yes on this property tomorrow. I want to be very clear, I do not believe that voting no is a vote against housing or against downtown growth. Voting no tonight is a vote to uphold our City's planning documents. It is a vote to ask that this rezoning application is not just or does not just partially align, but that it should fully align with our city standards before recommending approval to our City Council.

I would like to offer three arguments. First, this proposal contradicts our Downtown 2040 Plan. Second, the proposal does not have the support of the community and there are too many unresolved issues to allow it to move forward for a vote by City Council. Third, there are many alternative uses for this property that could better serve the needs and goals of our community.

First, this rezoning proposal contradicts the Downtown 2040 Plan in several important ways. The Downtown 2040 Plan was adopted by City Council, and it represents our community's shared vision for downtown development. While this development proposal may deliver development and density downtown, density alone is not enough. I would like to show a poster, and you should have a handout of this in your docket as well. This image, from page 60 of the Downtown 2040 plan, clearly depicts a B-1 style building at three stories, not four or five or six, but three stories with both historic buildings preserved. The applicant's proposal contradicts this plan by first demolishing historic buildings and second, introducing four- to five-story structures and massing in an area next to two- to three-story buildings. That scale and massing violate the sound planning principles of transition zones and the need to match existing neighborhood character. Some additional contradictions with the Downtown 2040 Plan include the following: The Downtown 2040 Plan calls for green building solutions on page 60. It is my understanding that the comparably sized Urban Exchange is LEED certified, but I do not see any similar environmental certifications being proffered in this proposal. This proposal also risks the negative environmental impacts of removing mature trees and green space next to the Blacks Run watershed. Page 44 of the Downtown 2040 Plan calls for the highest standards of design at this downtown gateway. The proposal's proffers, however, allow for an exposed parking deck rather than wrapping the parking with apartments, which is standard in many cities. The proffers even seem to allow for future changes to the design and materials after rezoning, and I simply feel that we should not accept, as Ms. Dang described as squishy general conformance language for the final design in building materials at this key gateway to our downtown. I do not think the Downtown 2040 Plan says that these issues I have mentioned can be ignored as long as density is delivered. Until all of these criteria are met, we have to conclude that at this time the current proposal contradicts the Downtown 2040 Plan. Thus, I respectfully ask that, even if there are aspects of this project that we appreciate, we nonetheless hold off in recommending approval until the proposal fully rather than only partially aligns with the content of our City's adopted Downtown 2040 Plan. Second, the proposal does not have the support of the community and there are too many unresolved issues to allow it to move forward for a vote by City Council. Over 1,600 people have signed the petition against rezoning and the map in your docket shows that the petition signatures come from neighborhoods all across the city.

Commissioner Seitz said sorry to interrupt. Are you referring to this? [Referring to a handout.] There is no label or context on this, so can you just describe explicitly what this page represents?

Mr. Larsson said that represents the addresses of those who have signed the petition against rezoning to B-1C, in favor of keeping the current R-3 rezoning.

Commissioner Seitz said thank you for the clarification.

Mr. Larsson said thank you for the question. It does not come as a surprise to me that there are so many people opposed to this given how many unresolved issues still linger. Affordability, traffic, parking, management plans, fiscal impacts, and the possibility of future tax breaks on the property and environmental impacts the legal enforceability of the proffers. None of these are small details. They are fundamental issues that demand answers, and the proposal now has an increased focus since last March on student-oriented units with the proffer now allowing up to 77% of bedrooms to be housed in student-oriented four-bedroom units. Increasing the proportion of student-oriented units simply does not make sense to me in light of JMU recently approved plan to build around 10,000 new beds on campus. We already have plenty of student housing in town and JMU on campus housing projections, we have heard forecast that will now be around 4,400 or more fewer students living off campus by 2040. Our City does not need a building with 440 new bedrooms marketed to students. If anything, we need 4,400 already existing bedrooms to convert from student off-campus housing to workforce and family housing between now and 2040. As our City Community Development Department recently said in its memo for the Peach Grove rezoning request, staff does not believe that more student-oriented housing is needed at this time. And secondly, they said, quote, it would be better for the community to provide the appropriate style of units at the initial time of construction.

Let me pose a question. What do the following recently completed multifamily apartments in downtown Harrisonburg have in common? The Ice House apartments, the Kavanaugh apartments, the Foundry apartments, and the Keezle building apartments. Besides all being very popular downtown Harrisonburg apartments, as far as I can tell from a quick internet search, it looks like they consist of only one- and two-bedroom units with no three- or four-bedroom units at all. I feel that the absence of three- and four-bedroom units is a major factor that makes properties like this attractive to year-round, non-student residence. Even Urban Exchange is predominantly made up of one- and two-bedroom units with only about 20% of their units listed online having three-bedrooms. And there are no four-bedroom units at Urban Exchange. None at all. We simply do not need more four-bedroom, student-oriented housing in town. On the other hand, one- and two-bedroom units appear to be in high demand downtown. Completely eliminating three- and four-bedroom units from the proposal not only seems to be financially feasible, but I also believe that this change would much better serve our City's current and future housing needs.

Finally, very briefly, I would like to show you how your no vote tonight could open the door to a better yes vote on a different plan tomorrow. First for reference, this is the developer's updated rendering that we have already seen this evening. I feel that it visually downplays the height of The Lindsey making its five-story parking decks somehow appear to be shorter than our three-story City Hall. In reality, the building and parking deck would likely feel very out of context with their surroundings. City Hall would no longer be the focal point of our civic core. Center stage would be taken by these apartments. Now here is a possible alternative use of the property [referring to a poster he held up]. The first possible alternative use of the property would be an

expanded public park. Please think about how great an expanded public park could be for this area, our downtown environment, and the ability to attract new investment in dense housing and businesses to downtown. The Urban Land Institute and other planning experts agree, great downtowns need great parks and public spaces. Think of how great an expanded downtown park could be to catalyze downtown growth and investment for generations to come. Will a student-oriented apartment building have the same effect?

A second alternative use of this property could be to build context-sensitive multifamily. If the landowner wishes to pursue B-1 housing here, then please vote no tonight and let us wait for a plan that fully aligns with the Downtown 2040 Plan by focusing on three-story apartments, built side by side with the existing historic buildings on the property. This would be consistent with the scale of other recently completed downtown apartments, the ones I mentioned earlier, and thus, it seems to be economically feasible and in high demand for our City. It could still provide downtown density, and it could be absolutely beautiful for our downtown. These are just two examples of a better path forward. I feel that it would be a false dichotomy to believe that this is a choice between something like R-3 townhomes or an out of context student-oriented apartment block. On the contrary, I would hope that there are many more options available for the applicant to explore that could better serve the common good of our city.

To conclude, a no vote tonight is not a rejection of downtown growth. It is an opportunity to reset and invite this talented development team to come up with a proposal that fully aligns with the needs of our community and the guiding documents adopted by our city government for the sake of our downtown today, as well as our legacy in the downtown that we leave for our children and our grandchildren. I ask that you please vote no tonight so that we can reset the process and work together towards a better yes tomorrow. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sierra Lambert, East Elizabeth Street, said my comment was not written by AI. A classic social psychological tactic is where a negotiator makes an extremely unreasonable request that is sure to be rejected when the other party inevitably says no. The negotiator follows up with a slightly smaller but still extreme request because the later request feels like a compromise. The other party is much more likely to agree. I ask that you do not fall for the psychological trap created by the developers and the attempts to convince us that this is a good thing for downtown. This updated plan still emphasizes the same 84 four-bedroom units, which undoubtedly primarily focuses on JMU students who are willing to be living in shared spaces. This proposed development would be just housing students who already go to school every day within walking distance of downtown, many of which will already be housed close by due to JMU's new on-campus housing plan. The argument of boosting downtown business from this development is invalid. I also just want to remind you of the likelihood of this development being sold to JMU. Being the developer is incentivized to sell because of certain tax breaks they would qualify for, then the City will be receiving absolutely no money from taxes from this development. Keep the dorms on campus where they belong. The new plan removed all public parking proffers and will only provide 320 parking spaces for 444 bedrooms, forcing residents to overflow into public parking that is already

limited, especially during the farmers' markets and church services. Not to mention the traffic that would be added to the two roads this development would be situated between that the Downtown 2040 Plan intends to reduce to one lane. If this development was proposed to go in place of the Courthouse on Court Square, would you consider that location because of any twisted attempts to argue that the Downtown 2040 Plan supports that. We have to think critically about the location of where we allow a massive, as massive of a structure as this, a four-story wall of brick, the same height as Urban Exchange and concrete wall, a story higher spanning from Main [Street] to Liberty Street at the entrance of downtown towering over our tiny pavilion park. Not to mention the historical destruction that will be caused by this development, which Downtown Harrisonburg cannot afford any more of. I will hit on, as I have in many other meetings, that there are plenty of other properties for sale already zoned for this type of development within walking distance of downtown and JMU. Some great alternatives I have mentioned prior include many buildings downtown that can be renovated into housing and the Roses and CVS lots. Some new properties that have come onto the market since the last meeting are 625 and 635 West Market Street, which is Black's Paint and Floor Covering. It is \$1.32 million, B-2 zoning, 3.46 acres. Another property is 291 West Wolfe Street. It is where the big white Graham Packaging plastic products plant is located right when you turn onto West Market Street, it's M-1, \$2.95 million, and 5.35 acres. A proposed alternative of a Lindsey Park is the best and highest use for this property with the greatest potential to benefit all of the members of not only the Harrisonburg community, but visitors as well. The public performance space will also provide a place for many local and tour musicians who have lost a place to play in Harrisonburg due to the closure of Crayola, the Warehouse, the Golden Pony, and many other venues downtown within the last few years. And the \$6 million is not really a lot to invest in a public park for everyone to enjoy when the City is proposing to spend \$26 million just to renovate the building we are standing in. The power is in your hands to make the best decision, and it is well within your right with a multitude of valid reasoning to say no to B-1C.

Sarah Baker-McEvilly, business owner at 157 North Main Street and resident in the Northeast Neighborhood, said I have been in support of this project since the beginning. One of the things that really concerns me about tonight from the opposition especially, is that we are making a lot of assumptions on hypotheticals. Everybody is really concerned about what is maybe going to happen to this building in 10 years. If JMU is able to follow through on this completely radical project to get 60% of their students living on campus that a brand-new president submitted and supported because he is new and wants to make his mark on the University, then that is great, that is totally within his rights to do that. But this is a really large undertaking, and we are assuming that there is going to be no delays in this project and that all these students are going to immediately start living on campus and then all of the student housing in town is going to be vacant quickly, overnight. And then there is going to be no use for these housing anymore. I think it is a very, very poor decision to decline this project because you are worried about something that could happen 10 years from now when the vacancy rate in town is 2% right now, and we need housing. I also think it is worth addressing that just because they are students does not mean they do not deserve

a place to live. We are having this entire conversation around a group of people who, yeah, it sucks that they leave in the middle of summer. As a business owner, I feel that stress, but when they come back in the fall, they throw their money around, and that is beneficial to me. I am not saying that the community does not support me throughout the year, but these people still participate in our economy, and we are treating them like second-class citizens who do not deserve a place to live. It is the unfortunate consequence of our economy in town that we need a certain amount of four-bedrooms to ground the economic feasibility of a project so that we can have one-bedrooms that young professionals can live in. I mean, this project has seen so many reiterations in the name of compromise that I think this is the best that we are going to get. And I am genuinely scared for what other things we are going to get brought to the table. I do not want us to be making decisions on city planning on hypotheticals that JMU is going to do this, or the hypothetical that this is only going to attract students or the hypothetical that this could be a drain on resources when I am assuming you have not had anybody who is an expert on water use come in and look at the wells underneath the land yet. And we do not really know anything about this project because this is just an approval to continue. I think that people asking for definitives are being willfully ignorant to how planning processes actually work. I also take huge offense as a business owner for people who do not own a business downtown, coming up here and saying, this is not going to benefit the local businesses. We have seen 15 businesses close in the last two years, and it is scary. We are seeing three open in the next month, and that is really, really great. I am super happy to have these people joining our community. They are not going to succeed, and the people who are here already are not going to succeed, if we do not have more people coming in downtown because while the community grounds us and has supported our downtown, the inflation rates are insane. We cannot keep up with the expenses and how everything is rising. I cannot tell you what I am going to have to raise my prices next year because my electricity bill just almost doubled because of how much we are paying Dominion for electricity now. There are so many outside influences to cost that you just simply need more people because it is not fair to demand our community to spend more money when the influx of money that they are getting from their jobs is not keeping up at the same pace. I fail to see how the park alternative that people have brought up with almost no planning or background or input from the city is ever going to support businesses downtown. People are saying it is going to drive people, attract people for businesses. A walking area separate from most of the businesses downtown is not going to bring people to my bakery. It is probably not going to bring people to Bella Luna, which is like a block away from wherever this park is. People go to parks to spend the afternoon. They maybe have a picnic there, they are not doing it to go hit up the businesses around it. And even with the numbers of signatures against this project, I would like to point out that that's only 4% of the City of Harrisonburg. And I do really love the opposition's vocalness and how involved they have been in this project. And I think the compromise that has happened in this process has been ultimately for the better. But now we are hitting a point where nothing that is going to be compromised on is good enough for this opposition. I would like to ask you guys some questions if you are able to answer. The traffic study has kind of identified points of failure in the traffic that's happening, right? The Lindsey is supposed to be addressing that with

the Paul Street bypass. If they do not do that, do you have any alternatives to fix the traffic patterns? I do not know of any alternative projects in the works to fix the traffic issues other than what The Lindsey is proposing to pay for. I do not know of any projects that are in the works to fix the parking problem. Everybody keeps talking about parking, meaning more parking garages. This is the only parking garage that has been put forward to be put downtown that I have seen in the last two years. I mean, it is directly addressing the problems that people are bringing up in opposition to the project that we have no other alternative to fix. I just do not see how not approving a project that is going to give you a solution to track problems in parking garages is not worth approving. But all that to say that as a business owner downtown, I do think this is the best way forward. I think that the compromises that have been made are incredibly generous. I am happy with the approval process that this has gone through. I think that this is great. I also am really happy with the reduction in scale, but we cannot keep denying this project. It is what I believe downtown needs. Thank you.

Keith May said I am the broker on this property. I appreciate the position the staff has taken on this project in the past and also the Planning Commission members. The opposition seems to think that they can actually determine what will be done with this property whenever it is privately owned. It is simply not their choice. The developer now could build townhouses, and they could say nothing about it. We have already approved a similar project like this when we approved the Urban Exchange Building in 2008. The residents of that property are not unruly, they are not loud, they are not disruptive, and they are not throwing up in the elevators. And whenever we talk about the gateway into Harrisonburg, I would argue that the Urban Exchange is on Route 33. That is more of the gateway to Harrisonburg than South Main Street. I would like to talk about affordable housing because we always talk about this is not affordable housing. I would say every single unit of housing that is built, either for rent or for sale, contributes to affordable housing. The more housing we provide, the more we contribute, the more we contribute to affordable housing. Building all types of housing increases housing supply, which in the end other people move up from lower housing into the higher housing and then other people from even lower housing move into that housing. So, it all relates to affordable housing. And I would argue that this very decision could contribute more to affordable housing than any other decision that the City has made in the past 10 years. Thank you very much for your service.

Aaron Garber, Paul Street, I was not going to speak tonight, but as the small business owner stated we cannot go off what ifs. Well, what if you take a president from another college, he comes in, makes a proposal to bring students on campus. Guess what? He has done it before at his previous college. He has been doing exactly what he is proposing here at JMU. So, it is not as much of an amorphous “will this happen?” “Could this happen?” It is probably going to happen because he has done it before. This man knows what he is doing and how he is going to do it. He already has made proposals, and I would almost say it is probably going to happen with a 98, 99% probability. Now Mr. May gets up here, he speaks to affordable housing. Well, we all remember Reagan and trickledown economics. So, are we talking about trickledown affordable housing? That is a joke.

We all know it. We know it from Reaganomics. We know it for this. So, Mr. May, he stands to earn big on this. Mr. Rhea does as well. That is the 900-pound gorilla in the room. You look at this room, the majority of us are against this project, and we are going to be the ones that are going to shoulder the burden if things go the way that the JMU president wants them to go. Not Mr. May or Mr. Rhea, because they are probably not going to be in town anymore. Again, I hope you oppose this. Thank you.

Bucky Berry, city resident, called in. [The call was not clear.] Mr. Berry stated his opposition to the rezoning. He asked how much the rent will be and stated this will not be affordable housing. He said the Water Street Parking deck should be rebuilt.

Chair Baugh recognized Mr. Mansfield back up for a second comment.

Mr. Mansfield said I guess from what the lady said that owns the bakery, that if 15 businesses have actually closed downtown and you have only gained three, are we doing something wrong? Might it be better to build something like a festival park, much like the Ting in Charlottesville that has been very successful in helping the downtown and is also economically self-sufficient. And also, I have a question is if you build more fours, does that mean that you are going to sell more [unintelligible]? That is regarding the affordable housing that these are not convertible. Apparently from what Mr. Rhea said in the past, that four-bedroom student housing is not easily convertible to affordable housing for workforce. And so if you have 4,000, you say it's hypothetical... well, I guess you could take that either way. Is it true or is it not true? And what are the consequences if it is true. Thank you.

At this time the Commission took a 5-minute recess.

Chair Baugh said we have completed the public hearing on item 4.d. and it is now before us for discussion and consideration. Alright, I will go first, I guess. There is a whole lot of really good thought that has gone into all of this stuff from a lot of different directions. I will spare everybody my commenting on every one of them. I have got sort of three points that jump out at me. One, is this last point that has come up. I have said this before, publicly, we know from data that people are not that good at predicting the future. So at some point, I think one of the speakers said the more the statements present certainty about this is what the future not just beckons, but will in fact occur... We are all entitled to our opinions and who knows sometimes those things are right and maybe somebody does make a right call. I think here, particularly, it is not really all that meaningful to look ahead and say, "I know what happened with this building in five, ten, 15 years" even in terms of things like internal configurations, because at least my observation has been, especially when you are at a market where housing is tight, you would be amazed at what people can do once they find that their market interests cause them to want to modify what they have or go in a different direction.

The second thing I want to say is that it surprises me a little bit, and this was discussed at the last public hearing on this... although I am not unfamiliar with there being a large group of people and I am the only one who holds the opinion that I hold. Will not be the first time that ever happened. But I think the point that I emphasized when we last considered this is that our existing planning, it calls, it is anticipated that our core downtown area would ultimately extend southward along the Route 11 corridor essentially until such time it gets met from the JMU development creeping north. At some point, that is what we envision things to be. And why would we do that? One of the reasons is that our core downtown area is in fact already our best economic engine and driver. It is surrounded. There are only so many directions you can go in it. Yes, there is some potential for some redevelopment and sort of the longstanding part of it, although that is fairly limited. There is some potential to go north, although that has already kind of a hit the northern boundary in a lot of respects. And there hopefully will be some future infill up there. And you have got this, where you are hemmed in. There is no interest in crossing over to redevelopment in the existing residential area. I would say heaven forbid we ever consider doing that. The thing I keep coming back to, I think we would agree that generally it is good to expand our core downtown area. That is to have the kind of more urban downtown development along that Route 11 corridor is not only kind of makes sense, but it is a thing that is done. I mean, we could go other places and look at main drags that have sort of an urban feel and there are residential areas a block over. It is a thing you see in communities that are successful. And I guess what hits me going the other way is well, we are not going to do that. There is a suggestion to do R-3. R-3 is not what you would think of as an urban core downtown zoning category. I will spare the speech over why that is all R-3 because it is just old inertia. So, R-3 is probably not it.

I will touch on the park related areas and my last point. I understand why a lot of people like what is there, it is what has always been there within the memory that this is sort of a little quiet break between what is perceived as the downtown and the JMU part. And there are things to like about that as a person who lives here. But from a planning standpoint, is that something that rises to the level of something we want to preserve to the point we are saying no to urban expansion southward? That is hard for me. That just sort of feels like it does not make sense to me that the plan is wrong because it should be about maintaining some sort of quiet buffer in there. I understand why people would like that. But that just does not seem like a great planning strategy to me.

And then the other thing... as I go back to discussions that we were having about this a little over 20 years ago when we were still talking about downtown revitalization as a hopeful thing. And what we were saying when we were doing our planning? One of the things that kept coming up was that for the places where this works, what has to happen economically for your businesses... if they can pay the bills off of pedestrian traffic that comes by, and then the events that come downtown that pull in larger groups of people periodically, the parades and those things... there is your gravy. But to make it work, you need people walking by your establishment on a regular basis. And this was when this was still somewhat aspirational for us. And what we said was yes,

we want to promote things to get people living downtown. And based on what we had at the time, what did we anticipate? Well, like a lot of places, the more common model than what we have had here is the older buildings redevelop. They spruce up. We have some of this, we spruce up the upper levels of things that are still commercial on the ground level and that will take care of it. We have had some of that. We have never had enough of that to really get the bodies downtown to support the downtown businesses. What happened instead, that we did not predict correctly... I try to place this conversation, and it was about 15 years ago I was speaking to JMU President Jon Alger when he was new. I was repeating the conventional wisdom of the time, which is not the conventional wisdom anymore, which is we used to say over and over as part of the discussions that if people cannot see where they are going when they park, they will not go there. And how do you factor everything in there? That was just accepted as truism and there were many examples of it. We used to talk about how at a time you had these things called shopping malls that sometimes would have a whole lot of people? Somebody will go to the mall during the holidays and park, get the last spot furthest away from the door, but would say I tried to go to a downtown merchant, and I had to park around the corner to walk half as much distance and then say we cannot support those downtown merchants anymore because there is no parking. That was the world 15 years ago. And what changed after that? And now the truism, something that we absolutely did not anticipate, is now if I can walk 15 minutes, it is easily walkable. That is just a no brainer. I do not see it. I do not have to pull a car up to it. I can walk to it in 15 minutes. And what happened with us and our downtown businesses was not predicted. The neighborhood in the northwest quadrant there between High Street and Market Street, they walk downtown and support businesses. 15-20 years ago, we would not have predicted that would happen. I know people who live in the neighborhood on the other side of Memorial Hall who can walk downtown in 15 minutes. It is great. Good way to clear your head on a nice night after you have been downtown. I understand the impulse about the park. I am not against the park although you have two huge challenges here that nobody has talked about. One is this is private property, so you have to work out something with the private property owner. And two, maybe Councilmember Dent wants to speak to it... what is in the budget? Not sure there is any money lying around.

This has been a known thing to the City about the property and the lack of interest of the City acquiring this property has been around for a while. I do not think it is brand new, and I am not quite convinced that anything here is going to change it. But aside from that, it seems to me, and I think this is what a couple of speakers are really saying is that, we are at a point right now where the economics of the City and the downtown it is not really about creating more space to attract people to come downtown. People want to come downtown already. We have been fairly successful about that. We need more bodies who live closer to it. And the thing that has been weird about us, where we deviated from that typical model of just redevelopment of upper stories is of course, part of our history is that Urban Exchange came online at what had to be about the historically worst time it could have ever come online since the seventies. So they had to change their business model. They really were not going to rent to students. Well, guess what? There was not any way to get anybody in those in 2009 unless you were willing to rent to students. And oh,

by the way, they filled up and they raised rates and got people downtown. Since it was part of a recession, it also sucked the air out of people who were looking to develop other projects downtown. So, we have had this history of these sort of bigger buildings coming in... I remain unconvinced that it is a bad idea for our core downtown to keep extending in this direction. And my sense from what I am hearing, what I hear from the business community is that they like the idea of more bodies downtown living closer to the businesses than they do trying to find another way to attract people downtown.

Commissioner Kettler said it is a good framework for discussion. I appreciate some of that context. Some of the context that I'm thinking about is at least as far back as 2011, the future Land Use [Guide] map for this area was designated the same as the rest of downtown. That is to say exactly along the lines that Chair Baugh has suggested, it should be part of downtown. And that is reiterated again in 2018 with the Comprehensive Plan then. The Downtown 2040 Plan specifically identifies this area as one key area to be redeveloped for housing. Arguably this is ultimately a debate over the vision of what downtown should be, and ultimately it is kind of along the same lines as it was in that discussion 15 years ago. Because a lot of it is, are we building for people? Or are we building for cars? That is an important distinction because if we are building for people, if we are building for foot traffic, that activates downtown in a way that absolutely nothing else will. We have had lots of business closures recently, apparently 15 in the last two years. The few that I know about and went to plenty were Mashita, Golden Pony, Friendly Fermenter, and Joshua Wilton House. And when I think about that and I think about those plans, I think they reflect a common vision. Downtown is better when it has more people, when it has a stronger economic engine, when there is more people driving it. And density is something we talk about here sometimes as a virtue. And nowhere is that more true than downtown. Downtown is the living, breathing heart of our City, and it is what needs that engine more than anything. It is not a new idea. The fact that you need people for a city to exist. I mean, that has been true since time immemorial. But what I think some of the anxiety from folks opposed to it have noted is concerns about parking and concerns about traffic. If your view of new development is that it means more cars, more cars means a flying hunk of metal that is repeatedly going by your house and making things less safe. That is the vision of it. But there is one way and one way only to reduce traffic-viable alternatives to driving. When you have housing that is close to other places, housing that is close to JMU, housing that's close to downtown, where you can walk to other businesses, that is the only way you get rid of traffic by providing meaningful alternatives. Fifteen minutes is good, five minutes is better. We need a lot of that kind of housing. We needed a lot of that kind of housing. That is reflected in our housing study and several other documents. And you know, the attitude that we have with that, it, it cannot just be, I support housing but not here. I support housing, but not now. I support housing, but not for students. I support housing, but not in my backyard. It has to be, I support housing. That's the only way we get out of a housing crunch by actually allowing that housing to exist in a way that creates a community that you don't just drive past, but one that you are a part of, by one that you can walk down the street that the easiest thing to do is to walk

down the street and see your neighbors and to walk to the local store and to make that a reality for more people.

Commissioner Seitz said the reconsideration of this has been an exercise of being careful what you wish for. I think that there were statements made when we considered this before that people were saying, in principle we understand the need for housing and, and some people, not everybody said this is a good place for it, but I wish it was not six stories. Credit to the developer for coming back. I supported it, I voted for it in its last iteration. And, and I did so not because it was a perfect project, but I thought that there was enough general benefits to the City, some of which had been discussed up here. Some of that was a worthwhile trade off to accept the engine of housing to be marketed to students relative to the other benefits; the extra parking spaces dedicated to the City, the greater dollar proffers. But in reducing scale, the developers have taken a lot of that away. I agree with the assessment that this is a housing development targeting undergraduate student residents. There have been comments made by people about the benefits of that relative to the benefits of other people occupying that building. Also, I voted against the Peach Grove and Port Road development and made the statement in that meeting, "I do not think Harrisonburg needs more student housing." That is kind of a blanket statement. I have nothing against students being accommodated in off-campus housing. But the situation we have found ourselves in is that whether it is development, whether it is up upzoning of places like this property, right now, the only free market economic engine that will build new housing is housing oriented towards students. So, as I have thought about all the pros and cons of this, I come back to this core issue. And my audience for what I am about to say is not the developers, it is not the residents of Harrisonburg, it is my fellow appointed officials that I serve with that are serving other parts of the City. It is to our elected officials. *t is to our city staff. The will to create the conditions to develop the type of housing other than student housing requires more than just leaving it to the free market. I am going to oppose this project more symbolically because I am asking all of us that are involved in leadership and I am asking citizens, everybody who is glad to say no, to come out when we do the Comprehensive Plan, to come out to do other things and get involved in solving the problem. Because we are not going to get to what we all up here are advocating for simply by saying no to projects. We are going to have to get involved. And, you know, it is incredibly complex. I think, first and foremost, we have to start with good planning that includes inclusive public input, skilled leadership towards consensus building, and a community-wide willingness to understand we do not get anywhere unless we compromise. I think we have to understand - this is not why this graphic was generated (holding up a graphic provided by Mr. Larsson) - but I had the thought in going through this material that Harrisonburg is a small enough place that everywhere in Harrisonburg is my backyard. So, to say I know we need housing, but put it over here on somebody's land that neither we nor the City control is not constructive in terms of getting this to where we do. You do it by engaging in the messy, dirty, drawn out, inefficient process of legislative endeavor, beginning with comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, petitioning City Council, electing City Council officials that are willing to get out in front of these issues. It is going to require that we wrestle with that we are not simply reactive in terms of utilities, transportation,

general infrastructure, and so on. We were proactive in terms of building a second school. But if I considered transportation a critical issue for vetoing things, I am not sure there is anything in Harrisonburg that I could vote for. I voted against the project out on Betts Road because I understand the severity of that situation. I also voted for the project on South Main Street where people have a legitimate concern about the traffic situation there. But again, where does the will come to make the public investment in improving traffic infrastructure? In utility infrastructure? In considering do we have enough water? Mr. Alexander, you referenced city governance that had the foresight to look ahead and plan. Where is that foresight now? Where is that political will now? Because we need the growth. And I also want to say I still think high density housing and mixed use is the highest and best use, hopefully designed in a way that it makes a gateway that makes us proud as Harrisonburg residents. And also in a way that honors the decade-long efforts of people to actually build a park and who have done the heavy lifting and the legwork of building consensus, of raising money, of coming to a legal agreement with the City. I think this proposal of an alternative use, again, falls back to this thing of, here is a great idea that proposition somebody else's land and the government should pay for it without doing the heavy lifting of true economic pro forma. Candidly just honoring the efforts of people that have been involved in this, in efforts going back to 2007. I wish that this was a different type of housing. I think the changes that have been made architecturally have made it better. But I at some point, as a citizen, as somebody that is part of hopefully being somebody with some foresight on behalf of the City, at some point we have to start drawing a line in the sand and saying, we have got to do the hard work because if we do not, it is just going to be the same thing over and over again. Thank you.

Vice-Chair Porter said I absolutely 100% agree with everything that this gentleman [Commissioner Seitz] just said. I think that this is a bigger issue that is structural in nature. One thing about having something like this come before us three times is I have had a lot of time to think about this. Sometimes projects come before us, I give it some thought the week of. Sometimes I may lie there at night after we have had a discussion about it, and I think about whether I did the right thing or whether I voted the right way. Did I give it the right thought? This, I have had some time to really contemplate, and I have heard commentary from friends and neighbors and folks that have come here on three separate occasions. I have heard a lot of very salient points on both sides of the issue. I think, for me, this comes down to a clear understanding of how difficult it is to build in a community. Also, how broken our system truly is. With all due respect to our developers in this particular case, you know, the market is in a position right now that what is being brought to our community is exactly this type of building. We are looking at being able to effectively service a student population where we know that there is a revenue stream that is predictable and we are adjusting and building to meet that revenue stream. I guess on some levels, I cannot blame a developer for coming in here and choosing to do that, but the reality is that the market and market forces are not bringing us the type of houses that we need in this community. That is not to say that student housing is not important or that there that if you are opposed to student housing in this location or to this degree or in this configuration, you are opposed to students. I do not view that that way. I think that my long-standing opposition to four-bedroom configurations has a lot to do

with the community that it creates. And then what happens when that housing is no longer desirable for students? We have watched students migrate around our community and those units do not fall back into our housing stock as well as they could have. I have seen some pretty deplorable circumstances during my time in homeless services where individuals are shoehorned into these four-bedroom units that really need permanent supportive housing because it is affordable or at least more affordable. The fact is, is that we have a misfit between the housing stock in our community and our needs. And the market is bringing us things that are economically viable. Only if you put 75% of it in four-bedroom student units, nobody is bringing us housing that says this is your workforce housing solution. I struggle with this because I do believe that Mr. May's point about more units drives affordability. I would agree with that up to a point. I think that there is some efficacy to that. But the types of units that we are bringing in and how easily those can convert to affordable housing is where I have the difference of opinion. I do not believe that these units fall into our housing stock in a very effective way. And for someone to have to come in and put additional cost into renovating these units or retrofitting these units, ultimately that cost is going to be passed on to the consumer like almost everything is. We do not end up with affordable housing. I believe very much, as Mr. Seitz does, that we have to look at really thoughtful, informed reform of how we do housing. And it goes much beyond this development.

I am disappointed that this facility will not allow for someone to come in and use a voucher because it will most likely be over the FMRs [fair market rates]. I am, again, be careful what you wish for. I think that I was a bigger fan of this project when there were more units in it. The fact is that we had to do that, or this was done to accommodate the community's desire to have a lower profile. But from just a sheer housing perspective, this might have been a better project before all the changes. I am still concerned about the fact that the percentage of units in this building that are four-bedroom units is going to actually create increases. I think it makes this building less viable for the long term. And to the point that was made about whether we can predict the future, we certainly cannot. I am not sure where this university and its housing is going to go. But what I can tell you is that I know that our present state does not allow for people who work in this community, that work at JMU, that work in downtown, that they are able to afford to live in this community based on the direction that we are headed. And every project that comes forward is focused on trying to be able to maximize a revenue stream. And maybe this is a bigger commentary on how we do housing in America, but the fact is that affordability is very rarely the primary concern. Will we look at housing? It is about "can we build it?" and "can we build it profitably?" And it is always more, more, more. Unfortunately, these are the type of products that we are going to continue to get. I do think that we, as a community, need to do a better job of curating and planning around this type of housing. I struggle with this layout. I will continue to have problems with the way the four-bedroom units are laid out, and I have seen the impacts that they have had, and I cannot support it. I will tell you that a lot of the issues here that this developer faced, they have accommodated. They have made significant concessions. I have been extremely impressed with the fact that they have been able to continue to engage. And I do believe that the statement that it does not matter what is going to get built here if it is this size and tenor, some folks are never going

to support it, whether it was six stories or four stories or three stories. I do believe that. But there are also legitimate concerns that the community has about traffic. What the burden on the developer to address that is, that line is in my opinion, partially on the City. I have concerns for the folks on Paul Street in terms of traffic flowing back up that street. I think it is a legitimate concern. If this expansion goes through Paul Street, I would like to see it be one way, flow out of the neighborhood, come across the building, do not flow back into Paul Street. I do think students are going to use this as an avenue to get to the other side of campus. If I lived in that neighborhood, I think it is a reasonable concern. But at the end of the day, the [unintelligible] arrow did not change for me on this. I changed my vote for this. I voted for this, and then I voted against it. The things that made me vote against it are still very much in place. So, I have a hard time changing my vote or even endorsing the project as currently configured.

With that being said, these developers have done a fine job of trying to meet what this community is asking it to do, not in the area that I would have voted for, which is affordability. And again, we have affordability arguments that are based on bigger macro discussions as opposed to what this building actually does to contribute to affordability. Affordability ultimately is somebody else's problem. I am telling you that I am of the opinion that we as a community are going to have to start to address this affordability issue and take some responsibility for it in terms of the type of housing that we are attracting and incentivizing to come to our community. But we are going to have something less than a community that we currently have.

Commissioner Jezior said I wanted to thank the members of the public that did reach out to talk. Sorry I did not get to accommodate everyone that did. And the developers as well, I am very impressed with the changes that were made to the look of the building. I mirror a lot of my Commissioner's viewpoints here. I voted for this project in the past, specifically because of the mix of family units, young professional units and student housing that was meant to be accommodated here. My main issue with the way this is being presented now is with the change in proffers. We are switching to three quarters of the building being four-bedroom and really just accommodating students. And like the other members here said, be careful what you wish for. Because of those changes, I do not think I will be able to support this anymore. I think everyone else has said what I have been thinking too, so I do not need to reiterate.

Councilmember Dent said I liked it the first round. I liked it more the second round, and I liked it even better the third. We need housing, and we need to continue revitalizing our downtown and the prejudice against student housing is unfortunate for a university town. The idea of having students walkable to campus and to downtown where many of them will work, as well as, supporting the downtown businesses. I have said all along, Harrisonburg is a city. We need to grow inward and, to some degree, upward or we keep losing all the people and the revenues to the County, which is exactly what has been going on for years. I will still support it enthusiastically. I am a little disappointed to lose some of the units, but I understand the accommodations to the community pressure for a smaller scale and even I can admit that it fits more comfortably within the community and having a smaller parking deck so that looking out of City [Hall] you don't see

quite as huge a thing. I still like it. I understand the dilemmas about student housing. I think that is more what will more appropriately addressed in the ongoing zoning ordinance updates. So that is where we can get involved. That, and the comprehensive plan when that comes around. So yes, I support it.

Commissioner Kettler said Commissioner Seitz, you were saying a lot of the things that I was thinking, but did not say in my initial remarks. So, I just want to touch on that briefly. This is, in my opinion, measurably worse project in almost every way compared to four months ago. Given the issues that three the Commissioners noted, it is a substantial reduction in all of the non-four-bedroom units and that makes it a project that is considerably less of what we need. I have spoken less about the difficulties with student housing with this, primarily because of its proximity to JMU in a way that is not true for almost any other development. Part of the reason I am not taking the developer to task about it is because it seems clear that that is the only path forward. That will not engender enough resistance to stop the project. Coming in tonight, I did not know whether I was going to vote yay or nay. Ultimately, I am going to vote yay for the reasons I discussed earlier, but I completely understand where you all are coming from. Fundamentally, the idea that we are discouraging more and more housing and this is back and forth the third time. It is discouraging. We have dodged a serious opportunity here. Another way that is less obvious, but the parking spaces that were previously proffered for municipal use could have been a useful part of solving the jigsaw puzzle of south downtown parking because we have the area north of the Turner Pavilion, which in the long term may still be viable as part of the downtown park. And part of the reason that did not work is there was not enough parking for city employees. Looking at the Water Street parking deck, that is, eventually, going to have to be redeveloped. In the meantime, we will need additional south downtown parking. That could have been a useful part of solving that problem. Now it is gone. I stand by my vote where I said previously, but I just wanted to recognize that I understand those concerns.

Commissioner Seitz said I would like to address Councilwoman Dent's comment about prejudice against student housing. I am not prejudiced against student housing. My family and my business have benefited tremendously from the presence of JMU, and I am proud that JMU is part of our town. I think the difference is that approving student housing and using the rationales that we do distracts us from the harder work of really getting the housing that we need. Maybe it is splitting hairs, but I feel like I want it in the record that it is not a prejudice against student housing. It is that I think it is a distraction from doing the hard work that we need to do to get the type of housing we really need.

Vice-Chair Porter said I think that this has also uncovered some inadequacies in terms of how our city has managed its business here in the last 15, 20 years. The fact that we still do not have a housing trust fund in this community, despite the significant need for it, is a problem. And again, I will continue to push our elected officials and anyone that will listen on the importance of having that. The proffers that are being presented this evening, I am not entirely sure I fully understand

the consultant's view on what is proportionate and what have you, but I do feel like that larger proffers for offsetting affordability, if they did want to make these units affordable, could have been something that could have been negotiated and that funding could have come into a fund that could have received a proffer as opposed to whatever convoluted process of a line item that this is going to end up being, if this moves forward in this manner. It is a problem, it is an injustice. We as a community are in a crisis as it relates to housing. And the fact that we do not have a housing trust fund and cannot receive proffers that would allow us to be able to build the type of housing that we truly need in the community, also even maybe foster some home ownership in our community, which is also a huge problem in terms of the mix of housing that we have in our community right now is a structural issue. We have traffic problems, we have significant infrastructure issues, we have difficulty being able to build in this community because it is hard to build in this community. And I understand the frustration of the developer getting into this process. I question if I was in their position, how comfortable I would be having to go through all of these meetings and all this process. It is difficult to build, but at the same time we have got to create a city that is going to not only accommodate this discussion, but also drive this discussion with some sort of vision. What should this community look like in 10 years? I think we are blind right now. I think we are literally reacting. The market is just bringing us whatever will be economically viable without putting us in a position of being able to say what best serves our community. So, I think this is part of the larger discussion that Commissioner Seitz has brought up. We as a community have to make some very serious decisions about what Harrisonburg looks like in the next 10 to 15 years. And affordability is going to have to be a key issue. And again, this is not just a Harrisonburg problem, this is a national issue. This is an issue that we as a nation have to think about who deserves housing, what should it cost, how much of their income should have to go to be able to put a roof over their heads. And the fact is that our systems are set up in such a way to make building more expensive and more difficult. It also puts us in a situation where the only things that can be built economically or these sorts of things that require pro forma, that have 77% of the bedrooms to be four-bedroom units because that is where we can get the maximum return. I think that, unfortunately, that is the reality that we are facing and will continue to face until we start doing some proactive thinking about what the City should look like.

Chair Baugh said I have a couple of thoughts. One, Councilmember Dent, I disagree with you on, on the point that yeah, I like the second iteration better than I like the third iteration. That is the only thing I think I disagree with you on about this. There is a part of me that ... this just seems odd that for all of the comments and input that was out there, and I know we received all of it, that was talking about how the essential issue with this was the scope and the scale and how big it is. And again, I was certainly in the group that supported it in that version. Essentially that is all this is, it is scaled back from what we saw before. And, somehow, the applicant is now in a worse position for having scaled it back. I am really having trouble getting my brain around that. I note that when we voted against the Peach Grove proposal, one of the things I pointed out was that, as almost all communities in this country are wrestling with these same questions right now, that one

of the things that many, if not most, localities have found on their list of things that they needed to correct, was something that we had not particularly had. When they looked at the list of all of the proposed projects that they voted down for one reason or another - it was not in the right place, these people did not like it, it is not forward looking enough. Those communities have come to realize that they would not be in some of the spots that they are in now if they had said yes to some of these things. We had not been that jurisdiction. So now we voted down Peach Grove. We voted down Betts Road; I was not here for that, and I would have had to recuse myself if I was. And now we have got apparently waning support for this. Meanwhile, the unchallenged figures going out, we still have a, what, 2% occupancy rate? As somebody who over the years has at times made these arguments about, if we really want to see what we have in the future, maybe you have to say no to some things to do this. I have found remarkable unwillingness of people to go along with that at a time when we seem to have a decent housing stock. But now, that we clearly do not have decent housing stock, we are “now is the time that we raise the bar and need to make the point about, you have to be willing to say no to this stuff.” Which is, you know, sort of generally true. I have also said my continued support for this plays into two other things that are just me and maybe I may be all by myself or part of a small minority. One of the things I have consistently opposed, and expect I will continue to oppose, is while I can agree that perhaps leadership in the City could have done more to have gotten us further along the line with this, it always bothers me, will continue to bother me, to think about voting against a proposal, largely driven by arguments about it not addressing affordable housing sufficiently, when we have not set any guidelines for that. And so the development community then bears the brunt of that. What do you have to do to get these things? Well, gee, we do not know what, you just know that there are people who are going to talk about affordable housing. If they are not satisfied, how do you satisfy them? Oh, we nobody has come up with that. It is certainly appropriate for this body to be involved in that discussion and consider making recommendations, but we are not the ones that ultimately decide those things. That circles back a little bit to my point of how in the world did this thing get smaller and smaller in response to input, and now it is a worse idea? That feels a little odd. And again, this is just me personally. I probably have, but I cannot think of one. Of all the votes I have taken on things, I just have a hard time with arguments, I am not talking about anybody else just talking about me, that at some point in my mind where I feel like I am being asked to let the perfect be the enemy of the good, I cannot think of a time when I ever voted that way. I probably have. I would not say I am an absolutist on that. I absolutely believe there are times to take a stand. But I say, this checks more good boxes than bad boxes, but I am going to vote no on it to make a larger point. The world is awfully speculative when you get there. We do not know what is going to happen tomorrow. It is just a few years from now. And as I said this checks off more good boxes than bad boxes. In my mind, the best arguments to vote against it are these arguments that are about “somehow we need to hold up for something better or need to be working for something better or we need to get our act together.” Meanwhile we have a 2% [vacancy] rate and we are now potentially on the third project here where, nope, wrong place, wrong time, did not check enough. I know we need more housing, but not this one in this place. This is a place that, there are a lot of places that things about

this where we are in uncharted waters. One of the places that I am seeing that we are uncharted waters is the extent that we are now suddenly voting against stuff at a time when, first and foremost we, we know we need more housing.

