



Summary of Stakeholder Sessions

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Introduction

From October 5th to October 7th, Kendig Keast Collaborative (KKC) held a series of virtual stakeholder interviews to invite discussion and identify the key land use and regulatory issues currently facing the City. These sessions were broken into eight different groups to determine the key issues affecting each stakeholder group. These groups and the corresponding dates of the meetings are shown in the table below.

Date	Stakeholder Group
10/5/2020	Group #1. Developers, Engineers, Attorneys, Architects, Builders (Group 1 of 2)
10/5/2020	Group #2. Developers, Engineers, Attorneys, Architects, Builders (Group 2 of 2)
10/5/2020	Group #3. Residential Developers and Real Estate
10/6/2020	Group #4. Business Owners, Commercial Property Managers, Other Associated Business Groups
10/6/2020	Group #5. People who Live in Harrisonburg (1 of 2)
10/7/2020	Group #6.-Environmental Advocates
10/7/2020	Group #7. Providers of Social Services
10/8/2020	Group #8. People who Live in Harrisonburg (2 of 2)
10/28/2020	Group #9. Educational Professionals (1 of 2)
10/29/2020	Group #10. Educational Professionals (2 of 2)

The purpose of holding these interviews was to hear firsthand what different types of users of the current Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances view as the greatest issues and highest priorities to be addressed in the updated Ordinances. This begins with an essential understanding of the Ordinances, how they've been applied, and the outcomes and implications of these Ordinances. These comments, together with KKC's Ordinance Diagnostic, District Comparison Analysis, and Comparative Map of Land Use and Zoning Districts sets the stage for KKC to begin drafting Module #1 of the updated Ordinances.



Below is an abbreviated recordation of the issues that emerged through these conversations and identification of the key themes that each focus group felt was critically important to be covered in the updated Ordinances. Please note that these comments may at times be inaccurate, but they do represent the views and perceptions of those interviewed. Comments that may be factually incorrect based on the text of the Zoning or Subdivision Ordinance or where clarification would be beneficial to the reader are provided with footnotes.

Zoning and Land Uses

Comments Received

- Lots of requests for uses in R-5 zoning district: supplemental standards in R-5 that are required to be met; no parking between street and buildings¹.
- B-1 zoning district is working really well because no setback and no parking requirements.
- Providing tools to give developers is good for small parcel redevelopment to allow City to become denser.
- New R-8 zoning district was good.... Some promise for smaller lots, reduced setbacks, etc.
- Short term rentals need to be dealt with.² They aren't regulated in outlying counties at the Council or Board level.
- Mixed use issues. People don't like these because of students sometimes.
- Projects that are about density and things that are "other than single-family" bring out a lot of concerns.
- Too many zoning districts. Many times, projects need a rezoning at same time as a special use permit.
- R-8 – minimum floor area of 2,800 square feet³:
 - Too big for affordability.
 - Other districts it causes problems too.
 - Rezone for smaller square footage.
- Ordinance steers a lot of developers toward townhouses.
- Keeping some uses out of Downtown like gas stations is good.
- In favor of more uses by right or limited uses.
- Trying to bring a park to downtown Harrisonburg.
- Short term rentals and how they impact neighborhoods should be addressed. There is a need for them, but there are some other opinions... they see the majority rentals going to people who come to visit the Shenandoah Valley.
- What are the negative impacts of short term rentals? Not "Friendly" or knowing them, but it works great when the owner occupies the property and rents some space therein. Scared that short term landlords are taking up good rental property for this use from families that need

¹ The interviewee thought it was difficult to place parking to side or rear, which while it is not prohibited by Zoning regulations city staff has encouraged for R-5 rezonings that are in designated as Mixed Use in the Comprehensive Plan.

² The interviewee may have thought that the City does not have STR regulations. City Council adopted STR regulations in March 2019 and subsequent amendments to the regulations were made in July 2019 and September 2020.

