



Blackwell Engineering, PLC

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December 7, 2022
Revised January 4, 2023
Revised January 10, 2023

Thanh Dang
Department of Planning and Community Development
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
540-432-7700
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SUBJECT: Bluestone Town Center Rezoning

BE: 2935-R

Dear Ms. Dang,

Basic Info

Attached is the rezoning application and necessary supplemental documents to request a rezoning of TM#115 B 1 4, TM#021 K 4, TM#021 K 5, & TM#117 C 3, from their respective current zonings to R-7. Below is a description of the site, as it is laid out in the attached proposed Master Plan and proposed Zoning Ordinance.

Project Overview

The goal of this project is to create a variety of affordable and attainable housing opportunities for city residents. To this end, Bluestone Town Center proposes to build up to (but not exceeding) 900 new dwelling units on a little under 90 acres. The site masterplan proposes a town center at the heart of the development, which will include a community center and retail shops that are community-service oriented. These amenities would serve the proposed community by offering a variety of necessary goods and services within walking or biking distance of the proposed residential units. Also proposed are interconnections to the existing and planned portions of Harrisonburg's *Friendly City Trail* and HDPT bus routes. With the inclusion of local retail options conveniently located to these developments, the developers hope to create a close knit and accessible community that adds value and opportunity to the City of Harrisonburg.

Compatibility with Zoning Ordinance

The current zonings of R-1, R-3, and B-2 allow a variety of residential, business, and community uses including (but not limited to) those listed in the table below:

Sample of Allowed Uses in Existing Zoning Districts		
	By Right	SUP
R-1	Single-family	Day care centers
	Churches	Community Buildings
	Schools	
	Governmental uses	
	Community Centers	
R-3	Single-family	Multi-family
	Duplexes	
	Townhomes	
	Professional offices	
	Churches	
	Day Care	
B-2	Mercantile establishments	Warehousing
	Professional offices	Multi-family
	Shops/stores	
	Churches	

As such, the uses proposed in the Master Plan Zoning Ordinance are similar to the uses already allowed in the existing zonings of the property. Likewise, with single-family & multi-family dwellings to the east & south of the property, business/professional offices to the west, agricultural land to the northwest, and a commercial golf course to north, the proposed mix of business and residential uses is similar to the uses of adjacent properties.

Included in the supplemental documents is an application for Zoning Ordinance amendment. If approved, this amendment would allow for manufactured houses to be erected in the R-7 zoning district. It would also modify ZO Sections 10-3-57.6.(c) and (d), allowing for multi-family dwelling units to comprise up to 50% of the total number of dwellings, and would allow for multi-family dwelling units of up to 64 units. These changes would allow the developer more freedom and flexibility to create diverse and affordable housing options.

In the proposed R7 zoning, single family dwellings and Townhomes of up to 8 dwellings are permitted by right. Multi-family dwellings would be allowed by right provided that they meet the conditions set forth in (amended) subsections 10-3-57.6.(c) and (d). Per subsection 10-3-57.6.(c), multiple-family units will not exceed 50% of all dwelling units and no single dwelling type will comprise more than 70% of the total units. In the conceptual site layout, multiple-family units comprise the largest percentage of units (approximately 46%).

Subsection 10-3-57.6.(d).(1) is met via the roadway shown on the Master Plan. Compliance with subsection 10-3-57.6.(d).(2) is also shown via the Master Plan layout. The single-family dwellings will be located primarily along the border of the property, with the taller apartment and townhome developments residing more toward the center of the development. Furthermore, as stated above, the proposed uses for the property are similar to the uses of adjacent parcels and similar to the uses allowed in the property's existing zoning. Subsection 10-3-57.6.(d).(3) references a development's impact on "steep slopes" (defined by the Zoning Ordinance as, "Natural slopes prior to land disturbance or construction that exceed fifteen (15) percent (0.15).) and "floodplains." The steepest existing slopes on site are around 12%, and the floodplain lies along the eastern edge of the property where no multi-family dwellings are proposed. Specific strategies and plans to mitigate erosion, mitigate flooding, and to preserve the floodplain will be addressed to City and State standards in the full E&S and stormwater plans that will be included with any subsequent site plan prior to construction.