Commissioner Jezior said my change in vote on this now is because of that percentage difference here. It is not anti-student. *t is that if you have 77% units filled with students versus a closer to 50-50 split, that building is going to have a much different feel. It is going be much more of a dorm than a community focused building bringing students and bringing young professionals and families that need the two- and three-bedroom units in. That is going to change the way that the students respond and live in that building when they see kids and other people that are not students in the building.

Chair Baugh said I do not disagree with that. All I said is that is a good succinct way of saying why I like the second version a lot better than the third version. I just end up on another part of the scale from you, which is fine. I am trying to say well, good thing this developer listened to all the community input and all the small “d” democratic stuff that was going on, telling them you have to make this smaller. Well, if you make it smaller that is what you have. Anybody want to make a motion, or do we want to keep talking?

Commissioner Kettler said I agree with your logic.

Vice-Chair Porter said the irony is not lost on me, in terms of the direction that this went. I think a lot of the folks that are in opposition had one point specifically about the size of this. Despite being the only Commissioner that voted against the last time it came before us, that was not my primary driver. Maybe my vote is a protest vote that is probably rooted in something that is much bigger than just this project. And the fact that we are making a recommendation as opposed to deciding the actual outcome of this project gives me some latitude to do so. I just think that this is simply a symptom of a much larger issue that I think is solvable, but it is something that we have to start really working on. I think you could be pro student and not support this configuration at the same time. And I think that the reality is that the density was never a concern for me. It was more about why do these units have to be \$2,000 for a one-bedroom? Why do we have to have the majority of the units be four-bedroom units that will maximize the return? The premise of what I am trying to say here is probably rooted in something that a lot of folks will not appreciate, which is that sometimes for the good of the community, I would like to see somebody take less. Or do something and say I am going to go ahead and offer up 5% of our units. You can accept a Section 8 voucher. That sort of thinking is not probably good business. But I do believe that that eventually doing good is good business. And I think that we will eventually find, hopefully somebody in this marketplace that will come forward and help us try to solve our housing problems. And we as a community need to incentivize that in terms of our development. We as a community need to do a better job of attracting the type of housing that we want. Work more closely and inclusively with

developers that come to this community to build that type of housing and make it as affordable and as easy for them to be able to do so as possible. I still think that there are huge barriers that affect affordability, that are systemic issues that are not necessarily germane to this specific case. But it does speak to the larger issue and why I am concerned about the fact that there is no affordability here.

Commissioner Kettler made a motion to recommend approval of the rezoning.

Councilmember Dent seconded the motion.

Chair Baugh called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Jezior	No
Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Vice-Chair Porter	No
Commissioner Seitz	No
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Chair Baugh	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the rezoning failed with a split vote (3-3). The request will move forward to City Council on August 25, 2026.

Consider requests to initiate Zoning Ordinance amendments related to (1) Manufactured housing, and (2) Minimum lot width in the R-8 district

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Dang said staff request Planning Commission initiate consideration of Zoning Ordinance amendments related to:

Manufactured housing

The Virginia General Assembly adopted amendments that prohibit localities from treating manufactured homes differently or more restrictively than single-family site-built dwelling units provided that the manufactured home is (i) converted to real property, (ii) constructed so that the certificate of occupancy is issued within five years following the date of manufacture listed on the home's data plate, and (iii) placed on individual lots. More information at: <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB655/text/CHAP0019>.

The Zoning Ordinance will be amended to comply with updates to the Code of Virginia.

Minimum lot width in the R-8 district

The Virginia Assembly adopted amendments that requires any locality with a population of 50,000 or more to adopt at least one zoning classification that permits a single-family dwelling on a lot with a minimum lot area not exceeding 3,000 square feet and that such zoning district classification not impose minimum lot widths exceeding 30-feet. More information at: <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20261/HB1212/text/CHAP0751>.

The R-8 district requires a minimum 2,800 square feet of lot area and a minimum of 35-feet of lot width for single-family detached dwellings. To comply with amendments to the Code of Virginia, staff proposes to reduce the minimum lot width for single-family detached dwellings from 35-feet to 30-feet.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any more questions for staff.

Vice-Chair Porter said as it relates to manufactured housing, does our City currently have anything on the books that would treat manufactured housing differently than stick-built housing?

Ms. Dang said presently there is only one mapped zoning district that allows manufactured housing, which is the R-7 district master plan for the Bluestone Town Center. Manufactured housing otherwise is not allowed in the City of Harrisonburg unless it was nonconforming, meaning it previously existed before it was prohibited or annexed from the County.

Vice-Chair Porter said would that include modular buildings?

Ms. Dang said no. Modular housing is different than manufactured housing. Manufactured housing is regulated by HUD [US Department of Housing & Urban Development] standards whereas modular housing is our building code requirements, even though it is constructed offsite, it has to comply with the Virginia building code.

Vice-Chair Porter said is the issue related to having a chassis or not having a chassis?

Ms. Dang said that is correct.

Mr. Fletcher said the new regulations that will be presented will require manufactured housing to be fee-simple property, be taxed that way, and be on a permanent foundation.

Councilmember Dent said I believe new manufactured housing is defined without a chassis or there is that option.

Ms. Dang said I am not aware. I will have to look into that.

Vice-Chair Porter said I think it is a sticky nomenclature issue that I struggle with sometimes as well because having a modular home built that is the same or higher standards in a stick-built home and having that placed on a foundation versus something that has a chassis are two very different animals. But a lot of times they are both called manufactured housing.

Commissioner Seitz said I move that the Planning Commission initiate consideration of zoning ordinance amendments to the City of Harrisonburg Zoning Ordinance to amend provisions related to manufactured housing and the minimum lot width requirement in the R-8 district. The Planning Commission finds that such amendments are required by the public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice, and hereby directs staff to prepare appropriate draft ordinances for public hearings and recommendations in accordance with § 15.2-2286 of the Code of Virginia.

Commissioner Kettler seconded the motion.

Chair Baugh called for a voice vote.

The motion to initiate Zoning Ordinance amendments related to (1) Manufactured housing, and (2) Minimum lot width in the R-8 district passed (6-0).

Public Comment

None.

Report of Secretary & Committees

Rockingham County Planning Commission Liaison Report

Commissioner Kettler reported on the July 7, 2026, Rockingham County Planning Commission meeting. The following items were on the agenda, and all were unanimously recommended for approval:

- Request to rezone 2.698-acres from A-2 (General Agricultural) to PMF (Planned Multi-Family at the corner of Jim Britt Way and Spottswood Trail
- Request to amend the Zoning Ordinance related to land use permissions and supplemental standards for the use “dwelling, manufactured home” to comply with State Code
- Request to amend the Zoning Ordinance related to supplemental standards for the large solar energy facility and small solar energy facility to comply with State Code
- Request to amend the Zoning Ordinance related to supplemented standards for data center and create supplemental standards for heavy industry to comply with State Code
- Request to amend sign regulations and criteria applicable to the Business Interchange (BX) zoning district

Ms. Dang relayed notes from Commissioner Alsindi regarding the June 2, 2026, Rockingham County Planning Commission meeting. The following items were on the agenda and all were unanimously recommended for approval:

- Request to amend the Zoning Ordinance to combine the Keezletown North Agricultural and Forestal District and Keezletown South Agricultural and Forestal District into one Keezletown Agricultural and Forestal District.

- Request to amend the Zoning Ordinance related to common area requirements in the Planned Single Family (PSF) district.
- Request to amend the Subdivision Ordinance to clarify when exceptions are permissible, and the application of the waiting period for non-family divisions.

City Council Report

Councilmember Dent said this is one of those unusual months where the first Planning Commission meeting of the month occurred the week before City Council. There were no items from Planning Commission that were considered by City Council to report on. Most pertinent for here was a presentation on the Communications and Public Engagement Plan for the Zoning Ordinance update project and there was a presentation on a new City of Harrisonburg to James Madison University working group.

Other Matters

Chair Baugh asked if there was anything else to discuss before we move on.

Mr. Fletcher said if I could add something that may be of interest to the group based on conversations this evening and in many other meetings. On July 6, the City held a project kickoff meeting with a contractor who has been hired by HousingForward Virginia to study policy options for a housing fund and affordable housing dwelling unit program. It is going to culminate in a written report that recommends realistic policy structures to sustainably support and incentivize effective housing solutions. More to come, but that project has been kicked off.

Commissioner Kettler said I attended a Charlottesville Planning Commission meeting virtually a couple of months ago. One thing that struck me there was that there is a non-voting representative from UVA on the board, which I think substantially contributed to some of those discussions. I bring it up now because of the obvious relevance.

Commissioner Seitz said if there were interest in making that happen here, what would it require?

Commissioner Kettler said an appointment by City Council.

Commissioner Seitz said is it coincidental that the appointment is somebody who works at JMU, or is it a designated position for someone who officially represents JMU on the Planning Commission?

Commissioner Kettler said I think, for a time at least, UVA's architect, or the person who oversees their grounds, was the person, but I do not know if it is that person now.

Commissioner Seitz said it is not that person now, it is someone a little further down the food chain, I think.

Chair Baugh said but presumably, mechanically, I think Council just has to amend the bylaws or whatever it is to talk about the structure of the Planning Commission, and then it is whatever everybody works out.

Commissioner Kettler said you actually do not even need to amend the bylaws. Section 10-1-2 says they can appoint honorary non-voting members.

Chair Baugh said all right. Just do it.

Commissioner Seitz said I would be curious to know what other people's opinions are about that idea. I would support it.

Vice-Chair Porter said I do not see any downside to that. I think that informs the discussion in ways that maybe we would not necessarily always have. Right now, more information is better than less.

Commissioner Jezior said I agree. Better to have more viewpoints and more information.

Councilmember Dent said what would be the process? Planning Commission proposes that to Council? Staff, what do you think?

Commissioner Kettler said does staff want to evaluate that first?

Ms. Dang said I have some thoughts about the effective use of their staff's time sitting through a meeting in which there is a lot. Are there other alternatives to communication? I am open to ideas.

Mr. Russ said this has been a longstanding practice in Charlottesville, and they seem to have found it very useful.

Commissioner Seitz said there is not much that comes up here that does not somehow relate to JMU. I think the bigger issue is who JMU would put forward? JMU, for a while, tried to have a university architect, and that did not go well. So, their facilities and planning group or facilities and engineering group... I am not sure who would come out of that or if it would come out of another department.

Ms. Dang said allow us to have some conversations with folks and report back.

Vice-Chair Porter said hopefully it would also create an internal apparatus within the university where the tone and tenor of the discussions that occur in this chamber are also flowing back that direction. I think it is a wonderful idea.

Chair Baugh said we are good with that? Let staff look into it and report back to us. Anything else before we have staff tell us what is looming ahead?

Review Summary of next month's applications

Ms. Dang reminded the Commissioners that there will be a Zoning Ordinance Update Project work session on July 21 at 6:00 pm in City Hall, Room 11.

Ms. Dang reviewed the items anticipated for the August 12 agenda:

- Special Use Permit – 381 Monticello Ave (Short-term rental in R-1)
- Special Use Permit – 291 W Wolfe St & 336 W Market St (Recreation and leisure time activities in M-1)
- Special Use Permit – 291 W Wolfe St & 336 W Market St (Religious use in M-1)
- Subdivision Ordinance Variance – 704 N Liberty St
- Plan Adoption & Comprehensive Plan Amendment - Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan
- Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Poultry Hatchery

Ms. Dang said there will be an August 18 Planning Commission work session to continue working on the Zoning Ordinance Update Project.

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 pm.

Richard Baugh, Chair

Anastasia Montigney, Secretary



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Legislation Text

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MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING COMMISSION

July 21, 2026

The Harrisonburg Planning Commission held a work session for the Zoning Ordinance Update Project on Tuesday, July 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Room 011 at City Hall, 409 South Main Street.

Members present: Richard Baugh, Chair; Laura Dent, Councilmember; KC Kettler; and Randy Seitz.

Members absent: Shannon Porter, Vice Chair; Heja Alsindi; and Rob Jezior.

Also present: Adam Fletcher, Director of Community Development; Thanh Dang, Deputy Director of Community Development; Wesley Russ, Deputy City Attorney; Tyler Blanks, Zoning Administrator; Nyrma Soffel, Planner; and Meg Rupkey, Planner.

New Business

Brief Reflections on Prior Work Session

Ms. Dang asked Commissioners if they had any reflections, questions, or comments about what was discussed during the prior month's work session. There were no questions or comments from Commissioners.

Ms. Dang demonstrated tools available in the draft zoning map available online.

Review and discuss portions of draft Zoning Ordinance text and draft Zoning Map

The group reviewed questions that were received in advance from Planning Commissioners regarding draft Article C. Use Regulations, draft Sections 10-3-53 through 56 from Article D. Site Development Standards, Draft Section 10-3-11. Definitions, the draft Zoning Map, and analysis on "Zoning Districts Breakdown." Discussion took place regarding:

- Some zoning district names have changed and were noted in the staff memorandum.
- Does assigning some existing land zoned R-2 and R-3 to the Neighborhood Residential district downzone them? About 265-acres of land zoned R-2 or R-3 and are proposed for the Neighborhood Residential District, and a lot of those lands are institutional uses like James Madison University and city school properties.
- Large undeveloped tracts of land that are intended for residential uses in the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Guide were assigned Neighborhood Residential district, which would still allow by-right development of single-family detached lots on smaller lot

sizes. Potential developers would likely want to rezone the land for higher density or different housing types in the future. Staff sees those rezonings as opportunity to work on traffic mitigations and other needs or concerns.

- Some neighborhoods zoned R-3 are proposed for the Neighborhood Residential district, such as the Bluestone Hills Drive area, where several streets have all single-family detached homes.
- Some neighborhoods currently zoned R-1 have properties that are nonconforming because their lot sizes are smaller than what the R-1 district requires.
- In the draft zoning ordinance, proposed are small home-based daycares and large home-based day cares, which mirror the current zoning ordinance's minor family day homes and major family day homes, that allow up to four and 12 children to be cared for, respectively. This also mirrors State regulations.
- Should standalone child daycare centers be allowed by right within more residential districts rather than by special exception? There was discussion about child day care centers being a commercial enterprise, larger in size, and similar to an office building with parking. Examples included Tots N' Toyland, Learning Paths Academy, and Generations Crossing. If Planning Commissioners wanted to explore allowing child daycare centers closer to or within a residential neighborhood, then form and design of buildings, and how the use looks and functions within the neighborhood should be considered. How important is it for a child day care center to be located within a residential neighborhood? Do child daycare centers serve people within the neighborhood, or do they primarily attract people from within a larger region? A suggestion was made that instead of being in the middle of a neighborhood, a child daycare center might be more appropriately located on the fringes of a neighborhood on land proposed to be zoned Neighborhood Commercial.
- The Comprehensive Plan update may be a good time to discuss commercial uses within or adjacent to residential neighborhoods and that could be rezoned to the Neighborhood Commercial district and support community interest in corner stores.
- The draft zoning ordinance proposes religious assemblies to be allowed by right in all residential districts and nonreligious community centers would require approval of a special exception. The draft ordinance reflects the existing ordinance from a use perspective.
- In the B-1 district ("downtown") currently single-family detached homes and duplexes are allowed by right. The proposed zoning ordinance would no longer allow single-family detached homes and duplexes but would allow townhomes and apartments by right. Staff's rationale for keeping townhomes is that they are allowed by right now and staff did not want to make too large of a change. Also, townhomes can work in downtown such as on North Liberty Street across from Magpie.
- Congregate housing includes short-term emergency shelters for domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness, and runaway youth. A concern was raised that the definition incorporates transitional housing

linked to support services. Staff acknowledged that transitional housing does not belong in the definition for congregate housing and will be fixed.

- Drive-thrus generally are not permitted in the Neighborhood Commercial district, but it is proposed that pharmacies could have drive-thrus by right. There was discussion about whether all drive-thrus should be treated the same, or if pharmacies should be allowed to have drive-thrus. There was general agreement to allow pharmacies to have drive-thrus by right in the Neighborhood Commercial district.
- Garden Community district density for apartments is in line with today's R-3, Medium Density Residential district requirements. In the future, allowing greater density can be explored.
- The Auto-Urban Commercial district's density for apartments is in line with today's B-2, General Business district requirement of a minimum of 1,200-square-feet of lot area per unit. There was discussion about the difference between subdividing to separate the commercial portion of a property from an apartment portion of the property versus not subdividing. The latter scenario could inflate the number of apartment units keeping one large parcel with the commercial use. Some other localities do not explicitly regulate density in every zoning district but instead focus on building height.
- The Neighborhood Commercial district requires commercial space on the first floor to ensure the district serves its intended commercial function while opening opportunities for residential uses. There was discussion whether the 75% requirement for commercial uses on the ground floor would leave enough for management offices, tenant amenities, and other apartment-associated accessory uses in taller, more narrow apartment buildings. Some smaller apartment buildings might not have any management offices or tenant amenities.
- In the current ordinance, residential districts have minimum lot sizes and minimum lot widths, but there are no minimum lot sizes or minimum lot widths for commercial districts. This can result in multiple subdivisions and lots being sold to different owners and then multiple curb cuts and entrances along a street corridor. The draft ordinance proposes to require property owners to figure out how entrances will be shared as part of the subdivision and record a shared access or cross-access easement. Staff will identify examples to share with the Commission.
- The definition of "Family" has four parts. Part C addresses recovery residences and allows up to eight adults and their dependents to be treated as a family under the zoning ordinance. Part D references Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2291 which requires treating a residential facility that meets specific criteria the same way a family would be treated under the zoning ordinance. Staff will evaluate if the definition of family can be made clearer.
- Starting July 1, 2027, Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2292.4 goes into effect. This State Code section requires single-family residential zoning districts to include accessory dwelling units as a permitted accessory use. Staff has plans to address this new requirement in early 2027 following the current zoning ordinance update project.

- At last month's work session, the draft zoning ordinance sections did not include intent statements for each draft zoning district. Staff will provide Planning Commissioners with the full list of intent statements.
- Townhomes will be allowed to front along a private street, shared drive aisle, or alley. Subdivision ordinance variations or exceptions for townhomes to not front along a public street will no longer be required. In the current zoning ordinance, oftentimes, the front yards of townhomes are in the parking lot or shared driveway used by the larger development. The draft zoning ordinance reduces the minimum lot sizes and will put the front property line of a townhome lot at the edge of the parking lot/drive.
- The draft zoning ordinance proposes to allow accessory structures to be located in the side yard of residential structures. Currently, accessory structures must be located in the rear yard, which includes only a portion of the side yard. The draft zoning ordinance would continue to not allow accessory structures in the front yard or side street yard (side of a corner lot that abuts a public street).
- The current zoning ordinance Section 10-3-114 prohibits accessory buildings from occupying more than 30% of the required rear yard. There was discussion as to whether this requirement should be kept or if it could be removed. How much it matters might depend on the size and proportions of a lot. This is also related to future zoning ordinance amendments related to accessory dwelling units and will be explored more then.
- The current zoning ordinance prohibits home occupations/home-based businesses from having customers visit the home and the draft zoning ordinance proposes the same. Staff had previously discussed expanding home-based business regulations to allow a certain number of customers to come to the home, but as staff began looking into it, it became more complicated. Therefore, staff recommends this be explored in the future. Depending on the type of business and size of the home-based business, additional review and requirements from the fire and building codes could apply.
- For most properties in the City, their current uses will continue to be allowed in the new zoning ordinance. In some cases, existing nonconforming uses might become conforming or they might continue to be a nonconforming use. Staff is considering having laptops available at public engagement meetings and have information online where community members can look up their properties to check what is currently allowed in the current ordinance and what will be allowed in the new zoning ordinance.
- Where the draft zoning map identifies a property as "Maintains Current Proffers and Entitlements" the existing zoning and proffers will remain in place until the property owner receives approval of a new rezoning.
- Properties that are currently in an Institutional Overlay are identified in the draft zoning map as "Maintains Current Proffers and Entitlements."

Next Steps

The next Planning Commission work session will be Tuesday, August 18.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Richard Baugh, Chair

Anastasia Montigney, Secretary



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Legislation Text

File #: ID 26-287, **Version:** 2

Subject:

Consider a request from Caitlin Denbigh for a special use permit at 387 Monticello Avenue

Presented By: Meg Rupkey, Department of Community Development

A request from Caitlin Denbigh for a special use permit per Section 10-3-34(7) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow a short-term rental in the R-1 Single-Family Residential District. The +/- 10,154-square-foot property is addressed as 387 Monticello Avenue and is identified as tax map parcel 26-Q-13.



August 12, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider a request for a Special Use Permit at 387 Monticello Avenue — Meg Rupkey, Community Development

Summary

Project name	N/A
Address/Location	387 Monticello Avenue
Tax Map Parcels	26-Q-13
Total Land Area	+/- 10,154 square feet
Property Owner	Caitlin Denbigh
Owner's Representative	N/A
Present Zoning	R-1, Single-Family Residential District
Special Use Permit Request	To allow a short-term rental per Section 10-3-34 (7)
Planning Commission	August 12, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated September 8, 2026 (Public Hearing)

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend approval of the special use permit request with the suggested conditions.

Context & Analysis

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

Site: Single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-1

North: Duplex, zoned R-1

East: Across Monticello Avenue, single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-1

South: Single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-1

West: Across alley, single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-1

The applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-34 (7) to allow a short-term rental (STR) in the R-1, Single-Family Residential District. The +/- 10,154-square-foot property is addressed as 387 Monticello Avenue and is identified as tax map parcel 26-Q-13. If approved, the applicant plans to operate a short-term rental (STR) in the accessory building on the property.

In 2019, the City adopted regulations associated with short-term transient lodging, commonly referred to as Airbnbs. These regulations were amended in September 2020 to create the by right “homestay” use. To operate a homestay, the property must be the operator’s primary residence,

may host up to four guests, guests must stay within the main dwelling unit (as opposed to staying in a separate building on the property), and may operate up to 90 nights per calendar year. If the operator wants to operate outside of what is permitted through a homestay, they must apply for an SUP to operate an STR.

The applicant recently purchased the property and will live in the home. They will be the operator of the STR and intend to make the STR available most weekends throughout the year. Because the applicant intends to operate the STR for more than 90 nights per calendar year and in an accessory building, the STR requires an SUP.

In the applicant's letter they state that the available rental area would be limited to two rooms (a bedroom and living room) and one full bathroom all on the bottom floor of the accessory building. The space can accommodate up to four guests, though the applicants intend to market the rental for two to three guests. The door between the garage and the living room would be locked and blocked to prevent guest access to the garage or loft area. The rental area would not include a kitchen, stove, or oven. The applicants have also landscaped a small driveway off the alley to be used by STR guests.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Low Density Residential and states:

These areas consist of single-family detached dwellings in and around well-established neighborhoods with a target density of around 4 dwelling units per acre. The low density residential areas are designed to maintain the character of existing neighborhoods. It should be understood that established neighborhoods in this designation could already be above 4 dwelling units per acre.

The proposed SUP does not add additional dwelling units or increase density.

Transportation and Traffic

A traffic impact analysis (TIA) was not required for the SUP request.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

Staff has no concerns with the requested special use permit regarding water and sewer matters.

Housing

The City's Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) places the subject property within Market Type D, which notes that "[m]arket type D has lower market activity as well as lower access to amenities. This could be because the areas are stable residential neighborhoods or because the area is less developed and therefore has fewer sales and fewer amenities. Strategies that would be appropriate in the latter case include concurrent development of the housing and economic opportunities through mixed-use developments to build commerce and housing centers across the City.

The property is zoned R-1, where only one single-family detached dwelling is allowed. The request does not remove a dwelling unit from the long-term rental housing inventory.

Public Schools

If the special use permit is approved, no additional dwelling units would be added to the property; therefore, the student generation is zero.

Conclusion

Staff believes this request shares similar characteristics to other applications for STRs that have received approval. Staff recommends approval of the SUP with the following conditions:

1. All STR accommodations shall be within the existing accessory structure described in the application.
2. There shall be no more than two STR guest rooms or accommodation spaces.
3. The number of STR guests at one time shall be limited to four.
4. Prior to operation, the operator shall submit to City staff a completed Short-Term Rental Pre-Operation Form. Furthermore, the operator shall maintain compliance with the items identified in the Pre-Operation Form when short-term rental guests are present.
5. Minimum off-street parking spaces do not need to be delineated and can be accommodated utilizing the driveway or other areas on the property.
6. If in the opinion of Planning Commission or City Council, the short-term rental becomes a nuisance, the special use permit can be recalled for further review, which could lead to the need for additional conditions, restrictions, or the revocation of the permit.

Options

1. Recommend approval of the special use permit request with the suggested conditions.
2. Recommend approval of the special use permit request as submitted by the applicant.
3. Recommend approval of the special use permit with other conditions(s).
4. Recommend denial of the special use permit.

Attachments

- Site maps
- Applicant's supporting documents

City of Harrisonburg

Special Use Permit
10-3-34 (7)
Short Term Rental
387 Monticello Avenue
Tax Map Parcel #
26-Q-13
+/- 10,154 square feet



22 July 2026

To Whom it May Concern:

My husband and I recently purchased a home at 387 Monticello Ave in Harrisonburg, VA. The property has an additional building in the backyard. We would like to use additional space as a short-term rental. We will be living on the property as the property owners during the rental time. We have landscaped a small driveway off the alley which will be used by the renters.

The available rental space will only encompass the two rooms (bedroom and living room) on the bottom floor as well as the full bathroom and can accommodate up to four guests (we will be marketing for two to three). The door between the garage and the living room will be locked and blocked, ensuring no access to the garage or loft. There is no kitchen (stove or oven) on the premises. Our plan is to make this rental available most weekends throughout the year.

Thank you,

Caitlin Denbigh

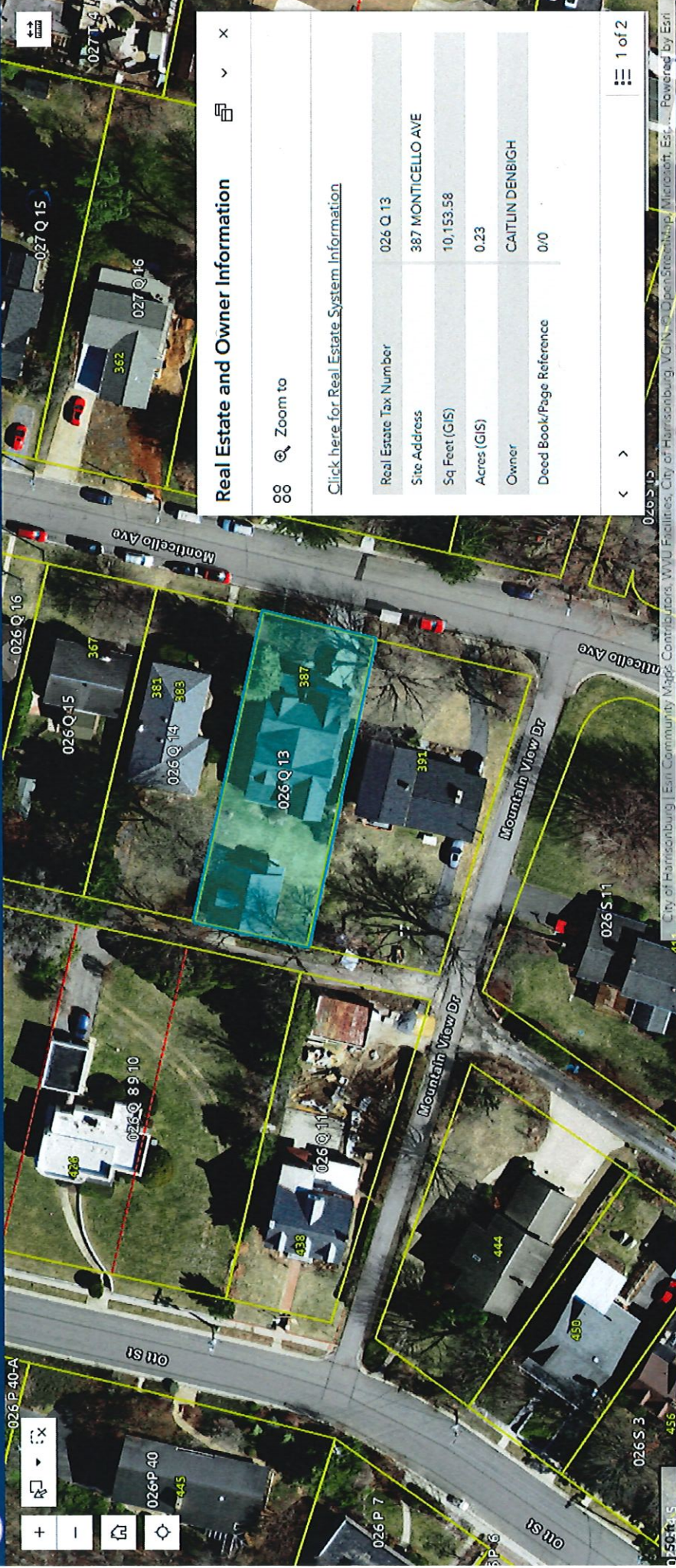


General Map: Property Viewer

Additional GIS Maps

Real Estate Information System

Find address or place



Real Estate and Owner Information

Zoom to

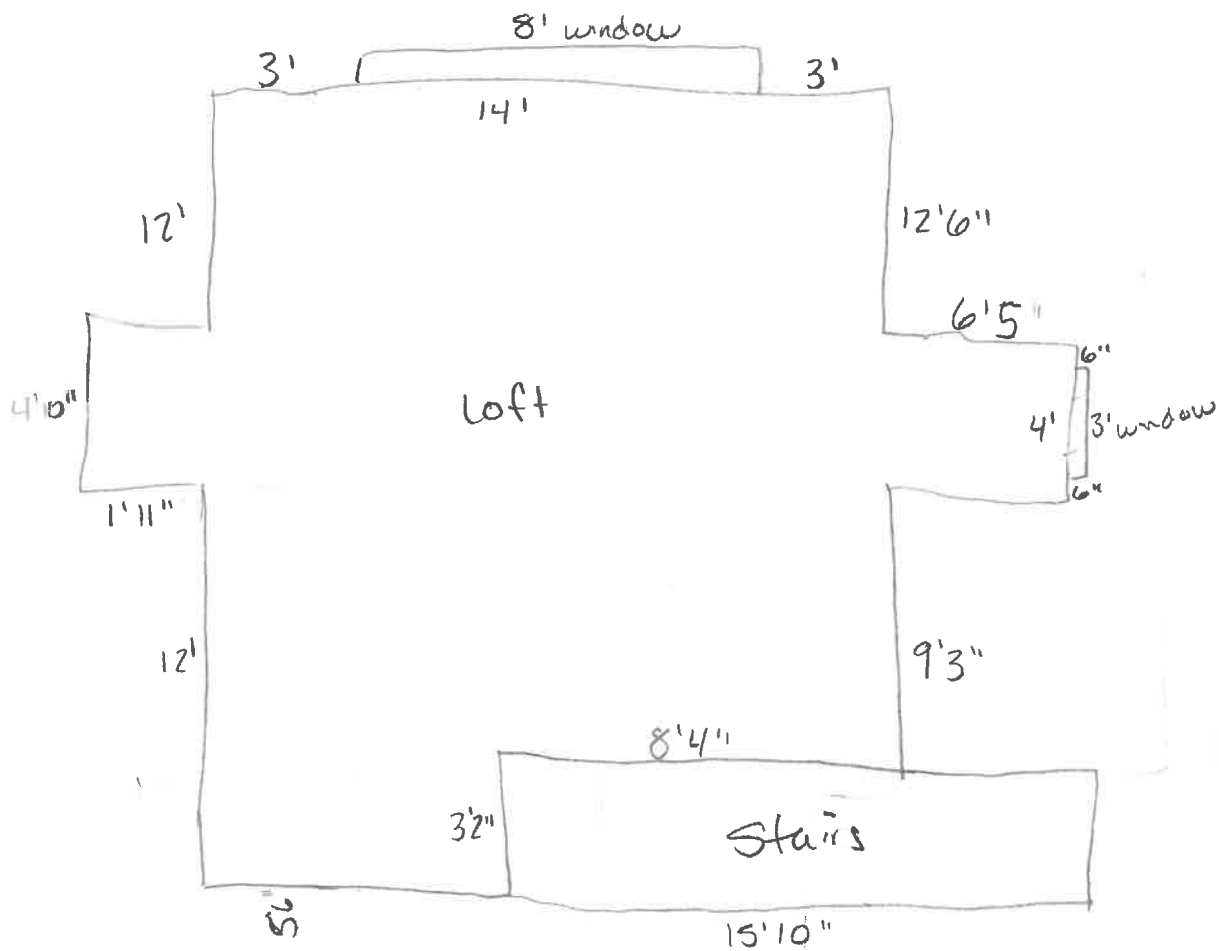
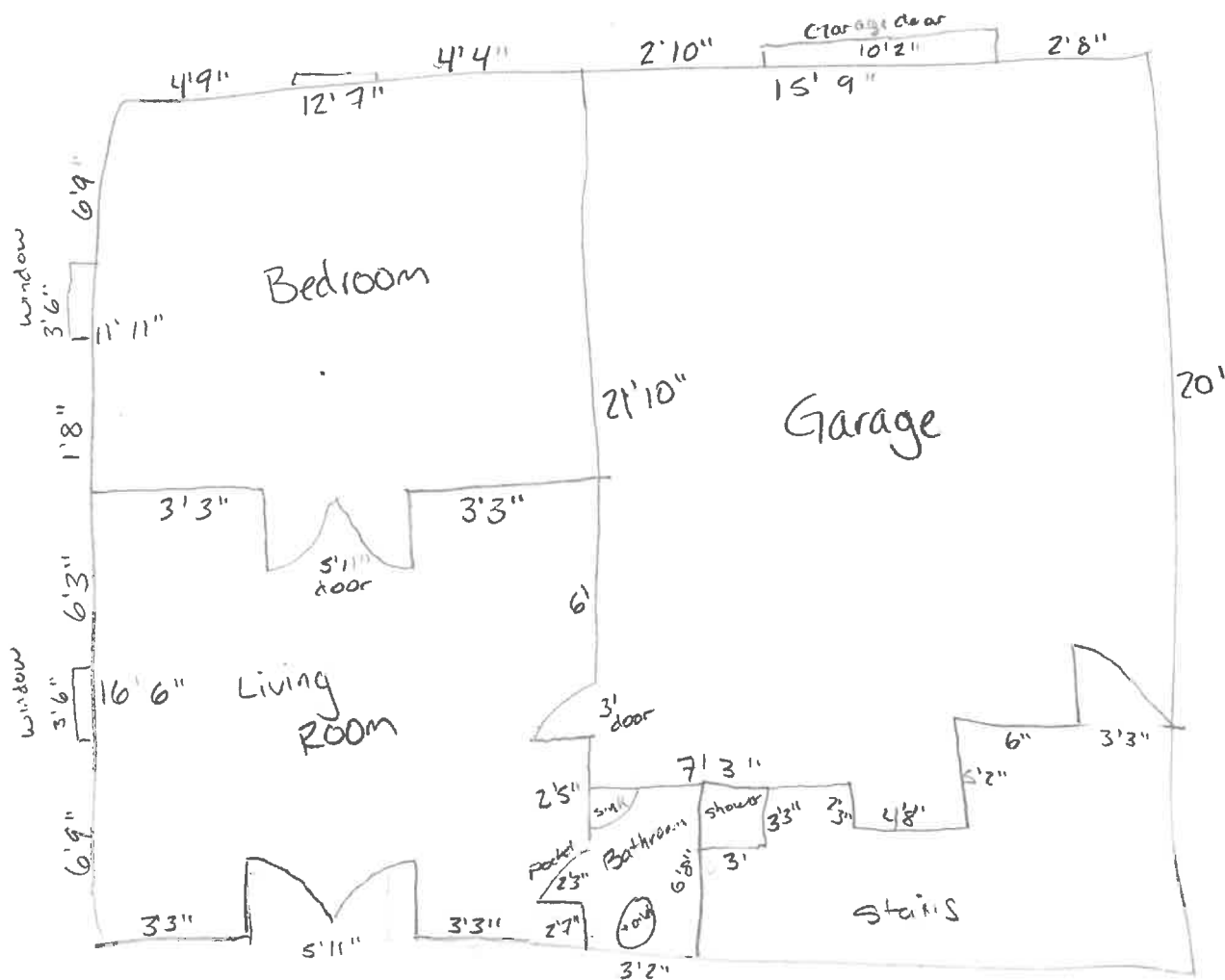
[Click here for Real Estate System Information](#)

Real Estate Tax Number	026 Q 13
Site Address	387 MONTICELLO AVE
Sq Feet (GIS)	10,153.58
Acres (GIS)	0.23
Owner	CAITLIN DENBIGH
Deed Book/Page Reference	0/0

1 of 2



1st Floor



2nd Floor



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Legislation Text

File #: ID 26-288, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Consider a request from VG Harrisonburg Storage LLC for a special use permit at 291 West Wolfe Street and 336 West Market Street

Presented By: Meg Rupkey, Department of Community Development

A request from VG Harrisonburg Storage LLC for a special use permit per Section 10-3-97(10) of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for recreational and leisure time activities, which may include non-transient dwelling units in the M-1 General Industrial District. The +/- 5.35-acre property is addressed as 291 West Wolfe Street and 336 West Market Street and is identified as tax map parcel 35-R-23.



August 12, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider a request for a Special Use Permit at 291 West Wolfe Street & 336 West Market Street
— Meg Rupkey, Community Development

Summary

Project name	N/A
Address/Location	291 West Wolfe Street & 336 West Market Street
Tax Map Parcels	35-R-23
Total Land Area	+/- 5.35 acres
Property Owner	VG Harrisonburg Storage LLC
Owner's Representative	High House Capital
Present Zoning	M-1, General Industrial District and M-1C, General Industrial District Conditional
Special Use Permit Request	To allow for recreational and leisure time activities, which may include non-transient dwelling units per Section 10-3-97(10)
Planning Commission	August 12, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated September 8, 2026 (Public Hearing)

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend approval of the special use permit request with the suggested conditions.

Context & Analysis

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

Site: Vacant building, formally Artisan Packaging, zoned M-1 and M-1C

North: Across West Wolfe Street, residential uses, zoned R-2

East: Residential uses, zoned R-3

South: Across West Market Street, residential uses, zoned R-2

West: Across North Brook Avenue, residential uses, zoned R-2

The applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-97(10) of the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) to allow for recreational and leisure time activities, which may include non-transient dwelling units in the M-1 General Industrial District. The +/- 5.35-acre property is addressed as 291 West Wolfe Street and 336 West Market Street and is identified as tax map parcel 35-R-23. The request does not include residential occupancy or non-transient dwelling units.

The property is the former location of Artisan Packaging, which ceased operations in October 2023. The applicant plans to make modifications to physically separate the building into two. In the northern building adjacent to West Wolfe Street, the applicant plans to operate a by-right self-storage facility. And in the southern building, close to West Market Street, the applicant plans to operate an indoor recreational facility. The applicant has identified two potential tenants. One tenant would like to operate an indoor rock-climbing facility and another that would like to operate an indoor pickleball facility.

The applicant's letter states that the indoor rock-climbing gym may include climbing walls, bouldering areas, fitness equipment, instructional and training areas, youth and family programming, merchandise and refreshment sales, and may have tournaments or events in the future. The indoor pickleball facility could include courts for open or league play, lessons, clinics, and youth and adult programming.

The applicant has noted that all proposed recreational activities would occur indoors.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Neighborhood Residential and Industrial and states:

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.

Industrial

These areas are composed of land and structures used for light and general manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing, high-technology, research and development, and related activities. They include the major existing and future employment areas of the City.

Staff finds that the proposed use can be compatible with the adjacent Neighborhood Residential land use designation when considered in the context of surrounding development patterns and existing site conditions. Although recreational and leisure-time activities are not residential uses, the proposed indoor recreational use would provide a lower-intensity transition between industrially zoned land and nearby residential properties than many industrial uses permitted by right.

Staff also finds that the proposed use can be appropriate within the industrial land use designation because it would utilize the existing industrial building. Compared to many of the by-right M-1 industrial uses, the proposed indoor recreational use would generally be expected to have fewer impacts related to noise, odor, outdoor storage, truck traffic, or heavy equipment.

Transportation and Traffic

A traffic impact analysis (TIA) was not required for the SUP request.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

Staff has no concerns with the requested special use permit regarding water and sewer matters.

Conclusion

Staff believes that the proposed use does not adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood and recommends approval of the SUP with the following conditions:

1. All recreational and leisure-time activities shall occur entirely within an enclosed building. No outdoor recreational activities shall be permitted.
2. The recreational and leisure-time activity use shall be limited to indoor rock climbing, pickleball, and substantially similar indoor recreational uses, as determined by the Zoning Administrator.
3. Non-transient dwelling units are not permitted.

Options

1. Recommend approval of the special use permit with the suggested conditions.
2. Recommend approval of the special use permit as submitted by the applicant.
3. Recommend approval of the special use permit with other conditions(s).
4. Recommend denial of the special use permit.