³ The R-8, Small Lot Residential District requires a minimum 2,800 square feet of minimum lot area for single-family detached dwellings, not minimum floor area.



housing in Harrisonburg.⁴

- Short term rentals – should be treated more as permitted subject to limitations. Too vague so that people may buy into a neighborhood and not know if they could come or not:
 - Hearings required whether you live there or not.
 - No scenario where permitted with limitations.
 - If you live there you should be able to do it without a hearing.⁵
- New apartment for JMU – CC asked why are we building more for students and that leaves a void for lower income residents to move in where they are not expected.
- Really struggle with projects involving providing housing for people facing substance abuse:
 - Group recovery housing only fit under boarding house as a use:
 - Restricted in zones and overlays.
 - Housing is hard to find and would need to find owner willing through special use process as conditional of sale.
 - Those in recovery are technically covered under ADA.
- In favor of eliminating R-1 zoning, allowing ADUs, allowing mixed-use zoning, emergency flexibility in zoning (such as to allow homeless shelters to operate in the R-1 district for long periods of time) - Zoning permits recovery housing in all areas of the City, not concentrated to one.
- In favor of more flexibility for small businesses such as childcare in homes.
- In favor of more mixed use, less exclusionary zoning especially DT.
- In favor of more infill development.
- The current ordinance allows the low density, suburban neighborhoods to have the greatest influence over downtown - that it is designed for cars to drive in, park in front of the destination and then leave when they are done.
- The current zoning regulations aren't the right tool to help us get there. Why not a form-based code? Is Harrisonburg ready for this type of zoning? How can that help them be what they want to be?
 - High cost of property acquisition? We have a housing bubble. We have small properties.... Tiny homes are needed. Many challenges ahead, because the City insists on rezoning in order to develop new housing.
- How can the ordinance be revised to allow for community gardens to be incorporated vs. something that requires a special permit garden by garden?
- Include cottage dwellings (aka. accessory dwelling units, ADUs) on properties. With mixed zoning, is there a way to incorporate this.
- Could you have a small grocery store close by? It takes forever to get to the grocery store? Areas of Harrisonburg are food deserts.
- How do we take the student-heavy townhome spaces and start dropping commercial into them?
- We want more flexibility and adaptability in zoning no matter what.
- We have a lot of large empty commercial spaces that never panned out.

⁴ The interviewee may not have been aware that City Council adopted new STR regulations in September 2020 that require that the property is the primary residence of the STR operator.

⁵ The interviewee may not have been aware that City Council adopted new STR regulations in September 2020 that created a new use called "homestays" that allows transient lodging in all dwellings except apartments that are located in zoning districts that allow residential uses, with limitations.



- How do we get an ordinance that can mitigate what we have messed up? We need greater flexibility!
- Student housing has to be able to allow micro redevelopment very quickly.
- Planning Commission and City Council are completely disjointed from needs of City. How do we generate an ordinance that keeps City Council out of micromanaging zoning decisions?
- It is mind boggling how many zoning districts there are.
- Chicken plant downtown causes a lot of truck traffic.

Key Themes / Concerns

- Short term rentals and student / multifamily housing need to be addressed.
- Need flexibility and allowances for infill in zoning/uses.

Urban Design

Comments Received

- Push towards the entire City operating in an urban mindset.
- One size doesn't fit all though! There are large tracts and big parts of Harrisonburg that aren't even suburban. We need to protect things as well. Some cities, for example, have pushed mixed use too much where it is not appropriate for the context.
- Setback provisions are a little too onerous for a City with density like this.
- People point to downtown as wanted example, but the regulations do not allow for that kind of development because of requirements like parking minimums, landscaping (buildings become "invisible" and could create traffic hazard because drivers are trying to find their destinations, building fences between lots is not working as intended), etc.
- Interested in overlay districts for downtown like Historic Preservation.
- 30' setback is awfully tough and done for uniformity only.
- Internal site circulation standards aren't strong enough:
 - Harrisonburg Crossing has bad interior circulation.
 - Conflicts between cars and pedestrians.
- Need connectivity to adjacent commercial areas to residential and vice versa.
- Would like update to work with transit options for apartments – possibly requiring bus stops or coordination with transportation agency.
- Harrisonburg has large tracts also above the shopping mall, etc. They are hideous! No planting, etc. Bike paths are separated. Sidewalks are separated. There are many great cities with great examples. We don't have to wait for things to be reimaged.
- JMU's contribution, economically, has been huge. They have been lacking in encouraging development that is smart. They have built some parking decks that encourages students to live far from campus, drive their cars to these decks, and park there. JMU needs to get on board with a more comprehensive view of the City and their stakeholder status.
- Townhomes not facing a public street - often granted, but staff changed mind about supporting it on a certain project.

