



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

409 SOUTH MAIN STREET, HARRISONBURG, VA 22801

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To: Planning Commission
 From: Department of Community Development
 Date: September 11, 2024 (Regular Meeting)
 Re: Rezoning – Eastern Mennonite University (Master Plan Amendment)

Summary:

Project name	EMU Master Plan
Address/Location	1100, 1111, 1115, 1301, 1311, 1321, 1317, 1381, 1400 College Avenue; 1302, 1304 Hillcrest Drive; 1000, 1078, 1088, 1090, 1092, 1094, 1098, 1100, 1200, 1240, 1280, 1300, 1320 Mt. Clinton Pike; 1100, 1110, 1160, 1161, 1191, 1194, 1195, 1301, 1304, 1307, 1310, 1320, 1330, 1401, 1041, 1481, 1510 Park Road; 1105, 1141 Parkway Drive; 720, 850, 880, 902, 912, 922, 932, 942, 994, 1080, 1085, 1090 Parkwood Drive; 1110, 1111, 1181, 1200, 1290 Smith Avenue; 1110, 1140 West Dogwood Drive; 1318 Woodland Park Circle
Tax Map Parcels	48-A-1, 2, 34, 35, 36; 48-B-5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18; 48-H-1, 3, 4, 5, 5-A, 6; 51-A-1; 51-B-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12; and 52-A-28A, 29, 30, 32, 38
Total Land Area	+/- 94-acres
Property Owner	Eastern Mennonite University (Eastern Mennonite College, Eastern Mennonite College Inc., and Eastern Mennonite College & Seminary Inc.)
Owner's Representative	Colman Engineering
Present Zoning	R-2, Residential District, R-3, Medium Density Residential, R-2, Residential District/I-1, Institutional Overlay District, R-3, Medium Density Residential/I-1, Institutional Overlay District
Proposed Zoning	R-2, Residential District/I-1, Institutional Overlay District and R-3, Medium Density Residential/I-1, Institutional Overlay District
Staff Recommendation	Approval
Planning Commission	September 11, 2024 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated October 8, 2024 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated October 22, 2024 (Second Reading)

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

- Site:** Academic, recreational, and residential buildings, parking lots, and common area associated with Eastern Mennonite University, zoned R-2, R-3, R-2/I-1, R-3/I-1
- North:** Across West Dogwood Drive and across Parkway Drive, residential dwellings, zoned R-2; and north of the eastern portion of Eastern Mennonite University; Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, zoned R-3/I-1
- East:** Residential uses, academic buildings, and athletic fields associated Eastern Mennonite School, zoned R-3/I-1, B-2C/I-1; Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, zoned R-3/I-1
- South:** Across Mount Clinton Pike, residential dwellings, academic buildings associated with Eastern Mennonite University, and commercial uses, zoned R-2 and B-2
- West:** Residential uses, zoned R-3 and across Hillcrest Drive, residential uses, zoned R-2, and properties located in Rockingham County, zoned R2

The Institutional Overlay District provides for distinctive development of certain nonprofit institutional uses, such as colleges and universities, where upon approval of a master plan, development may deviate from the requirements of the underlying zoning district. If a master plan is approved and the property owner does not want to abide by the permissions of the master plan, a master plan amendment is necessary, which is accommodated through a rezoning process.

EMU's Institutional Overlay Master Plan was originally approved in 1998. This plan provided a layout for existing and proposed buildings, the number of stories and overall heights of those buildings, as well as the proposed parking layout throughout the campus. In 2010, EMU amended the plan by adding a parcel, enlarging the Suter Science Center, and introducing green technology in the form of solar panels, to the overall plan. In 2014, EMU again amended their Master Plan to adjust the maximum heights and location of proposed solar panels at various locations.

Key Issues:

The applicant is requesting to rezone +/- 94 acres of property zoned R-2, Residential District, R-3, Medium Density Residential, R-2, Residential District/I-1, Institutional Overlay District, R-3, Medium Density Residential/I-1, Institutional Overlay District to R-2, Residential District/I-1, Institutional Overlay District and R-3, Medium Density Residential/I-1, Institutional Overlay District by amending the Eastern Mennonite University Master Plan.

Master Plan

The applicant is requesting to amend the existing Master Plan, superseding previous amendments made to the original 1998 plan. This iteration adds new parcels to the plan and includes provisions for defining setbacks, allowing deviations in height for solar and other equipment, and adjustments in parking lot landscaping, and the required number of parking spaces.

While most changes are easily understood, the below information provides clarification on several details.

In "Item 2" of the Master Plan, the applicant proposes height deviations for buildings. Specifically, they request allowing maximum building heights to be increased by 10-feet for solar panels and other equipment. The table below provides a comparison of height requirements of the base zoning district and what is proposed through the master plan.