Attachments

- Site maps
- Applicant's supporting documents

City of Harrisonburg

Special Use Permits

Church in M-1

Recreational in M-1

291 West Wolfe Street &

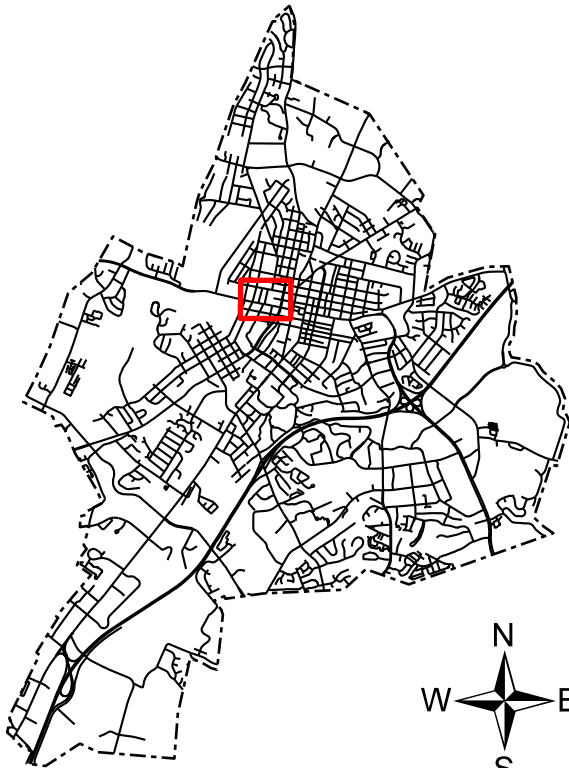
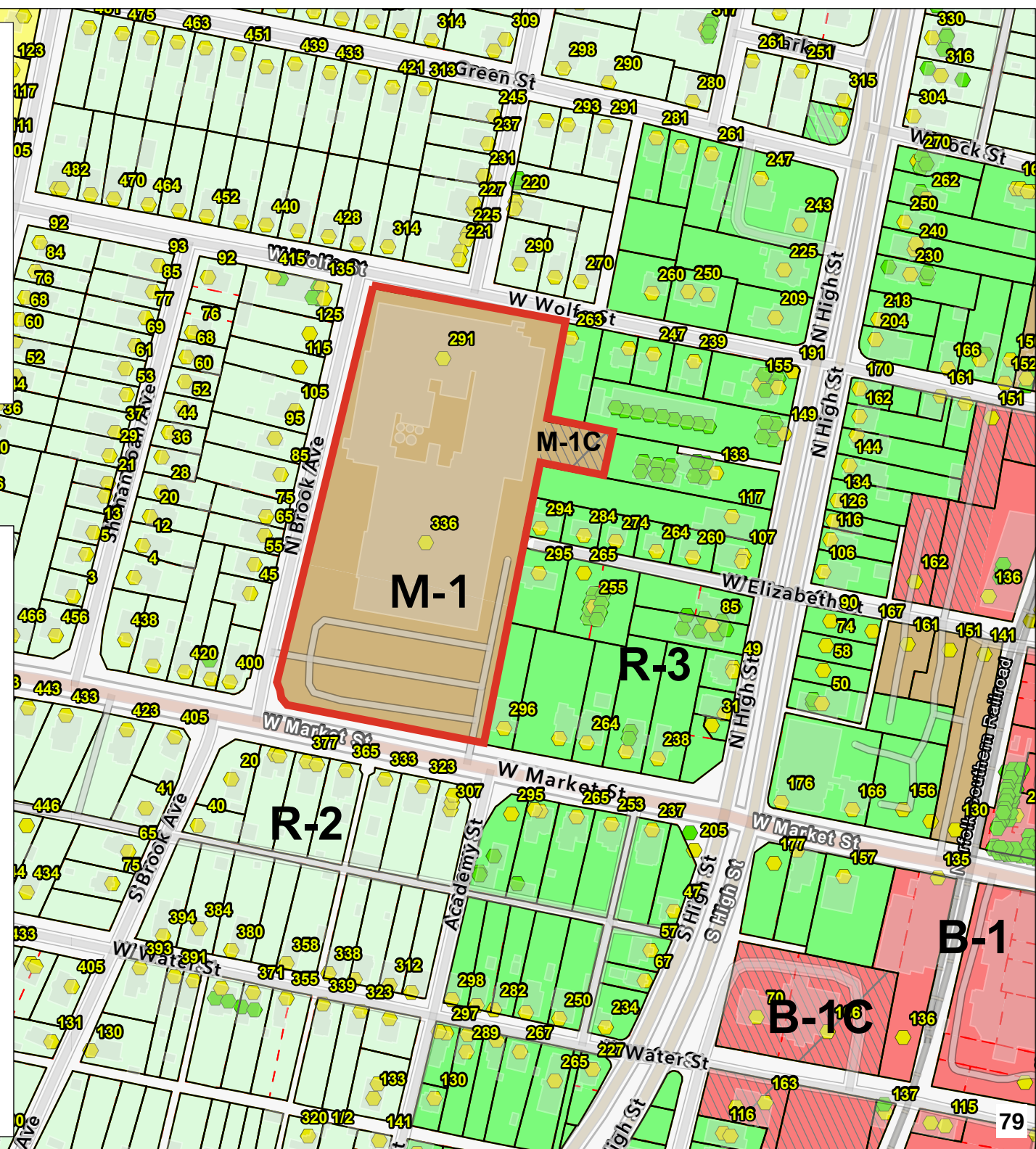
336 West Market Street

Tax Map Parcel #

35-R-23

+/- 5.35 acres

Zoning



City of Harrisonburg

Special Use Permits

Church in M-1

Recreational in M-1

291 West Wolfe Street &

336 West Market Street

Tax Map Parcel #

35-R-23

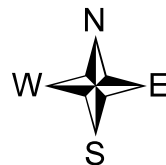
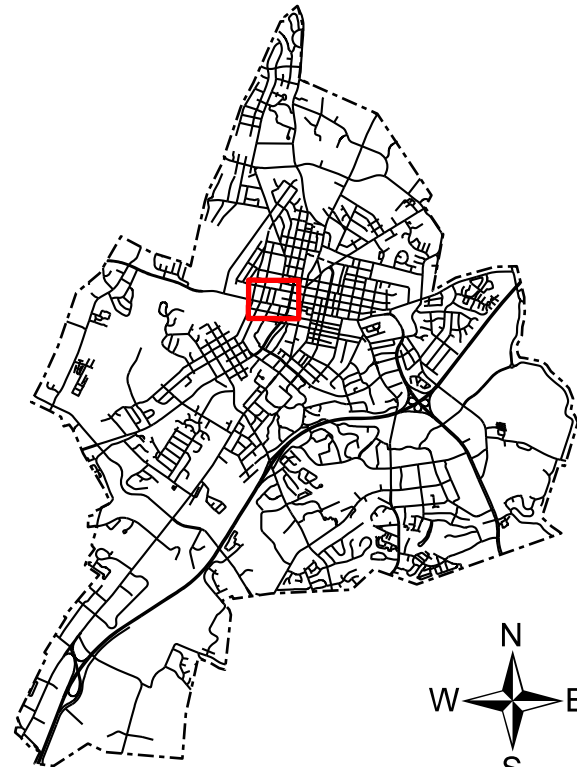
+/- 5.35 acres

(Future) Land Use Guide

Neighborhood Residential

General Industrial

Mixed Use



City of Harrisonburg

Special Use Permits

Church in M-1

Recreational in M-1

291 West Wolfe Street &

336 West Market Street

Tax Map Parcel #

35-R-23

+/- 5.35 acres

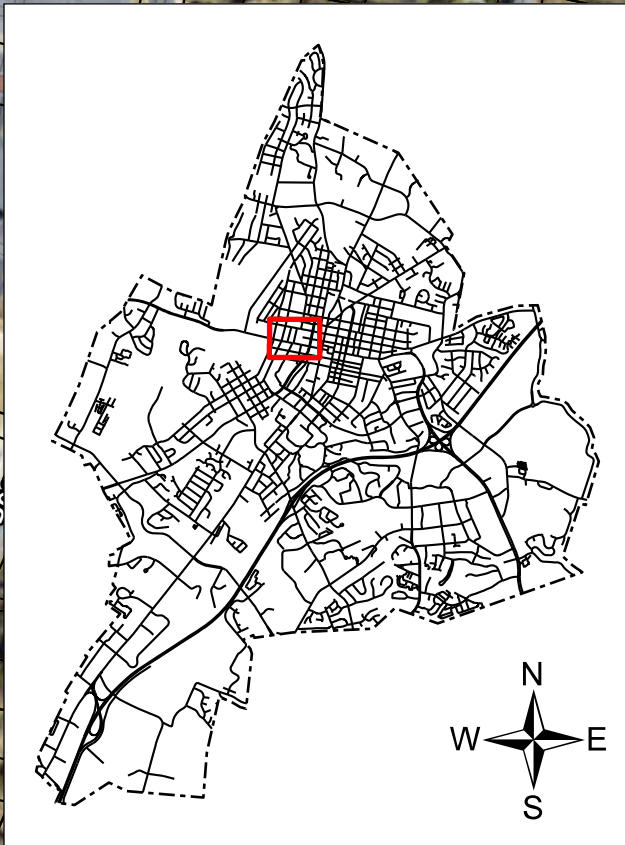
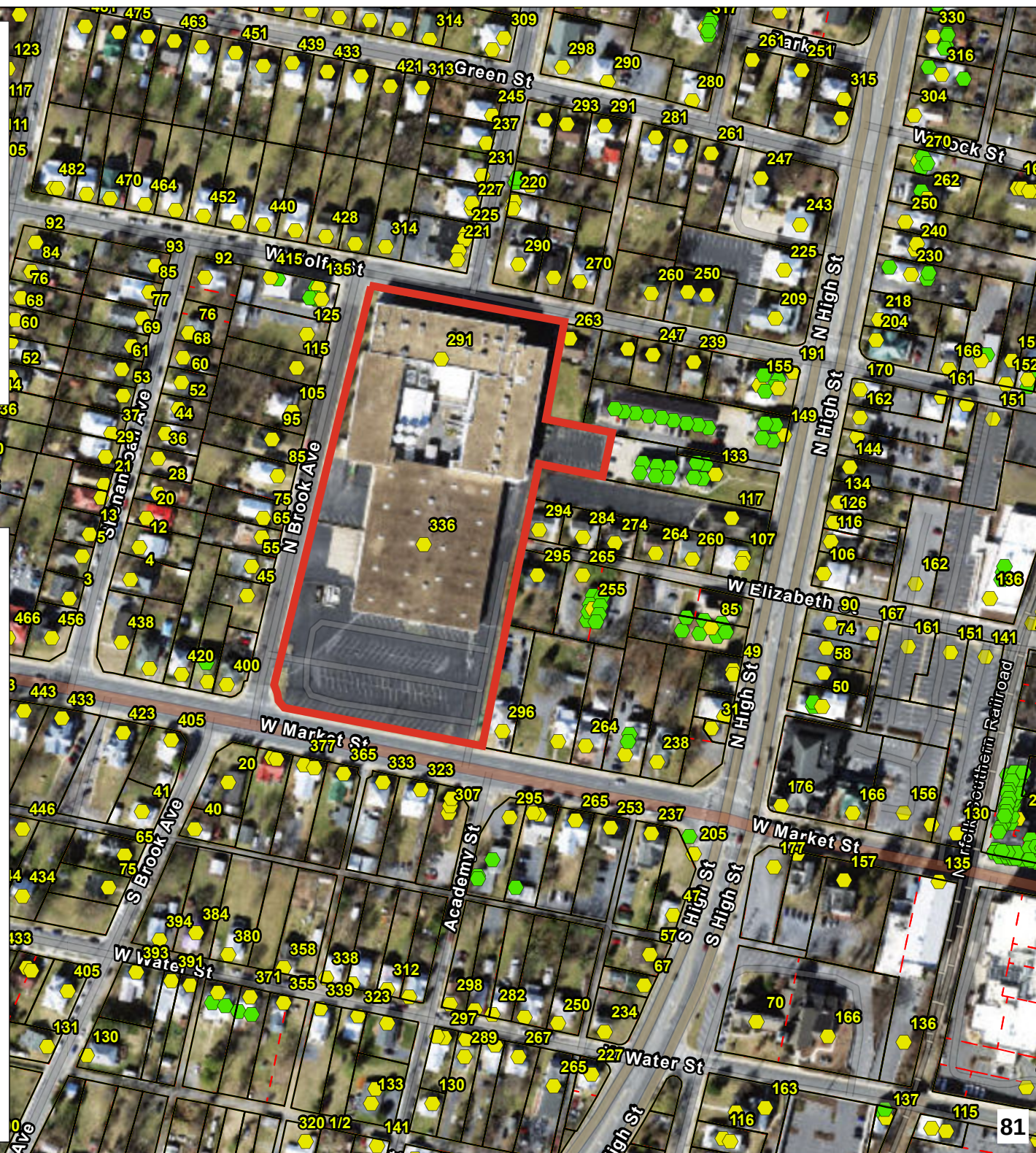


EXHIBIT A

On behalf of the Property Owner, we are requesting a **Special Use Permit** to allow for **recreational and leisure time activities** at the property located at 291 West Wolfe Street & 336 West Market Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22802 (Tax Map Number: 35 R 23) (the “Property”). No residential use or non-transient dwelling units are proposed as part of this request.

The Property is located within the M-1, General Industrial District, where recreational and leisure time activities are permitted by Special Use Permit pursuant to Section 10-3-97(10) of the Harrisonburg Code of Ordinances.

The Property Owner is in discussions with potential tenants interested in operating an **indoor rock-climbing gym** and an **indoor pickleball facility** at the Property.

Proposed Use and Operations

The proposed indoor recreational and leisure time use would occur only within the southern portion of the Property, which is approximately 41,373 square feet as depicted in the attached Site Sketch and which is referred to as the “Recreational Facility”. All recreational and leisure time activities would occur entirely within the Recreational Facility. The Recreational Facility will be physically separated from the larger multi-story building and will have its own dedicated means of ingress and egress.

The rock-climbing gym operations are anticipated to include climbable wall surfaces, with routes designed for beginners through experienced climbers and changed routinely. The rock-climbing gym may also include bouldering areas, cardio and weight-training equipment, flexible multi-purpose studio or floor spaces for activities such as classes, instructional and personal-training areas, youth climbing clubs and teams, summer camps, family programming, and other recreational activities, areas for accessory retail sales, a beverage and snack refreshment area, an administrative office, and conference space. Individual instruction and group classes may be offered. Tournaments, climbing competitions, and other programmed activities are expected to occur periodically, and these events would remain incidental to the primary indoor recreational uses. Comparable businesses include Rocky Top Climbing and Rock Revolution, both located in Charlottesville, VA, and Triangle Rock Club located in the Raleigh-Durham area of NC.

Pickleball operations are anticipated to include indoor courts for open play and league play, lessons, clinics, youth and adult programming.

The Recreational Facility is anticipated to operate during normal retail operating hours, with exact hours to be determined.

Off-street parking for the proposed recreational uses will be provided in accordance with all applicable requirements of the Harrisonburg Zoning Ordinance.

Community Support and Benefits

The proposed rock-climbing gym is being developed by an operating team with longstanding connections to Harrisonburg, James Madison University, the local climbing community, and youth recreation. Harrisonburg currently has an active outdoor climbing community, but the nearest indoor climbing facility open to the public is approximately one hour away. The proposed gym would provide a year-round location where new and experienced climbers can train, learn, socialize, and participate in organized programming.

The climbing gym operations are anticipated to support approximately four full-time-equivalent positions through a combination of management and approximately six to ten part-time employees. Part-time roles may include youth-program leaders, personal trainers, and front-desk staff, including opportunities for high-school and university students. The facility may also provide opportunities for local fitness professionals, climbing guides, instructors, physical therapists, and local food and beverage businesses to connect with customers. Competitions, tournaments, instructional programs, and special events may attract visitors from surrounding communities who may also patronize nearby businesses.

Compatibility with the Property and M-1 District

First, the proposed use represents a productive adaptive reuse of an existing industrial and warehouse building. Indoor pickleball and rock-climbing facilities require large open floor areas, durable building construction, adequate ceiling heights, and flexible interior layouts. These characteristics are well suited to the existing building and would allow the Property to remain active and economically productive without significant new ground-up development.

Second, the proposed use is compatible with the M-1 district. Compared with many industrial, warehousing, storage, repair, transportation, and service-related uses otherwise permitted in the district, the proposed use is expected to have fewer external impacts. The activities would occur indoors and would not involve manufacturing, outdoor storage, industrial dust, odors, vibration, or similar impacts associated with more intensive industrial uses.

Third, the proposed use would provide a meaningful community benefit by expanding year-round recreation for residents, students, families, young professionals, older adults, and visitors. Recreational and leisure time activities provide exercise, instruction, social interaction, team-building, youth and adult programming, and organized recreational activity in a controlled indoor environment. The Recreational Facility would add to the City's recreational offerings while supporting healthy lifestyles and local business activity.

Scope of Requested Approval

The applicant is requesting approval for **recreational and leisure time activities** to be conducted at the Property. No residential use or non-transient dwelling units are proposed as part of this request.

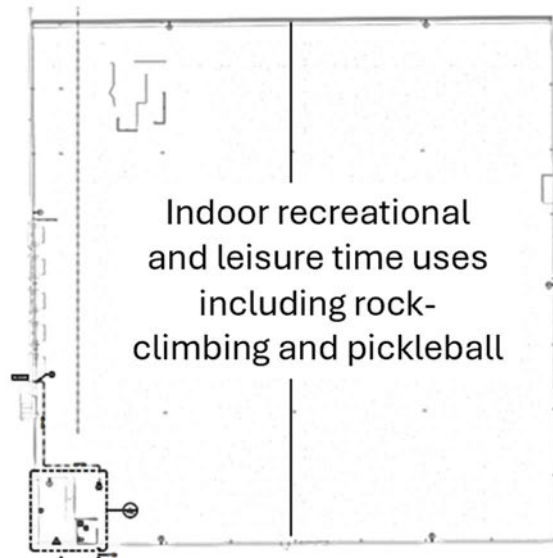
The applicant is not requesting approval for outdoor courts, outdoor recreation, outdoor amplified events, an indoor shooting range, go-karts, paintball, residential occupancy, or

unrelated entertainment or event uses unless such uses are otherwise permitted or separately approved as required by the Zoning Ordinance.

In summary, the proposed recreational and leisure time use is compatible with the M-1 district, is expected to have fewer adverse impacts than many uses permitted by right, would provide a positive recreational amenity for the Harrisonburg community, and would support the productive reuse of an existing building.

We respectfully request that the Planning Commission recommend approval and that City Council approve the requested Special Use Permit.

Site Sketch





City of Harrisonburg, VA
Department of Public Works

**Determination of Need for a
Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA)**

www.harrisonburgva.gov/traffic-impact-analysis

For inclusion in an application for Planning Commission review (for Special Use Permit, Rezoning or Preliminary Plat), this form must be submitted to the Public Works Department at least 5 business days prior to the Planning Commission application deadline.

Contact Information			
Consultant Name:			
Telephone:			
E-mail:			
Owner Name:	VG Harrisonburg Storage, LLC		
Telephone:			
E-mail:			
Project Information			
Project Name:	VG Harrisonburg Storage		
Project Address:	291 West Wolfe St		
TM #:	35-R-23		
Existing Land Use(s):	Manufacturing / Industrial		
Proposed Land Use(s): (if applicable)	Rock Climbing / Mini-storage		
Submission Type:	Comprehensive Site Plan ☐	Special Use Permit ☒	Rezoning ☐ Preliminary Plat ☐
Project Description: (Include site plan or preliminary sketch and additional details on land use, acreage, access to site, etc)	Conversion of a portion of the building into mini storage. We are proposing a rock climbing gym use for the warehouse building fronting West Market St.		
Peak Hour Trip Generation (from row 15 on the second page)			
AM Peak Hour Trips:	0		
PM Peak Hour Trips:	16		

(reserved for City staff)

TIA required? Yes _____ No ☒

Comments:

Accepted by: Zenith Mason

Date: 06/25/2026

Revised Date: December 2019

Peak Hour Trip Generation by Land Use

Row	ITE Land Use		ITE Land Use Code	Unit	Quantity	AM Peak Hour of Adjacent Street Traffic	PM Peak Hour of Adjacent Street Traffic
1	Proposed #1	Mini Warehouse	151	1,000 Sqft	112	9	16
2	Proposed #2	Rock Climbing Gym	434	1,000 Sqft	50	70	82
3	Proposed #3						
4	Proposed #4						
5	Proposed #5						
6	Proposed #6						
7	Total New Trips				79		98
8	Existing #1	General Light Industrial	110	1,000 Sqft	112	83	73
9	Existing #2	Warehousing	150	1,000 Sqft	50	9	9
10	Existing #3						
11	Existing #4						
12	Existing #5						
13	Existing #6						
14	Total Existing Trips					92	82
15	Final Total (Total New – Total Existing)					0	16

Instructions

Determination of trip generation rates shall be in conformance with ITE guidelines.

- Based on the intended use(s), calculate the AM Peak and PM Peak trip generation using the AM and PM Peak Hour of Adjacent Street Traffic rates from the most current version of the ITE Trip Generation Manual (rows 1-6). Attach additional sheets as necessary for more uses.
- Sum up all of the trips generated for the new uses in the Total New Trips row (row 7).
- If the development has any existing uses, calculate the AM Peak and PM Peak trip generations using the AM and PM Peak Hour of Adjacent Street Traffic rates from the most current version of the ITE Trip Generation Manual (rows 8-13). Attach additional sheets as necessary for more uses.
- Sum up all of the trips generated for the existing uses in the Total Existing Trips row (row 14).
- Subtract the total existing trips from the total new trips to get the final total number of trips generated by the development (row 15). Enter these numbers on the first page.

Revised Date: December 2019



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Legislation Text

File #: ID 26-290, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Consider a request to amend the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan

Presented By: Nyrma Soffel, Department of Community Development

Consider amending the 2018 Comprehensive Plan, last updated on June 14, 2022, to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan as Appendix A.



August 12, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider request to amend the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan — Nyrma Soffel, Community Development

Summary

Project name	Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan
Address/Location	Study area boundaries: West: North Federal Street and North Main Street North: East Washington Street East: Tower Street and Old Furnace Road South: East Market Street
Total Land Area	+/- 186 acres
Comprehensive Plan Amendment	To incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan as Appendix A
Planning Commission	August 12, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated September 8, 2026 (Public Hearing)

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend approval of amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan.

Context & Analysis

In September 2023, the City of Harrisonburg received a Community Connectors Program grant from Smart Growth America, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The grant was focused on building capacity to co-design projects alongside impacted communities to advance new infrastructure projects that repair damage from divisive infrastructure. The Community Connectors team included the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA), Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project (SVBHP), Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR), Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA), and the City of Harrisonburg.

Over the next two years, the Community Connectors team led efforts that included:

- Facilitated Community Dialogues,

- Historical research on the history of and impact of Urban Renewal on Harrisonburg residents and businesses,
- The Complete Streets Leadership Academy and North Mason Street Complete Street Demonstration Project, and
- The Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (SAP).

The Northeast Neighborhood SAP is the City’s first small area plan for a neighborhood and is recommended in the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 15. Revitalization. The Comprehensive Plan (page 15-4) states:

A number of neighborhoods around the City have experienced stress. Some are suffering from poorly maintained, deteriorating, or vacant homes and spot conversions of single-family homes to apartments, often for students. Other areas contain older deteriorating apartment buildings. Some are affected by encroaching commercial development or undesirable conversion of houses to non-residential uses. Impacts of traffic on highly traveled roadways may also be creating neighborhood stress. The Potential Small Area Plans map roughly identifies the boundaries of neighborhoods that could be prioritized for study. Actual boundaries for study will be identified at a future time in further consultation with community members. This plan recommends that for each of these areas a community-based neighborhood plan be developed to address these and other issues raised by the community.

The Northeast Neighborhood is identified in the Potential Small Area Plans map.

CHPlanning served as the planning consultant for the development of the Northeast Neighborhood SAP. Together, CHPlanning and the Community Connectors team worked with Northeast Neighborhood community members on a plan that “addresses displacement and other impacts of Urban Renewal, presenting possible early action steps and long-term solutions for addressing these impacts. The harms of Urban Renewal are generational. The plan proposes strategies to return functional control and ownership to community residents and organizations, and to restore a sense of engagement, place-making, and belonging.” (SAP, page 8)

Through this effort, the Northeast Neighborhood SAP was developed to guide future growth and investment in the area. Building upon Section 5 of the Northeast Neighborhood SAP, Section 6 includes an Implementation Matrix. The matrix identifies each SAP goal, strategy, and action, and assigns a priority, lead entity, potential partners, and potential funding sources. Lead entities and partners include City departments, other government agencies, and community organizations who can help implement or support goals, strategies, and actions.

Staff recommends that the Northeast Neighborhood SAP be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan as Appendix A. Once incorporated, the Northeast Neighborhood SAP will serve as a policy guide for City staff, Planning Commission, City Council, and other boards and commissions when evaluating future policies, studies, programs, funding opportunities, capital improvements, administrative approvals, and land use decisions affecting the neighborhood.

The Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan and additional information about the Community Connectors project is available at: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/community-connectors>.

Staff recommends approval of amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan.

Options

1. Recommend approval of amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan
2. Recommend denial of amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan

Attachments

1. Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (2025)
2. Resolution recommending approval of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (2018) to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan

NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD SMALL AREA PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Harrisonburg commissioned the Small Area Plan in collaboration with the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA), the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project (SVBHP), the Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR), and the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA).

Special thanks to:

Luke Morgan, Albemarle County (formerly with City of Harrisonburg)
CHPlanning, LTD.

Thanh Dang, City of Harrisonburg

Tom Hartman, City of Harrisonburg

Michael Parks, City of Harrisonburg

Amy Snider, City of Harrisonburg

Nyrma Soffel, City of Harrisonburg

Jakob zumFelde, City of Harrisonburg

Erin Fisher, Loudoun County Government (formerly with City of Harrisonburg)

Andrea Dono, Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance

Duane Bontrager, Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Association

Karen Thomas, Northeast Neighborhood Association

Councilwoman Monica Robinson, Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project

Steve Davis, Smart Growth America

This document was prepared by CHPlanning, LTD.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northeast Neighborhood is a 186-acre area situated in the northeast corner of the City of Harrisonburg. It is characterized by its rich history shaped by a strong African American community. In the 1950s, the Northeast Neighborhood was impacted by Urban Renewal, displacing many African American residents and destroying community spaces.

The Northeast Neighborhood's existing conditions reflect the lasting impacts of Urban Renewal and other policies that transformed community assets into regional amenities. These changes have contributed to a **loss of historical identity and sense of place, along with increased vacancy and disinvestment.**

In September 2023, the national nonprofit Smart Growth America and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded a Community Connectors Program grant to the City of Harrisonburg to provide an opportunity to acknowledge past harm and improve collaboration between the City government and its residents. The project team is led by the City government, the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA), the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project (SVBHP), the Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR), and the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA). After the grant was awarded, the project team identified that a **Small Area Plan (SAP) for the Northeast Neighborhood would help identify desires related to both historical preservation and opportunities for physical changes to shape the community's future.**

Community engagement was critical throughout the development of the SAP. From community events to workshops, community surveys to neighborhood tours, the project team employed **diverse methods to meet residents where they were throughout each project stage.** With support from NENA and SVBHP, the team was able to successfully obtain input from residents, project partners, business owners, and community leaders. HDR served as a connector to the business community.

These discussions, combined with a review of the existing conditions and other City plans, have resulted in this community-driven document: **a framework to shape the future of the Northeast Neighborhood and heal from the impacts of Urban Renewal.**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

This document uses the following common terms and acronyms.

CBO - Community-Based Organizations

HDR - Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance

HRHA - Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority

LIHTC - Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

NENA - Northeast Neighborhood Association

SAP - Small Area Plan

SVBHP - Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project

S.W.O.C. - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges



Section 1:

Introduction

This Small Area Plan (SAP) is a **community-informed vision and implementation framework** for the City of Harrisonburg's ("City") Northeast Neighborhood ("Neighborhood"). The goal of this document is to outline the steps necessary to bring the Neighborhood's desired vision to reality. It provides recommendations for future projects, programs, and policies that address land use and transportation planning, urban design, investment decisions in capital projects and programs, and adjustments to zoning laws.

Although the Northeast Neighborhood comprises just 1.7% of the City's total footprint, its historical significance is profound. During Urban Renewal in the 1950s and 1960s, major infrastructure projects fractured the Neighborhood's cultural and physical assets, disrupting a thriving Black community and leaving lasting scars.

This SAP, along with the other work done by Smart Growth America and the Community Connectors Program, as discussed in the "Why Plan Now?" section, lays out a path toward healing those past injustices and building a more equitable future. The development and, more importantly, the implementation of this plan's goals and strategies reflect the City's commitment to prioritizing the Northeast Neighborhood for meaningful investment and improvement, and to holding the City accountable for that promise.



Urban Renewal refers to the federally supported process, initiated by the Housing Act of 1949, in which cities like Harrisonburg cleared "blighted" areas and redeveloped them through public-private partnerships, often replacing older neighborhoods with new housing and infrastructure.

"I like to call it 'Urban Removal,' because it was where cities declared urban areas as slums, and they received federal dollars to come in there and to literally displace and replace area residents ... to rebuild new housing."

- Stan Maclin, Former President of the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center

This SAP supplements the City's 2018 Comprehensive Plan. While the Comprehensive Plan provides a cohesive framework for the City's future, the SAP offers a more detailed understanding of the Northeast Neighborhood's specific needs. It ensures that future decisions, programs, and policies align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan and other City planning documents, as referenced in Appendix A, and will be developed with input from the residents of the Neighborhood.

Community input was a core value in the development of the SAP. The project team prioritized local voices, creating a more effective and responsive approach to future growth that reflects the Neighborhood's character and fosters community ownership. This approach aimed to start repairing the harm caused by past Urban Renewal efforts and connect the Neighborhood to Downtown, ultimately building trust between Northeast Neighborhood residents and the City of Harrisonburg.

The plan addresses displacement and other impacts of Urban Renewal, presenting possible early action steps and long-term solutions for addressing these impacts. The harms of Urban Renewal are generational. The plan proposes strategies to **return functional control and ownership to community residents and organizations, and to restore a sense of engagement, place-making, and belonging.**

Throughout the planning process, the City of Harrisonburg, the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA), the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project (SVBHP), the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA), and the Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) have engaged with the community and have **established relationships that form the basis for trust.** The plan puts forward communication and collaboration strategies to grow and build relationships that are difficult to undermine or undo in the future.

Historically, residents of the Northeast Neighborhood were subject to racism and prejudice that worked against the accomplishments and achievements of its residents. The plan proposes **policies and protections to prevent gentrification and displacement for new residents from low-income and immigrant backgrounds.**



Lucy Simms Mural, Source: City of Harrisonburg

PROJECT APPROACH

The project approach consisted of the following three phases:

Community involved
throughout all project phases

PHASE 1: UNDERSTAND

During this phase, the project team built a strong relationship with the Neighborhood's community, gaining insight into its history. The project team also analyzed current data and reviewed existing plans to gain a better understanding of the Neighborhood's current conditions.

PHASE 2: ENVISION

In this phase, the project team collaborated with the community to develop and refine a shared vision for the Neighborhood's future.

PHASE 3: SHAPE

For the third phase, the project team established the community's priorities and identified goals and strategies, considering all gathered community input and documented existing conditions to date.

WHY PLAN NOW?

COMMUNITY CONNECTORS GRANT

In September 2023, the national nonprofit Smart Growth America and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded a Community Connectors Program grant to the City of Harrisonburg to provide an opportunity to advance locally driven projects that will reconnect communities separated or harmed by transportation infrastructure. The Harrisonburg project team's goals were to **repair past harms and to reconnect today's Northeast Neighborhood by creating a community-led small area plan to guide future investments in the area**, including re-envisioning the North Mason Street corridor. The effort from the beginning was grounded in the need to strengthen trust and collaboration between the City, partner organizations, and the community.

The far-reaching impacts of Urban Renewal contributed to a deep distrust of government within the community. This planning effort represents a step toward rebuilding that relationship. With long-time residents facing displacement pressures, a growing need for affordable housing, and increasing climate disruptions, the SAP is more critical than ever. The Neighborhood is also rich in cultural assets that deserve preservation and celebration. As a priority area for the City of Harrisonburg, this SAP provides a framework to guide future projects and programs.

The Harrisonburg Community Connectors team, led by the Northeast Neighborhood Association, the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project, the City of Harrisonburg, the Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance, and the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority, is guided by the following vision statement:

COMMUNITY CONNECTORS VISION STATEMENT

Rebuilding trust between Northeast Neighborhood residents and the City, repairing past harms, and reconnecting today's Northeast Neighborhood to the heart of the city are our most important goals. We commit to prioritizing the needs, wants, and desires of Northeast Neighborhood community members as we scope potential future investments in the community.

Subgroup of Harrisonburg's Community Connectors Team, Source: City of Harrisonburg



OTHER CITY INITIATIVES

The development of the SAP aligns with several concurrent City initiatives that share complementary goals:

- **Historical Research** under the Community Connectors grant documents the impacts of Urban Renewal on displaced residents and businesses, helping the City acknowledge past harms and support restorative storytelling.
- Smart Growth America's Complete Streets Leadership Academy's **transportation demonstration project** introduces temporary improvements along Mason Street to better connect the Northeast Neighborhood to Downtown, directly supporting the SAP's connectivity and mobility goals.

The City's **Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Rewrite** also presents a timely opportunity to reinforce SAP recommendations through updated policies that support diverse housing, mixed-use areas, and safer streets.

Aligning the outcomes of these efforts with the SAP **strengthens the plan's implementation** and ensures a more **integrated, inclusive approach** to neighborhood development.

GUIDING OBJECTIVES FOR THE PLANNING PROCESS

The following objectives informed the approach to the SAP, grounding it in community history, lived experience, and local priorities:

- **Acknowledge and document past harm** caused by Urban Renewal and foster a foundation for healing between the City and the Neighborhood.
- **Engage residents** in shaping a shared vision for the Neighborhood's future, with clear communication of expectations and next steps. Educate the community about City resources to address their needs.
- **Support community-led efforts** by empowering local groups, faith-based organizations, and Neighborhood advocates.
- **Respond to core needs** around walkability, transportation access, housing, and economic opportunity.

“ I would love to see the Neighborhood continue to grow in those expressed hopes. There is a lot of good history in that space. There is a lot of beauty too in the people and places. But there is also a large economic divide within this Neighborhood. My vision would be to see the Neighborhood continue to be a place for such different people, but a healthy place for those who are struggling to be able to succeed. ”

– Resident

STRUCTURE OF THE SAP

The SAP serves as a guide for community leaders, residents, institutions, community-based organizations, City staff, property owners, and developers. It is organized into six sections:

1. INTRODUCTION

Provides an overview of the plan, including its purpose, key goals, and general planning overview.

2. ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S PAST

Discusses the Northeast Neighborhood's history, from its time as a prominent settlement for freedmen up to Urban Renewal and its impact.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT

Reviews the current social, cultural, and geographic landscape of the Northeast Neighborhood, including community characteristics and demographic trends.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

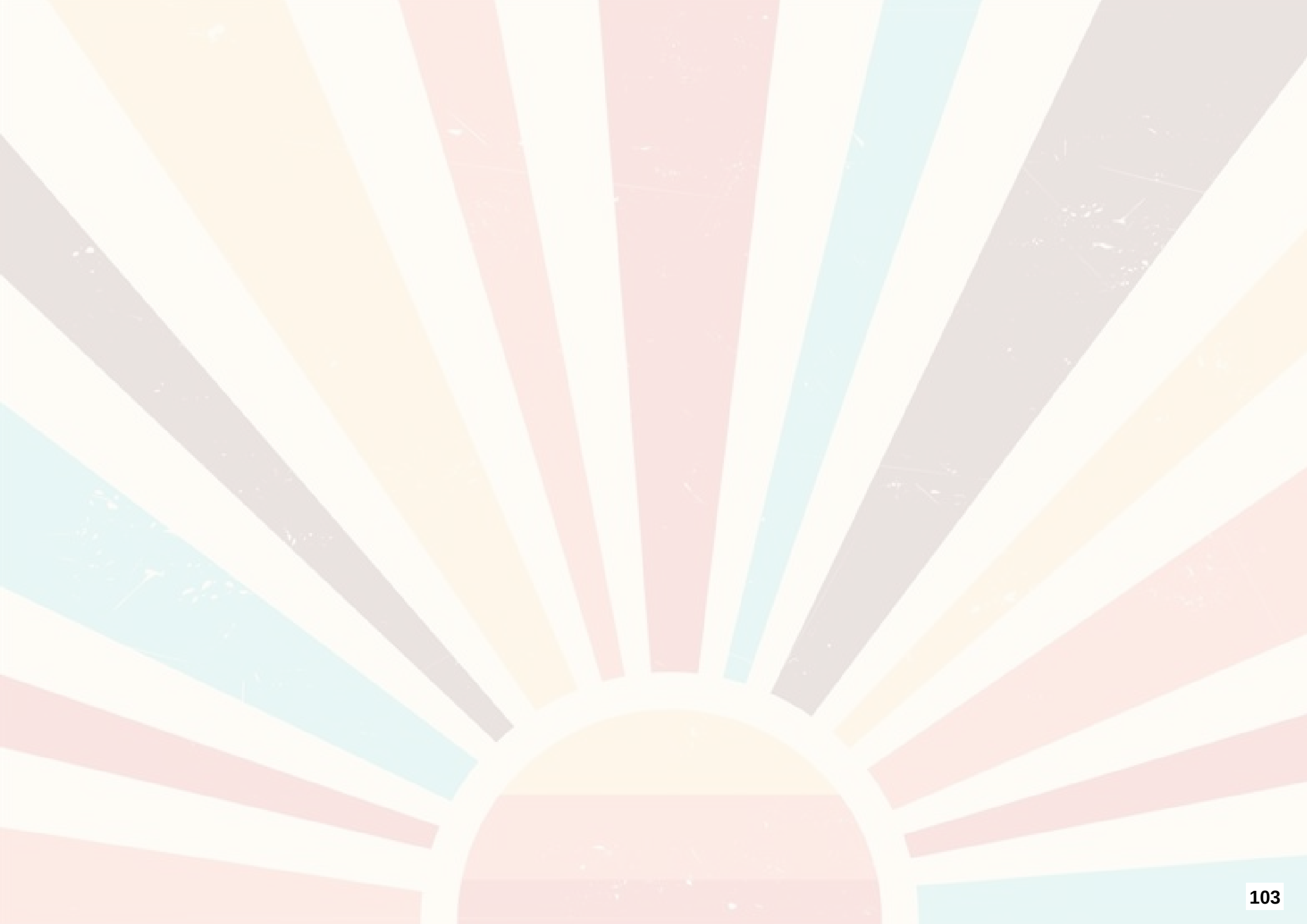
Provides an overview of the various engagement pathways undertaken by the project team for the plan. It highlights some key takeaways from the engagement process and a narrative of community feedback.

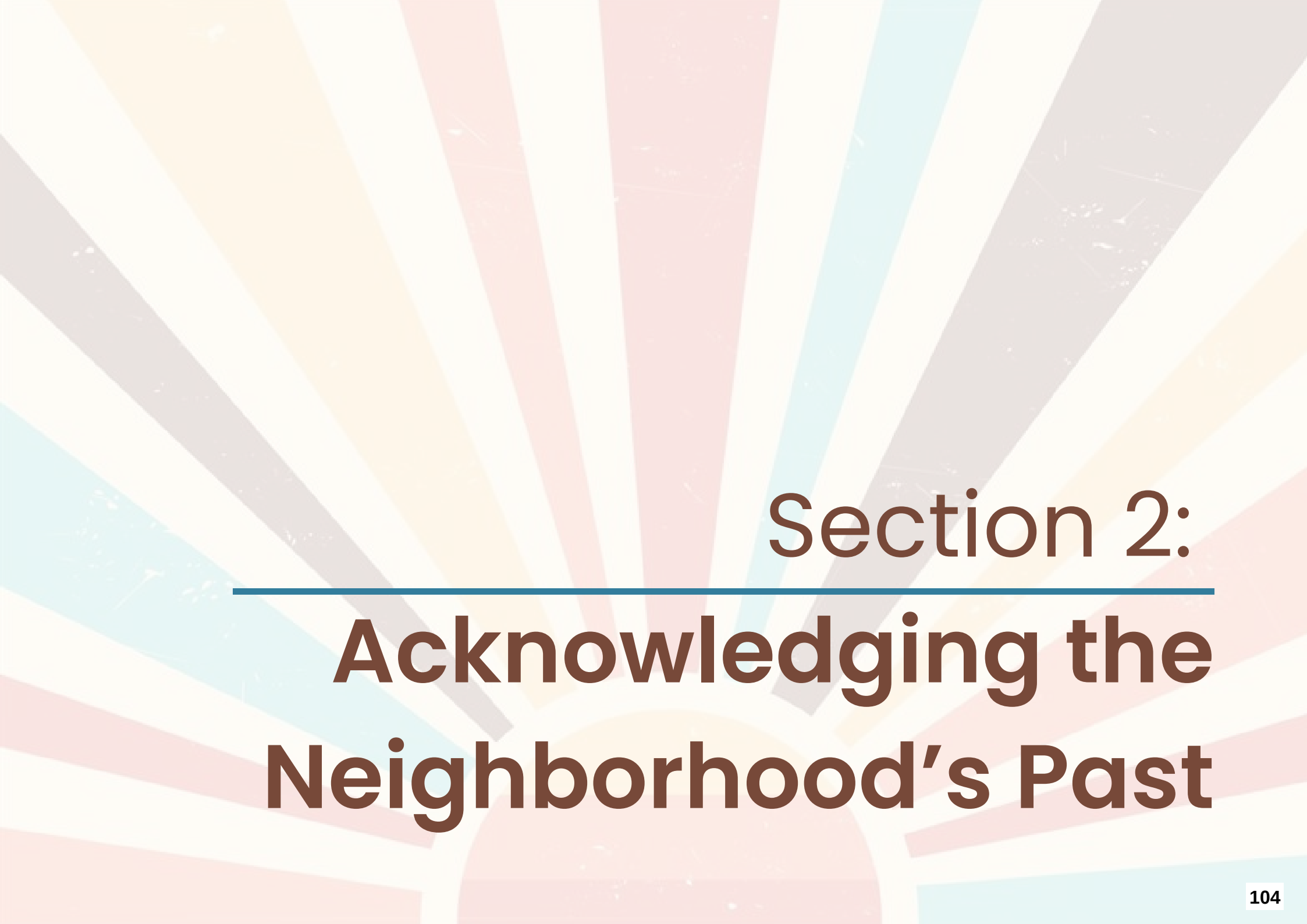
5. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: COMMUNITY PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

Synthesizes gathered information and feedback to produce targeted ideas for a shared vision of the future. The goals and strategies are organized under five key themes: 1) Gathering and Belonging; 2) Reconnecting to Downtown; 3) Safety and Security; 4) Opportunity for All; and 5) Healthy Environments.

6. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

Outlines actions for implementing the goals and strategies. The implementation plan is organized into a matrix that establishes a priority hierarchy based on public feedback. Each strategy includes responsible entities, key partners, and potential funding sources.





