City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Final
Planning Commission

Tuesday, July 21, 2026 | **6:00 PM** | **City Hall, Room 011**

Zoning Ordinance Update Project Work Session

1. Call To Order

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.

2. Roll Call/Determination of Quorum

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.

Present 4 - Richard Baugh, City Council Representative Laura Dent, Kenneth Kettler , and Randall Seitz

Absent 3 - Heja Alsindi, Shannon Porter , and Stanley Jezior

3. New Business

3.a. Brief Reflections on Prior Work Session (10-15 minutes)

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.

3.b. 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."

3.c. Next Steps

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

4. Adjourment

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

NOTE TO THE PUBLIC

Anyone interested may attend the meeting; however, no public comment will be received. The meeting will be recorded and will be posted online after the meeting.

Staff will be available at 4:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the next Planning Commission meeting for those interested in going on a field trip to view the sites on the next agenda.