Key Themes / Concerns

- Need to be less car centric.



- Downtown is pointed to as example, but regulations make it impossible to development in the same way outside of downtown.

Housing

Comments Received

- Promoting single-family and promoting affordable housing... well those are just two different things sometimes. We need tools to redevelop and put 3-4 units back where there was one before. We don't have these tools for small parcels. We need to address housing and think about it through a redevelopment lens. The City is out of land and we have to address this and work on this!
- There is a tremendous need for affordable housing. It is very hard to do in the City.
- Affordable housing is a commonly discussed topic. For example: why are sidewalks needed on both sides of the road in a subdivision? If you want affordability, there has to be a middle ground. You can't keep adding requirements and regulations and expect them to be affordable.
- Big need for affordable housing especially in multifamily format.
- Affordable housing tends to get developed in parts of town with legacy utilities. Have to fix those before you can provide a single square foot of livable space.
- Hearings and opposition also prevent affordable housing.
- Seldom a month goes by the affordable housing doesn't get brought up.
- Everything builds up to prevent affordability. City wants more affordable housing but increases regulations. Should only have sidewalks on one side of suburban subdivision to promote affordability.
- Student housing complexes (4 bedroom/ 4 bath townhomes/apt):
 - Students move to new ones and then older ones become "workforce" housing.
 - Income is a protected class in VA now.
 - Housing shortage - 42 houses on the market for 55,000 pop.
 - R-5 zoning is difficult because people are afraid it'll be student housing.
 - Multi-family housing downtown near Old Town gets people out to meetings.
 - Opinion doesn't change based on if building is stand alone or mixed use.
- Lack of annexation makes it very difficult for housing in the City.
- Student Housing: hard to regulate; unintended consequence of new student housing... there will be vacancy and neighborhoods that are blighted student housing that becomes lower income housing. There is a demand for a different type of housing (families) that doesn't have to be former student housing. We need to plan for this better.
- More spaces need to be designed for all incomes and housing types; poor planning thus far on this issue- where multifamily should go; Student housing is not easily repurposed (ex: Hunter's Ridge on Port Republic Road).
- Student housing becoming affordable housing:
 - There's not enough affordable housing in Harrisonburg.
 - Myths about affordable housing have been dispelled.
 - Affordable housing in previously more upscale neighborhoods does not drive down property values according to studies.
 - Faith in Action is undertaking an affordable housing trust.



- JMU's growth has had an impact on housing.
- People left larger homes and they turned into fraternity houses and student housing.
- Old Town is now more like it was in the 60s. In the 1970s-2000s there was a lot more student housing.
- A person can rent a townhouse for a certain amount to a family but if they rent it by the bedroom they can make a lot more money.
- Very low home ownership rate in Harrisonburg.
- Exodus of people to County because of so much student housing.
- State mandate that says Universities have to have enough housing for 25% of students and JMU just meets that.
- It is difficult to construct pricier single-family homes due to construction standards for infrastructure.
- Affordable housing just gets lip service in Harrisonburg.
- Trying to tear down 625 SF small house. Wanted to put 3 units on it. Going from 2 units to 3 units, which would have made houses more affordable, would have had to put in fire hydrant, sprinkler system, site plan if disturbing so many square feet of ground:
 - This is a disincentive for doing small re-developments.
 - Having to put in full street infrastructure to do just 2 lots.
- Need density bonuses in code.
- Need pictorial examples of lot layouts in code.
- Projects struggle to even get to public hearing stage because of frustration with the rezoning process early on.
- City hosts monthly housing meetings and ideas are often shot down; very discouraging.
- Need more meaningful incentives so people will build affordable housing instead of more student housing.
- Lots of talk about increasing density by planner types. Would love affordable housing along transit routes and near employment centers.
- Need a new relationship with JMU – students only required to live on campus for 1 year so housing market is distorted:
 - 6,000 students on campus and 15,000 off campus.
- Would love to hear from universities about ideas to help solving the housing crisis and not just have the City give in to demands of whatever they want built.
- No housing specialist works for the City so lack of meaningful work; lots of lip service.
- Student housing allows apartments to charge 3x the rent or a co-signer to be approved. People working could pay rent, but don't have 3x the rent to qualify for the apartment.
- Other student housing is filled by families, but no thought was put into safety or design for children and families.
- Large portion of housing stock is controlled by 4 companies:
 - Essentially being rented per bedroom but isn't enforced as boarding house, single-room occupancy, etc.
 - Would be in favor of allowing mix of housing like single-room occupancy and more one-bedroom units.
- Lots of landlords not wanting to participate in Sec. 8 or Choice Vouchers because they don't want to meet the standards – student housing standards are lower.