Section 2:

Acknowledging the Neighborhood's Past

AFRICAN AMERICANS HAVE SHAPED THE NEIGHBORHOOD SINCE EMANCIPATION

In 1832, twin brothers Ambrose and Reuben Dallard were born as enslaved people at Riverbank. The brothers escaped, joined the Union Army, and then settled in a community named Zenda before moving to the City of Harrisonburg. In 1869, the brothers began purchasing land and building homes in the northeast section of Harrisonburg, an area that would later become known as Newtown. After the Civil War and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, Newtown became home to many freedmen. As Newtown grew, community assets were established to reflect the needs of its residents. The Newtown Cemetery was established as a burial site for emancipated people, and the Effinger Street School, also known as the Harrisonburg Colored School, was constructed to provide public education to African American children.

In 1892, the City of Harrisonburg annexed Newtown. The community continued to thrive and grow. Many residents moved into the area, and by 1920, Newtown's population had grown from 997 to 1,200. Property ownership and entrepreneurship were of great importance to the community. The Colonnade building served as a gymnasium for the Effinger Street School, a meeting space for the Black American Legion No. 76, and a safe space for a range of community programming. It also became home to several Newtown-born businesses, including George's Barbershop, 'Skully's' pool hall, and Miss Jennie's Chicken Shack.

In 1939, the Effinger Street School closed to make way for the newly built Lucy F. Simms School, which served as a community hub. It was joined by Harris Pool — a public pool built by local African American businessman, Mr. Kent Frances — and several historic Black churches, including John Wesley Methodist Church, First Baptist Church, the Mennonite Mission, and Bethel AME Church.

- **1869:** Brothers, Reuben and Ambrose Dallard, began building houses in what became known as the historic Newtown African American community.
- **1869:** The Newtown Cemetery is established as a burial site for freedmen.
- **1882:** Harrisonburg City Public Schools established the Effinger Street School or the Harrisonburg Colored School.
- **1892:** Newtown was annexed by the City of Harrisonburg.
- **1893:** The Church of the Brethren, which later became known as the historic Bethel AME Church, was built.
- **1895:** The Dallard-Newman house was built by the Dallard brothers.
- By **1920**, Newtown population grew from 997, in 1880, to 1,200.
- **1939:** The Effinger Street School was closed to make way for the newly built Lucy F. Simms School.

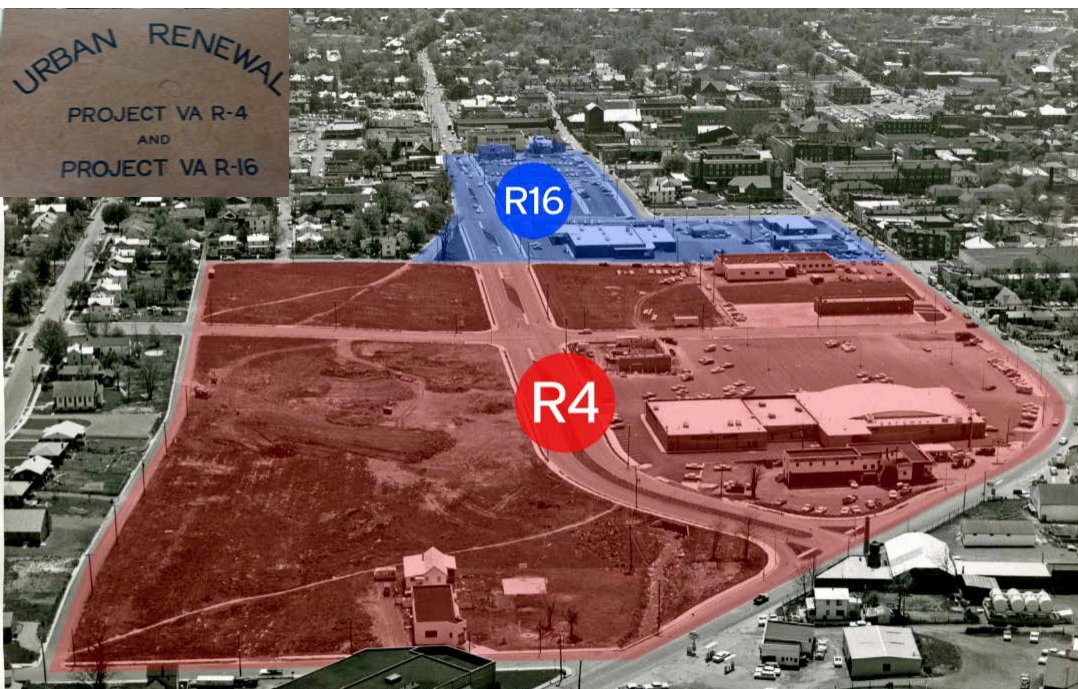
Kelley Street United Brethren in Christ Church, Source: NENA



THE NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD WAS IMPACTED BY URBAN RENEWAL, DISPLACING MANY AFRICAN AMERICAN RESIDENTS AND DESTROYING COMMUNITY SPACES

Around 1955, the City of Harrisonburg initiated Urban Renewal efforts to redevelop "slums" into public housing, with federal assistance. The City established the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA) to execute the two main Urban Renewal projects: the "Harrisonburg Northeast Urban Renewal Project R-4" and its smaller tag-on, "Project R-16." These projects targeted Newtown and Mason Street, condemning many Black-owned homes and businesses in the area as "**blight**." Using this designation, HRHA was able to acquire properties through **eminent domain** and clear the land for redevelopment, with the intention of increasing tax revenue, building new commercial developments and low-income housing, and facilitating easier automobile travel.

R-4 was approximately 32.5 acres and R-16 was approximately 7.5 acres, Source: City of Harrisonburg



Eminent domain allows the government to seize privately-owned properties for "just compensation" to be used for "public use," such as roads or public housing.

These actions razed homes and businesses, displacing many Black residents and destroying treasured community spaces. About 225 dwelling units were destroyed and 215 households were forced to relocate (Community Connectors Program – History of Urban Renewal in Harrisonburg 2025), some having to move out of Harrisonburg entirely. Many of the destroyed homes were owned or occupied by descendants of the formerly enslaved people who moved to the area in the late 1800s. The loss of homes, significant capital assets, had profound social and economic effects on residents and their heirs, eliminating generational wealth and hard-fought investments.



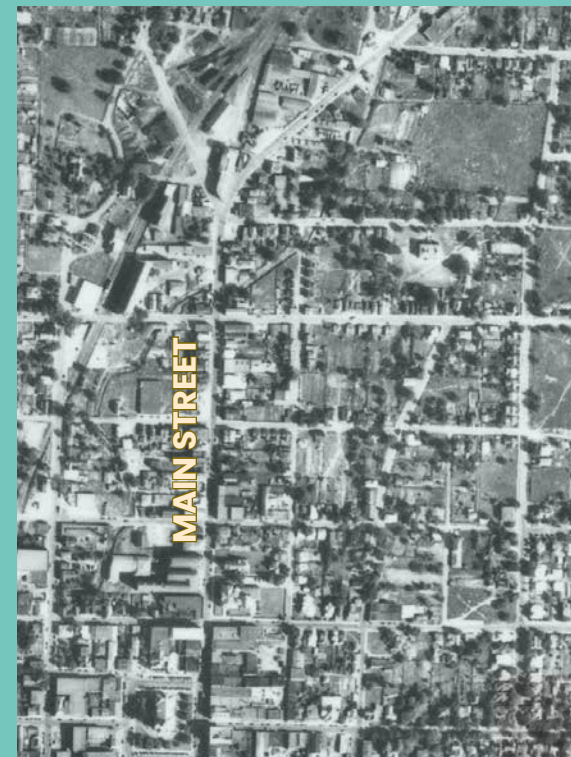
A lot of the time, we focus on the homes that were demolished, whereas when I think about Urban Renewal, it's about the community and sense of community that was lost. ”

– Monica Robinson, Executive Director of SVBHP

The local government sold the seized land to commercial developers, rather than using it for public purposes. The commercial and residential development that occurred reflected a more suburban character with deep setbacks and large parking lots. This suburban character stood in stark contrast to the traditional urban fabric of the historic Downtown, creating a visible divide between the redeveloped north end and the portions of the district that had escaped Urban Renewal.

Additionally, the projects widened and paved streets in the community, including Mason Street, making the area car-centric and reducing safe travel options, such as walking or biking, while also creating a barrier to Downtown.

Urban Renewal remains a scar on the community, traumatizing generations of residents and leading to a lack of trust in government officials.



1937



2022

Maps of Northeast Neighborhood in
1937 (above) and 2022 (right)



1962 – Residence on the corner of East Elizabeth and Federal Street



Undated photo – Parking lot built on the site of razed homes on the corner of East Elizabeth and Federal Street



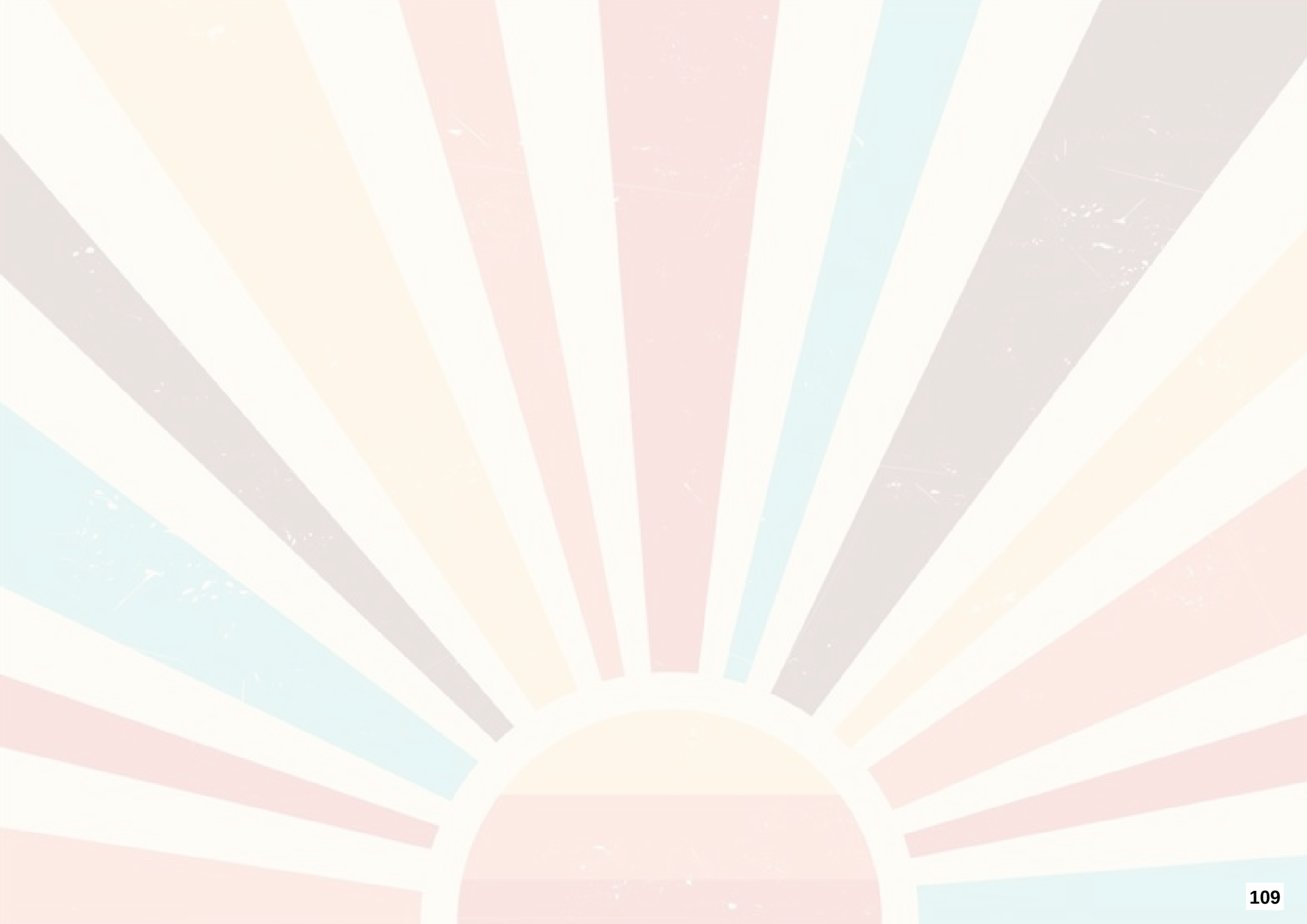
2013 – Parking deck built in 1971 on the corner of East Elizabeth and Federal Street

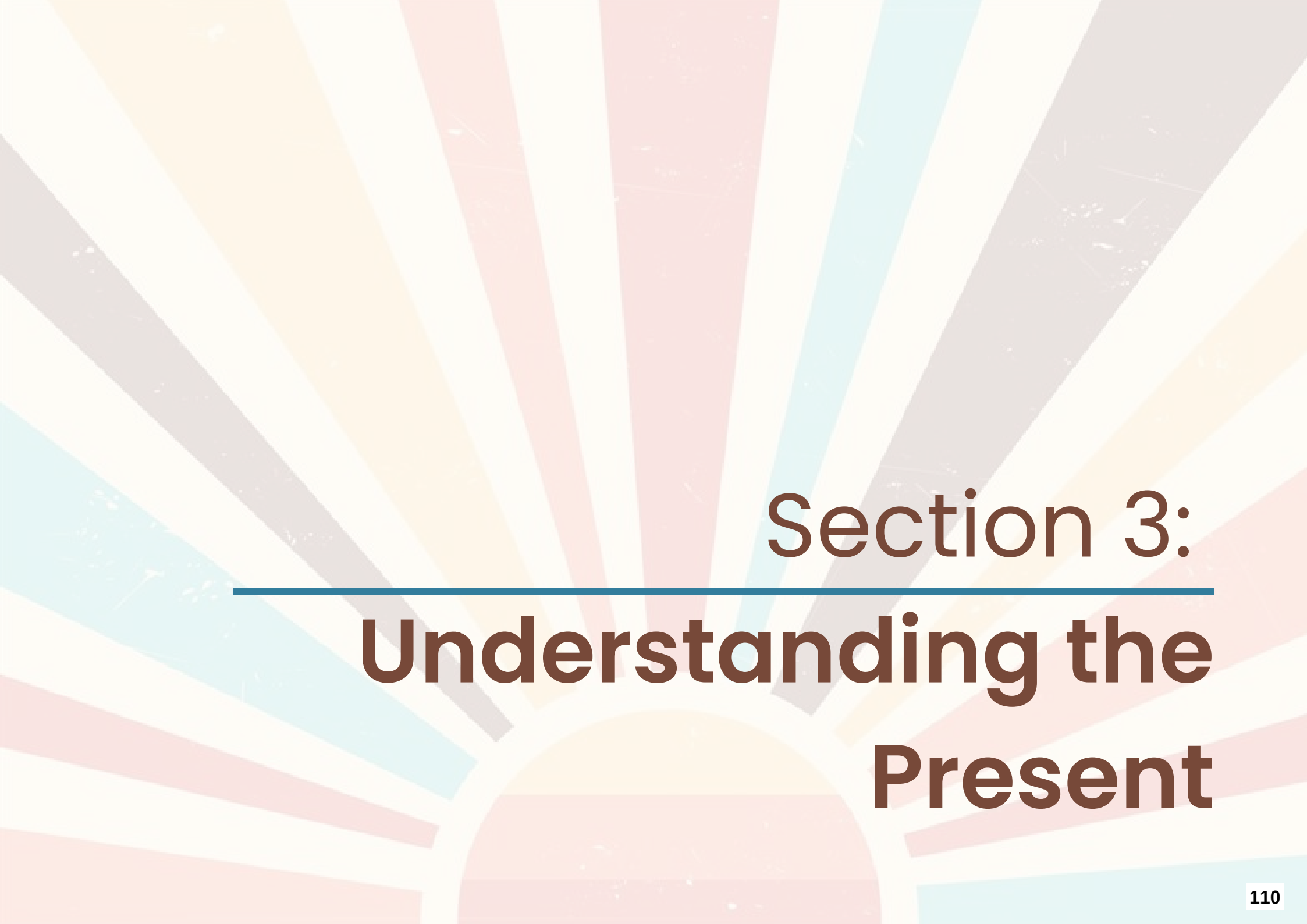
“ These were the homes which could never be described as blighted or slums. They just happened to be in the way of progress. These were the homes with the manicured lawns, well-tended flowers, and in some cases, the wrap around porches. ”

– Ruth Toliver, Author and Retired Teacher, spent summers in Harrisonburg staying with her grandmother

Homes labeled as "blight", Source: JMU Archives







Section 3:

Understanding the Present

UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT

Planning for the future begins with a clear understanding of the Northeast Neighborhood's current conditions. These conditions form the foundation of the plan's recommendations. The project team evaluated a range of factors to gain a deeper understanding of the Neighborhood's existing conditions, which together tell the story of the Neighborhood.

These factors included:

- Existing data
- Existing plans, policies, and studies
- Community feedback

As the name suggests, the Northeast Neighborhood is situated in the northeast area of Harrisonburg. For the purposes of the SAP, the Northeast Neighborhood is bounded by N. Main Street from the west, E. Market Street from the south, Tower Street from the east, and E. Washington Street from the north. The study area spans approximately 186 acres in total.

It should be noted that the City of Harrisonburg does not have official maps of neighborhood boundaries and that the Northeast Neighborhood Association's (NENA) map of the Northeast Neighborhood includes areas outside of the SAP's study area.



Northeast Neighborhood Association's Map of the Neighborhood, Source: NENA

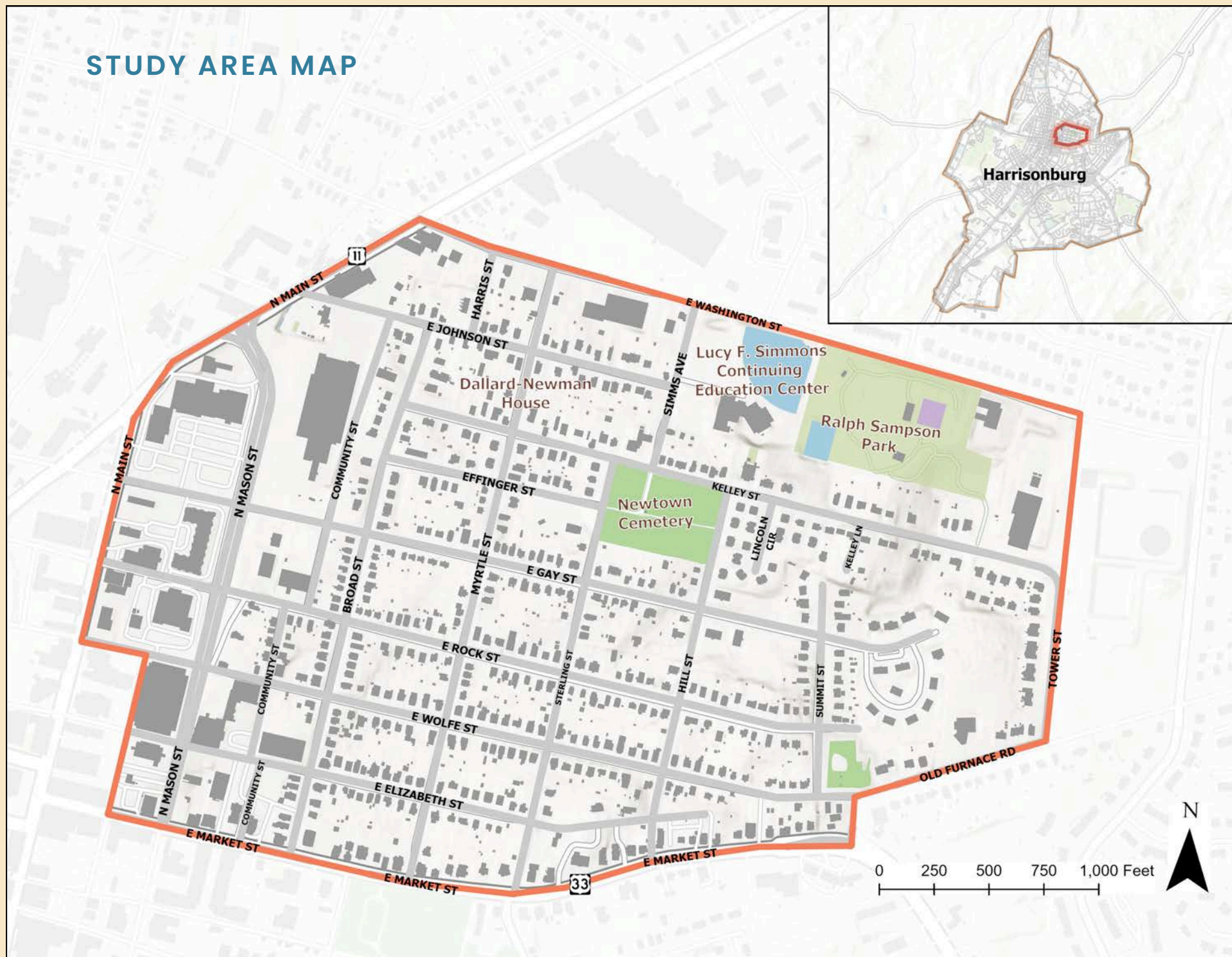
The plan examines existing conditions in the context of historic laws, policies, and practices. It addresses opportunities for Neighborhood residents, CBOs, communities of faith, business and non-profit entities, and the City to preserve and enhance Neighborhood amenities and assets for Neighborhood residents, including people impacted by Urban Renewal and people who might be affected by similar detrimental policies in the future.

The history of Harrisonburg, Newtown, and the Northeast Neighborhood includes slavery, emancipation, and the establishment of Newtown as a self-governing freeman's town with community-sustaining institutions. The existing conditions in the Northeast Neighborhood are shaped by Urban Renewal and other policies that converted Neighborhood assets into regional amenities. As a result, the community has lost some of its history and sense of place and has experienced increased vacancy disinvestment. One considerable loss residents have noted is Harris Pool, the community's swimming pool, which was located at 400 Kelley Street. It hosted various community events before closing in 1979.



Harris Pool, Source: JMU Libraries

STUDY AREA MAP



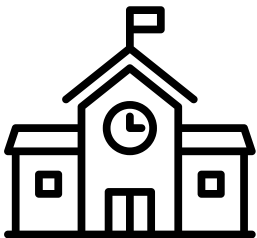
Source: City of Harrisonburg GIS Data Library

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Northeast Neighborhood is home to approximately 1,940 residents (2022 American Community Survey), accounting for about 4% of Harrisonburg's total population. Between 2000 and 2022, the Neighborhood's population grew by 8.1%, while the City of Harrisonburg saw a significantly higher growth rate of 26%.

In the Northeast Neighborhood, the **predominant age group consists of individuals aged 30–34**, with about an equal distribution of male and female residents. Additionally, there is a **significant population of children and youth aged 0–9**, highlighting the Neighborhood's appeal to both young adults and families.

Northeast Neighborhood



45.2%

High school graduate or higher



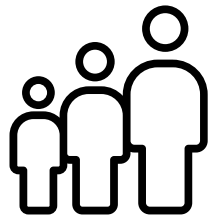
13.2%

Bachelor's degree or higher



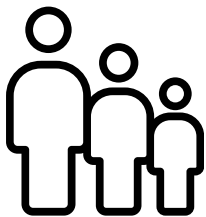
\$39,716

Median income



28%

of the population is under 18 years of age



72%

of the population is 18 years of age and over



34.2 years

Median age



6.5%

Unemployment rate

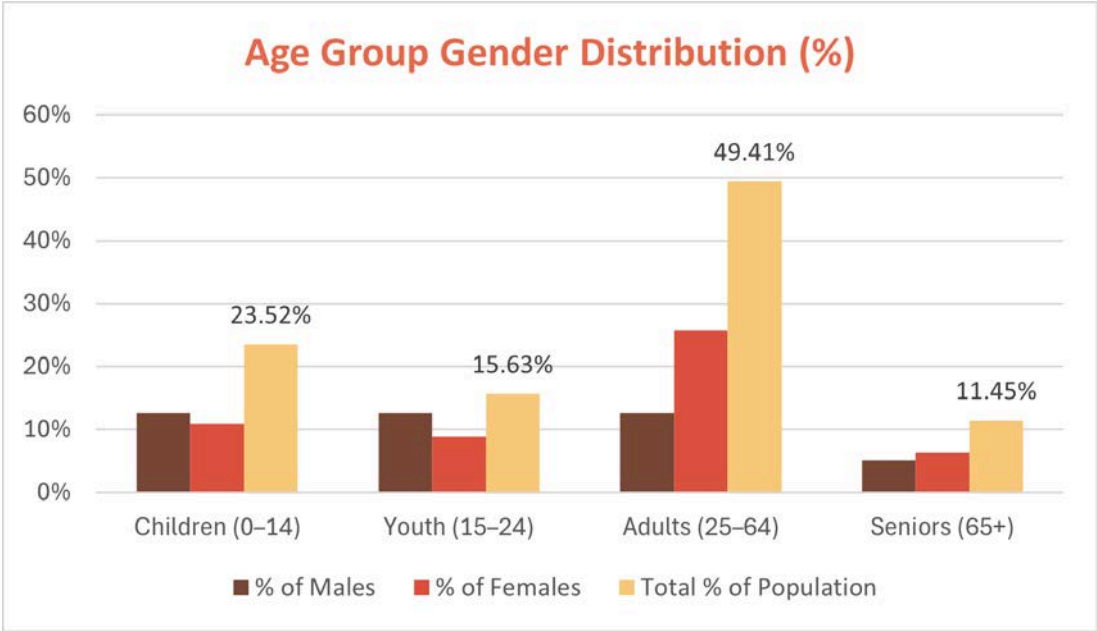
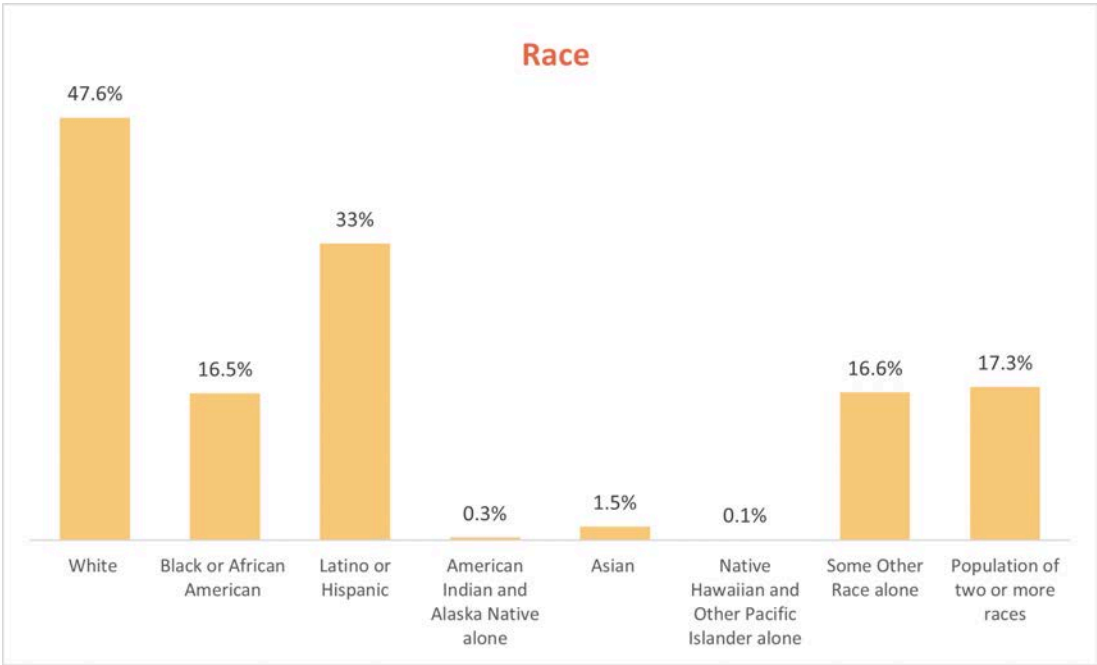


15.7%

Poverty rate

DEMOGRAPHICS

Industry by Occupation for Population 16 Years & Over in the Northeast Neighborhood	Percent of Population
Construction & Trades	37%
Education & Health Services	18%
Public Safety & Service	18%
Sales & Office Support	13%
Management, Business, & Finance	8%
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math)	4%
Arts, Media, & Entertainment	2%



LAND USE AND ZONING

The Northeast Neighborhood is **predominantly residential**, but it also features a mix of other land uses, including commercial, government, and recreational areas. Nearly three-quarters of its area is zoned R-2 (Residential District), permitting single-family and duplex homes. The R-2 zoning allows a variety of housing types and allows group housing projects, which are properties consisting of two or more buildings arranged in a manner that cannot be subdivided into conventional streets and lots and that require designation by the City of Harrisonburg Planning Commission. HRHA's Franklin Heights properties are examples of a group housing project.

Additionally, the Neighborhood also includes nonconforming residential uses, such as apartments, and R-3 zoned (Medium Density Residential) properties on its southern end, which allow single-family and duplex homes by right and apartments with up to 12 dwelling units per building by special use permit, contributing to the area's residential diversity.

The northwestern periphery of the Neighborhood is zoned as M-1 (General Industrial District). This zoning allows uses such as manufacturing, processing, and storage, including the feed mill, distribution centers, and automotive services, which become increasingly apparent at gateways or key transition points into and out of the Neighborhood. The western edge of the Neighborhood is zoned B-1 (Central Business District), which accounts for 63% of the Neighborhood's commercial addresses.

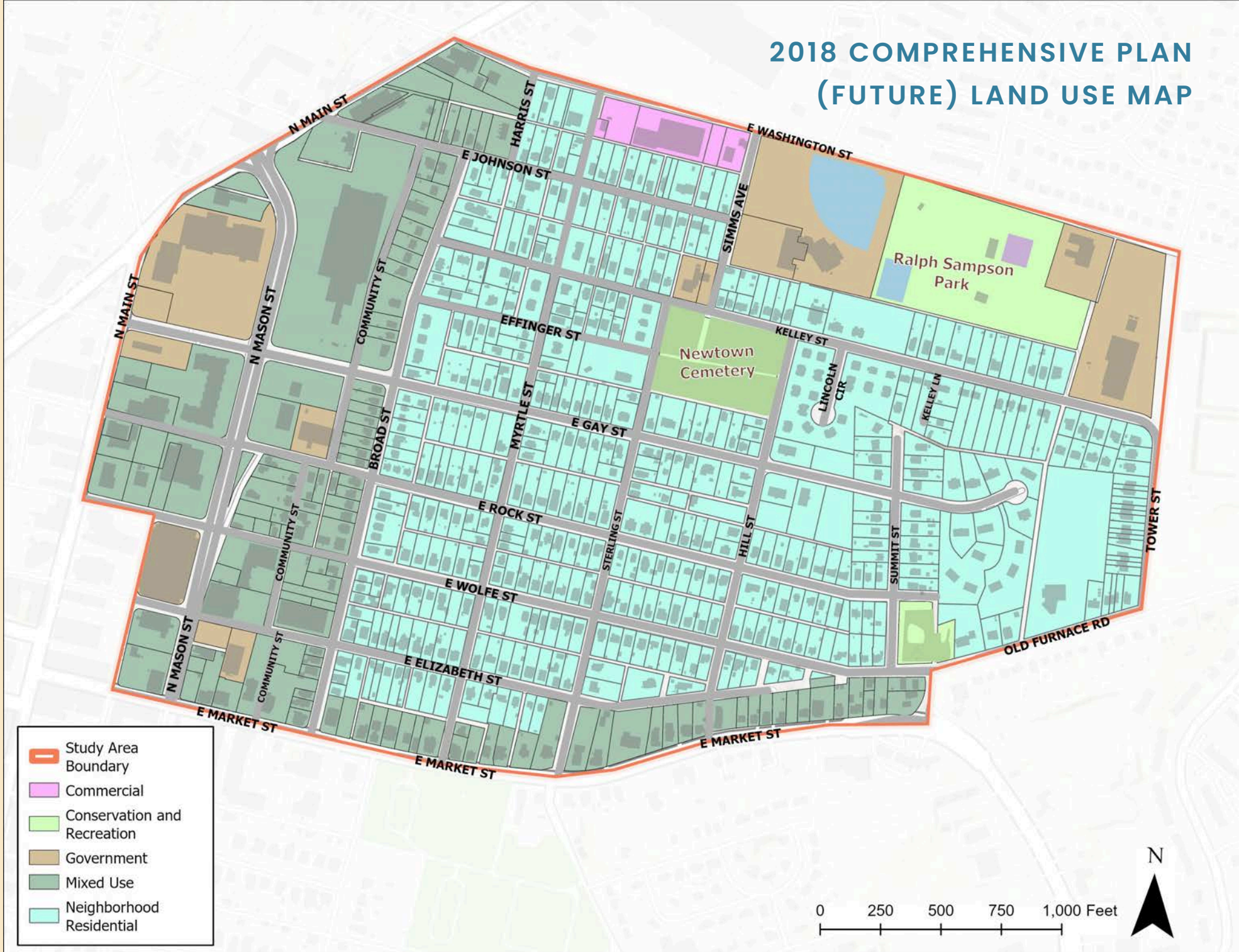
Around 3.5% of the lots in the Neighborhood are vacant. Currently, these vacant lots might harm the area's unity and feel, but they offer future opportunities for affordable housing, green spaces, or small business development.

The study area is also within one of Harrisonburg's two federally designated **Opportunity Zones**.



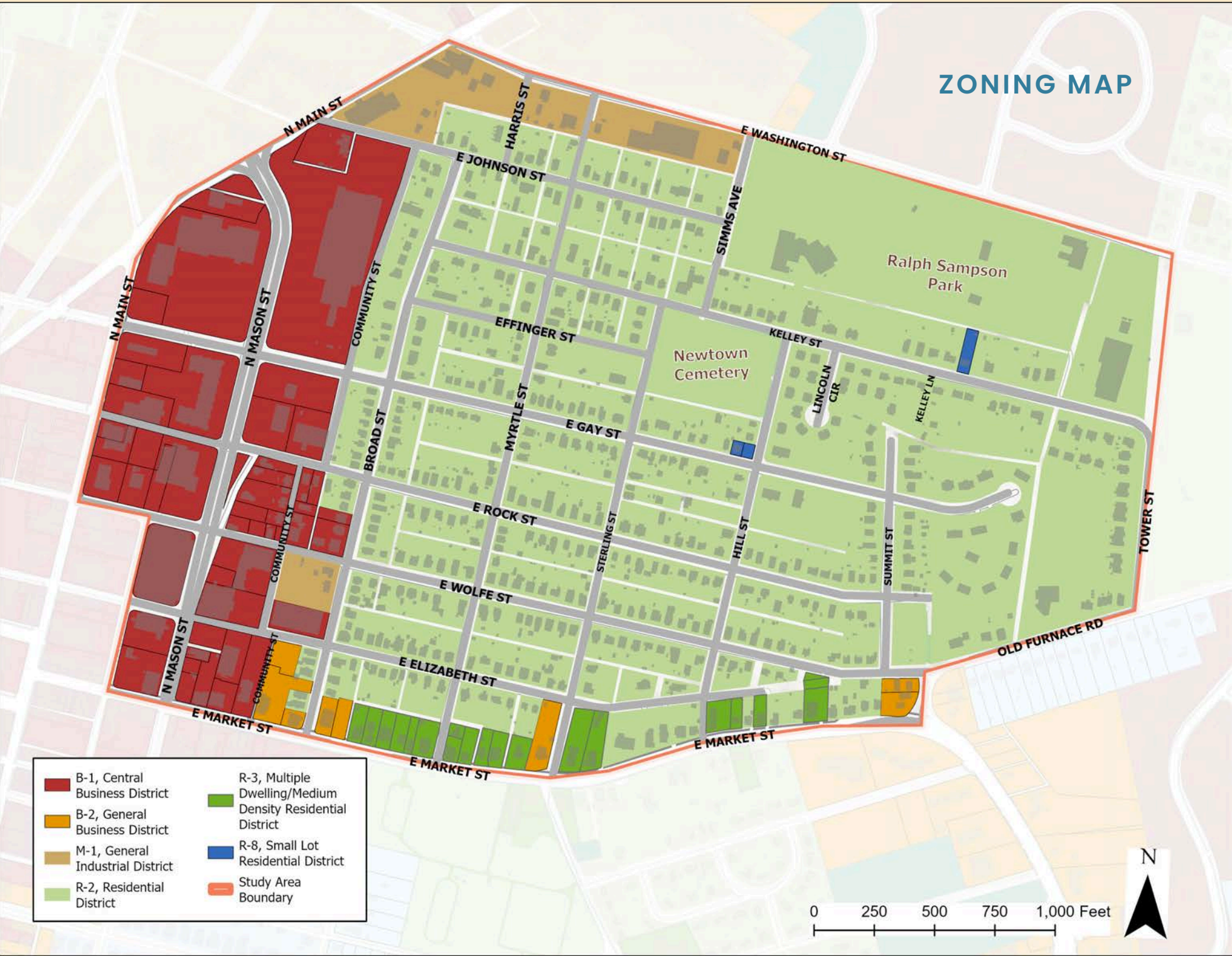
Opportunity Zones are low-income areas that may be eligible to receive tax benefits with new investments. They are intended to encourage economic development for investors.

2018 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (FUTURE) LAND USE MAP

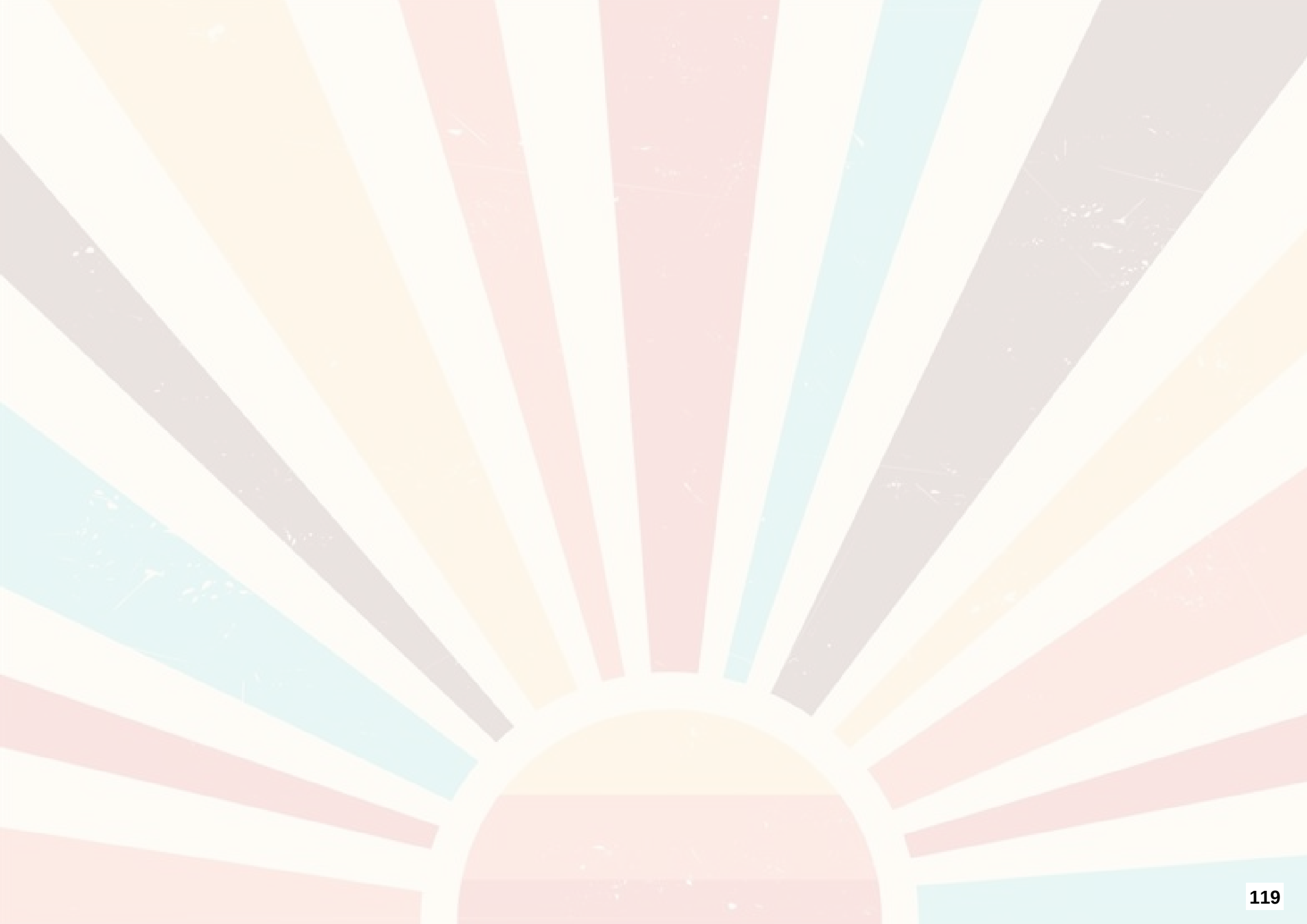


Source: City of Harrisonburg GIS Data Library

ZONING MAP



Source: City of Harrisonburg GIS Data Library



TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

The Northeast Neighborhood's **transportation infrastructure reflects the lasting impacts of Urban Renewal**, particularly the widening of Mason Street, which created a physical and social divide from the rest of the City. Today, efforts such as traffic calming, Complete Streets planning, and enhanced pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure aim to reconnect the Neighborhood and make its streets safer and more inclusive for all residents.

The Neighborhood includes both local and high traffic streets, meaning the area handles both residential traffic and through traffic. High traffic streets include N. Mason Street, E. Wolfe Street, and E. Gay Street. Mason Street is a collector road running north to south, serving as a key connector between local roads and major thoroughfares. As part of the Urban Renewal efforts, Mason Street was widened from two lanes to four lanes to accommodate anticipated vehicle traffic. This **change created a visual and physical barrier between the Northeast Neighborhood and the rest of Harrisonburg**, contributing to the emergence of parking lots and car-oriented businesses in the area, as well as the loss of many historic buildings. The fact that the Harrisonburg Downtown Historic District ends at the edge of the Neighborhood further emphasizes the divide.

Residents have requested and pursued traffic calming through the City multiple times since 2008, including collecting signatures from a large percentage of the Neighborhood in 2018 and 2019. As some requirements of the City's traffic calming program posed barriers to implementing traffic calming measures, the City decided in 2021 to address intersection safety concerns in the Neighborhood.