District	Maximum Height	Maximum within EMU Master Plan
R-2 – Single Family or Duplex	35 feet	45 feet
R-3 – Single Family or Duplex	35 feet	45 feet
R-3 – other	40 feet	50 feet
I-2/ Institutional Building, including hospitals and other medical care facilities (other than residential)	40 feet	50 feet
I-2/ Institutional Residential Buildings, with maximum occupant capacity of Less than 50	40 feet	50 feet
I-2/ Institutional Residential Buildings, with maximum occupant capacity of 50 – 100	45 feet	55 feet
I-2/ Institutional Residential Buildings, with maximum occupant capacity of 101 – 150+	50 feet	60 feet

Additionally, in Item 2, the applicant proposes to deviate from minimum setback requirements. The applicant is proposing that principal buildings be allowed to have a minimum 10-foot setback at external boundaries of the campus as well as along public streets. The master plan would allow accessory structures to have a minimum 5-foot setback along the campus external boundaries, but be limited to a 10-foot setback, along public street right-of-ways.

For internal lot lines, the applicant originally proposed a minimum 0-foot setback. However, staff was concerned about radiant heat and fire spreading as well as the angle of ladder placement for fire and rescue personnel between buildings. In most zoning districts, principal buildings are separated from each other by at least 20-feet because there is a 10-foot or greater side and rear yard setback for both buildings. Reducing the distance between buildings increases the risk of fire spreading between buildings and reduces the working area for the Fire Department to protect exposures of a building in the event of a fire.

Mimicking the approach adopted when the R-8, Small Lot Residential District, was created, the Master Plan would allow:

“A minimum 0-foot setback applied to all interior lot lines. When interior lot line setbacks are less than 10-feet at least one of the following is required:

- a) National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 13, 13R, or 13D fire sprinkler systems will be installed in such buildings; or
- b) Exterior walls adjacent to the aforementioned lot line will be constructed without openings and with a minimum 1-hour fire resistance rating in accordance with testing standards described in the Virginia Residential Code and Construction Code.”

In "Item 3," the applicant seeks to deviate from the minimum off-street parking requirements as well as the parking lot landscaping regulations. The applicant is specifically requesting for the flexibility to be able to determine the number of off-street parking spaces they need to serve the university rather than meeting any of the minimums required by the Zoning Ordinance. As to the deviations to parking lot landscaping regulations, EMU is requesting to meet all requirements of Section 10-3-30.1 except they would deviate from subsections (5) and (6) that together require specific landscaping islands and required plantings. Rather than complying with subsections (5) and (6), they will instead provide the otherwise required plantings within other locations internal to the parking lot or within 15 feet of the parking lot.

The Master Plan also outlines open space locations and lists existing and proposed uses and parking. Note that existing and proposed uses and parking areas listed and illustrated on the Campus Map are not binding.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Institutional and states:

These areas are planned for development by certain institutional uses, like private colleges and universities, hospitals, and retirement communities that operate on large land areas and may function in a campus-like environment.

Transportation and Traffic

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

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

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

Recommendation

Staff believes that the Master Plan changes conform with the I-1 district and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s Land Use Guide. Staff does not foresee negative impacts to the surrounding neighborhood. Staff recommends approval of the Master Plan.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- a. Recommend approval of the rezoning request; or
- b. Recommend denial of the rezoning request.

Community Engagement:

As required, the request was published in the local newspaper twice advertising for Planning Commission’s public hearing. The advertisement was published as shown below:

Rezoning – Eastern Mennonite University (Master Plan Amendment)

Public hearing to consider a request from Eastern Mennonite University (Eastern Mennonite College, Eastern Mennonite College Inc., and Eastern Mennonite College & Seminary Inc.) to rezone +/- 94-acres of property zoned R-2, Residential District, R-3, Medium Density Residential, R-2, Residential District/I-1, Institutional Overlay District, R-3, Medium Density Residential/ I-1, Institutional Overlay District to R-2, Residential District/I-1, Institutional Overlay District and R-3, Medium Density Residential/I-1, Institutional Overlay District by amending their master plan. The property is addressed as 1100, 1111, 1115, 1301, 1311, 1321, 1317, 1381, 1400 College Avenue; 1302, 1304 Hillcrest Drive; 1000, 1078, 1088, 1090, 1092, 1094, 1098, 1100, 1200, 1240, 1280, 1300, 1320 Mt. Clinton Pike; 1100, 1110, 1160, 1161, 1191, 1194, 1195, 1301, 1304, 1307, 1310, 1320, 1330, 1401, 1041, 1481, 1510 Park Road; 1105, 1141 Parkway Drive; 720, 850, 880, 902, 912, 922, 932, 942, 994, 1080, 1085, 1090 Parkwood Drive; 1110, 1111, 1181, 1200, 1290 Smith Avenue; 1110, 1140 West Dogwood Drive; 1318 Woodland Park Circle and is identified as tax map parcels 48-A-1, 2, 34, 35, 36; 48-B-5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18; 48-H-1, 3, 4, 5, 5-A, 6; 51-A-1; 51-B-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12; and 52-A-28A, 29, 30, 32, 38.

In addition, adjoining property owners were notified of the public hearing; the property was posted with signage advertising the request; and a notice was provided on the City’s website at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/public-hearings>.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends alternative (a) approval of the rezoning request.

Attachments:

- 1. Site maps
- 2. Application and supporting documents

Review:

N/A