- Respite housing:
 - Currently using hotel vouchers.
 - Would love a house to be able to place people post hospital visit.
 - Use is not currently defined.
- Nothing should be exclusive to just college students:
 - Landlords deny nonstudents – lot of “they wouldn’t fit in here.”
 - City allows it.
- Need % low income units required built into development.
- High density should be required to take Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher.
- Student resorts on outskirts that are not going to be sustainable or useful in the future – built poorly with no mind to environmental impact or quality of materials.
- No positive inertia for affordability in Harrisonburg. Government hasn’t invested in this issue in a way that is viable or helpful.
- Affordable housing should be required, not encouraged.

Key Themes / Concerns

- Lack of housing, especially affordable housing:
 - Need incentives.
- Overabundance of student housing.
- No real movement from City to solve housing issues.

Parking

Comments Received

- Parking is the number one thing to work on.
- Parking requirements for off street parking, between setbacks and parking, create a lot of impermeable surface and encourage commuter and congestion issues.
- Best district for parking is in the B-1 district/downtown, with no parking requirements. Downtown parking is a free and public good and keeps downtown development reasonable, compact, walkable, and nice as a college town.
- Move towards parking maximums (or at least discuss); malls, etc. could benefit from reduced parking requirements.
- Parking capacities should be reviewed downtown. There should be flexible solutions. For example- an office building and a church can share because there is a lot of empty parking downtown on weekends at uses that aren’t used during those times.
- Bicycle parking needs to be addressed for specific uses. Too much black and white in some areas. For example- why bicycle parking required at a mattress store?
- Parking requirements are tough to meet.
- Think about parking maximums.
- Sometimes cannot subdivide land because parking requirements for each individual use cannot be met. Huge parking lots for no reason.
- Downtown areas that aren’t exempt from parking are tough to meet.
- Recent change to reach out further to get parking spaces... it’s overboard. There should be flexibility on application of ordinance. Lots of zoning ordinances have general categorization of uses and don’t act the same. For example, some offices get walk ins and some don’t... non-



public service uses should not have as many. Self-defined parking is required. Only use what is needed. They aren't cornered in.

- Designated historic properties to have no on-site parking requirements.
- Minimum requirement creates problems because they want to maximize building size.
- There are some discrepancies in how the parking is calculated.
- In general, markets take care of that.
- Landscaping island increase wasted space in lots.
- Needs to be balance in reg and common sense.
- Offsets would be nice so less parking spots if xx landscaping is installed or bike parking is provided.
- Removal of parking minimums is first and foremost:
 - Will allow for more greenspace.
 - Allow market to control.
- Parking lots take up a lot of space.
- Do you have a lot of parking variances? Yes- sometimes and the City is receptive because they know this needs to be addressed. They have shown site specific data for specific uses and gotten good feedback.

Key Themes / Concerns

- Need to rehaul parking requirements and require less.
- Parking lots take up too much space.
- Requirements make development more difficult.

Signs / Landscaping / Lights

Comments Received⁶

- Very strict and aggressive regulations for trees and landscaping along thoroughfares makes a place beautiful. Harrisonburg is not visually attractive outside of downtown because of this. Route 11, South Main Street, AKA The Motor Mile. Greenspace is what makes the City softer and lovely. This has to be intentional.
- Signage downtown is not effective for traveling cars- confusing.... Even a drinking game at a local bar on how many traffic nightmares happen downtown. They need European style traffic lights downtown because they don't work. The signage is cluttered and not clear downtown at all. Driving up the upper deck is so confusing. IF you don't know the City especially.
- Visual attractiveness - downtown area has done a good job on signs.
- As you approach downtown its scaled to cars then scale down as you get downtown.
- Unattractive – motor mile – high signs – scaled for interstate traffic – even restaurants:
- Pretty towns are that way because they have green space and because they have unobtrusive signs.