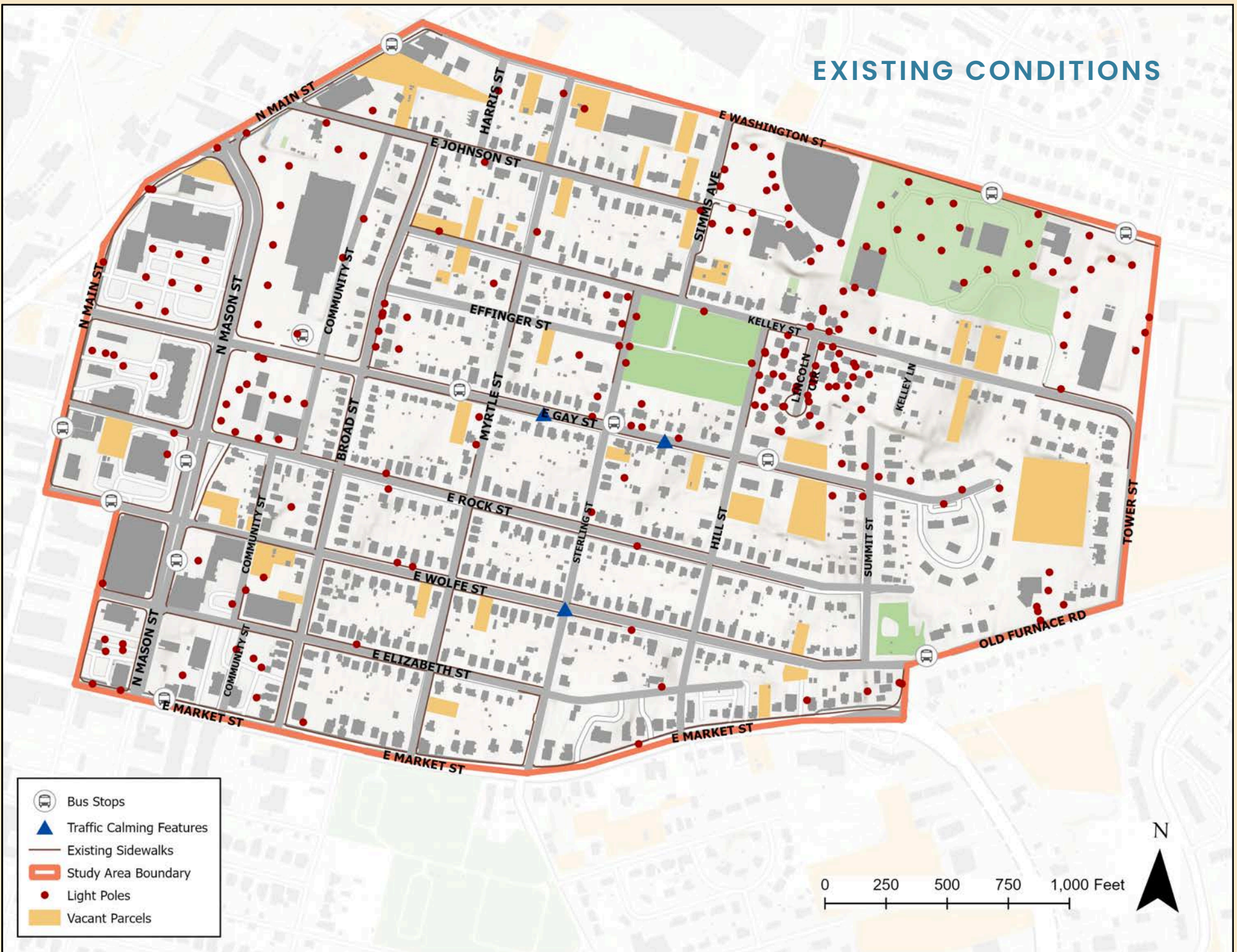
The City prioritized making changes at intersections with higher numbers of crashes, which were all located on E. Wolfe Street or E. Gay Street. These changes involved adding speed humps or relocating stop sign locations. Additionally, stop bars and crosswalks were installed at all intersections in the Neighborhood. There is demand for more safety upgrades across the Neighborhood, including Kelley Street and E. Market Street, as **residents note that speeding and disregard for stop signs remain an issue**.

Public transit runs across E. Gay Street, N. Mason Street, N. Main Street, and E. Market Street. At the corner of E. Gay Street and Community Street is the Transit Hub, one of the city's three bus transfer locations. However, **limited public transportation options and inadequate bus shelters impact connectivity**, and multimodal options are needed to serve residents without personal vehicles better.

Bus stop located at East Gay St. and Sterling St., Source: CHPlanning



EXISTING CONDITIONS



Source: City of Harrisonburg GIS Data Library

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

The Community Connectors grant from Smart Growth America involved a Complete Streets Demonstration Project for N. Mason Street between E. Market Street and N. Main Street. Harrisonburg Public Works made temporary changes to the configuration of N. Mason Street starting on July 7, 2025 until August 5, 2025 that shifted all traffic to the two east lanes of N. Mason between Gay Street and Elizabeth Street.

This temporary change allowed the City to test if roundabouts would be successful at those two intersections, while creating shorter crossing times of N. Mason Street at multiple intersections for pedestrians and bicyclists. It also opened up space currently used for vehicles (the west lanes of North Mason Street between Gay Street and Elizabeth Street) for other community uses, such as space for walking and biking and areas for picnic tables.



Complete Streets is a street design approach that prioritizes safe and convenient access for all users, regardless of their mode of transportation.

The changes were based on community input received through a public forum held in March 2025 and from participants in the Harrisonburg Complete Streets Leadership Academy. The Leadership Academy brought community members and business leaders from the Northeast Neighborhood together with City staff and transportation experts to brainstorm ways to improve N. Mason Street. While temporary traffic adjustments are in place, City staff are analyzing changes to how the corridor is used by all users, in addition to seeking public feedback on their thoughts about the changes. That data and community input will be utilized to determine if a permanent project will be pursued.

N. Mason Street Reconfiguration, Source: Kyle Lawrence

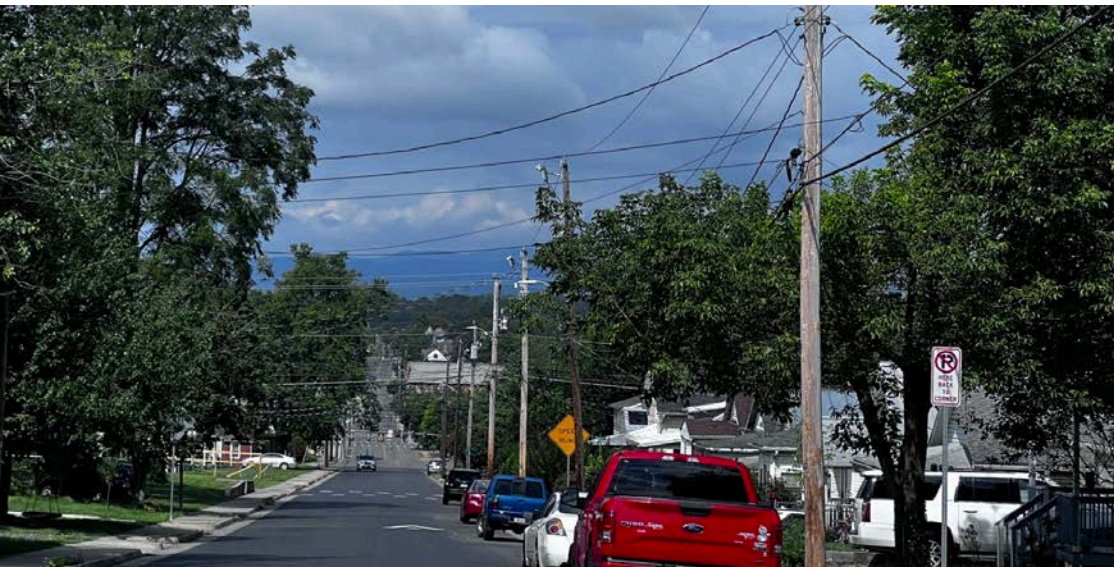


TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

There are bike lanes along parts of the Northeast Neighborhood's perimeter, including E. Washington Street and sections of Vine Street and N. Main Street. Within the Neighborhood itself, only two blocks in the southwest corner have a bike lane and a shared-use path. The City's bike stress level criteria classify many streets east of N. Mason Street in the Neighborhood as high-comfort for biking. In contrast, N. Mason Street is considered low-comfort due to factors like multiple travel lanes, higher vehicle speeds, and limited bike infrastructure.

The Neighborhood's streetlights are consistent with City standards. Still, residents noted that **some intersections are dark, which affects nighttime mobility, safety, and visibility**. There is interest among the community in adding and improving lighting along key walking corridors, such as Broad Street. Additional lighting needs to be balanced with potential light pollution, as some residents expressed concern that nighttime lighting could lead to disturbances.

Gay Street, Source: City of Harrisonburg



Stop sign at Hill Street and E. Rock Street, Source: CHPlanning



HOUSING INVENTORY AND AFFORDABILITY

The Northeast Neighborhood's housing landscape reflects the long-term effects of Urban Renewal, with public housing, aging homes, and a mix of renters and long-time residents shaping its character. As concerns about gentrification and rising rents grow, **preserving affordable housing, supporting long-time residents, and honoring the Neighborhood's historic character is key to ensuring equitable development.**

The Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority (HRHA) was initially started in the 1950s to execute Urban Renewal initiatives. Today, HRHA owns 97 residential units in the Neighborhood, including seven single-family homes, and 90 units spread across duplexes and four-unit buildings. These properties are primarily located north of Gay Street, south of Johnson Street, and east of Broad Street. Residents have commented that HRHA should improve its property maintenance and encourage resident participation by offering incentives for upkeep.

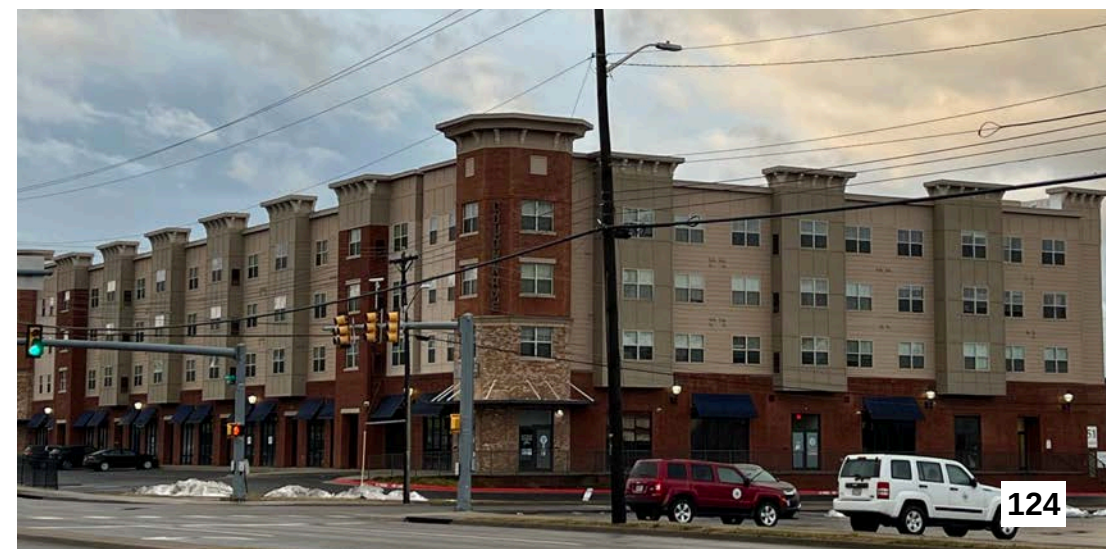
The Northeast Neighborhood is **primarily residential**, featuring a mix of single-family homes and multi-family units. The owner-to-renter ratio is similar to that of the City of Harrisonburg, with approximately 40% of its units being owner-occupied. The tenure of the community, much like its housing types, encompasses a diverse range, including long-time residents who have lived there for 25 years or more, as well as new arrivals.

The Neighborhood features a range of architectural styles, including early 20th-century homes with front porches and pitched roofs, mid-century brick homes, and newer infill developments. Many structures reflect vernacular and craftsman influences, contributing to the Neighborhood's historic charm. In terms of building conditions, many homes in the area exhibit signs of aging, with some requiring significant repairs due to deferred maintenance. **The prevalence of older housing stock presents both challenges and opportunities for historic preservation and revitalization.**

Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority, Source: CHPlanning



Colonnade Apartments on N. Mason Street, Source: CHPlanning



HOUSING INVENTORY AND AFFORDABILITY

There are also several historic homes in the area that community members, in partnership with local institutions and CBOs, are working to **preserve both in terms of their physical structure and historical significance**, such as the Ida M. Francis House. This home, located at 252 N. Mason Street, served as a Green Book safe place for Black travelers during the segregation era. The Dallard-Newman House, located at 184 Kelley Street, is another historic home that is undergoing renovation. Ambrose and Reuben Dallard, two freedmen who started the Newtown community, built the house in the mid-1890s. With federal grant funding and support from NENA, the upgraded Dallard-Newman House will turn into the first African American history museum in the area.

In 2021, the City of Harrisonburg completed a housing assessment and market study that identified market types for each U.S. Census-defined block group. The study identified the western side of the Neighborhood as "Market Type A" and the eastern side as "Market Type B." Market Type A is characterized by high demand, rapid population growth, and greater access to amenities, such as transit. Market Type B includes areas with high housing sales, high-income households, and slower population growth, with below-median access to amenities. The study separated the market types by the census block group division at Myrtle Street. Through field experience, however, the Neighborhood character shift occurs at Broad Street, suggesting a potential need to revisit the market study designations.

Gentrification, or the arrival of new residents and developments that displace long-standing community members and businesses, is a concern in the Neighborhood. This issue is especially pressing due to the high demand for off-campus housing from JMU students and the emergence of new developments that may drive up living costs. JMU students already live in the Neighborhood, contributing to the area's evolving housing dynamics.

Many community members are concerned that they will not benefit from the anticipated new development due to pressures of physical, economic, and cultural displacement. Rising housing costs are becoming an increasing burden for many residents, emphasizing the need to preserve existing affordable housing units.

Dallard-Newman House, Source: VA Department of Historic Resources



HOUSING INVENTORY AND AFFORDABILITY

Northeast Neighborhood



732

Households



37%

of the households are
owner-occupied



63%

of the households are
renter-occupied



2.55

Average household
size



55.4%

of housing units are
detached single-
family houses



\$258,750

Median value of
owner-occupied
housing units



I like that it's a true blend of all kinds of people. It's one of the last neighborhoods in town with affordable housing and people living close together in detached homes with yards. It's colorful. It feels very safe to me. I love all the kids and the families. The churches and the cars. I don't want anything coming in here and changing the community feeling or pushing out long time demographics with gentrification.



– Resident

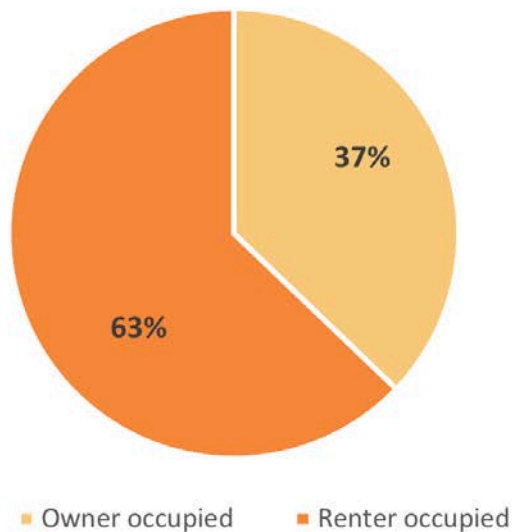
HOUSING INVENTORY AND AFFORDABILITY



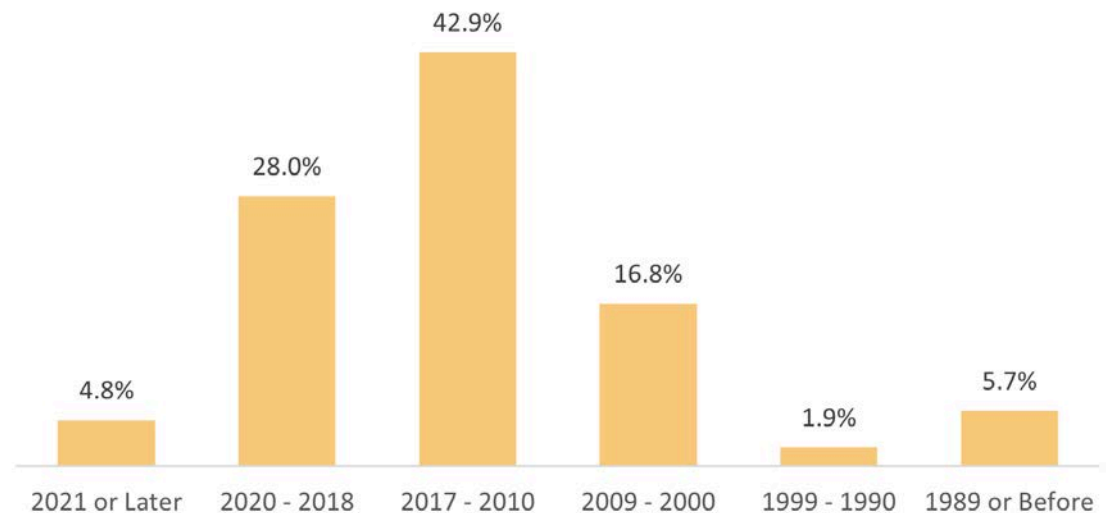
Existing Housing Programs Available:

- HRHA – Assistance for First-time Homebuyers
- VA DHCD – Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program (DPA); Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)
- Central Planning District Commission – Regional First-Time Homebuyers Program
- City of Harrisonburg – SPARC Mortgage Interest Rate Reduction
- VA Dept. of Social Services – Energy Assistance Program (EAP)
- Central Valley Habitat for Humanity – Critical Home Repair Program
- Southeast Regional Community Action Program – HUD-Certified Housing Counseling

Housing Tenure



Year Household Moved Into Neighborhood



LOCAL ECONOMY

The Northeast Neighborhood's limited access to essential services and underperforming commercial areas—especially those along N. Mason Street—reflect the **lingering effects of disinvestment following Urban Renewal**. The strategic redevelopment of key sites, such as the Roses property, offers an opportunity to meet community needs.

The Neighborhood lacks essential services, such as grocery stores and healthcare facilities. It has a modest mix of businesses within a limited and underperforming local economic landscape. Community staples such as Kline's Dairy Bar, El Paisano Bakery, and Friendly City Food Co-Op provide valued food, social, and recreational outlets. Still, they are all located west of N. Mason Street, making access difficult. Generally, overall commercial activity remains sparse.

A prominent symbol of this underutilization is the Roses property, a discount department store located near the intersection of N. Mason Street and N. Main Street. Once a key part of the Neighborhood retail corridor, the site represents both a challenge and a significant opportunity for strategic revitalization. Due to its central location, size, and visibility, the Roses property is often envisioned as a future anchor for mixed-use development, affordable housing, or public space.

I think the Roses complex is really exciting in terms of possibility. I have a vision of a centralized place with bike/pedestrian access that has mental health services, community gathering places like coffee shops, thrift stores, and bike shops that can provide job opportunities and training to young people, and access to the arts, healthy food, and educational opportunities.

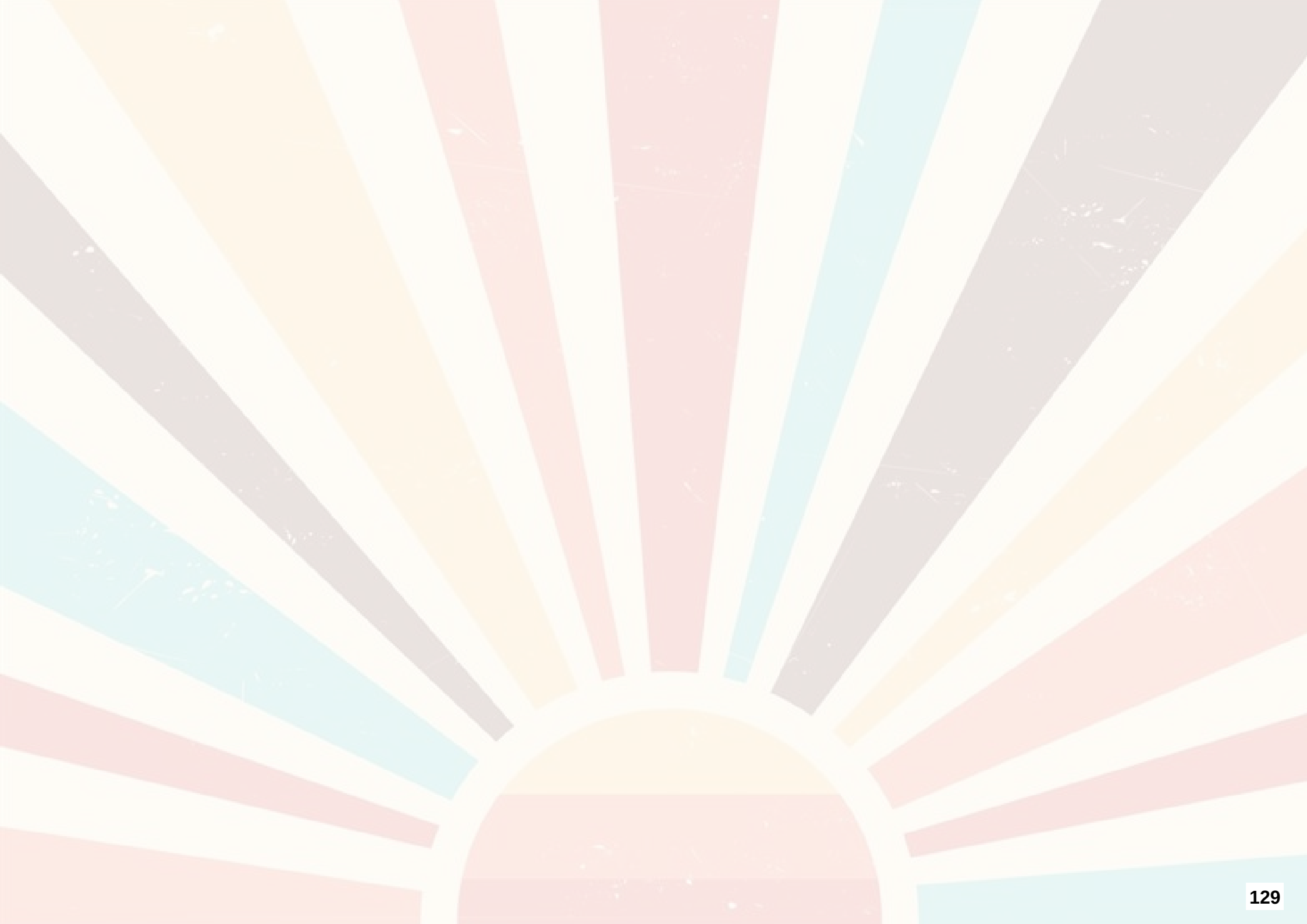
– Resident

Aerial view of Roses, Source: Lee & Associates



Klines Dairy Bar and El Paisano Bakery, Source: CHPlanning





COMMUNITY ASSETS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE

The Northeast Neighborhood has many important **historical and cultural assets and organizations that enrich community life and foster a sense of place**. It is also home to municipal services, transportation services, charities serving people experiencing drug addiction and homelessness, and other institutional uses that provide services for the City of Harrisonburg and the surrounding region. The Downtown United States Postal Service location on N. Mason Street is well used, offering P.O. Boxes as well as mailing services.

The Northeast Neighborhood has a strong presence of churches, with nine churches located within the Neighborhood — several of which are integral to the City's historic fabric and cultural identity. **Several churches in the area function not only as places of worship but also as informal community hubs**. Notably, First Baptist Church has a children's playground on a parcel directly across the street, which supports local families and fosters community connection.

Ida Mae Francis Tourist Home, Source: Virginia DHR



Important cultural assets in the area that serve as the foundation of the Neighborhood's rich African American history include Newtown Cemetery, the Dallard-Newman House and Museum, the Ida Mae Francis Tourist Home, and the Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center. The Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center is a historic community hub named after a pioneering African American educator. Originally a segregated school, it now serves as a vibrant space for education, cultural events, and local organizations.

Adjacent to the site, Our Community Place's daytime community and meal program provides essential support to unhoused and other financially insecure individuals but has also drawn concern from residents due to visible signs of substance use, discarded needles, and loitering. These conditions have raised safety and public health concerns among residents, reinforcing the need for a coordinated response that balances compassionate care with thoughtful site planning and community-informed redevelopment.

While some public art exists—mainly along the western edge near N. Mason Street—there is an opportunity to strengthen Neighborhood identity and sense of place through the expansion and strategic placement of public art and public realm improvements.

COMMUNITY ASSETS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESENCE



Source: City of Harrisonburg GIS Data Library

ENVIRONMENTAL AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

The Northeast Neighborhood features gently rolling hills typical of the Shenandoah Valley, with gradual slopes that are mainly oriented towards the northwest and southwest. These hills influence both viewsheds and flooding.

The topography of the Neighborhood provides **scenic views and vistas** that both residents and visitors enjoy. Some of the most picturesque views can be seen from the highest elevations, located near the cemetery and Ralph Sampson Park. The feed mill, located at the corner of N. Main St. and Kratzer Ave., is another prominent landmark that can be seen from higher elevations in the community and serves as a significant visual cue when entering or leaving the Neighborhood.

The community identified **frequent flooding** on Sterling Street, E. Gay Street, and Hill Street as a significant concern. Newtown Cemetery, a cemetery over 150 years old dedicated to the burial of freedmen, faces significant water issues due to erosion from foot traffic, runoff from rainwater, and a berm causing ponding of water on the property. In 2019, an effort was made to plant more trees at the cemetery, spearheaded by NENA and students at Broadway High School, to celebrate the cemetery's 150th anniversary and help prevent future erosion.

The City started a Drainage Improvement Program to evaluate existing infrastructure, identify necessary upgrades and alternative drainage routes, and reduce the frequency and severity of flooding. Residents in the Neighborhood have applied to the program, as there is a history of flooding during heavy storm events, especially along Hill Street, Rock Street, and E. Elizabeth Street.

HRHA Kelley Street Garden, Source: City of Harrisonburg



Ralph Sampson Park, Source: City of Harrisonburg



ENVIRONMENTAL AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

Trees not only help prevent erosion, but they also are critical to reducing the urban heat island effect. The urban heat island effect is when a neighborhood experiences significantly higher temperatures than other residential neighborhoods with more green spaces. Impervious surfaces and a lack of tree cover drive this phenomenon. Trees provide shade, cool the air, and reduce heat retention. Currently, tree canopy covers only 20.4% of the Neighborhood, which is lower than the citywide average of 23%, according to the City's 2024 Tree Canopy Study. Community members have expressed a need to plant additional trees and protect existing trees, particularly at the Roses parking lot, which is dominated by impervious surfaces.

The Ralph Sampson Park covers 31 acres in the northeast corner of the Neighborhood. It has steep topography, offering panoramic views of the City and serving as a key elevation point in the Neighborhood. The park features a futsal complex, a natural surface walking trail, basketball courts, a playground, picnic shelters, and a sprayground that opened to the public in July 2025. Many residents note that while the addition of the sprayground is exciting, it does not replace the need for a community swimming pool.

Ralph Sampson Park Basketball Courts, Source: City of Harrisonburg



Ralph Sampson Park Futsal Courts, Source: City of Harrisonburg





Section 4:

Community Engagement

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This plan was developed with **community voice as a core value**. From the earliest conversations, the CBOs and the City recognized that this plan could not follow a conventional path. Engagement is not only about collecting feedback, but it is also about listening to lived experiences, validating community pain and pride, and ensuring the strategies in this plan reflect what residents truly want: to be heard, to stay, to thrive, and to belong.

The plan's community engagement was aimed at:

- **Understanding** residents' needs
- **Addressing** past and remaining harms from Urban Renewal
- **Envisioning** the Northeast Neighborhood's future through community input

Recognizing the legacy of displacement and mistrust, the project team used a trauma-informed approach to guide engagement. Principles of safety, trust, empowerment, and cultural awareness shaped all outreach and interactions with the community.

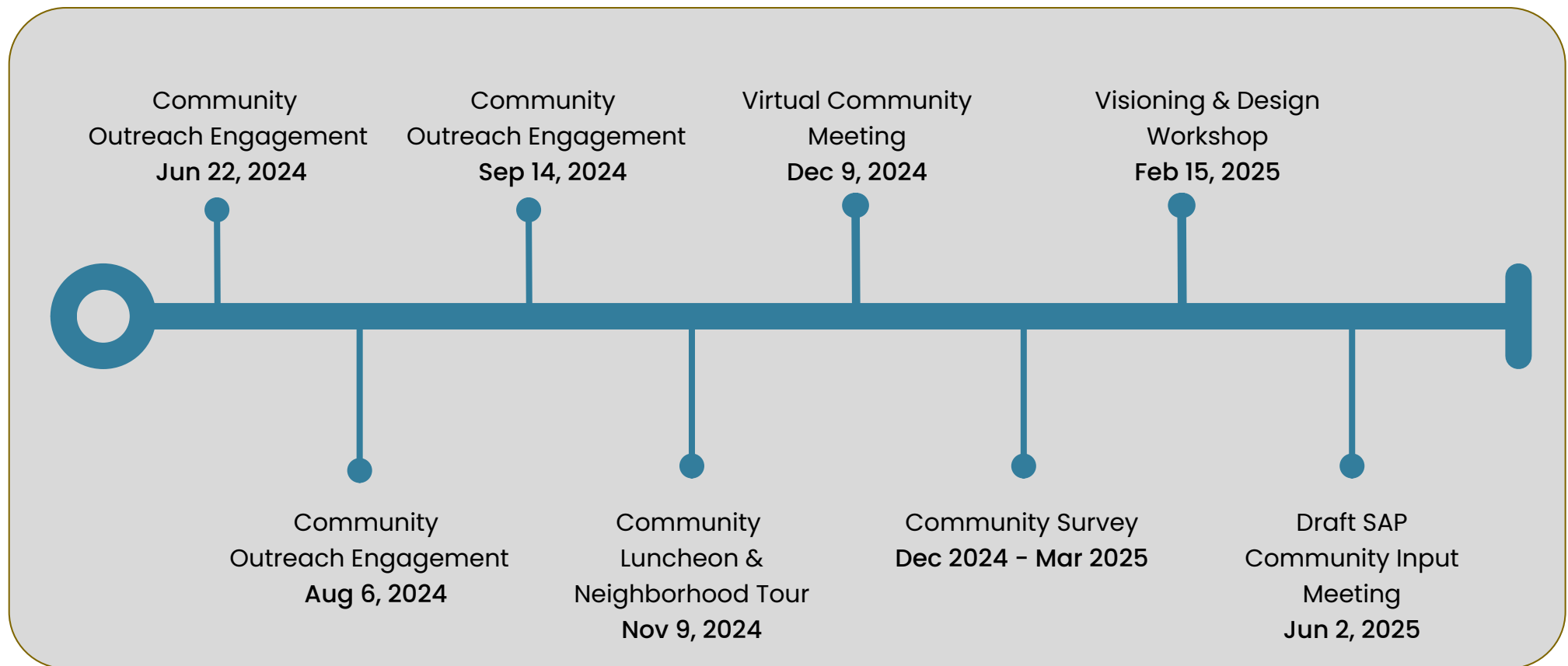
The engagement plan was created by the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA) and the Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project (SVBHP), two trusted CBOs with longstanding ties to the Neighborhood. Their leadership helped guarantee the process was rooted in historical context and guided by relationships. The City and project team supported their efforts, encouraging broader participation across different groups within the Neighborhood, including renters, young families, business owners, and long-time residents.

Photo from Engagement Event, Source: City of Harrisonburg



ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Engagement was woven throughout every phase of the planning process. From community events to workshops, community surveys to neighborhood tours, the team used diverse methods to meet residents where they are. The engagement process targeted a range of stakeholders, including residents of the Northeast Neighborhood, project partners, business owners, and community leaders. Feedback from the engagement process directly shaped the recommendations in the SAP. The engagement efforts are summarized below:



Community Luncheon & Neighborhood Tour

Saturday, November 9, 2024

The Harrisonburg Community Connectors Luncheon at the Lucy F. Simms Center served as the project's official kickoff event. **Thirty-four community members** gathered to set the stage for the SAP, reviewing the impacts of Urban Renewal, and learning about the planning process and project goals. Residents identified priorities through various engagement activities, including an idea wall to facilitate group brainstorming, a priority dot voting exercise to visualize what the group values most, a map station to gather local knowledge, and a vision board to help envision the future.

After the luncheon, interested attendees joined the project team on a Neighborhood tour. The tour offered participants an opportunity to physically reconnect with spaces impacted by Urban Renewal, while also gaining insight into present-day challenges related to safety, economic development, and Neighborhood character.

Photos from Community Luncheon, Source: CHPlanning



Virtual Community Meeting

Monday, December 9, 2024

Several community members joined a virtual meeting held over Zoom to provide feedback regarding the Northeast Neighborhood's past, present, and future. During this virtual event, attendees answered the following discussion questions through the meeting chat.

1. What do you value most about the Northeast Neighborhood's history and identity?
2. What types of changes or opportunities would you like to see to improve economic and community development?
3. What kind of community do you envision for future generations living in the Northeast Neighborhood?

Participants shared reflections on the Neighborhood's history and identity and discussed how to improve economic and community development. Many emphasized preserving the Neighborhood's character and protecting residents from displacement.

Initial Input and Priorities

After the first two engagement events, the project team reviewed and synthesized the early feedback received from the community. Participants emphasized the need for affordable housing, economic opportunity, public safety, and spaces that foster belonging and pride. Residents also highlighted the importance of reconnecting to Downtown and protecting the character of the Neighborhood.

From this early feedback, the project team identified five guiding priorities that would shape the goals for the SAP:



GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL (ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

These draft themes were presented at the next phase of engagement for refinement and confirmation.

Visioning and Design Workshop

Saturday, February 15, 2025

Forty-nine community members met at the Lucy F. Simms Center to refine ideas from earlier engagement sessions and provide feedback on goals and strategies. Attendees participated in a **visioning activity** and a **design workshop activity**.

- The **visioning activity** provided an opportunity for the participants to co-create an aspirational, inclusive, and actionable vision statement for the SAP that is rooted in identity and to review the draft themes.
- During the **design workshop activity**, participants provided feedback on initial strategies and ideas related to the five priority themes. This collaborative effort helped foster community ownership of the planning process, ensuring that future decisions reflect their values and aspirations.

Participant Priority Rankings:

- *Opportunity for All (Economic Mobility)* received the strongest emphasis (40%), reflecting a community-wide focus on access to jobs, housing affordability, and financial stability.
- *Safety and Security* ranked second (17%), underscoring the need for improved lighting, safer streets, and more substantial community presence.
- *Gathering and Belonging, Reconnecting to Downtown, and Healthy Environments* were equally valued (14%), signaling a desire for stronger social connections, access to green space, and better integration with the broader city.

These priorities became the foundation for developing goals and strategies in the SAP, as discussed in Section 5.

Photos from the Visioning and Design Workshop, Source: CHPlanning



Community Survey

December 2024 to March 2025

The project team launched a survey inviting residents and businesses to express their views on the Northeast Neighborhood. Created on SurveyMonkey, the project team distributed the survey via QR codes, email, the project website, yard signs, and printed copies. It received **101 responses**. Key findings included:

- **Affordable housing** was the highest priority, with 62 respondents identifying it as their top concern.
- **Safer pedestrian and biking infrastructure** was also strongly supported, with 52 respondents ranking it as a top issue.
- Residents cited **community events, better lighting, and local economic growth** as ways to improve Neighborhood safety.
- In terms of transportation and accessibility, respondents emphasized the need for **improved pedestrian safety, sidewalks, and public transit options**.
- Open-ended responses offered further ideas around **youth programming, future uses of key sites** like Roses, and a **10-year vision** for the Neighborhood.



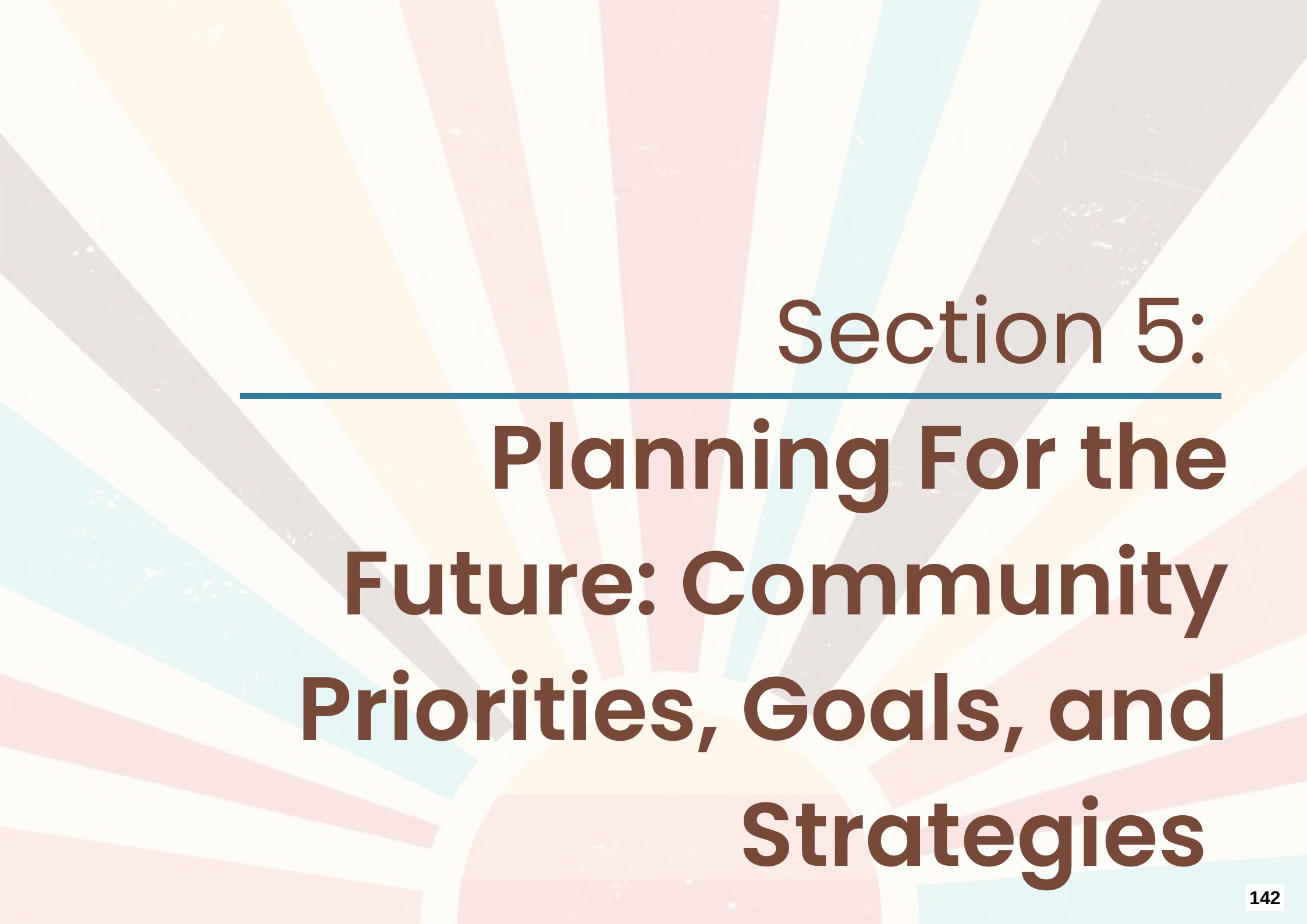
Yard signs advertising the survey, Source: CHPlanning

Draft Small Area Plan Community Input Meeting

Monday, June 2, 2025

The project team hosted a community meeting at the Lucy F. Simms Center to gather community feedback on the proposed SAP goals and strategies. The open-format discussion drew strong engagement from approximately **50 attendees**, who voiced support for youth engagement, expanded childcare access, zoning reforms, and improvements to public spaces. Many participants also emphasized the importance of housing equity and called for formal acknowledgments of historical injustices.

The stories, priorities, and lived experiences shared through each event created a foundation for the next step in the planning process. Through community events, workshops, surveys, and conversations, residents defined what matters most: **preserving identity, creating opportunity, and fostering a sense of belonging**. The project team organized all engagement feedback under five core themes and used it to inform the development of **Goals and Strategy Recommendations** in the Small Area Plan.



Section 5:

Planning For the Future: Community Priorities, Goals, and Strategies

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

This section bridges the existing conditions and the future of the Northeast Neighborhood by:

- **Establishing** a vision statement,
- **Identifying** strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (S.W.O.C.), and
- **Setting** focus areas, goals, and strategies.

To develop this section, the project team synthesized **existing conditions, relevant plans, and community input** to shape a comprehensive and forward-looking framework for Neighborhood growth and improvement.

The Northeast Neighborhood and its partners made exciting progress over the course of the SAP planning process. There is significant momentum and mutually shared commitment to **reversing the negative impacts of Urban Renewal**. The Northeast Neighborhood residents were engaged in developing the Plan's goals and implementation strategies, and residents will continue to be engaged in making the plan become a reality. The goals, strategies, and recommendations are the result of many candid and difficult conversations—discussions geared toward establishing an openness for trust.

The plan focuses on **placemaking** and **place-based solutions** that are built on neighborhood-serving organizations, institutions, and infrastructure. At the same time, the plan promotes greater comfort and confidence for Neighborhood residents who might enjoy amenities offered Downtown. **In summary, the plan and its goals, strategies and recommendations restore a path for increased agency, ownership, authority, and accountability for the people who call the Northeast Neighborhood home.**

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement describes the desired future for the community, reflecting the hopes and aspirations of residents.

COMMUNITY'S VISION FOR THE NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD

The Northeast Neighborhood is a resilient community, rich in history, particularly in our African American heritage. Today, we are known for our caring and diverse spirit, where residents can connect and access the resources they need. We envision a future that honors our past while building a vibrant and welcoming community.

Here, everyone has the opportunity to thrive through homeownership, wealth-building, and access to essential services like quality education, affordable housing, and childcare. We will be a model of inclusivity, guided by the principles of equity, compassion, and collaboration. We will have well-lit walking and biking routes that reconnect the neighborhood with downtown.

Together, we will ensure that every voice is heard, and every decision is made with the well-being of all residents in mind. We aspire to create a safe, supportive and joyful neighborhood – a place where our children can flourish, our businesses can thrive, and our residents feel a deep sense of pride and belonging.

S.W.O.C. ANALYSIS

The comments received during the community engagement efforts were organized into a S.W.O.C. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges) matrix. The matrix is a valuable analysis tool to identify the actions needed to achieve the Northeast Neighborhood's vision and goals.

Strengths are existing features, amenities, and characteristics that contribute to a community's success and well-being. These include intangible attributes as well as physical assets. Thriving communities reinforce, protect, and build on all their strengths.

Weaknesses are existing features, conditions, or problems that hinder a community from realizing its goals. A community should consider ways to address or overcome these obstacles.

Opportunities, unlike strengths and weaknesses, are more forward-looking and deal with larger forces. These are prospects that could help a community realize its goals. A community should consider ways to capitalize on these opportunities strategically.

Challenges, like opportunities, are more forward-looking. These future challenges could hinder the community from realizing its goals. A community should consider ways to avoid or mitigate threats.