As stated in the Project Overview, the development will consist of a combination of residential, retail, and community buildings. Sheet 1 of the master plan shows the proposed locations of various housing types. A zoning table showing the minimum specifications for lots of various types is included in the Master Plan Zoning Ordinance. Sheet 2 shows the public road layout, typical section info for each street, and proposed offsite road improvements. Sheet 1 of the conceptual site layout shows the existing condition of the site. Sheet 2 of the conceptual site layout shows a conceptual layout of unit placement which includes the location of community buildings and common green space, and a general landscaping schedule. Per subsection 10-3-57-6.(g)(5), no slopes exceeding 15% are on site and the 100-year flood plain is shown on the existing conditions on Sheet 1 of the conceptual site layout. The accompanying zoning ordinance dictates other specific design principles.

Compatibility with Comprehensive Plan

The 2018 approved Comprehensive Plan designates the majority of the site as Low-Density Mixed Residential, which includes, “residential development containing a mix of large and small-lot single-family detached dwellings, where commercial and service uses might be finely mixed within residential...” The plan goes on to state that, “The intent is to have innovative residential building types and allow creative subdivision designs that promote neighborhood cohesiveness, walkability, connected street grids, community green spaces, and the protection of environmental resources or sensitive areas (i.e. trees and floodplains).”

As is shown on the Master Plan, the proposed development will include a variety of single family dwelling units, along with townhome and apartment style dwellings. A series of shared use trails will connect the farther residential dwellings with the town center located at the heart of the development.

Based on table 6-6 of the approved Comprehensive Plan, the following number of units are allowed by right for the site in its existing zoning:

Existing Lot Zoning & Density Table					
TM #	Acerage	Zone	Units Per Acre	Lower Unit Density	Maximum Unit Density*
115 B 1 4	27.816	R1	3.3 - 4	91	111
115 B 1 4	8.528	R3	10 - 21	85	179
115 B 1 4	10.099	B2	-	-	-
021 K 4	25.984	R3	10 - 21	259	545
117 C 3	17.215	R1	3.3 - 4	56	68
021 K 5	0.2	R3	-	-	-
Total	89.842			491	903
*Maximum density obtained from Table 6-6 in Chapter 6 of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan					

The attached conceptual site layout proposes a total of 897 dwelling units via various dwelling types as broken down on in the conceptual design chart. This breaks down to approximately 10 units/acres. Though this density is greater than the 7 units per acre proposed by the City’s comprehensive plan for Low-Density

Mixed Residential, the proposed 897 units fall within the density range allowed by right on the property in its current zoning.

Furthermore, the developers believe a density of around 10 units/acre is needed in order to keep prices affordable per the goals laid out in the project overview. The average cost per unit has increased greatly over the past couple years. The lower range density proposed by the 2018 Comprehensive Plan will not allow for development to occur at price point that will provide for affordable & attainable housing to those who most need it. Chapter 7 of the Comprehensive Plan states that Objective 6 is *“To meet the current and future needs of residents for affordable housing”* specifically through *“affordable housing options, including affordable rental properties and affordable homes for ownership”* (Objective 6.1). The goal of this development is to achieve this objective through *“expanding housing choice and access to opportunity; increasing home ownership among low-income households and members of protected classes; improving the utility of public transit for low-income and disabled persons...”* (Strategy 6.1.1) and *“the development and construction of a variety of housing types provided at a range of densities, types (single-family detached, duplex, townhome, and multi-family), and costs”* (Strategy 6.1.5). As such, the density of this development is driven by a desire to meet these goals of the comprehensive plan, providing a variety of affordable housing options, rather than by a desire to maximize unit density to increase profits for the HRRRA.

We thank you for your time in considering our request for rezoning. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Michael Wong, Executive director for the Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority (540-434-7386) or myself (540-432-9555).

Cordially



Edmond H. Blackwell, P.E.
Civil Engineer