⁶ Several comments in this section are refer to vehicular wayfinding and traffic signage that is outside the purview of the Zoning Ordinance. These comments will be shared with the Departments of Public Works and Economic Development, and with Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance who either regulate traffic signage or plan for wayfinding signage. The Zoning Ordinance regulates signage on private properties.



- Warrenton, VA has pretty strict and has aggressive landscaping standards; violations are routinely and proactively enforced.
- Signs downtown are not effective for letting people know where they are going.
- Pedestrian level traffic lights downtown would make things safer.
- Signs can seem cluttered downtown.
- Neon and fluorescent signs – there haven't been a lot – but the ones that the City has are bright.
- Health center has a bright sign.
- Many unauthorized signs:
 - Temporary signs.
 - Grand opening signs, we buy houses, etc.
 - Private land.
- LED signs are a big problem:
 - Impacts to driving public with brightness are significant.
 - Turn them off outside business hours.
- Site lighting needs to be addressed in code with images:
 - Motor Mile example.
 - Dark Sky-compliant standards.
- Shade trees and street trees should be incorporated into new developments

Key Themes / Concerns

- Lots of sign clutter
- Lack of landscaping requirements
- Overall, makes City unattractive

Administration for all Development Review Processes⁷

Comments Received

- Interpretation changes depending on personnel and guidelines vs. black and white would be helpful.
- It would be great for more administrative authority given to make decisions.
- Some requirements are not always matching the motive or need (no rationale).
- Give developers more flexibility with the land use and with parking would be great. Giving city staff more discretion to approve things that meet the intent would be great.
- Projects take longer than other local jurisdictions (Charlottesville for example).
- We hope that this doesn't make it take longer.
- They have to chase around comments to get feedback and getting conflicting messages on what has to be done, and may be due to staff changes.
- One submittal to another might have a different reviewer and they review things differently or think of things in different ways.
- Outside of Charlotte, NC: Waxhaw, NC: Their process, entirety of code and design guidelines was a great experience throughout.

⁷ Unless specifically indicated as a zoning matter, these comments reflected interviewees' opinions of the City in general, across City departments and across different review processes, including the engineered comprehensive site plan and building permit processes, or it was not specified which the comment referred to.



- City is good to work with, but getting consistent and timely comments from City agencies is slower compared County agencies. It would be nice to have practical solutions and a more simplified code.
- Staff should be able to make decisions on reductions or alternatives rather than Boards and Commissions. NIMBYism creeps in at Planning Commission meetings. Planning Commission members and Council aren't as entrenched in development to know the idiosyncrasies of it.
- Staff is kind of by the book, which is consistent, and sometimes there are shades of gray that need inferences. Ordinance needs rewriting.
- Going through the Special Use permitting process, rezoning, etc. are all public process and ironing those out can be troubling.
- Change in zoning or use is what takes forever. Most projects in Harrisonburg are redevelopments.
- VA law allows Zoning Administrator to adjust setbacks, but Harrisonburg doesn't.
- The process is easier in the county. The county has a lot of different areas. The City is all urban, so the county has more room to build. But utilities aren't available always in the county, so it's apples and oranges.
- Rockingham County is easy to work with. Comes from the top. Casey (Asst. County Admin) is great to work with as a developer/engineer. They don't make the process more difficult than what it is. This county wants to be part of the solution.
- Adam Fletcher is great in Harrisonburg. But other Staff act like if it doesn't check a box, the answer is no. He's trying to do the right thing. The preapplication process is advantageous on a by right project, but otherwise, no.
- Disconnect between Staff recommendation, Planning Commission, and Council. Council is more susceptible to public outcry.
- Augusta County is similar to Rockingham and the City of Staunton; they have a faster development process.
- Sometimes the City acts like you are bothering them. They are not thankful for the projects. Not so much the ordinances, but the attitude.
- Fewer hearings = more staff authority, which means more objective and articulate standards for the Staff to rely on.
- City doesn't have provision to allow Zoning Administrator to make minor adjustments to setbacks.
- Rather work in County for larger development because the process is easier in County.
- Other governments that are good to work it – efficiency, thoroughness, ease:
 - Rockingham County is easy to work with.
 - Leadership requires it.
 - They want to be part of the solution.
- Augusta County good to work with.
- City of Staunton – good to work with:
 - Don't take as long.
 - Entire process of plan review and getting approvals.
- City does not have enough administrative freedom:
 - County Staff will at least render a decision.
- Disconnect between PC recommendations and CC decisions:
 - PC recommends approval / CC denies.
 - CC is more susceptible to public outcry.
- City Staff doesn't think of developers cost when asking for changes and how long things take.
- City is too caught up in the letter of the ordinance and not looking at what the best use of land