 STRENGTHS	 WEAKNESSES
• Many residents enjoy walking to Downtown. • Strong desire to activate vacant lots and create pocket parks for children's play areas, particularly using church properties along Broad Street. • Strong desire to restore/build gathering spaces. ◦ Restore lost community spaces such as pools, civic centers, and youth activity centers, to provide safe spaces for children and young adults. ◦ Interest in reviving an annual dinner at the Simms Center, which the community used to host. ◦ Support for reviving community concerts, food festivals, and arts programming. ◦ Suggestions to add pickleball courts and other outdoor activity spaces. • Caring and diverse neighborhood. ◦ Interest in creating more welcoming spaces for immigrant families, particularly Hispanic and Latino communities. • Rich local history. ◦ Desire to highlight and preserve the Neighborhood's civil rights history. • Presence of strong CBOs. • Mason Street is owned by the City, offering opportunities for local improvements.	• Concerns about walkability, and a lack of continuous sidewalks and clear crosswalks. ◦ Difficulty navigating the Neighborhood safely, especially at Rock Street and Mason Street. ◦ Some residents use alleys as alternative walking paths because sidewalks are missing. • Concerns about crime, drug activity, and squatting in vacant properties. • Traffic safety concerns, particularly speeding at Rock Street and Mason Street. • Lack of gathering spaces for youth. ◦ Loss of recreational amenities such as a pool and baseball field, which past generations enjoyed. ◦ The spraygrounds do not replace the need for a real pool, as many older residents learned to swim because a pool was accessible. ◦ The Simms Center and Ralph Sampson Park feel less child-friendly due to the presence of older youth. • Concerns about rental fees at the Simms Center (e.g., \$75 for funerals), with residents feeling that they should not have to pay for a space that was once community owned. ◦ Lack of willingness to open the space up to community groups, making booking the space challenging to do. ◦ Lack of amenities that often come with rental and community spaces. • Frequent flooding on Sterling Street, Gay Street, and Hill Street. • Noise pollution from parks late at night or early in the morning is prompting requests for better enforcement of quiet hours. • Concerns about noise pollution from traffic, including jack braking and drag racing on Route 33.
 OPPORTUNITIES	 CHALLENGES
• City-owned streets, like Mason Street, make it easier to implement improvements. • Community Connectors and Smart Growth America support the redesign of City-owned Mason Street. • Interest in reviving past Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) programs (e.g., computer classes, basic graphics, photography) and a hope for a Downtown satellite campus. • Potential partnership with local schools to use the Simms Center for after-school programs and youth engagement. • Interest from Spottswood Elementary School in expanding school partnerships to support after-school programs and youth engagement.	• Concerns about the loss of trees due to storms, urban improvements (e.g., sidewalk installations), and lack of maintenance. • Concerns that past community requests for youth spaces have been ignored, leading to skepticism about the potential for meaningful change. • Concerns that Boys & Girls Club use of the Simms Center may limit space for broader youth programming. • Concerns about rising housing costs and displacement due to new development. • Concerns about market-driven development that may not reflect the needs of existing residents. • Perception that the City's planning process does not fully reflect community input, with some feeling decisions are predetermined.

KEY THEMES, FOCUS AREAS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

Building on the vision statement and S.W.O.C. analysis, the project team expanded the original five key themes (priorities) into nine focus areas and twelve goals, providing a clear framework for specific strategies.

KEY THEMES



GATHERING AND BELONGING



RECONNECTING TO DOWNTOWN



SAFETY AND SECURITY



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL
(ECONOMIC MOBILITY)



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

FOCUS AREAS



HISTORY AND CULTURE



GATHERING AND BELONGING



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY



HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY



ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS



NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY



HEALTH

GOALS

GOAL 1

GOAL 2

GOALS 3 & 4

GOALS 5 & 6

GOAL 7

GOAL 8

GOAL 9

GOALS 10 & 11

GOAL 12

HOW TO READ THIS SECTION

KEY THEMES

Five guiding principles shaped by community input.

FOCUS AREAS

Defined areas of focus within broader key themes.

GOALS

Broad and long-term guides for achieving the community's vision.

STRATEGIES

Specific policies, infrastructure improvements, partnerships, or other actions necessary to achieve objectives, create essential conditions, or overcome barriers.

ACTIONS

Concrete steps taken to implement strategies.



CASE STUDY OR SPOTLIGHT

Focused example that highlights relevant context or a similar project.

GATHERING AND BELONGING



HISTORY AND CULTURE

Goal 1: Celebrate and educate others about the Northeast Neighborhood's rich African American history and cultural heritage.

Strategy 1.1: Develop programs that celebrate the Northeast Neighborhood's African American heritage.

- *Gather history from those with lived experience and history of the Northeast Neighborhood.*



HISTORY AND CULTURE

The Northeast Neighborhood began as a sanctuary for formerly enslaved people seeking to escape a life of hardship, offering them a place to settle and establish roots. Over the years, the Northeast Neighborhood has evolved into a diverse community, continually embracing new cultures and demographics. Its rich history continues to shape the Neighborhood's identity, fostering a strong sense of belonging among its residents.

 **Goal 1: Celebrate and educate others about the Northeast Neighborhood's rich African American history and cultural heritage.**

Strategy 1.1: Develop programs that celebrate the Northeast Neighborhood's African American heritage.

- Gather history from those with lived experience and history of the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Create exhibits, indoors and/or outdoors, to showcase and capture oral histories from legacy residents and their descendants.
- Organize intergenerational events to connect seniors with younger residents, fostering a shared appreciation of heritage.
- Implement ways for community members to provide feedback and suggest improvements for programs.

Strategy 1.2: Identify reliable financial resources to preserve and enhance Newtown's cultural assets.

- Identify and create a list of cultural assets, including Newtown Cemetery, Ida Mae Francis Tourist Home, Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center, the AME Church, and the Historic Dallard-Newman House.
- Partner with agencies to identify and apply for funding resources.
- Apply for grants specifically designed to preserve cultural heritage assets.
- Complete the renovation of the Dallard-Newman House to serve as a museum to showcase exhibits about the Neighborhood's history and capture oral histories from long-time residents.
- Collaborate with other communities to learn about their funding sources and strategies.



HISTORY AND CULTURE



Goal 1: Celebrate and educate others about the Northeast Neighborhood's rich African American history and cultural heritage.

Strategy 1.3: Incorporate public art that raises awareness about what was lost during the Urban Renewal process and celebrates the Neighborhood's diversity of languages and ethnic backgrounds today through a variety of public art media (e.g., sculpture, performances, festivals).



- Issue a call for local artists to contribute to public art projects.
- Partner with property owners and art groups to facilitate the installation of public art.
- Organize art walks to showcase the new installations and educate the public about their significance.
- Host community meetings to identify the best locations for public art installations

Strategy 1.4: Attract tourists and visitors to the Northeast Neighborhood to learn about Newtown's history and cultural assets.

- Install signage and historical markers detailing significant historical events and figures, including those related to Newtown, Urban Renewal, and the Civil Rights era.
- Create a self-guided walking tour map for residents and visitors to explore.
- Develop promotional materials highlighting the Neighborhood's events and attractions.

Strategy 1.5: Continue to use preservation easements, registries, and other tools to enhance the architectural integrity and historical significance of homes and sites in the neighborhood.

- Educate the community about existing preservation tools and their benefits.
- Continue to partner with local organizations and universities to restore and maintain historic homes and sites.
- Preserve Newtown Cemetery through structural interventions that reduce flooding, such as installing protective fences and planting additional trees.
- Explore the feasibility of creating a *historic overlay district* to include parts of the Neighborhood.



OPENING DOORS: THE ART OF INCLUSION PROJECT IN HARRISONBURG, VA

In 2023, The Arc of Harrisonburg & Rockingham and the Arts Council of the Valley collaborated to showcase twenty artists who transformed household doors into vibrant canvases, celebrating themes of inclusion, acceptance, unity, diversity, and belonging.



A **historic overlay district** adds additional requirements to a zoning ordinance district that protects the historic character of the area.



GATHERING AND BELONGING

Recently, the Neighborhood has experienced significant demographic shifts, notably with a growing Hispanic population. As we look to the future, it is essential to focus on the emerging younger demographic, particularly those in their 30s, while also honoring and supporting the older Black residents who have long been a cornerstone of the community. This balanced approach will ensure that the Northeast Neighborhood remains inclusive and thriving for generations to come.



Goal 2: Build community connections through placemaking, inclusive gathering spaces, and community events for all ethnic groups present in the Northeast Neighborhood.

Strategy 2.1: Organize accessible and inclusive community concerts, food festivals, and arts programming for everyone at the Lucy F. Simms Center.

- Collaborate with the Neighborhood and graduates of the Simms School Reunion Committee to create programming and events that are accessible to Neighborhood residents, such as school reunions, May Day celebrations, festivals, and lawn parties.
- Involve children and teens in event planning and programming.
- Identify potential short- and long-term placemaking opportunities and requirements (e.g., permits, use of vacant lots) with the assistance of other stakeholders (e.g., City, James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University).
- Explore grants to fund these events.
- Create a bulletin board kiosk and a community list-serve to inform community members about Neighborhood events and activities.
- Invite food kitchens and food trucks to participate in events, offering affordable options and social gathering spots.
- Identify funders to eliminate rental fees for CBOs located in the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Offer childcare services at events to ensure accessibility for families.
- Evaluate the long-term use of space in the Lucy F. Simms Center to prioritize the Northeast Neighborhood residents' needs.

“ I believe my vision for this underserved community would be the creation of space where all individuals, regardless of socioeconomic background, have equitable access to quality healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and essential services, enabling them to thrive and fully participate in society, free from systemic barriers and disparities. ”

– Resident



GATHERING AND BELONGING



Goal 2: Build community connections through placemaking, inclusive gathering spaces, and community events for all ethnic groups present in the Northeast Neighborhood.

Strategy 2.2: Partner with local schools to host after-school programs at the Lucy F. Simms Center to deepen youth engagement.

- Facilitate multi-generational meet-and-greets to foster connections between youth and seniors.
- Develop educational workshops at the Lucy F. Simms Center on various topics that cater to youth, like tutoring, first aid training, entrepreneur courses, art classes, and cooking classes.
- Collaborate with local schools, places of worship, universities, and organizations to offer community service opportunities around the Neighborhood.

Strategy 2.3: Create inclusive spaces that welcome newcomers from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the Northeast Neighborhood.

- Distribute event schedules via internal and external bulletin boards and social media to keep residents informed.
- Ensure signage and information are available in multiple languages to accommodate diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- Leverage local church presence to serve as informal community hubs and strengthen community cohesion.
- Make spaces accessible to individuals with disabilities by ensuring ADA compliance.
- Install benches and picnic areas to encourage social connections.

Strategy 2.4: Create friendly environments for senior citizens that support independence, well-being, and social inclusion.

- Engage senior citizens in the planning process.
- Create a walkable Neighborhood by providing well-maintained sidewalks, shade, safe crossings, accessible gathering spaces, services and amenities (e.g., grocery stores, markets, bus stops), and removing any tripping hazards.
- Provide open spaces that include seating, shade, and restrooms.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

At the core of this plan is a commitment to continue to work hand-in-hand with the community to shape a shared vision for the future of the Northeast Neighborhood. This means ensuring that growth and investment reflect the priorities and aspirations of residents, not outside interests. Achieving this requires building local capacity, empowering residents to take active roles in decision-making, and supporting Neighborhood leaders with the skills and tools they need to guide change. Transparent, ongoing dialogue is essential, creating spaces where everyone feels welcome and heard. Recognizing and honoring the community's history is also vital to moving forward, which includes expanding existing programs to be more inclusive, through multilingual outreach, accessible meeting locations, and culturally relevant engagement. By centering community voices and fostering inclusive participation, this plan aims to create a future that is rooted in equity, pride, and shared ownership.

Goal 3: Empower the Northeast Neighborhood's community or residents to shape the future of the area.

Strategy 3.1: Maintain engagement between the City and the CBOs through meetings in familiar settings (e.g., neighborhoods, places of worship) and public forums to foster dialogue.

- Work with trusted community leaders, such as church leaders, to encourage participation and dialogue.
- Distribute information to the Neighborhood (e.g., on a website or social media) and communicate with partner entities about the languages spoken in the Neighborhood to facilitate the creation of translated materials.
- Hold meetings in pedestrian- and bike-accessible locations, such as the Simms Center and places of worship.
- Create a Northeast Neighborhood community bulletin board kiosk, as well as a community list-serve, to inform community members about community events and activities in the Neighborhood and Downtown.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Goal 3: Empower the Northeast Neighborhood's community or residents to shape the future of the area.

Strategy 3.2: Educate both the public and City staff about the impacts of past Urban Renewal and current opportunities for improvement.

- Develop materials in different languages to educate the public about the impacts of Urban Renewal and current opportunities, and make these materials publicly available in various locations.
- Collect and preserve the cultural history of the Northeast Neighborhood through oral history and documentary material.
- Continue to offer free walking history tours to educate the community about the history of the Northeast Neighborhood and to enhance the tours by adding more stops and information.
- Create a public location (e.g., a website) for community members to access the research completed on Urban Renewal and the inventory of all available historical documents.
- Continue to collaborate with Harrisonburg City Public Schools and Rockingham County Public Schools to incorporate the Neighborhood's history into the curriculum.

Strategy 3.3: Build CBOs' capacity for grant writing and project management.

- Connect with training opportunities for small nonprofits and grant writing.



Goal 4: Addressing past harm caused by Urban Renewal.

Strategy 4.1: Prioritize infrastructure projects in the Northeast Neighborhood.

Strategy 4.2: Implement infrastructure projects, especially stormwater and transportation projects, as identified in this SAP.



CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN

During the Reconstruction era, formerly enslaved people moved to the Newtown area, now known as the Northeast Neighborhood. In the early 1900s, the area thrived with Black-owned shops and businesses, creating a vibrant atmosphere. However, it thrived out of necessity, as Black residents were confined to this area and had to ensure they had all the resources they needed because leaving the area was unsafe. Urban Renewal projects further isolated the Neighborhood by widening Mason Street into a four-lane road, creating a physical and psychological barrier that made accessing Downtown Harrisonburg more challenging. The community and the City aim to improve access to and from the Northeast Neighborhood and Downtown. Despite its proximity, Downtown feels distant due to heavy traffic, unsafe pedestrian paths, and unwelcoming infrastructure. Reconnecting the Northeast Neighborhood to Downtown is a priority, aiming to create safer and more accessible routes that foster a sense of unity and inclusion.

Goal 5: Strengthen the link between the Northeast Neighborhood and Downtown.

Strategy 5.1: Expand public art and Downstreet streetscape to the Downtown area in the Northeast Neighborhood.

- Identify locations, public and private, for expansion of public art (e.g., murals, traffic cabinets, sculptures).
- Incorporate the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) implementation of the Downtown Streetscape Plan in the Downtown area of the Northeast Neighborhood.

Strategy 5.2: Enhance Northeast Neighborhood gateways, or entry points, to reinforce placemaking and strengthen community identity.

- Gather feedback from the Neighborhood on what gateways should look like and what should be placed at those points to reflect the Neighborhood's values.
- Identify potential private funding sources to support the enhancement of the gateways.



GATEWAY SIGNAGE FOR SEVEN CORNERS IN FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA

Fairfax County community designed gateway signs and banners to reflect its identity and values and distributed a survey to ensure the signage enhances the community's sense of place.



CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN



Goal 6: Revitalize N. Mason Street to make it an inviting street.

Strategy 6.1: Improve N. Mason Street to make it more bike- and pedestrian-friendly based on Smart Growth America's Complete Streets Leadership Academy's demonstration project results.

- Ensure sidewalks and pedestrian curb ramps are ADA compliant.
- Enhance street crossings with markings and traffic signals for safer pedestrian movement.
- Add midblock crossings at key locations to improve safety, such as between the Rockingham County Administrative Building and Elizabeth Street Parking Deck, Triangle Park (along N. Mason St., between E. Rock St., and E. Elizabeth St.) and the Friendly City Food Co-Op, and the Rockingham County Administrative Building and Roses discount department store.

Strategy 6.2: Convert N. Mason Street to a major neighborhood destination by attracting businesses and promoting community activation.

- Develop a wayfinding and placemaking strategy to encourage foot traffic.
- Enhance street-level activations by incorporating seating and other amenities into public spaces on N. Mason Street.
- Explore public/private partnerships to acquire property along N. Mason Street, advancing community-driven development.
- Repurpose underutilized parking areas for community use or small businesses.
- Provide existing tools and resources for local businesses to open on N. Mason Street.
- Find opportunities to leverage available space in the Comcast Building for the benefit of the Northeast Neighborhood, its residents, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.
- Explore the opportunity to reinstate Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) satellite campus on Mason Street to attract students and educational activities.
- Extend the city's annual Best.Weekend.Ever festival and monthly First Friday events to include Mason Street.
- Reexamine setback, massing, and other building form regulations to enhance the pedestrian experience along Mason Street.



Existing tools and resources include Black & Brown Owned Business Growth Program (B³) and the Harrisonburg Entrepreneurship Development Initiative (HEDI). B³ seeks to grow and attract Black and Brown owned businesses by providing business support, while the HEDI program supports early-stage business owners by providing business consulting services.



CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN



Goal 6: Revitalize N. Mason Street to make it an inviting street.

Strategy 6.3: Implement urban design projects to connect the Northeast Neighborhood to Downtown and other destinations in the City.

- Develop streetscape design standards and/or guidelines that align with the historic character of the Neighborhood and Downtown.
- Identify and prioritize high-need areas for urban design improvements.

Strategy 6.4: Implement Complete Streets interventions on N. Mason Street to mitigate the legacy of segregation that excluded African Americans from participating in Downtown civic life.

- Collaborate with a range of stakeholders, including business owners, bus riders, residents, delivery services, county offices, and the fire department, to achieve Complete Streets goals.
- Explore rebuilding the corridor to allow two-way traffic on the west side of the median (E. Elizabeth Street to N. Main Street), thereby repurposing for a combination of uses, including open space, paths, seating, and other amenities.
- Enhance the streetscape with greenery and planters to beautify the area, provide shade, and improve aesthetics.



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

One of the most pressing issues in the Neighborhood is the lack of reliable and continuous sidewalks, which are essential for mobility. Additionally, the bus stops in the area are poorly equipped, lacking amenities such as seating, shelter, and lighting, making waiting for and riding the bus uncomfortable. Lighting is another significant concern; residents would feel more secure walking around in the evening if there were better lighting, as the current inadequate lighting makes the Neighborhood feel unsafe after dark. Despite previous efforts to implement traffic calming measures, residents remain concerned about speeding and disregard for stop signs, which continue to pose risks to pedestrian safety and the well-being of the Neighborhood. Addressing these concerns is crucial for enhancing mobility, safety, and the quality of life in the Neighborhood.

 **Goal 7: Provide transportation, pedestrian, bike, and public transit infrastructure to promote connectivity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for all residents in the Northeast Neighborhood.**

Strategy 7.1: Provide improvements in walking routes to connect people to places with a focus on sidewalks.

- Engage residents in prioritizing improvements during the next Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan update.
- Make sidewalk improvements in areas with public institutions, housing developments, transportation hubs, and frequently visited places.
- Implement pedestrian-friendly pathways to enhance accessibility and connectivity between N. Mason Street and surrounding neighborhoods.

Strategy 7.2: Improve safety on local streets in the Northeast Neighborhood by installing additional traffic calming measures where appropriate.

- Identify priority areas for traffic calming measures using data and public engagement.
- Install speed bumps, speed tables, or other traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds.
- Install new or enhanced crosswalks in high-traffic areas, especially near churches and community gathering spaces.
- Evaluate and address sightline obstructions (e.g., fences, foliage, parked cars, etc.) at intersections.



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

 **Goal 7: Provide transportation, pedestrian, bike, and public transit infrastructure to promote connectivity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for all residents in the Northeast Neighborhood.**

Strategy 7.3: Add and improve lighting throughout the Northeast Neighborhood, especially around key walking corridors.

- Partner with Harrisonburg Electric Commission to develop a lighting plan for the Northeast Neighborhood.
- Explore opportunities for installing mid-height warm lighting on privately owned properties throughout the community, funded by private sources.
- Encourage residents to turn on door and porch lights during appropriate evening hours.
- Encourage new developments to have outdoor lights.
- Ensure lights are low-glare, warm-toned to reduce potential light pollution.

Strategy 7.4: Increase public transportation use by improving the comfort, safety, and accessibility of bus stops.



- Upgrade bus shelters to be more comfortable, with adequate lighting, emergency call buttons, benches, and shelters.
- Advertise trip planning apps that provide riders with real-time information.
- Collaborate with local artists to enhance bus shelter visibility and foster a sense of community identity.



ConnectingVA is a website and mobile app developed by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) that provides a range of transportation options for traveling throughout Virginia, including ride-sharing, transit, biking, and rail.



TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

 **Goal 7: Provide transportation, pedestrian, bike, and public transit infrastructure to promote connectivity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for all residents in the Northeast Neighborhood.**

Strategy 7.5: Increase Neighborhood access to electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.

- Continue to include public property (e.g., Ralph Sampson Park) in City solicitations for public-private partnerships to install EV chargers for public use.
- Engage with congregations, private property owners, and HRHA to share the Neighborhood's interest in EV charging stations and explore whether any non-public properties may be interested in installing EV chargers.
- Encourage private property owners to add EV chargers when properties are redeveloped (e.g., Roses, 7-Eleven).

Strategy 7.6: Enhance safety at designated school bus stops.

- Inventory and map all Neighborhood school bus stops.
- Evaluate school bus stops for safety.
- Relocate school bus stops as necessary.
- Educate parents and children directly about bus stop locations, safe roadway crossings, and pedestrian safety.
- Educate drivers about school bus stop awareness, especially during pick-up and drop-off times.



HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Harrisonburg is a thriving city, renowned for being a bustling university town where college students significantly contribute to population growth and shape the housing market. Currently, there are some students living in the Northeast Neighborhood, and residents are keen to keep the student population to a minimum. Housing affordability is a significant topic of discussion in the area, with concerns about rising housing costs and the potential displacement that new developments may cause. There have been discussions on affordable housing solutions, with some participants suggesting that housing should be prioritized for existing residents. Many residents are pleased that individuals rather than large development companies own numerous houses. There is a strong interest in zoning policies that support mixed-income development while preventing displacement.

 **Goal 8: Build a safe and strong Northeast Neighborhood by ensuring healthy and sustainable housing options that meet the diverse needs of all residents, including legacy residents and those seeking affordable housing opportunities.**

Strategy 8.1: Update land use regulations and zoning to align with the Neighborhood's preferences.

- Engage residents in updates to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance.

Strategy 8.2: Explore the use of tax incentives or inclusionary zoning to support and encourage the creation of affordable and mixed-income housing.

- Explore legal authority to mandate a percentage of affordable units for all future developments in the Neighborhood.
- Continue to use the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and the Virginia Housing Opportunity Tax Credit for new affordable housing.



HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY

 **Goal 8: Build a safe and strong Northeast Neighborhood by ensuring healthy and sustainable housing options that meet the diverse needs of all residents, including legacy residents and those seeking affordable housing opportunities.**

Strategy 8.3: Preserve existing housing stock.

- Obtain feedback from the community on current challenges in housing preservation.
- Provide homeowner education on maintenance and improvement programs.
- Support residents applying for programs and grants, like the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) or the Energy Assistance Program (EAP).
- Explore providing tax exemptions on the increased value for rehabilitated properties to encourage rehabilitation without displacement.
- Advertise existing tools and programs for established residents who improve housing with their funds or with City funds as a strategy for anti-displacement.

 The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) helps reduce household energy use by installing cost-effective energy-saving measures. The Energy Assistance Program (EAP), run by the Virginia Department of Social Services, supports low-income households with their energy needs through four components: Fuel, Crisis, Cooling, and Weatherization Assistance.

Strategy 8.4: Work with Our Community Place (OCP) and the Navigation Center to identify a new state-of-the-art facility for OCP located outside of the Northeast Neighborhood.

- Hold a discussion with Neighborhood residents to address safety concerns.
- Increase communication between OCP and Neighborhood residents regarding actions taken to improve the safety and security of the facility, particularly after hours.
- Encourage the OCP Board to meet with Neighborhood residents about the long-term goals for OCP based on its recent strategic planning efforts.



REAL ESTATE TAX ABATEMENT PROGRAM IN DANVILLE, VA

In 2019, the City of Danville passed a law that gives homeowners a tax break if they significantly renovate their homes for residential use. They only pay property taxes based on the home's value before the renovation, encouraging people to improve their homes without worrying about higher taxes.



HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Goal 8: Build a safe and strong Northeast Neighborhood by ensuring healthy and sustainable housing options that meet the diverse needs of all residents, including legacy residents and those seeking affordable housing opportunities.

Strategy 8.5: Enhance quality of life and public safety for homeowners, landlords, tenants, and transient populations through code enforcement and proactive efforts to prevent underutilized properties from falling into disrepair.

- Work with the community to develop revitalization plans for vacant parcels, including green spaces, pocket parks, and housing.
- Provide community education and outreach on zoning, property maintenance, junk/trash, and other City Codes.
- Engage HRHA, CBOs, OCP, regional resources (e.g., Habitat for Humanity), and communities of faith in supporting seniors and others who might benefit from support (e.g., disposing of non-compliant porch furniture, yard maintenance, or minor repairs).

Strategy 8.6: Develop a community-centered anti-displacement strategy.

- Host engagement sessions with residents for active participation.
- Explore community-tied housing models, rental-to-ownership pathways, community land banks, and other practices.
- Review policies for public housing applications to identify ways to improve their efficiency.
- Ensure regular evaluation and monitoring through specific metrics, review processes, and community input.
- Identify financial incentives, such as tax abatements, performance grants, and rental assistance, to help homeowners and renters achieve affordable housing goals.
- Analyze how existing policies can be revised to incorporate anti-displacement priorities.
- Explore the creation of a Community Preference Policy, which provides priority placement for affordable units in a neighborhood or group of neighborhoods to low-income applicants who have been displaced from their neighborhood, are current residents at risk of displacement, or are descendants of displaced residents.



EXTREME HOME REPAIR BLITZ IN HAMPTON, VA

The City of Hampton partnered with Habitat for Humanity and the City of Newport News to help elderly, veterans, disabled, or low-income homeowners in the Wythe neighborhood with repairs to the exterior of their homes, like power washing and window repairs.

Strategy 8.7: Facilitate pro-bono estate planning to resolve issues around "tangled" titles, wills, and insurance.

- Develop a list of area residents/organizations willing to volunteer pro bono estate planning.



ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

The Northeast Neighborhood faces a significant lack of essential services, such as grocery stores and healthcare facilities, which are mostly concentrated in the central business district across Mason Street, making them largely inaccessible to residents. This gap has sparked a strong interest in fostering small business development within the Neighborhood to better serve the community's needs. A key opportunity lies in the redevelopment of the underutilized Roses property, which residents envision as a vibrant mixed-use hub that could include economic, educational, and mixed-income housing opportunities. The area also holds deep African American cultural and historical significance, having endured past injustices like Urban Renewal. Today, there is a renewed commitment to honoring and celebrating this heritage while ensuring the Neighborhood remains inclusive and welcoming to all—legacy residents and newcomers alike. The vision is to create a thriving, diverse community that bridges generations and cultures, rooted in equity and shared opportunity.



Goal 9: Make the Northeast Neighborhood a great place to open, own, and operate a business with a workforce that has opportunities to professionally grow.

Strategy 9.1: Encourage and incentivize future owners to transform the Roses site into a mixed-used hub with economic and educational opportunities, and mixed-income housing.

- Build relationships between future owners and the community to increase transparency and create trust.
- Review case studies of the redevelopment of similar buildings.
- Gather community input on the future of the Roses site.



Thriving, inclusive, and welcoming sounds good! Encouraging cooperative/collective ownership of land, housing, and businesses can be an important way to keep it that way. We can foster safety through connections – develop third spaces where people can gather and hold community events. Make sure the Neighborhood improves walkability to make it a pleasant place to be outdoors interacting with neighbors.



– Resident



ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS



Goal 9: Make the Northeast Neighborhood a great place to open, own, and operate a business with a workforce that has opportunities to professionally grow.

Strategy 9.2: Create a centralized and accessible community hub for educational and workforce development.

- Promote networking among community businesses and residents.
- Create an online hub that houses information on educational and workforce development opportunities.

Strategy 9.3: Continue to host educational programs and workshops that support all families in areas such as language learning, job training, and civic engagement.

- Provide workshops on financial literacy in various languages, catering to the diverse population of the Northeast Neighborhood.

Strategy 9.4: Educate developers, investors, and businesses on how to take advantage of the Opportunity Zone tax incentive, allowing investors to defer taxes on the invested gain amounts until the Congress-mandated deadline.

- Monitor federal policy regarding the Opportunity Zone tax incentive to ensure the City is working within the correct timeline.
- Create and promote workshops to educate developers, investors, and businesses about the Opportunity Zone incentive.

Strategy 9.5: Support small businesses and foster business opportunities in the Northeast Neighborhood.

- Promote available programs through multiple channels, including social media pages, community boards, CBO websites, and other online platforms (e.g., NextDoor, MeetUp).
- Develop a list of all resources available to residents and small businesses.
- Consider a rezoning study to determine zoning allowances for small businesses and home-based enterprises.

Strategy 9.6: Encourage the establishment of new preschools, child care centers, and in-home care providers in the Neighborhood to expand access to high-quality and easily accessible child care.

- Evaluate in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan the possible use of the Lucy F. Simms Center for the provision of child care.
- Conduct a conversation with the faith community and other community-based organizations to explore the potential use of existing facilities for child care.
- Educate residents on the regulations related to in-home child care and local resources to support the establishment of an in-home child care business.



NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Northeast Neighborhood faces growing environmental and sustainability challenges that demand urgent and thoughtful action. Climate change is already impacting the area, with low-lying zones, such as the historic Newtown Cemetery, experiencing frequent flooding. The abundance of impervious surfaces and inadequate stormwater infrastructure exacerbate these issues by contributing to stormwater runoff and rising temperatures. To build resilience, the community needs more trees and green infrastructure to help mitigate flooding and manage stormwater. Protecting and promoting the Neighborhood's scenic vistas is also a priority, ensuring these natural assets are both preserved and enjoyed.

Goal 10: Build a sustainable Northeast Neighborhood that is resilient to the effects of climate change.

Strategy 10.1: Plant native plants and trees in public areas, like parks, recreational spaces, streets, and private properties, to provide shade, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and reduce stormwater concerns.

- Prioritize areas with high levels of impervious surfaces that increase the risk of flooding, as well as areas that promote walking towards amenities and services.
- Partner with Harrisonburg's Urban Forestry Program as they work to expand the Neighborhood's tree canopy.
- Conduct outreach on the benefits of preserving and planting trees on private properties, as well as financial support programs, such as the Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program (HCAP) and the Harrisonburg Electric Commission.
- Collaborate with local schools, organizations, and businesses to plant trees and enhance public spaces and private properties.

Strategy 10.2: Partner with established organizations and agencies to provide community gardens and pollinator gardens to encourage biodiversity and local food production.

- Consider partnerships with nonprofit organizations to support community-based beautification programs.
- Host public education workshops on pollinator gardens, native plants, and sustainable gardening.
- Work with the city's Pollinator Program to explore extending the city's pollinator corridor into the Northeast Neighborhood.



THE WORKFORCE - THE GREAT RALEIGH CLEANUP AND CITY OF RALEIGH BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM, RALEIGH, NC

The City of Raleigh, North Carolina, partners with local nonprofit, The Great Raleigh Cleanup, to employ people experiencing homelessness to beautify City locations, like parks, waterways, and roadsides.



NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY



Goal 10: Build a sustainable Northeast Neighborhood that is resilient to the effects of climate change.

Strategy 10.3: Explore the opportunity for installation of recycling bins, trash cans, and dog waste stations at appropriate locations.

- Identify priority areas.

Strategy 10.4: Use multi-level resources (individual, organizational, and municipal) to implement green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bioretention systems, for stormwater management and flood mitigation where feasible.

- Educate residents on best management practices they can implement to reduce flooding and reduce their Stormwater Utility Fee.
- Conduct a flooding analysis to identify areas that experience frequent flooding and should be prioritized for stormwater management interventions.
- Identify projects that could be eligible for the Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program (HCAP) to develop, design, and construct stormwater practices.

Strategy 10.5: Expand renewable energy, energy conservation, weatherization, and water-efficient technologies in the Northeast Neighborhood as part of broader sustainability efforts.

- Educate the community on solar installation, energy conservation, weatherization, and water-efficient technology opportunities.
- Determine a list of City-owned and HRHA facilities that are suitable for using renewable energy and water-efficient technologies.
- Identify available funding sources for infrastructure investments and apply for grants.



NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY



Goal 11: Preserve the Northeast Neighborhood's scenic vistas.

Strategy 11.1: Improve awareness, access, and amenities to enhance community and visitor enjoyment of Northeast scenic vistas.

- Educate the public about this Neighborhood amenity through signs and educational campaigns.
- Explore working with Scenic Virginia to assess and inventory vistas or consider partnering with Scenic America to protect this neighborhood amenity.
- Add more seating in Ralph Sampson Park to enjoy the views.

Strategy 11.2: Establish land use strategies (e.g., zoning, easement, etc.) to preserve and protect scenic vistas throughout the Neighborhood.

- Limit the placement and height of any amenity that may block the current vistas.



HEALTH

The Neighborhood lacks essential services like grocery stores and healthcare facilities, which limit access to fresh, affordable food and medical care. Addressing these gaps—while educating residents about available resources and opportunities—will be key to creating a healthier, more sustainable environment for all.

 **Goal 12: Enhance Neighborhood health by ensuring access to affordable, healthy foods, welfare services, ADA-compliant facilities, and recreational spaces.**

Strategy 12.1: Improve access to fresh, affordable food through farmers' markets, local grocery stores, cooperative food options, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.

- Examine zoning regulations to support more access to grocery stores and other food sources.
- Support aspiring entrepreneurs who will provide affordable, local, and culturally appropriate food through mobile units, events, food stands, brick and mortar shops, or innovative enterprises.
- Explore tax incentives, loans, and funds (e.g., Virginia Food Access Investment Fund loans and grants) to fund grocery stores in low-income areas.
- Create a handout for WIC/SNAP recipients that includes a map showing locations where SNAP is accepted, such as the Farmers Market and Friendly City Food Co-Op.
- Explore establishing a Healthy Corner Store Initiative.

Strategy 12.2: Investigate sustainable urban agriculture and food production practices.

- Encourage the maintenance and growth of community gardens, incorporating planter boxes.
- Offer educational programs to residents on how to grow their food.
- Explore the use of vacant lots for urban agricultural use.
- Explore partnerships with residents, places of worship, and other organizations to establish additional community gardens, similar to the existing Kelley Street Garden.

HEALTHY CORNER STORE INITIATIVE IN RICHMOND, VA

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative, led by the Virginia Department of Health, seeks to increase access to nutritious foods in underserved communities. In Richmond, the program equipped local corner stores with refrigerators stocked with fresh fruits and vegetables sourced from nearby farms. These healthy options are offered at prices lower than those typically found in grocery stores, making them more accessible to residents.



HEALTH



Goal 12: Enhance Neighborhood health by ensuring access to affordable, healthy foods, welfare services, ADA-compliant facilities, and recreational spaces.

Strategy 12.3: Continue to provide behavioral health services outside the Northeast Neighborhood and promote affordable health services and mental wellness support for unhoused individuals, especially during daytime hours.

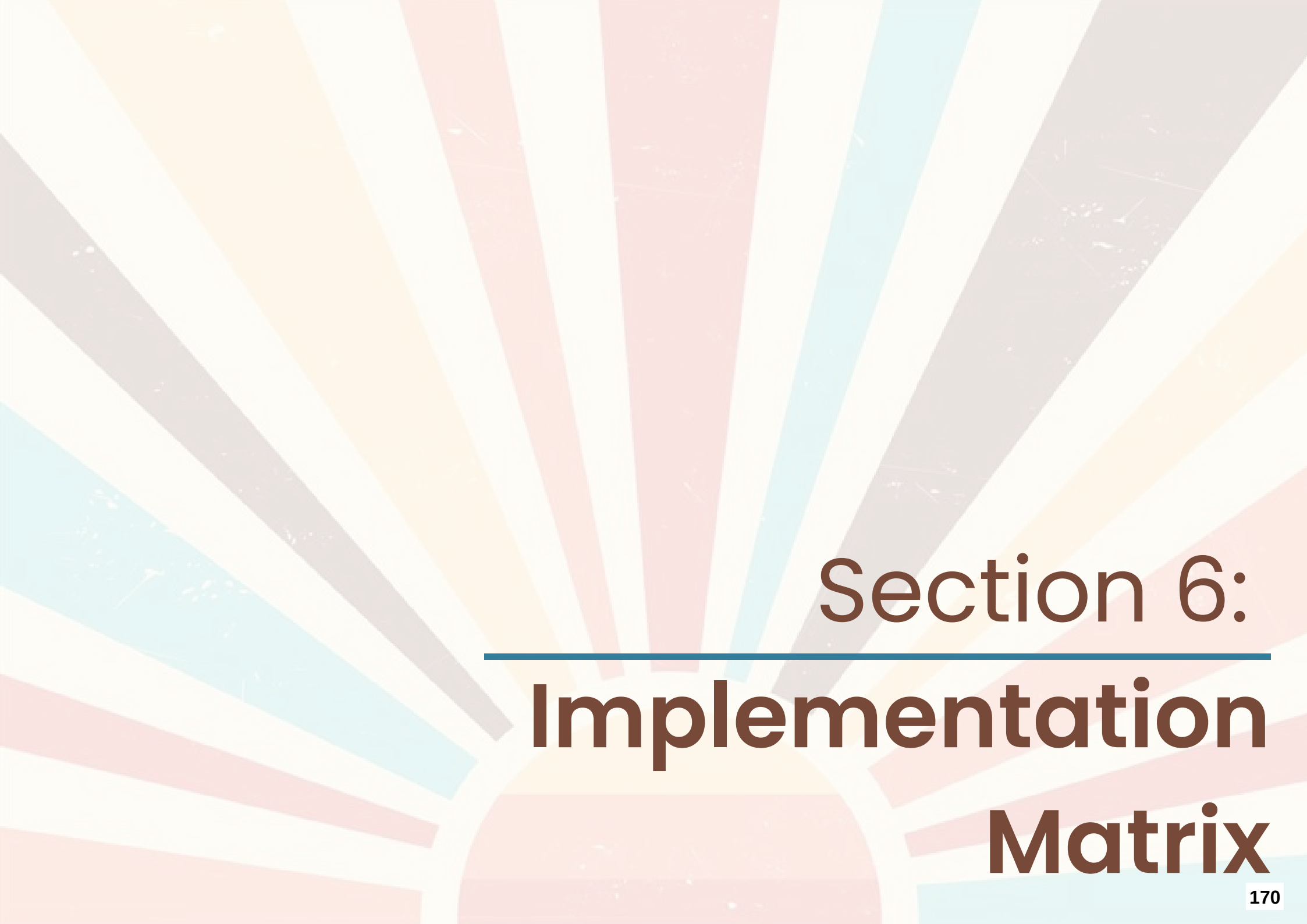
- Develop a map that shows where services and resources are located and how they can be accessed, using the Strength in Peers' Community Resource Center's Resource Guide as a reference.
- Continue offering mobile primary care services, such as the Mobile Sentara bus, and expand services to include counseling and therapy.

Strategy 12.4: Encourage physical activity and water safety education by maintaining existing recreational spaces and creating a new swimming pool for all Neighborhood residents.

- Explore opportunities to add more recreational spaces based on community engagement and available funding.
- Invest in amenities at the Simms Center's fitness center and gymnasium.



The Sentara Mobile Care bus makes weekly visits to the Simms Center, offering full-service primary care.



Section 6:

Implementation Matrix

HOW TO READ THIS SECTION

PRIORITY

Priority levels—high, medium, and low—are assigned based on feedback from community engagement efforts.

LEAD ENTITY

Party mainly responsible for the implementation of the recommendation.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Parties that could support the lead entity in execution and implementation.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Potential funding sources that may be explored to support implementation.

Acronyms are used in the matrix to represent commonly referenced entities that are often abbreviated.

- BRCC:** Blue Ridge Community College
- CDBG:** Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program
- DHR:** Virginia Department of Historic Resources
- DPW:** Harrisonburg Department of Public Works
- EMU:** Eastern Mennonite University
- HDR:** Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance
- HDPT:** Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation
- HRHA:** Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- JMU:** James Madison University
- NENA:** Northeast Neighborhood Association
- OCP:** Our Community Place
- SVBHP:** Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project
- VDOT:** Virginia Department of Transportation
- VPAS:** Valley Program for Aging Services
- VSBDc:** Shenandoah Valley Small Business Development Center

HISTORY AND CULTURE				
Goal 1: Celebrate and educate others about the Northeast Neighborhood's rich African American history and cultural heritage.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 1.1: Develop programs that celebrate the Northeast Neighborhood's African American heritage.	High	NENA, SVBHP	JMU, EMU, Harrisonburg City Public Schools	Grants, Private/Nonprofit Funding
ACTIONS a. Gather history from those with lived experience and history of the Northeast Neighborhood. b. Create exhibits, indoors and/or outdoors, to showcase and capture oral histories from Legacy residents and their descendants. c. Organize intergenerational events to connect seniors with younger residents, fostering a shared appreciation of heritage. d. Implement ways for community members to provide feedback and suggest improvements for programs.				
Strategy 1.2: Identify reliable financial resources to preserve and enhance Newtown's cultural assets.	High	NENA, SVBHP	Newtown Cemetery Board of Trustees, Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, VDHR, JMU, EMU	Grants
ACTIONS a. Identify and create a list of cultural assets, including Newtown Cemetery, Ida Mae Francis Tourist Home, Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center, the AME Church, and the Historic Dallard-Newman House. b. Partner with agencies to identify and apply for funding resources. c. Apply for grants specifically designed to preserve cultural heritage assets. d. Complete the renovation of the Dallard-Newman House to serve as a museum to showcase exhibits about the Neighborhood's history and capture oral histories from long-time residents.				
Strategy 1.3: Incorporate public art that raises awareness about what was lost during the Urban Renewal process and celebrates the Neighborhood's diversity of languages and ethnic backgrounds today through a variety of public art media (i.e., sculpture, performances, festivals).	Medium	Arts Council of the Valley	NENA, SVBHP, Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, HDR, DPW	Grants
ACTIONS a. Issue a call for local artists to contribute to public art projects. b. Partner with property owners and art groups to facilitate the installation of public art. c. Organize art walks to showcase the new installations and educate the public about their significance. d. Host community meetings to identify the best locations for public art installations.				

HISTORY AND CULTURE				
Goal 1: Celebrate and educate others about the Northeast Neighborhood's rich African American history and cultural heritage.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Potential Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 1.4: Attract tourists and visitors to the Northeast Neighborhood to learn about Newtown's history and cultural assets.	Medium	NENA	Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development, HDR, SVBHP	Grants
ACTIONS a. Install signage and historical markers detailing significant historical events and figures, including those related to Newtown, Urban Renewal, and the Civil Rights era. b. Create a self-guided walking tour map for residents and visitors to explore. c. Develop promotional materials highlighting the Neighborhood's events and attractions.				
Strategy 1.5: Continue to use preservation easements, registries, and other tools to enhance the architectural integrity and historical significance of homes and sites in the Neighborhood.	Medium	NENA, SVBHP	DHR, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, Newtown Cemetery Board of Trustees, JMU, EMU	Grants, Private/Nonprofit Funding
ACTIONS a. Educate the community about existing preservation tools and their benefits. b. Continue to partner with local organizations and universities to restore and maintain historic homes and sites. c. Preserve Newtown Cemetery through structural interventions that reduce flooding, such as installing protective fences and planting additional trees. d. Explore the feasibility of creating a historic overlay district to include parts of the Neighborhood.				

GATHERING AND BELONGING

Goal 2: Build community connections through placemaking, inclusive gathering spaces, and community events for all ethnic groups present in Northeast Neighborhood.

Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 2.1: Organize accessible and inclusive community concerts, food festivals, and arts programming for everyone at the Lucy F. Simms Center.	Medium	Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation	HDHA, NENA, SVBHP, Places of Worship, JMU, EMU, Any Given Child	Grants, Annual City Budget

ACTIONS

- Collaborate with the Neighborhood and graduates of the Simms School Reunion Committee to create programming and events that are accessible to Neighborhood residents, such as school reunions, May Day celebrations, festivals, and lawn parties.
- Involve children and teens in event planning and programming.
- Identify potential short- and long-term placemaking opportunities and requirements (e.g., permits, use of vacant lots) with the assistance of other stakeholders (e.g., City, James Madison University, Eastern Mennonite University).
- Explore grants to fund these events.
- Create a bulletin board kiosk and a community list-serve to inform community members about Neighborhood events and activities.
- Invite food kitchens and food trucks to participate in events, offering affordable options and social gathering spots.
- Identify funders to eliminate rental fees for CBOs located in the Northeast Neighborhood
- Offer childcare services at events to ensure accessibility for families.
- Evaluate the long-term use of space in the Lucy F. Simms Center to prioritize the Northeast Neighborhood residents' needs.

Strategy 2.2: Partner with local schools to host after-school programs at the Lucy F. Simms Center to deepen youth engagement.	Medium	Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation	Harrisonburg City Public Schools, Places of Worship, JMU, EMU, VPAS, HRHA	Annual City Budget
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ACTIONS

- Facilitate multi-generational meet-and-greets to foster connections between youth and seniors.
- Develop educational workshops at the Lucy F. Simms Center on various topics that cater to youth, like tutoring, first aid training, entrepreneur courses, art classes, and cooking classes.

GATHERING AND BELONGING				
Goal 2: Build community connections through placemaking, inclusive gathering spaces, and community events for all ethnic groups present in Northeast Neighborhood.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 2.3: Create inclusive spaces that welcome newcomers from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the Northeast Neighborhood.	Medium	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office	Places of Worship, Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, NENA, SVBHP, HRHA, Church World Services	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Distribute event schedules via internal and external bulletin boards and social media to keep residents informed. b. Ensure signage and information are available in multiple languages to accommodate diverse ethnic backgrounds. c. Leverage local church presence to serve as informal community hubs and strengthen community cohesion. d. Make spaces accessible to individuals with disabilities by ensuring ADA compliance. e. Install benches and picnic areas to encourage social connections.				
Strategy 2.4: Create friendly environments for senior citizens that support independence, well-being, and social inclusion.	Medium	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office	Places of Worship, Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, NENA, SVBHP, HRHA	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Engage senior citizens in the planning process. b. Create a walkable Neighborhood by providing well-maintained sidewalks, shade, safe crossings, accessible gathering spaces, services, and amenities (e.g., grocery stores, markets, bus stops), and removing any tripping hazards. c. Provide open spaces that include seating, shade, and restrooms.				

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS				
Goal 3: Empower the Northeast Neighborhood's community or residents to shape the future of the area.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 3.1: Maintain engagement between the City and the CBOs through meetings in familiar settings (e.g., Neighborhoods, places of worship) and public forums to foster dialogue.	High	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office	NENA, SVBHP, HRHA, Neighborhood Business Owners, Places of Worship	
<u>ACTIONS</u> a. Work with trusted community leaders, such as church leaders, to encourage participation and dialogue. b. Distribute information to the Neighborhood (e.g., on a website or social media) and communicate with partner entities about the languages spoken in the Neighborhood to facilitate the creation of translated materials. c. Hold meetings in pedestrian- and bike-accessible locations, such as the Simms Center and places of worship.				
Strategy 3.2: Educate both the public and city staff about the impacts of past Urban Renewal and current opportunities for improvement.	High	NENA, SVBHP	JMU, Harrisonburg City Manager's Office, HDR, Harrisonburg City Public Schools, Rockingham County Public Schools, Harrisonburg Department of Economic	Grants
<u>ACTIONS</u> a. Develop materials in different languages to educate the public about the impacts of Urban Renewal and current opportunities and make these materials publicly available in various locations. b. Collect and preserve the cultural history of the Northeast Neighborhood through oral history and documentary material. c. Continue to offer free walking history tours to educate the community about the history of the Northeast Neighborhood and to enhance the tours by adding more stops and information. d. Create a public location (e.g., a website) for community members to access the research completed on Urban Renewal and the inventory of all available historical documents. e. Continue to collaborate with Harrisonburg City Public Schools and Rockingham County Public Schools to incorporate the Neighborhood's history into the curriculum.				
Strategy 3.3: Build CBO's capacity for grant writing and project management	High	NENA, SVBHP	JMU, The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County	Grants
<u>ACTION</u> a. Connect with training opportunities for small nonprofits and grant writing.				
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COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS				
Goal 4: Addressing harm caused by Urban Renewal.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 4.1: Prioritize infrastructure projects in the Northeast Neighborhood.	High	DPW	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, NENA, SVBHP, HDR	Annual City Budget
Strategy 4.2: Implement infrastructure projects, especially stormwater and transportation projects, as identified in this SAP.	High	DPW	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, NENA, SVBHP, HDR	Annual City Budget

CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN				
Goal 5: Strengthen the link between the Northeast Neighborhood and Downtown.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 5.1: Expand public art and Downstreet streetscape to the Downtown area in the Northeast Neighborhood.	High	DPW	HDR, Arts Council of the Valley	City Funds
ACTIONS a. Identify locations, public and private, for expansion of public art (e.g., murals, traffic cabinets, sculptures). b. Incorporate the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) implementation of the Downtown Streetscape Plan in the Downtown area of the Northeast Neighborhood.				
Strategy 5.2: Enhance Northeast Neighborhood gateways, or entry points, to reinforce placemaking and strengthen community identity.	Medium	DPW	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, NENA, SVBHP, HDR	Grants
ACTIONS a. Gather feedback from the Neighborhood on what gateways should look like and what should be placed at those points to reflect the Neighborhood's values. b. Identify potential private funding sources to support the enhancement of the gateways.				

CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN				
Goal 6: Revitalize N. Mason Street to make it an inviting street.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 6.1: Improve N. Mason Street to make it more bike- and pedestrian-friendly based on Smart Growth America's Complete Streets Leadership Academy's demonstration project results.	Medium	DPW	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	VDOT, Maintenance Funds, Grants
ACTIONS a. Ensure sidewalks and pedestrian curb ramps are ADA compliant. b. Enhance street crossings with markings and traffic signals for safer pedestrian movement. c. Add midblock crossings at key locations to improve safety, such as between the Rockingham County Administrative Building and Elizabeth Street Parking Deck, Triangle Park (along N. Mason St., between E. Rock St., and E. Elizabeth St.) and the Friendly City Food Co-Op, and the Rockingham County Administrative Building and Roses discount department store.				
Strategy 6.2: Convert N. Mason Street to a major Neighborhood destination by attracting businesses and promoting community activation.	Medium	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	NENA, SVBHP, DPW, Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development, HDR, Private Property Owners, Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce, BRCC	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Develop a wayfinding and placemaking strategy to encourage foot traffic. b. Enhance street-level activations by incorporating seating and other amenities into public spaces on N. Mason Street. c. Explore public/private partnerships to acquire property along N. Mason Street, advancing community-driven development. d. Repurpose underutilized parking areas for community use or small businesses. e. Provide existing tools and resources for local businesses to open on N. Mason Street. f. Find opportunities to leverage available space in the Comcast Building for the benefit of the Northeast Neighborhood, its residents, businesses, and nonprofit organizations. g. Explore the opportunity to reinstate Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) satellite campus on Mason Street to attract students and educational activities. h. Extend the city's annual Best.Weekend.Ever festival and monthly First Friday events to include Mason Street. i. Reexamine setback, massing, and other building form regulations to enhance the pedestrian experience along Mason Street.				

CONNECTION TO DOWNTOWN				
Goal 6: Revitalize N. Mason Street to make it an inviting street.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 6.3: Implement urban design projects to connect the Northeast Neighborhood to Downtown and other destinations in the City.	Medium	DPW	NENA, SVBHP, DPW, Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development, HDR	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Develop streetscape design standards and/or guidelines that align with the historic character of the Neighborhood and Downtown. b. Identify and prioritize high-need areas for urban design improvements.				
Strategy 6.4: Implement Complete Streets interventions on N. Mason Street to mitigate the legacy of segregation that excluded African Americans from participating in Downtown civic life.	Medium	DPW	NENA, SVBHP, DPW, Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development, HDR, Harrisonburg Fire Department	City Funds, Grants
ACTIONS a. Collaborate with a range of stakeholders, including business owners, bus riders, residents, delivery services, county offices, and the fire department, to achieve Complete Streets goals. b. Explore rebuilding the corridor to allow two-way traffic on the west side of the median (E. Elizabeth Street to N. Main Street), thereby repurposing for a combination of uses, including open space, paths, seating, and other amenities. c. Enhance the streetscape with greenery and planters to beautify the area, provide shade, and improve aesthetics.				

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY				
Goal 7: Provide transportation, pedestrian, bike, and public transit infrastructure to promote connectivity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for all residents in the Northeast Neighborhood.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 7.1: Provide improvements in walking routes to connect people to places with a focus on sidewalks.	High	DPW	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, Harrisonburg Rockingham MPO, HDPT, JMU	City Funds, CDBG Funds
ACTIONS a. Engage residents in prioritizing improvements during the next Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan update. b. Make sidewalk improvements in areas with public institutions, housing developments, transportation hubs, and frequently visited places. c. Implement pedestrian-friendly pathways to enhance accessibility and connectivity between N. Mason Street and surrounding Neighborhoods.				
Strategy 7.2: Improve safety on local streets in the Northeast Neighborhood by installing additional traffic calming measures where appropriate.	High	DPW	NENA, SVBHP, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, Harrisonburg Police Department	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Identify priority areas for traffic calming measures using data and public engagement. b. Install speed bumps, speed tables, or other traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds. c. Install new or enhanced crosswalks in high-traffic areas, especially near churches and community gathering spaces. d. Evaluate and address sightline obstructions (i.e., fences, foliage, parked cars, etc.) at intersections.				

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY				
Goal 7: Provide transportation, pedestrian, bike, and public transit infrastructure to promote connectivity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for all residents in the Northeast Neighborhood.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 7.3: Add and improve lighting throughout the Northeast Neighborhood, especially around key walking corridors.	High	DPW	Harrisonburg Electric Commission, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Partner with Harrisonburg Electric Commission to develop a lighting plan for the Northeast Neighborhood. b. Explore opportunities for installing mid-height warm lighting on privately owned properties throughout the community, funded by private sources. c. Encourage residents to turn on door and porch lights during appropriate evening hours. d. Encourage new developments to have outdoor lights. e. Ensure lights are low-glare, warm-toned to reduce potential light pollution.				
Strategy 7.4: Increase public transportation use by improving the comfort, safety, and accessibility of bus stops.	Low	HDPT	DPW, Arts Council of the Valley	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Upgrade bus shelters to be more comfortable, with adequate lighting, emergency call buttons, benches, and shelters. b. Advertise trip planning apps that provide riders with real-time information. c. Collaborate with local artists to enhance bus shelter visibility and foster a sense of community identity.				

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY				
Goal 7: Provide transportation, pedestrian, bike, and public transit infrastructure to promote connectivity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for all residents in the Northeast Neighborhood.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 7.5: Increase Neighborhood access to electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.	Low	DPW	Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, HDPT, Places of Worship, Neighborhood Businesses, HRHA	City Funds, Grants, Private Funding
ACTIONS a. Continue to include public property (e.g., Ralph Sampson Park) in City solicitations for public-private partnerships to install EV chargers for public use. b. Engage with congregations, private property owners, and HRHA to share the Neighborhood's interest in EV charging stations and explore whether any non-public properties may be interested in installing EV chargers.				
Strategy 7.6: Enhance safety at designated school bus stops.	High	HDPT	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, Harrisonburg Police Department	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Inventory and map all Neighborhood school bus stops. b. Evaluate school bus stops for safety. c. Relocate school bus stops as necessary. d. Educate parents and children directly about bus stop locations, safe roadway crossings, and pedestrian safety. e. Educate drivers about school bus stop awareness, especially during pick-up and drop-off times.				

HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY				
Goal 8: Build a safe and strong Northeast Neighborhood by ensuring healthy and sustainable housing options that meet the diverse needs of all residents, including legacy residents and those seeking affordable housing opportunities.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 8.1: Update land use regulations and zoning to align with the Neighborhood's preferences.	High	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office-Housing Coordinator	Annual City Budget
<u>ACTION</u> a. Engage residents in updates to the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance.				
Strategy 8.2: Explore the use of tax incentives or inclusionary zoning to support and encourage the creation of affordable and mixed-income housing.	Medium	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office-Housing Coordinator	Annual City Budget
<u>ACTIONS</u> a. Explore legal authority to mandate a percentage of affordable units for all future developments in the Neighborhood. b. Continue to use the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and the Virginia Housing Opportunity Tax Credit for new affordable housing.				
Strategy 8.3: Preserve existing housing stock.	High	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office-Housing Coordinator	HRHA, NENA, SVBHP, Harrisonburg Electric Commission, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, VPAS, Habitat for Humanity, Places of Worship	Grants, CDBG
<u>ACTIONS</u> a. Obtain feedback from the community on current challenges in housing preservation. b. Provide homeowner education on maintenance and improvement programs. c. Support residents applying for programs and grants, like the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) or the Energy Assistance Program (EAP). d. Explore providing tax exemptions on the increased value for rehabilitated properties to encourage rehabilitation without displacement. e. Advertise existing tools and programs for established residents who improve housing with their funds or with city funds as a strategy for anti-displacement.				

HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY				
Goal 8: Build a safe and strong Northeast Neighborhood by ensuring healthy and sustainable housing options that meet the diverse needs of all residents, including legacy residents and those seeking affordable housing opportunities.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 8.4: Work with Our Community Place (OCP) and the Navigation Center to identify a new state-of-the-art facility for OCP located outside of the Northeast Neighborhood.	High	OCP	Harrisonburg Police Department, City Manager's Office, Harrisonburg Fire Department, NENA, SVBHP	Private/Nonprofit Funds
ACTIONS a. Hold a discussion with Neighborhood residents to address safety concerns. b. Increase communication between OCP and Neighborhood residents regarding actions taken to improve the safety and security of the facility, particularly after hours. c. Encourage the OCP Board to meet with Neighborhood residents about the long-term goals for OCP based on its recent strategic planning efforts.				
Strategy 8.5: Enhance quality of life and public safety for homeowners, landlords, tenants, and transient populations through code enforcement and proactive efforts to prevent underutilized properties from falling into disrepair.	Medium	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	NENA, SVBHP, DPW, Harrisonburg Police Department, Harrisonburg Fire Department	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Work with the community to develop revitalization plans for vacant parcels, including green spaces, pocket parks, and housing. b. Provide community education and outreach on zoning, property maintenance, junk/trash, and other City Codes. c. Engage HRHA, CBOs, OCP, regional resources (e.g., Habitat for Humanity), and communities of faith in supporting seniors and others who might benefit from support (e.g., disposing of non-compliant porch furniture, yard maintenance, or minor repairs).				

HOUSING AND PUBLIC SAFETY				
Goal 8: Build a safe and strong Northeast Neighborhood by ensuring healthy and sustainable housing options that meet the diverse needs of all residents, including legacy residents and those seeking affordable housing opportunities.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 8.6: Develop a community-centered anti-displacement strategy.	High	Harrisonburg City Manager's Office- Housing	HRHA, NENA, SVBHP, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	City Funds/ Grants
<u>ACTIONS</u> a. Host engagement sessions with residents for active participation. b. Explore community-tied housing models, rental-to-ownership pathways, community land banks, and other practices. c. Review policies for public housing applications to identify ways to make them more efficient. d. Ensure regular evaluation and monitoring through specific metrics, review processes, and community input. e. Identify financial incentives, such as tax abatements, performance grants, and rental assistance, to help homeowners and renters achieve affordable housing goals. f. Analyze how existing policies can be revised to incorporate anti-displacement priorities. g. Explore the creation of a Community Preference Policy, which provides priority placement for affordable units in a Neighborhood or group of Neighborhoods to low-income applicants who have been displaced from their Neighborhood, are current residents at risk of displacement, or are descendants of displaced residents.				
Strategy 8.7: Facilitate pro-bono estate planning to resolve issues around "tangled" titles, wills, and insurance.	Medium	NENA, SVBHP	Local Attorneys, Blue Ridge Legal Services, City Manager's Office- Housing Coordinator, VPAS	City Funds/ Grants/ Non-Profits
<u>ACTION</u> a. Develop a list of area residents/organizations willing to volunteer pro-bono estate planning.				

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS				
Goal 9: Make the Northeast Neighborhood a great place to open, own, and operate a business with a workforce that has opportunities to professionally grow.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 9.1: Encourage and incentivize future owners to transform the Roses site into a mixed-used hub with economic and educational opportunities, and mixed-income housing.	High	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development, Harrisonburg City Manager's Office- Housing Coordinator, NENA, SVBHP, City Manager's Office	Private Funds
ACTIONS a. Build relationships between future owners and the community to increase transparency and create trust. b. Review case studies of the redevelopment of similar buildings. c. Gather community input on the future of the Roses site.				
Strategy 9.2: Create a centralized and accessible community hub for educational and workforce development.	Low	Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development	NENA, SVBHP, Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation, BRCC, Shenandoah Valley Partnership, VSBDC, Shenandoah Valley Workforce Board	Grants, Private/Nonprofit Funds
ACTIONS a. Promote networking among community businesses and residents. b. Create an online hub that houses information on educational and workforce development opportunities.				
Strategy 9.3: Continue to host educational programs and workshops that support all families in areas such as language learning, job training, and civic engagement.	Medium	NENA, SVBHP	HRHA, Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development, Harrisonburg City Manager's Office- Housing Coordinator, Places of Worship	Grants, Private/Nonprofit Funds
ACTION a. Provide workshops on financial literacy in various languages, catering to the diverse population of the Northeast Neighborhood.				

ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND COMPETITIVENESS				
Goal 9: Make the Northeast Neighborhood a great place to open, own, and operate a business with a workforce that has opportunities to professionally grow.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 9.4: Educate developers, investors, and businesses on how to take advantage of the Opportunity Zone tax incentive, allowing investors to defer taxes on the invested gain amounts until the Congress-mandated deadline.	High	Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, HRHA	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Monitor federal policy regarding the Opportunity Zone tax incentive to ensure the City is working within the correct timeline. b. Create and promote workshops to educate developers, investors, and businesses about the Opportunity Zone incentive.				
Strategy 9.5: Support small businesses and foster business opportunities in the Northeast Neighborhood.	High	Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development	NENA, SVBHP, VSBDC, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Annual City Budget, Grants/Loans, Private/Nonprofit Funds
ACTIONS a. Promote available programs through multiple channels, including social media pages, community boards, CBO websites, and other online platforms (e.g., NextDoor, MeetUp). b. Develop a list of all resources available to residents and small businesses. c. Consider a rezoning study to determine zoning allowances for small businesses and home-based enterprises.				
Strategy 9.6: Encourage the establishment of new preschools, child care centers, and in-home care providers in the Neighborhood to expand access to high-quality and easily accessible child care.	High	City Manager's Office	VSBDC, NENA, SVBHP, Places of Worship	Grants, Private/Nonprofit Funds
ACTIONS a. Evaluate in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan the possible use of the Lucy F. Simms Center for the provision of child care. b. Conduct a conversation with the faith community and other community-based organizations to explore the potential use of existing facilities for child care. c. Educate residents on the regulations related to in-home child care and local resources to support the establishment of an in-home child care business.				

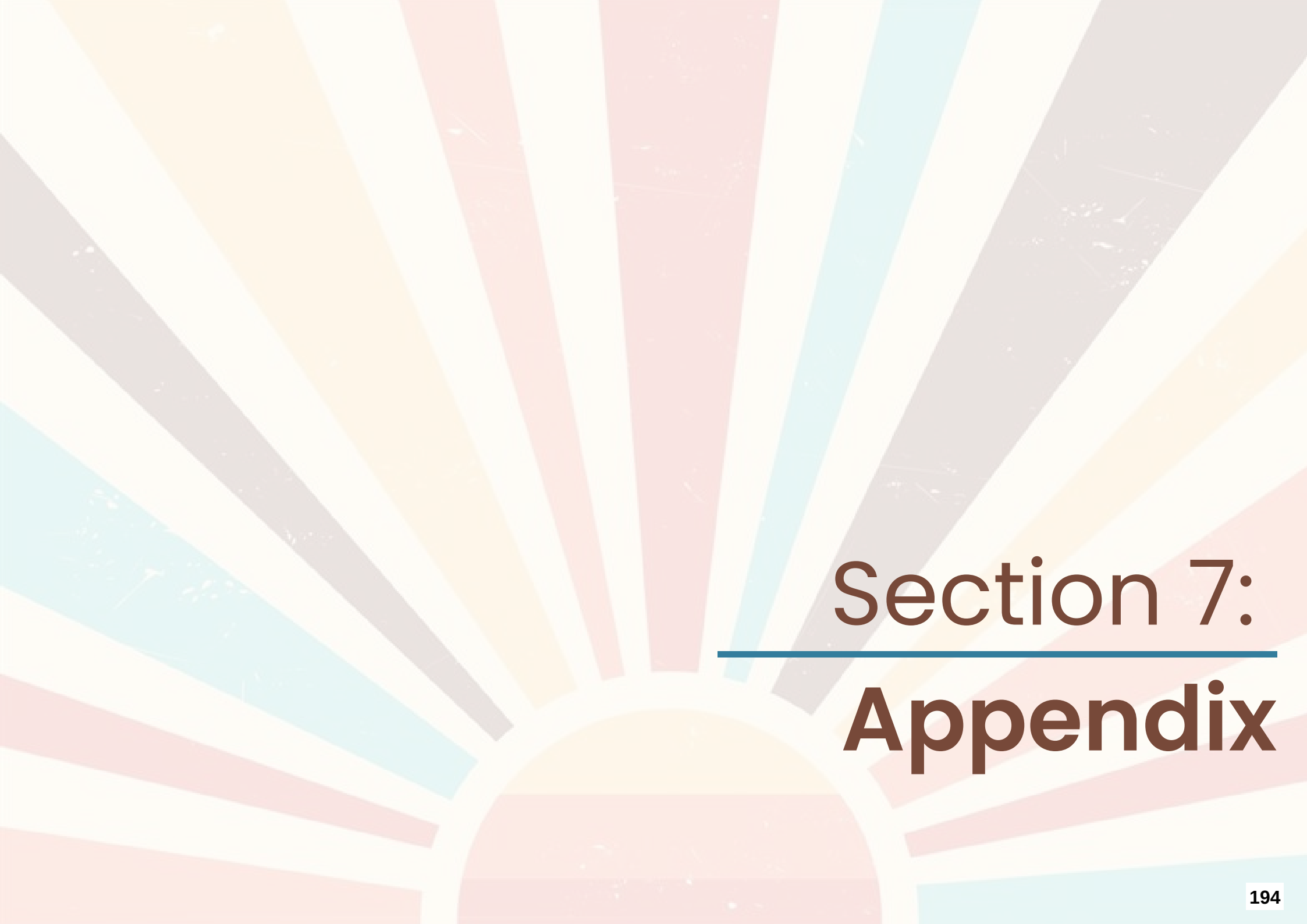
NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY				
Goal 10: Build a sustainable Northeast Neighborhood that is resilient to the effects of climate change.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 10.1: Plant native plants and trees in public areas, like parks, recreational spaces, and streets, and private properties to provide shade, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and reduce stormwater concerns.	Medium	DPW	NENA, SVBHP, Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, Harrisonburg City Public Schools, Civic Organizations	Grants, Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Prioritize areas with high levels of impervious surfaces that increases the risk of flooding. b. Partner with Harrisonburg's Urban Forestry Program as they work to expand the Neighborhood's tree canopy. c. Conduct outreach on the benefits of preserving and planting trees in private properties and financial mechanisms like Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program (HCAP), Harrisonburg Electric Commission. d. Collaborate with local schools, organizations, and businesses to plant trees and enhance public spaces and private properties.				
Strategy 10.2: Partner with established organizations and agencies to provide community gardens and pollinator gardens to encourage biodiversity and local food production.	Low	NENA, SVBHP	OCP, HRHA, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, DPW	Private/Nonprofit Funding
ACTIONS a. Consider partnering with non-profit organizations to become involved in community-based beautification programs. b. Host public education workshops on pollinator gardens, native plants, and sustainable gardening. c. Work with the City's Pollinator Program to explore extending the city's pollinator corridor into the Northeast Neighborhood.				

NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY				
Goal 10: Build a sustainable Northeast Neighborhood that is resilient to the effects of climate change.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 10.3: Explore the opportunity for installation of recycling bins, trash cans, and dog waste stations at appropriate locations.	Medium	DPW	NENA, SVBH, Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, HRHA	Annual City Budget, Private/Nonprofit Funds
<u>ACTION</u> a. Identify priority areas.				
Strategy 10.4: Use multi-level (individual, organizational, and municipal) resources to implement green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bioretention systems, for stormwater management and flood mitigation where viable.	Medium	DPW	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Annual City Budget, Grants
<u>ACTION</u> a. Educate residents on Best Management Practices they can implement to reduce flooding and reduce their Stormwater Utility Fee. b. Perform flooding analysis to identify areas that experience frequent flooding and that should be prioritized for stormwater management interventions. c. Identify projects that could be eligible for the Harrisonburg Conservation Assistance Program (HCAP) to develop, design, and construct stormwater practices.				
Strategy 10.5: Expand renewable energy, energy conservation, weatherization, and water efficient technologies in the Northeast Neighborhood as part of broader sustainability efforts.	Low	DPW	NENA, SVBHP, Harrisonburg Electric Commission, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, HRHA	Annual City Budget, Grants
<u>ACTIONS</u> a. Educate the community on solar installation, energy conservation and weatherization, water efficient technology opportunities. b. Determine a list of City-owned and Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority facilities suitable in using renewable energy and water efficient technologies. c. Identify available funding sources for infrastructure investments and apply for grants.				

NATURAL SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINABILITY				
Goal 11: Preserve the Northeast Neighborhood's scenic vistas.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 11.1: Improve awareness, access, and amenities to enhance community and visitor enjoyment of Northeast scenic vistas.	Medium	NENA, SVBHP	Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development, Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development	Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Educate the public about this Neighborhood amenity through signs and educational campaigns. b. Explore working with Scenic Virginia to assess and inventory vistas or consider partnering with Scenic America to protect this Neighborhood amenity. c. Add more seating in Ralph Sampson Park to enjoy the views.				
Strategy 11.2: Establish land use strategies (e.g., zoning, easement, etc.) to preserve and protect scenic vistas throughout the Neighborhood.	Medium	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation, NENA, SVBHP	Annual City Budget
ACTION a. Limit the placement and height of any amenity that may block the current vistas.				

HEALTH				
Goal 12: Enhance Neighborhood health by ensuring access to affordable, healthy foods, welfare services, ADA-compliant facilities, and recreational spaces.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 12.1: Improve access to fresh, affordable food through farmers' markets, local grocery stores, cooperative food options, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs.	Medium	Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Friendly City Food Co-Op, Harrisonburg Farmer's Market, Harrisonburg Department of Economic Development	Virginia Food Access Investment Fund, Grants
ACTIONS a. Examine zoning regulations to support more access to grocery stores and other food sources. b. Support aspiring entrepreneurs who will provide affordable, local, and culturally appropriate food through mobile units, events, food stands, brick and mortar shops, or innovative enterprises. c. Explore tax incentives, loans, and funds (e.g., Virginia Food Access Investment Fund loans and grants) to fund grocery stores in low-income areas. d. Create a handout for WIC/SNAP recipients that includes a map showing locations where SNAP is accepted, such as the Farmers Market and Friendly City Food Co-Op. e. Explore establishing a Healthy Corner Store Initiative.				
Strategy 12.2: Investigate sustainable urban agriculture and food production practices.	Low	NENA, SVBHP	Virginia Cooperative Extension, Places of Worship, HRHA, Harrisonburg Department of Community Development	Grants, Private/Nonprofit Funding
ACTIONS a. Encourage the maintenance and growth of community gardens, incorporating planter boxes. b. Offer educational programs to residents on how to grow their food. c. Explore the use of vacant lots for urban agricultural use. d. Explore partnerships with residents, places of worship, and other organizations to establish additional community gardens, similar to the existing Kelley Street Garden.				

HEALTH				
Goal 12: Enhance Neighborhood health by ensuring access to affordable, healthy foods, welfare services, ADA-compliant facilities, and recreational spaces.				
Strategy	Priority	Lead Entity	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
Strategy 12.3: Continue to provide behavioral health services outside the Northeast Neighborhood and promote affordable health services and mental wellness support for unhoused individuals, especially during daytime hours.	Low	Harrisonburg-Rockingham Community Services Board	Sentara RMH Medical Center, Healthy Community Health Center	Private/Nonprofit Funding
ACTIONS a. Develop a map that shows where services and resources are located and how they can be accessed, using the Strength in Peers' Community Resource Center's Resource Guide as a reference. b. Continue offering mobile primary care services, such as the Mobile Sentara bus, and expand services to include counseling and therapy.				
Strategy 12.4: Encourage physical activity and water safety education by maintaining existing recreational spaces and creating a new swimming pool for all Neighborhood residents.	Low	Harrisonburg Department of Parks and Recreation		Annual City Budget
ACTIONS a. Explore opportunities to add more recreational spaces based on community engagement and available funding. b. Invest in amenities at the Simms Center's fitness center and gymnasium.				



Section 7:

Appendix

APPENDIX A: EXISTING PLANS AND STUDIES & PLAN CONSISTENCY

The project team reviewed thirteen (13) existing plans and studies that may impact the project's study area and found four common themes and key areas of focus: Cultural Identity, History, and Community Spaces; Connectivity to Downtown; Housing Affordability; and Infrastructure & Environment Sustainability.

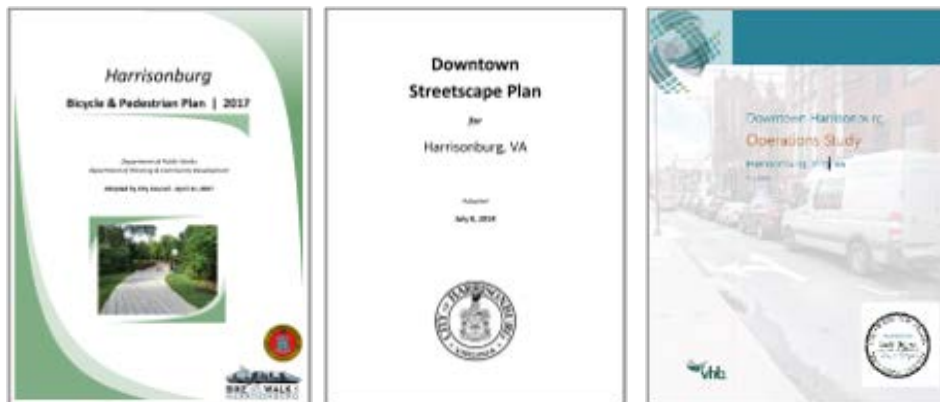
CULTURAL IDENTITY, HISTORY, AND COMMUNITY SPACES



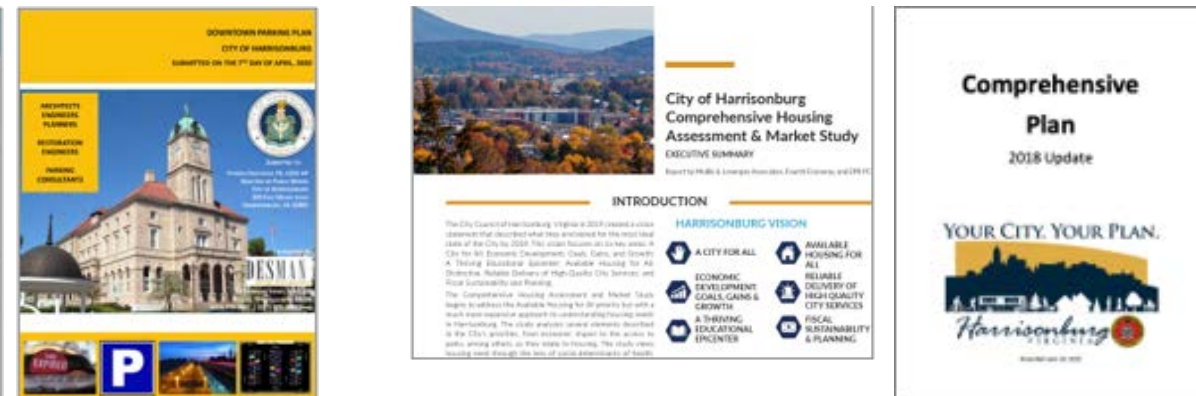
INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



CONNECTIVITY TO DOWNTOWN



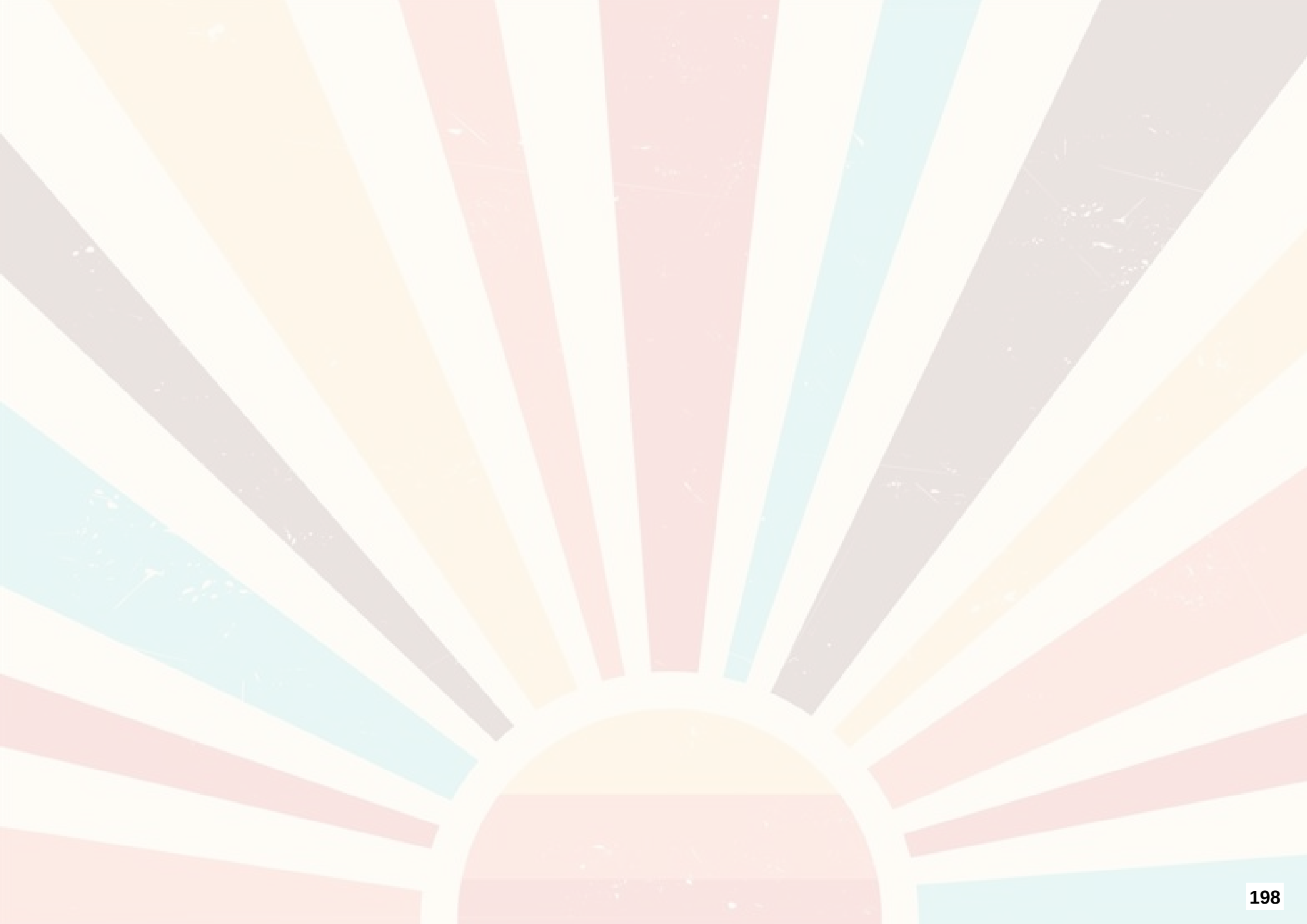
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

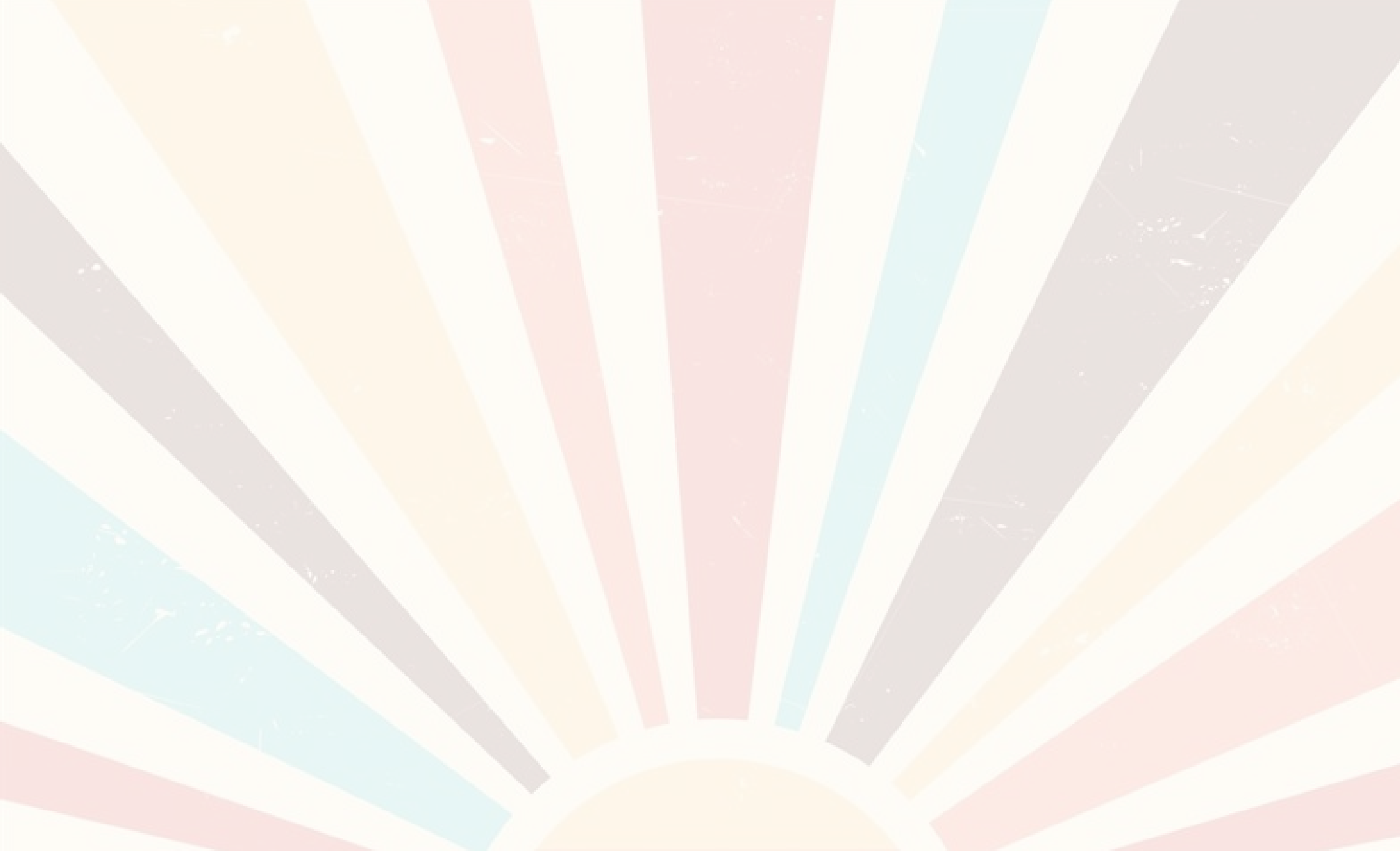


Category	Plan Name	Year	Description
Cultural Identity, History, and Community Spaces <i>These plans focus on preserving cultural identity, acknowledging the history of disruption due to urban renewal in the Northeast Neighborhood, and enhancing community spaces.</i>	Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan Update	2013	Includes the recommendation to create a museum discussing the history of the Northeast Neighborhood and emphasizes community events at the Lucy Simms Center.
	Ralph Sampson Park Master Plan	2008	Focuses on revitalizing a key recreational space for the neighborhood and improving accessibility and community engagement.
	Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 Plan	2021	Acknowledges the displacement caused by Urban Renewal and emphasizes reconnecting the Northeast Neighborhood with Downtown to bridge historical divides.
Connectivity to Downtown <i>This set of plans emphasizes the importance of connectivity to downtown, upgrades to sidewalks, bike and pedestrian amenities, and the need for better transit and bus ridership from public housing.</i>	ADA Transition Plan	2024	Focuses on removing barriers to accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and improving sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure in the Northeast Neighborhood.
	Harrisonburg Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan	2017	Enhances connectivity through safer and more inclusive walking and biking options.
	Harrisonburg Downtown Streetscape Plan	2014	Addresses transit and pedestrian infrastructure, including better connections for public housing residents.
	Downtown Harrisonburg Operations Study	2020	Proposes traffic pattern adjustments and pedestrian safety enhancements, indirectly benefiting Northeast Neighborhood residents by improving access to the Downtown core.
	Downtown Parking Study	2019–2020	Promotes shared parking and alternative transportation to ease access for residents traveling to and from Downtown.