- (i.e. Wanting a building to face a different direction, but the land doesn't fit that).
- Process takes too long and frustration with being turned down at Council after significant financial investment.
 - Concerns about engineered comprehensive site plan resubmission process - lots of comments for resubmittal and frustration when new comments are given on a 2nd or 3rd submittal.
 - Things take so long and developers are getting different answers during every meeting.
 - Implementing a meeting with all departments involved would be helpful.
 - There is a lack of coordination between departments.
 - Previously staff was spending a lot of time doing the engineering on projects and completing submittals and needed to tighten up the standards for submittals.
 - Never blindsided by Council, but often by Staff.
 - Rezoning process - recent projects that were difficult were rezoning industrial land for Family Dollar, but Staff wanted the layout of the site changed; Neighborhood Walmart ready to go for rezoning until last minute and then changed the layout at the last minute and Walmart pulled out of deal.
 - Requirements/expectations seem arbitrary and are not written.
 - Flexibility – we have gone from a more rigid set of regs to allowing PUD, B-1, and being more flexible.
 - Too often it is easy to get forgiveness after the fact rather than permission beforehand:
 - What is driving this? The new comprehensive plan, regulations are old, changes in population and demographics.
 - Projects take forever and have a lot of NIMBY comments at public hearings:
 - Some from traditional NIMBY and some from people who feel their communities have been forced to carry too much of the burden of support services.
 - Lots of misinformation about projects.
 - Lack of flexibility:
 - Pandemic has exasperated issues.
 - Planning/Zoning Dept needs to be a place of “yes” and “how can we make that happen” instead of just “no.”
 - The slowness allows time to catch up and see what the environmental implications are for proposed development:
 - Point is to sustain environment during changes. They don’t keep it slow on purpose, but it gives a chance for them to comment on equity and the environment.
 - The City is interested in mixed use development and they see benefits, but the problems with the procedures are that the project is just dropped on the citizens and the battle begins and Council decides. The procedure should require developers to consult with neighborhoods before the proposal is ever launched. Required neighborhood meetings beforehand.
 - Development review process needs to be better defined and cleaner.
 - Variance process needs to allow for creative ideas without getting shot down⁸.
 - There have been delays at times for Building review.

Key Themes / Concerns

⁸ Interviewee comments about variances appear to refer to subdivision variances and reduced parking special use permits, which are not reviewed by the BZA but are reviewed by Planning Commission and City Council.



- Consistency
- Process takes too long
- Lots of “no”
- Decisions often based on vocal minority; those who oppose a development proposal are more likely to show up to a public hearing and speak up against it, than those who may support the proposal or who do not have an opinion.

Infrastructure / Stormwater / Sidewalks

Comments Received

- Stormwater management in City. City should come up with a quasi-regional strategy to come up with pocket areas for stormwater management that multiple properties can benefit from and maybe incentivize the stormwater management utility fee? But the cost vs. the benefit is inconsequential. There is much opportunity to do this more robustly and do a better job of this.
- Stormwater is a huge issue with parking because you are creating a ton of impervious surface (parking lots).
- Legacy street and legacy stormwater issues are very expensive to deal with before you can even construct something.
- Downtown traffic – people drive the wrong way on one-way streets.
- Bike infrastructure:
 - Visited Davis, CA and saw their impressive bike infrastructure.
 - Paths connecting schools to parks and accommodating alternative modes of travel.
- Some people don’t want paths / trails near their houses.
- We are all better served by enabling kids to walk to school.
- New developments happen seemingly without paying attention to the broader system. I feel that this is one reason why we struggle to retrofit the City with bike paths and trails.
- City Council should consider what size of a City is most conducive to neighborliness? Access to parks and better community spirit and interaction bolsters this.
- Barriers to bicycling infrastructure:
 - Some is how density is distributed throughout City is hard.
 - Some people want to keep low density and the R-1 district.
 - How do we develop an ordinance regulation and code for the City that enables/promotes better planning and development collaboration with JMU and the County?
 - NIMBYism has a lot of influence when it comes to bike trails/paths.
 - It is politically impossible to get there in the next decade.
 - Car only culture will not be compatible with American society in a few years.
 - Peer cities, such as Blacksburg, Charlottesville, and Lynchburg, are not used to people thinking they should be able to have multiple parking spaces in front of their homes.
 - Expectation that new housing units built downtown=an expectation of parking.
 - Would love to see a downtown centered around pedestrian parking.
 - Amend desired outcomes: promote walkable and bikeable neighborhoods connected by greenways.
- Most sidewalks don’t even meet ADA.



- Bike paths are in constant conflict with motor vehicles.
- How can we tear up and rebuild the ordinance that allows us to start retrofitting our infrastructure for increased rain quantity events per the climate change modelling for our region?

Key Themes / Concerns

- Stormwater management is an issue
- Need better planning for biking infrastructure

City's Planning Efforts Generally

Comments Received

- Coordination on the downtown master plan? Overlap? Collaboration? We need to be aware and make sure they coordinate.
- They are looking to set a formal downtown limit and there is a concern that there will be a problem over which plan takes precedence? Which one?
- Important to make the downtown master plan and this process mesh.
- People get very invested in comp plan process, but they cite it when it suits certain political ends and then it is ignored. A lot of effort that doesn't actually do anything.
- Align changes with the 2018 comp plan? Should also align with the 2020 Environmental Action Plan.
- Newer sustainable energy devices have been hard sells: geothermal heating and cooling and solar panels specifically.

Key Themes / Concerns

- Needs coordination and consistency

Miscellaneous

Comments Received

- Development costs are scary sometimes with City requirements.
- Does a client ever want to cluster? Nope. They want to stay out of the City altogether.
- Lack of definitions.
- Developmental standards manual; asked if that will be addressed.⁹
- Want Harrisonburg to stay business friendly - keep process easy, inexpensive, and high-quality product as possible; not have the process be overbearing.
- Disastrous decisions about schools.
- Definition of a family due to college student housing, but there is a better way to use and do this- be careful defining family.
- We need to address things within the code if the City will allow it and don't have a constant whack a mole with one off items.

⁹ The City's Design and Construction Standards Manual (DCSM) will not be addressed as part of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances Update Project.



- Need to work on school planning better! Including JMU. They are the only state school that isn't landlocked, so they will grow!
- Harrisonburg does not do a good job controlling growth.
- Sports related and natural tourism.
- JMU – why no satellite campuses?
- JMU - they can build classrooms but not dorms, so they don't build student housing, so developers are building all of these new students housing communities; single-family areas need protection:
 - Can't use state funds for dorms.
 - Developers build them and then flip them.
- Simplify the code so other people besides city staff can understand it – rely less on interpretation.
- Worried we are building a community not made for the people who live here.
- Code enforcement is lack across the board – more concerned about trees hanging over property lines and appearance vs. safety with code violations.
- Transportation issues:
 - Bus system designed for students not residents.
 - Lack of routes to employment centers and during 2nd and 3rd shifts.
 - High cost band-aid solutions like "Way to Go".
- Pandemic has shown flexibility is needed to solve problems that we may not know yet.
- Developments need to partner with City or State to capture some of the grant available.
- JMU and higher ed have some transparent planning ahead. Systematic challenges that the community will experience especially with Covid-19 and demographic challenges.
- Harrisonburg has called itself a cultural hub and culinary district. So, what does the future look like in 30-50 years? But it has to accommodate how things will be within the next 10-20 years. Zoning is crucial because of this! It will make this transition harder if we don't get this correct:
 - Virginia has a huge energy shift coming. 2045- 100% renewable energy. What do the rooftops in cities look because of this? How do we enable this? Facilitate this? Encourage this?
- The ordinance needs to lead us to the community we want to become, not be the result of the community that we currently are.
- There is a holding pattern on a new high school being built in city limits.
- Public schools have a growing population. 1900 kids in a 1300 capacity high school.
- Schools have a very difficult time finding land.
- Anything to allow people in the City to make development easier would be good.
- Many college students don't go downtown until they are Juniors or Seniors. There are lots of on-campus food and entertainment establishments.