Category	Plan Name	Year	Description
Housing Affordability <i>These plans address the need for affordable housing in the Neighborhood and outline strategies for housing and employment growth.</i>	Comprehensive Housing Assessment & Market Study	2020	Highlights the pressures on affordable housing in the Northeast Neighborhood and the need for preservation and rehabilitation to prevent displacement.
	Harrisonburg Comprehensive Plan	2018	Identifies traffic and roadway improvements, as well as housing affordability, as citywide needs and includes strategies for enhancing rental and homeownership options in the Northeast Neighborhood.
Infrastructure & Environmental Sustainability <i>This category covers flood mitigation, urban heat island effects, and other environmental sustainability considerations.</i>	Capital Improvement Program	2024	Includes projects to enhance safety, pedestrian infrastructure, and stormwater management in the Northeast Neighborhood.
	Stormwater Improvement Plan	2024	Addresses water quality, supports regulatory compliance, and identifies locations to implement stormwater management best practices, including at a stormwater management facility at Ralph Sampson Park.
	Urban Forest Management Master Plan	2021	Aims to reduce urban heat islands and improve air quality, creating a healthier living environment for residents.
	Environmental Action Plan	2020	Identifies goals to improve the City's environment and sustainability, including increasing public transit ridership and promoting urban agriculture and community gardens.

These existing plans help establish the groundwork for the Small Area Plan and also create many opportunities to address both immediate and long-term needs.





RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDING APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (2018), AS AMENDED, TO INCORPORATE THE NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD SMALL AREA PLAN AS APPENDIX A

WHEREAS, in 2018 City Council adopted a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Harrisonburg, and it has been amended from time to time thereafter;

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plan serves as a guide for City and community decision-making regarding future growth, development, public investment, and related policies;

WHEREAS, the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (2025) was developed through a community engagement process to guide decision-making regarding future growth, development, public investment, and related policies within the Northeast Neighborhood;

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that incorporation of the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan into the Comprehensive Plan will further the Comprehensive Plan's role as a guide regarding future growth, development, public investment, and related policies;

WHEREAS, the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (2025) has been posted on a publicly available website maintained by the City on which the Planning Commission generally posts information; notice of the public hearing was given in accordance with § 15.2-2204 of the Code of Virginia; and the Planning Commission conducted a duly advertised public hearing on August 12, 2026, in accordance with § 15.2-2225 of the Code of Virginia;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Harrisonburg, Virginia, that it hereby recommends that the City Council of the City of Harrisonburg, Virginia approve amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan (2018), as amended, to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (2025), attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated herein by reference, as Appendix A to the Comprehensive Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a certified copy of this resolution and the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (2025) be transmitted to the City Council of the City of Harrisonburg, Virginia, in accordance with § 15.2-2225 of the Code of Virginia.

Adopted this 12th day of August, 2026.

CHAIR, PLANNING COMMISSION

ATTESTE:

SECRETARY TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Legislation Text

File #: ORD 26-019, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Consider a request to amend the Zoning Ordinance to create a new term and definition for "poultry hatchery"

Presented By: Tyler Blanks, Department of Community Development

Consider amending Section 10-3-24, Definitions, to add a new term and definition for "poultry hatchery" and to amend and Section 10-3-96(22), Uses permitted by right, to add poultry hatcheries as a by-right use in the M-1, General Industrial District.



August 12, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider a request to amend the Zoning Ordinance related to Poultry Hatcheries – Tyler Blanks, Zoning Administrator

Summary

Zoning Ordinance Sections	Amend Sections 10-3-24 and 10-3-96
Purpose	To add a new term and definition for “poultry hatchery” and to add poultry hatcheries as a by-right use in the M-1, General Industrial District
Applicant	City of Harrisonburg
Planning Commission	August 12, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated September 8, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated September 22, 2026 (Second Reading)

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Context & Analysis

In February 2026, City Council approved Zoning Ordinance (ZO) amendments that established definitions for “meat processing and storage facility” and “poultry processing and storage facility.” The amendments also added poultry processing and storage facility as a by right use in the M-1, General Industrial District, and added meat processing and storage facility as a use allowed only by special use permit (SUP) in the same district.

The amendment created the opportunity for someone to be able to establish a new meat processing and storage facility with the approval of a SUP while also creating a pathway for a nonconforming meat processing facility to become conforming through the same process. Staff worked with the applicant to develop the new definitions in a way that distinguished poultry processing from other types of meat processing, consistent with the long-standing interpretation of the ZO that poultry processing in the M-1 district is allowed by right. When drafting the amendments, staff did not address standalone poultry hatcheries and unintentionally made poultry hatcheries a nonconforming use, as they were outside the scope of the previous application.

After becoming aware of this issue, staff began work on a new amendment to codify the long-standing interpretation that a poultry hatchery is also a by right use in the M-1 district and provide a definition for poultry hatcheries. This amendment will clarify that poultry hatcheries are allowed by-right in the M-1 district. Staff worked with the Virginia Poultry Federation to identify three operational hatcheries within City limits; which are all located within the M-1 District:

- George's Hatchery: 410 Stone Spring Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22801
- George's Hatchery: 1620 South Main Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801
- Cargill Hatchery: 1724 Country Club Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Copies of the drafted amendment and definition were shared with the President of the Virginia Poultry Federation, Hobey Bauhan. No concerns were raised regarding the proposed changes.

Staff recommends approval of the ZO amendments.

Options

- Recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendments.
- Recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendments with modifications.
- Recommend denial of the Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Attachments

1. Current Ordinance Reflecting Recommended Amendments
2. Locations of existing hatcheries according to Virginia Poultry Federation

**ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTIONS OF TITLE 10 – PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT, CHAPTER 3. – ZONING, THE CODE OF ORDINANCES CITY OF
HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

Be it ordained by the Council of the City of Harrisonburg, Virginia:

Section 10-3-24. - Definitions shall be amended as shown:

Poultry Hatchery: A facility or use where fertilized eggs of poultry are incubated and hatched into live poultry. The use may include accessory activities directly related to hatching, including egg handling, candling, sorting, sexing, vaccination, temporary holding, and the packaging, shipment, or distribution of live hatchlings. The term does not include slaughtering, evisceration, rendering, or the processing of poultry or poultry products for human consumption.

Section 10-3-96. - Uses permitted by right shall be amended as shown:

Sec. 10-3-96. - Uses permitted by right.

(22) Poultry processing and storage facilities, ~~and~~ and poultry hatcheries.

The remainder of each Section is reaffirmed and reenacted in its entirety, except as hereby modified.

This ordinance shall be effective from the _____ day of _____, 2026. Adopted and approved this _____ day of _____, 2026.

MAYOR

ATTESTE:

CITY CLERK

Existing Poultry Hatchery Operation

Cargill Hatchery 1724 Country Club Road Harrisonburg, VA 22802

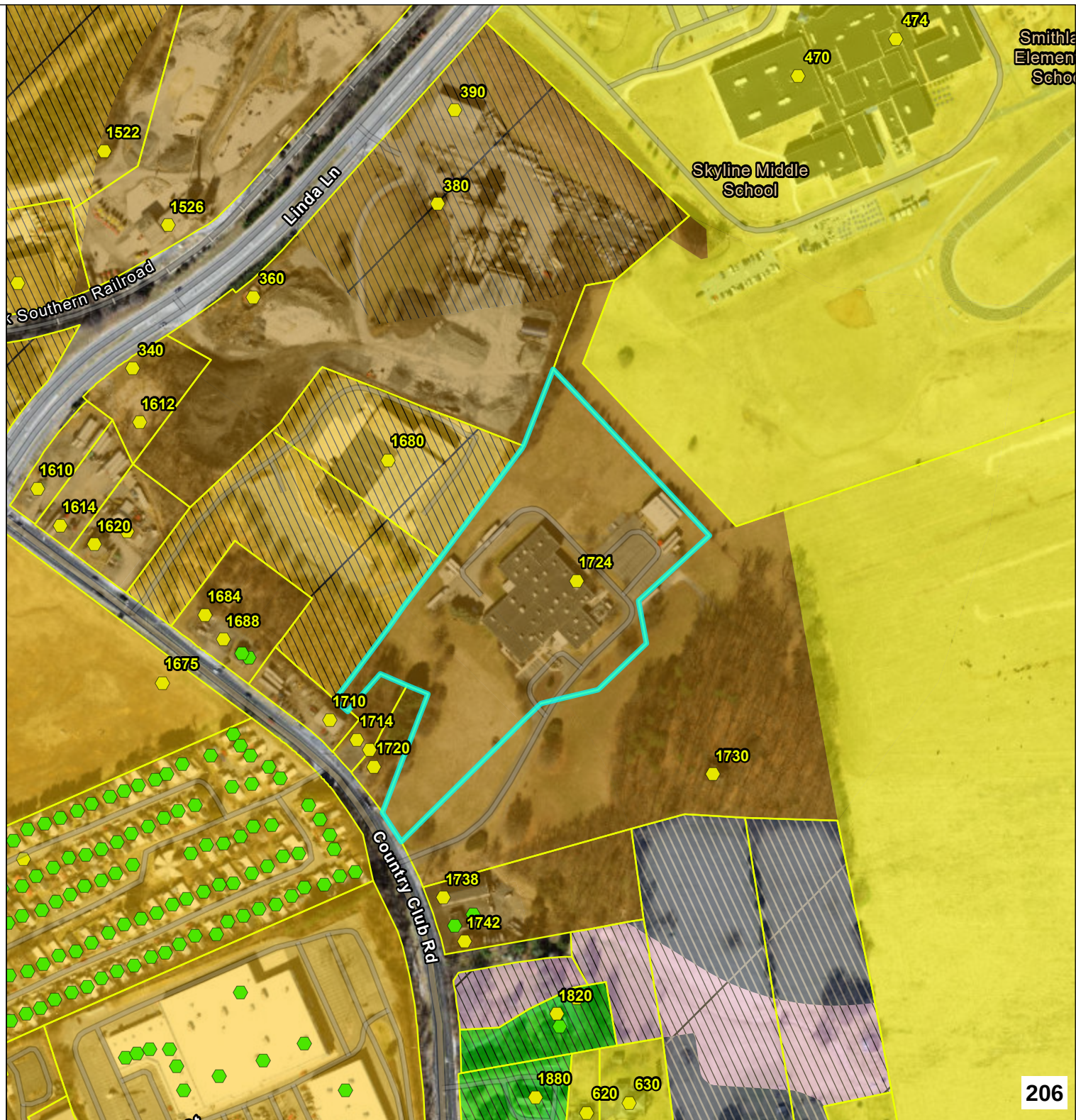
-  Apt/Unit/Suite: Active
-  Base Address: Active
-  Real Estate and Ownership



Existing Poultry Hatchery Operation

Cargill Hatchery 1724 Country Club Road Harrisonburg, VA 22802

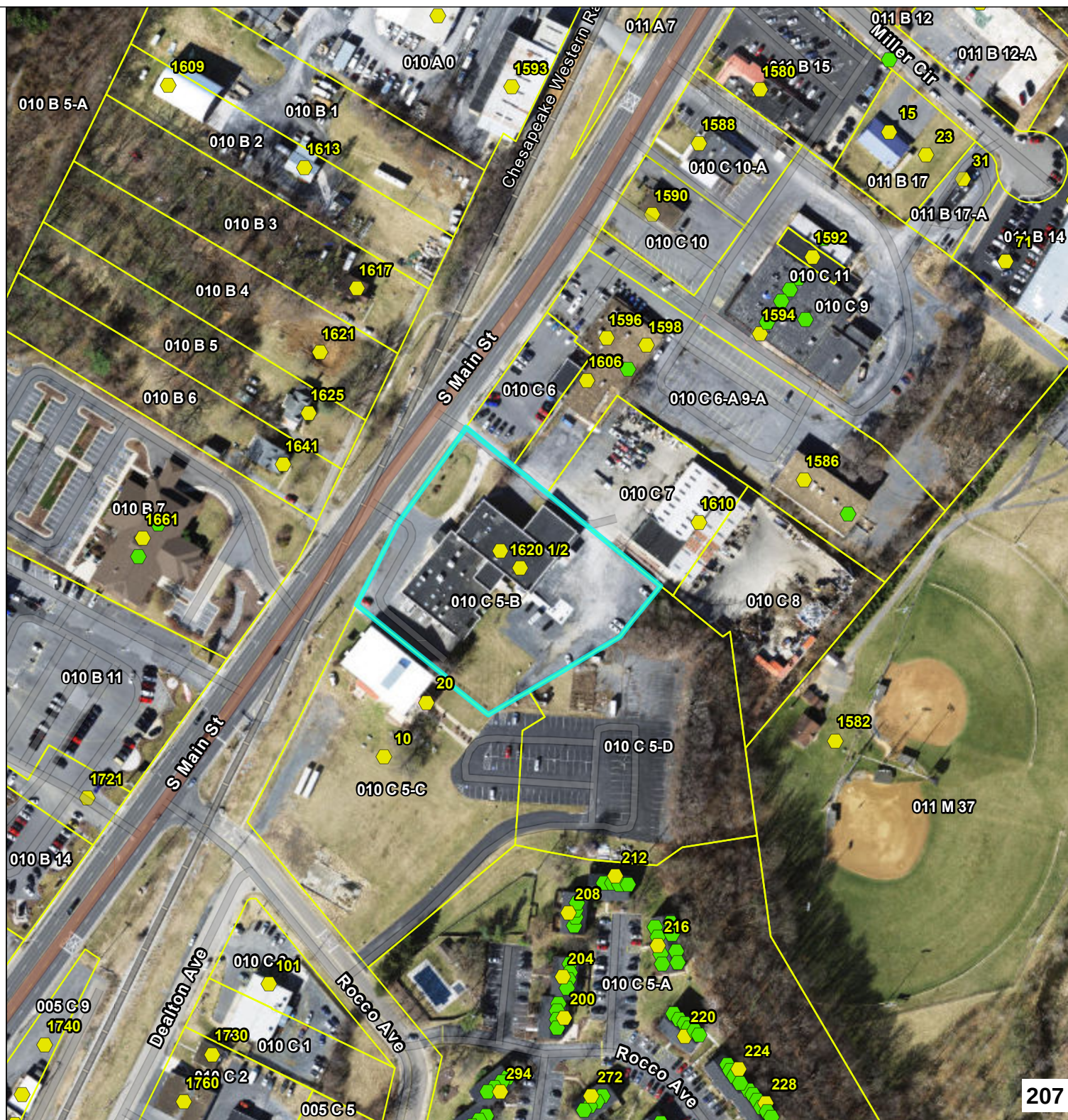
-  Apt/Unit/Suite: Active
-  Base Address: Active
-  Real Estate and Ownership
-  B-2
-  B-2C
-  M-1
-  M-1C
-  R-1
-  R-3C
-  R-5C
-  R-8C



Existing Poultry Hatchery Operation

George's Hatchery 1620 South
Main Street Harrisonburg, VA
22801

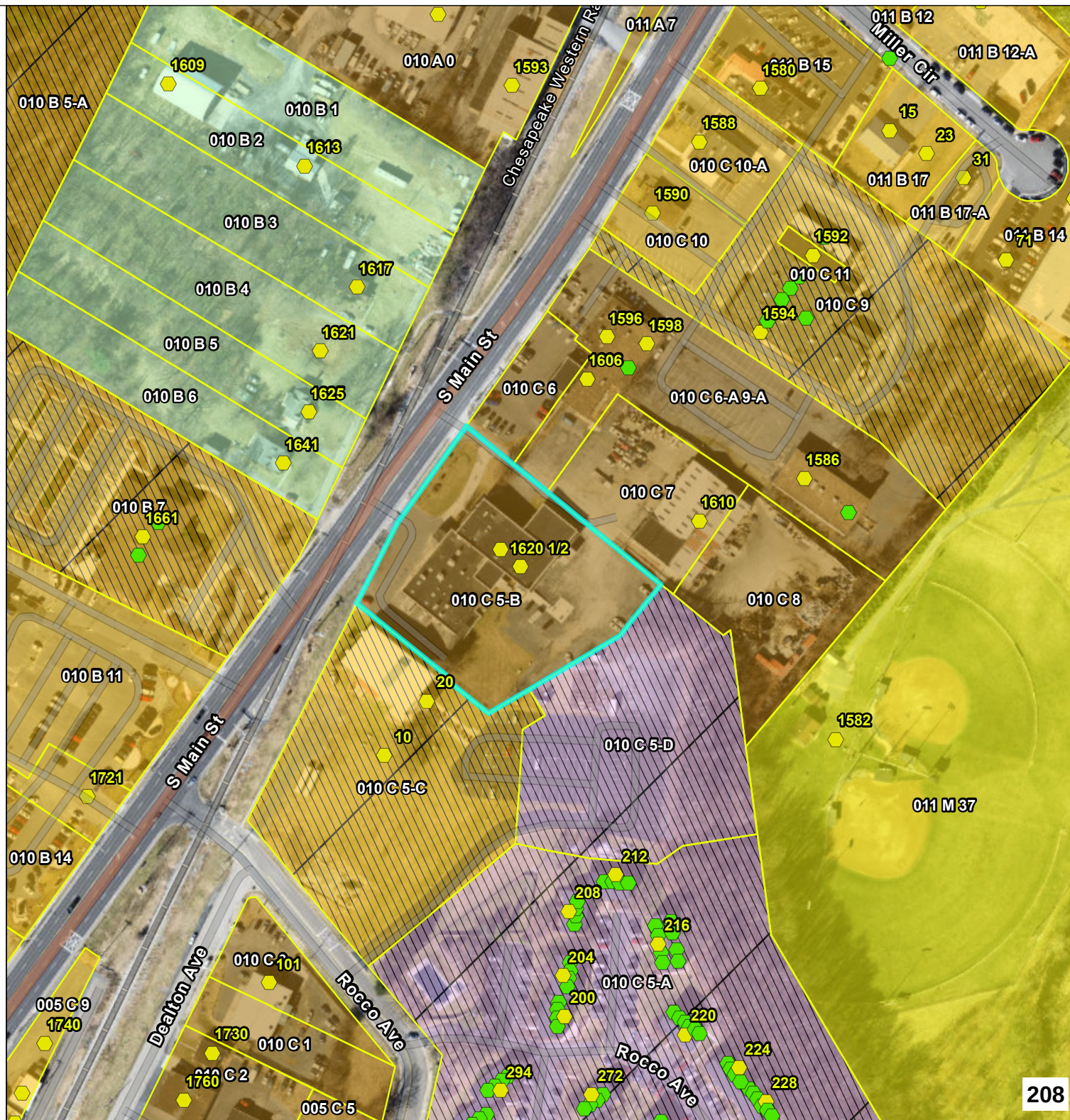
-  Apt/Unit/Suite: Active
-  Base Address: Active
-  Real Estate and Ownership



Existing Poultry Hatchery Operation

George's Hatchery 1620 South
Main Street Harrisonburg, VA
22801

-  Apt/Unit/Suite: Active
-  Base Address: Active
-  Real Estate and Ownership
-  B-2
-  B-2C
-  M-1
-  R-1
-  R-2
-  R-5C



Existing Poultry Hatchery Operation

George's Hatchery 410 Stone
Spring Road Harrisonburg, VA
22801

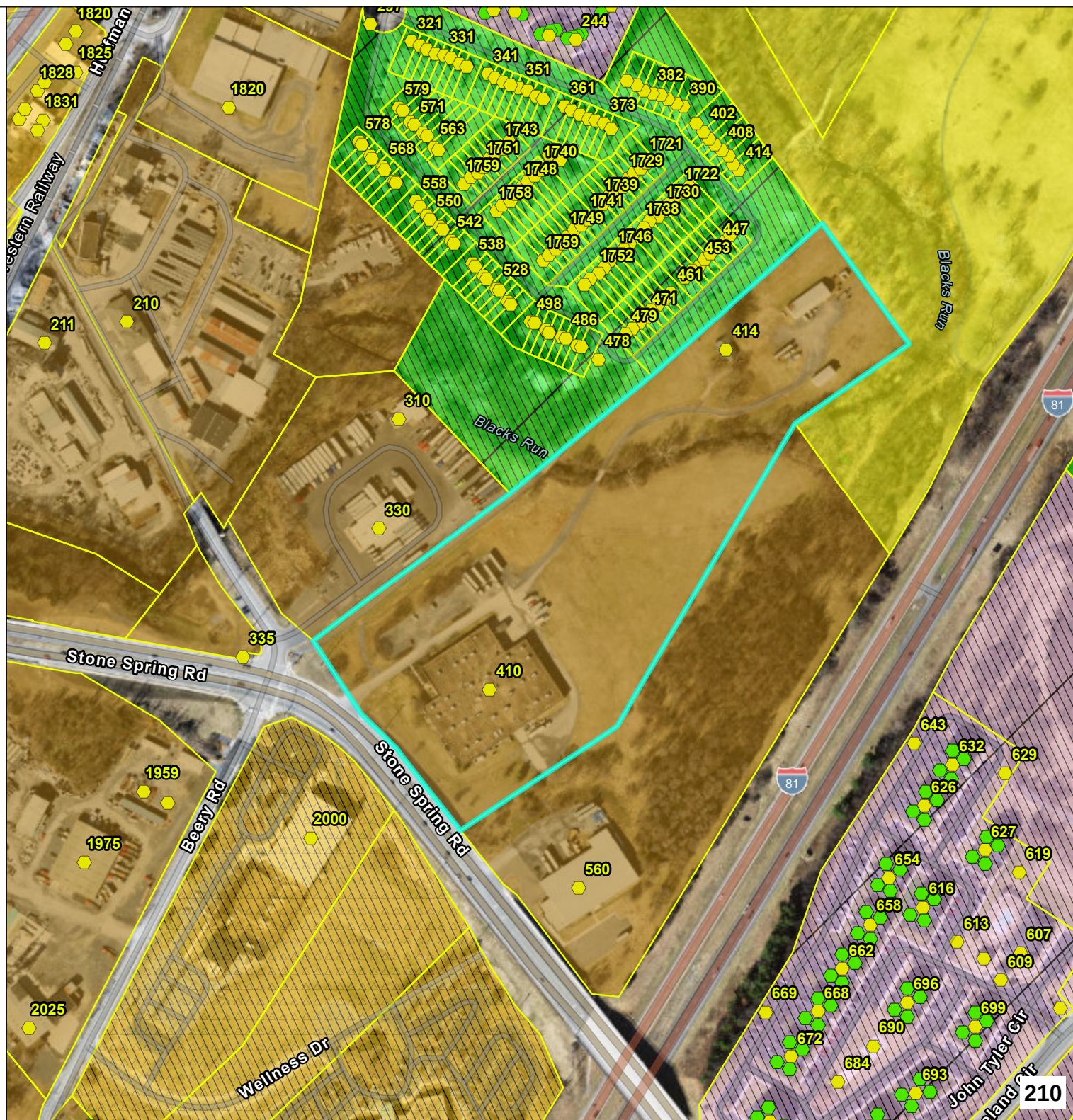
-  Apt/Unit/Suite: Active
-  Base Address: Active
-  Real Estate and Ownership



Existing Poultry Hatchery Operation

George's Hatchery 410 Stone
Spring Road Harrisonburg, VA
22801

- Apt/Unit/Suite: Active
- Base Address: Active
- Real Estate and Ownership
- B-2
- B-2C INSTITUTIONAL OVERLAY
- M-1
- R-1
- R-3
- R-3C
- R-5C





City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Legislation Text

File #: ID 26-292, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Consider a request from Jose Antonio Lopez Montiel for a variance from the Subdivision Ordinance at 704 North Liberty Street

Presented By: Nyrma Soffel, Department of Community Development

A request from Jose Antonio Lopez Montiel for a variance from the Subdivision Ordinance Section 10-2-61(c) requirement to construct a sidewalk. The property is addressed as 704 North Liberty Street and is identified as tax map parcel 40-N-1 and 2.



August 12, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider a request for a Subdivision Ordinance Variance at 704 North Liberty Street — Nyrma Soffel, Community Development

Summary

Project name	N/A
Address/Location	704 North Liberty Street
Tax Map Parcels	40-N-1 and 2
Total Land Area	+/- 13,495.23 square feet
Property Owner	Jose Antonio Lopez Montiel
Owner's Representative	Colman Engineering
Subdivision Ordinance Variance Request	Section 10-2-61(c) requirement to construct a sidewalk
Planning Commission	August 12, 2026
City Council	Anticipated September 8, 2026

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend denial of the Subdivision Ordinance variance.

Context & Analysis

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

Site: Single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-2

North: Single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-2

East: Across undeveloped alley, parking lot, zoned M-1

South: Across West Washington Street, vacant lot, zoned R-2 and residential uses, zoned M-1

West: Across North Liberty Street, single-family detached and duplex dwellings, zoned R-2

The applicant is requesting a variance from the Subdivision Ordinance (SO) Section 10-2-61(c), which requires the construction of a public sidewalk when an adjacent property on either side has an existing sidewalk. The property is addressed as 704 North Liberty Street and is identified as tax map parcel 40-N-1 and 2. If approved, the applicant plans to subdivide the property into four lots, retain the existing single-family dwelling, build a duplex along the North Liberty Street frontage, and construct a new single-family detached dwelling along the West Washington Street frontage.

On July 8, 2026, Planning Commission recommended approval of the applicant's requests to rezone the property from R-2, Residential District to R-8C, Small Lot Residential District Conditional, and for a special use permit (SUP) to allow reduced side yard setbacks. The rezoning and SUP requests are scheduled for a public hearing before City Council on August 11, 2026. If approved, the rezoning requires a second reading, anticipated on August 25, to become effective. As part of the rezoning request, the applicant proffered to dedicate right-of-way along West Washington Street for the existing sidewalk and to dedicate right-of-way along the North Liberty Street frontage. While the applicant has proffered to dedicate right-of-way along North Liberty Street, dedication alone does not satisfy Section 10-2-61(c).

SO Section 10-2-61(c) requires that "[w]here a lot being subdivided fronts on an existing street, and adjacent property on either side has an existing sidewalk, the subdivider shall construct, and where necessary dedicate land for, sidewalk on the property being subdivided to connect to the existing sidewalk, even when no other street improvements are required." There is an existing sidewalk along the West Washington Street frontage to the intersection with North Liberty Street; therefore, extending the sidewalk along the North Liberty Street frontage is required as part of the subdivision.

Within the submitted application materials, the applicant states, "[a] sidewalk currently exists along the West Washington Street frontage of the property. This sidewalk was constructed by the City without an easement having first been obtained from the property owner." Aerial images show that the sidewalk along the West Washington Street frontage existed as early as 2002, before the applicant acquired the property in 2019. In addition, survey information from 2011 showed an existing two-foot combination curb and gutter and a three-and-a-half-foot sidewalk entirely within the 27-foot right of way of West Washington Street.

The City widened the sidewalk to five feet in 2011-2012 and made improvements to the intersection with North Liberty Street in 2024. If an encroachment exists related to the sidewalk widening or from the intersection improvements, it can be investigated and addressed, if the applicant desires. However, such encroachment would be evaluated and addressed through a separate process and should not be considered a determining factor in the review of the applicant's SO variance request to waive the requirement to construct sidewalk along North Liberty Street since sidewalk has existed along West Washington Street for some time.

According to Section 10-2-22(a), for a SO variance to be granted, the subdivider must show that strict application of the sidewalk requirement would cause an unnecessary hardship because of topographical or other unusual conditions or would undermine or conflict with the City's Comprehensive Plan goals and policies encouraging walkable, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly street corridors. The applicant has not demonstrated that the property has physical constraints, topographical limitations, or other unusual site conditions that prevent sidewalk construction. The applicant states in their letter that "the cost of the required improvement is substantial." While sidewalk construction has a cost, similar subdivisions are subject to similar costs.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Neighborhood Residential and states:

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.

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.

As with other older residential neighborhoods, this area has an incomplete sidewalk network. Goal 13 of the Comprehensive Plan calls for the City to develop and maintain a safe and convenient transportation system serving all modes of travel, including driving, walking, biking, and taking public transportation. Strategy 13.1.5 addresses implementation of measures to expand the pedestrian infrastructure network so that all streets have pedestrian accommodations on both sides of the street.

Objective 13.2 of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the desire to increase opportunities for alternative modes of transportation, including walking, and several strategies refer to the City’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan’s vision includes providing “pedestrian infrastructure to safely and conveniently reach all areas of the city for school, work, play, and other daily needs.” In addition, the City’s ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Transition Plan documents current accessibility deficiencies and establishes policies and procedures to make transportation facilities accessible to all, including pedestrian infrastructure. The SO requirement to construct sidewalks is an important tool for implementing the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and ADA Transition Plan.

While the North Liberty Street sidewalk segment would not span the entire block, it does not mean it lacks value. The City’s pedestrian network is built incrementally as properties subdivide or redevelop. Requiring frontage improvements at the time of subdivision is one of the City’s tools for closing sidewalk gaps over time. Staff does not agree with the applicant’s argument that constructing the sidewalk along the subject property frontage would create an unsafe pedestrian condition. The sidewalk would connect to the existing sidewalk and crosswalk location at West Washington Street and North Liberty Street. The applicant has stated that terminating a sidewalk at the edge of the property would encourage pedestrians to cross North Liberty Street at a midblock location; however, the absence of sidewalk does not prevent pedestrians from walking along the frontage. Staff believes the presence of a sidewalk along the frontage would encourage residents to walk to the intersection to cross North Liberty Street. Sidewalk construction provides a defined pedestrian facility and improves access to the established intersection crossing.

Housing

The City's Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) places the subject property within Market Type D, which notes that "[m]arket type D has lower market activity as well as lower access to amenities. This could be because the areas are stable residential neighborhoods or because the area is less developed and therefore has fewer sales and fewer amenities. Strategies that would be appropriate in the latter case include concurrent development of the housing and economic opportunities through mixed-use developments to build commerce and housing centers across the City."

The proposed development adds to the housing supply in support of the Housing Study. However, the applicant is requesting relief from a required public improvement. While there is a cost to constructing the sidewalk, safe pedestrian access is also an important component of housing affordability. Providing safe pedestrian access can reduce transportation costs and improve residents' ability to reach jobs, schools, transit, parks, and other services.

Conclusion

The applicant has not demonstrated that strict application of Section 10-2-61(c) would cause an unnecessary hardship due to topographical or other unusual conditions. In addition, requiring sidewalk construction would advance the City's Comprehensive Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and ADA Transition Plan by incrementally expanding the City's pedestrian network. Staff recommends denial of the SO variance request.

Options

1. Recommend denial of the Subdivision Ordinance variance.
2. Recommend approval of the Subdivision Ordinance variance as requested.
3. Recommend approval of the Subdivision Ordinance variance with conditions.

Attachments

- Site maps
- Applicant's supporting documents

August 4, 2026

Nyrma C Soffel
Planner, City of Harrisonburg
Department of Community Development
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

RE: Variance Request for 704 N Liberty St.

Nyrma,

The purpose of this letter is to request a variance, pursuant to Section 10-2-2 of the City of Harrisonburg Code of Ordinances, for the property located at 704 N. Liberty Street, identified as TM# 040-N-1-2, related to the sidewalk construction requirement set forth in Section 10-2-61(c). The property owner is currently in the process of rezoning and subdividing the property, to increase the number of homes from one to four (the existing single-family home, one additional single-family home, and a duplex containing two homes) each of which represents the type of modest, attainable housing identified as a priority in the City's Comprehensive Plan and Housing Study.

A sidewalk currently exists along the West Washington Street frontage of the property. This sidewalk was constructed by the City without an easement having first been obtained from the property owner. As a result of the sidewalk's presence, the property is now subject to the requirement of Section 10-2-61(c) that a connecting sidewalk be constructed along the North Liberty Street frontage as part of the subdivision process.

Requiring construction of the connecting sidewalk would create an unnecessary hardship. The condition triggering this requirement was created by the City's prior construction of sidewalk improvements on private property without the necessary easement having been obtained. For a subdivision of this modest size, the cost of the required improvement is substantial. Section 10-2-2 authorizes a variance where strict adherence to a provision of the chapter would cause an unnecessary hardship because of unusual conditions, and the circumstances described above present precisely such a condition.

A variance in these circumstances would not have the effect of nullifying the intent and purpose of the Comprehensive Plan. Goal 13 provides for a transportation system that is "safe and convenient," and Objective 13.1 provides for the movement of people "efficiently and safely." A sidewalk constructed at this time would terminate at the edge of the property and would encourage pedestrians to cross North Liberty Street at a point beyond the intersection, rather than at the intersection itself, creating an unsafe crossing. Deferral of the sidewalk until it can be extended to a location where a safe crossing is available is therefore consistent with, rather than contrary to, the safety purpose of Goal 13. The long-

term objective of Strategy 13.1.5—pedestrian accommodations on both sides of every street—is preserved through the right-of-way dedication described below.

The location of the property within the Housing Study’s Market Type D does not alter this conclusion. The strategy identified for Market Type D is the concurrent development of housing and economic opportunities through mixed-use development. A connecting sidewalk that reaches no amenity, and that directs pedestrians to an unsafe crossing, does not advance that strategy; the housing proposed by the property owner does, consistent with Goal 5, Objective 5.2, and Strategy 6.1.5 of the Comprehensive Plan. More broadly, requiring small-scale developers of affordable housing to construct public infrastructure increases the cost of housing and reduces its affordability. The Housing Study recommends that the City offset such costs, including through the waiver of certain fees (Recommendation 5) and the provision of infrastructure as an incentive (Recommendation 7). The present circumstances afford the City an opportunity to further those recommendations.

In lieu of requiring construction of the sidewalk by the property owner, a right-of-way is proposed to be granted for the existing sidewalk along West Washington Street, together with a right-of-way to be dedicated to the City for a future City sidewalk along the North Liberty Street frontage of the property. This approach would resolve the existing easement issue, preserve the ability to complete future pedestrian improvements at a time when a safe crossing can be provided, and avoid imposing an undue burden on the property owner.

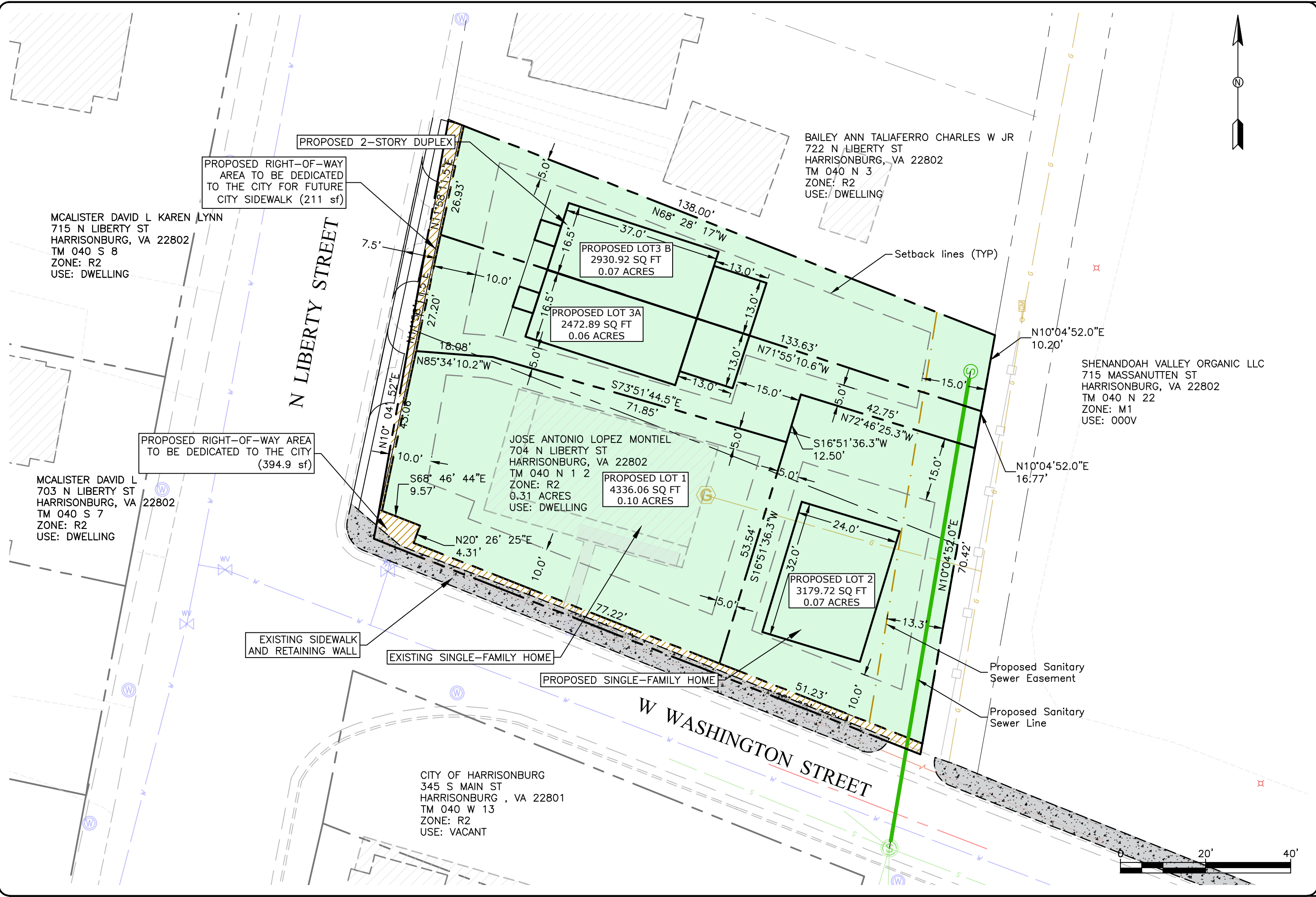
For these reasons, approval of a variance from the sidewalk construction requirement of Section 10-2-61(c) is respectfully requested. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this request further and thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jose Lopez', with a stylized, cursive script.

Jose Lopez
Property Owner

WORKING DRAWING.dwg Plotted: 8/4/2026 By: Gil Colman



Project: CE202631	Sheet: 1 of 1
Revisions	
Date: 06/29/2026	Scale: 1" = 20'
Designer: GLC, PE	Drafter: GLC, PE
Reviewer: GLC, PE	

VARIANCE REQUEST
704 N. Liberty St Property
3 Brothers Construction
704 Liberty Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

REZONING

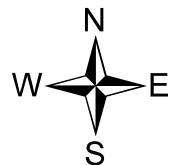
COLMAN ENGINEERING
3 South High Street, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 | P: 540-861-1111 | www.colmanengineering.com

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City of Harrisonburg

Subdivision Ordinance Variance
704 North Liberty Street
Tax Map Parcel #
40-N-1 and 2
+/- 13,131 square feet

(Future) Land Use Guide



Neighborhood Residential

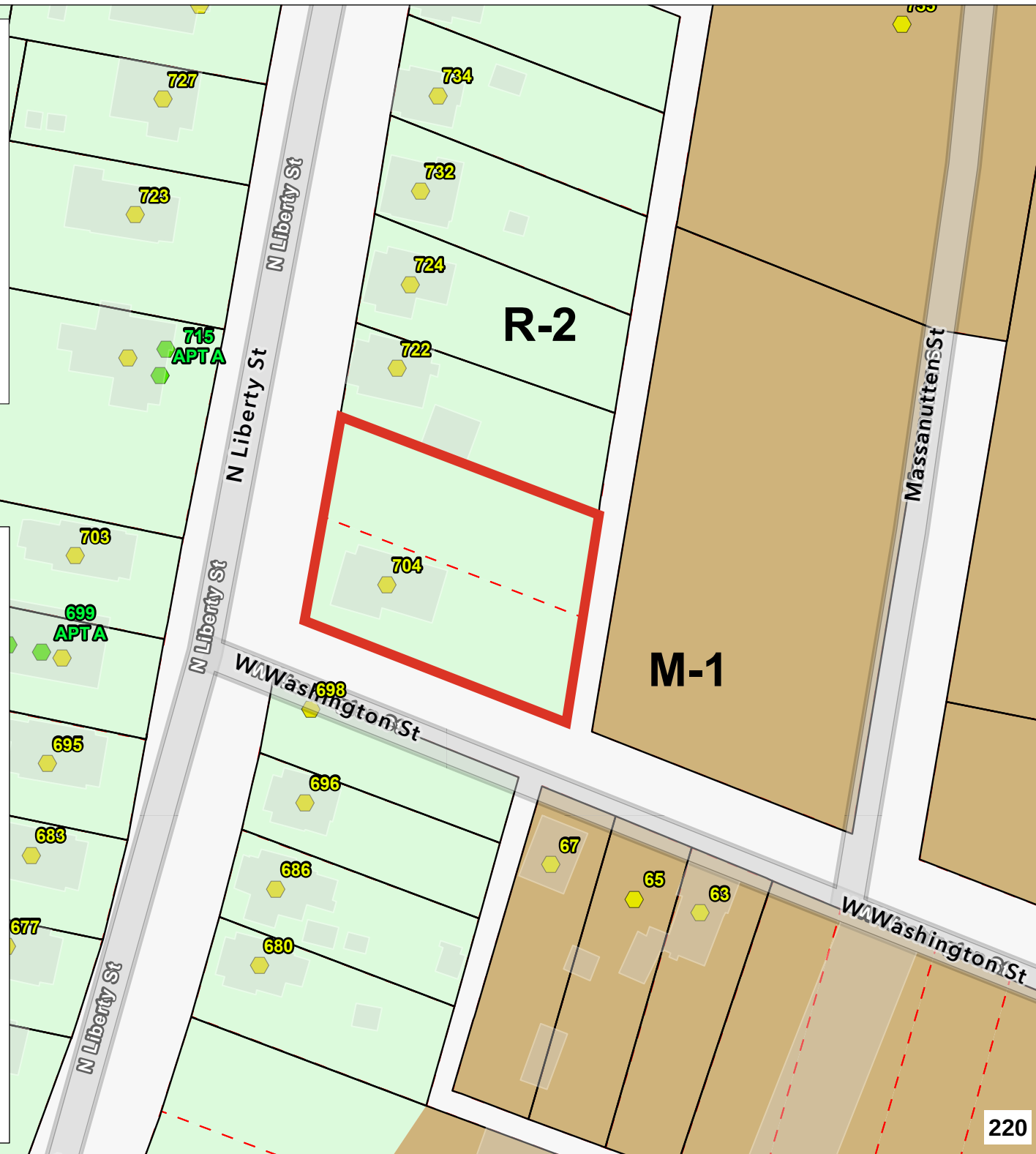
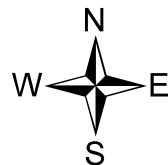
Limited Commercial

Mixed Use

City of Harrisonburg

Subdivision Ordinance Variance
704 North Liberty Street
Tax Map Parcel #
40-N-1 and 2
+/- 13,131 square feet

Zoning



City of Harrisonburg

Subdivision Ordinance Variance
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