



May 13, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider Rezoning and Special Use Permits for 1351 and 1361 Peach Grove Avenue (The Walk) — Meg Rupkey, Community Development

Summary

Project name	The Walk
Address/Location	1351 and 1361 Peach Grove Avenue
Tax Map Parcels	92-F-6 and 10
Total Land Area	+/- 15.35 acres
Property Owner	Skylar & Talli LLC and James Madison University Real Estate Foundation Inc
Owner’s Representative	LCD Acquisitions, LLC
Present Zoning	R-5C and B-2
Proposed Zoning	R-5C and R-5C (Proffer Amendment)
Proposed Special Use Permit	Multiple-family dwellings of more than twelve (12) units per building per Section 10-3-55.4 (1)
Planning Commission	May 13, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated June 9, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated June 23, 2026 (Second Reading)

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend denial of the rezoning and special use permit requests.

Context & Analysis

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

- Site: Undeveloped property, zoned R-5C and B-2
- North: Multi-family dwelling units, and commercial uses, zoned R-3 and B-2
- East: Commercial uses, zoned B-2
- South: Across Peach Grove Avenue, private school, retail, and vacant property, zoned B-2
- West: Multi-family dwelling units, zoned R-3

The applicant is requesting a rezoning and a special use permit (SUP) for a +/- 15.35-acre property addressed as 1351 and 1361 Peach Grove Avenue and identified as tax map parcel 92-F-10 and 6. The property is zoned R-5C, High-Density Residential District Conditional and B-2, General

Business District. The applicant is requesting a SUP per Zoning Ordinance (ZO) Section 10-3-55.4 (1) to allow multiple-family dwellings of more than twelve (12) units per building in the R-5 district. The development would consist of 207 multifamily units with a mix of one-, two-, three-, and four- bedroom units within a mix of multifamily row apartments, quadplexes, and garden apartments.

1351 Peach Grove Avenue: Prior Rezoning, SUPs, and Development Plans

In June 2019, City Council approved a request to rezone 1351 Peach Grove Avenue (addressed as 1051 Peach Grove Avenue in 2019) from B-2, General Business District to R-5C, High Density Residential District Conditional, along with three SUPs to allow multi-family development, increased building height, and non-residential uses. At that time, the applicant proposed a six-story mixed-use building with approximately 16,000 square feet of commercial space on the first floor and 120 multi-family units above, consisting of one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom units. Staff and Planning Commission recommended denial of the rezoning due to concerns that the design was vehicle-centric and did not provide a safe, walkable pedestrian-friendly environment, and did not support a cohesive mixed-use environment. City Council approved the rezoning and associated SUPs.

In 2021, the applicant revised proffers to remove the requirement for non-residential uses, including the previously mandated minimum commercial square footage, and to increase the maximum number of bedrooms from 400 to 460. The revised proffers added new commitments, including construction of a bus pull-off and shelter easement and a requirement that total traffic generation not exceed levels established in the previously accepted traffic impact analysis (TIA). Overall, the changes transitioned the project away from a mixed-use concept toward a higher-density residential-only development while incorporating additional transportation-related improvements and traffic controls. Staff and Planning Commission recommended denial of the request. Staff noted the loss of the mixed-use component, the unit mix of predominantly four-bedroom units indicating that the development was geared toward student housing, and the design continuing to be vehicle-centric and not supporting a pedestrian-friendly environment. Staff suggested the applicant consider proffering a multi-family building that would have one-, two-, and three-bedroom units and a proffer that provided a breakdown of the number of each style of the units. Ultimately, City Council voted to approve the amendment to the proffers.

An engineered comprehensive site plan (ECSP) for the residential-only project was approved on March 13, 2024, and will remain valid from that date for five years. The SUPs to allow for more than 12 units in a building and increased height are valid as long as the approved ECSP remains active. If someone does not pursue developing the approved ECSP, then it and the two SUPs would expire on March 13, 2029. The SUP for non-residential uses has expired.

1361 Peach Grove Avenue: Prior SUP and Development Plans

In February 2023, 1361 Peach Grove Avenue received approval of an SUP to allow for multiple-family dwellings in the B-2 district. As required by Section 10-3-93 (d) of the ZO, the applicant submitted a development plan to be in accord with the requirements of the SUP. Section 10-3-93

(d) states that “[f]or multiple-family dwellings and mixed use buildings, the development plan submitted with the special use permit shall govern development on the site and shall be used as a basis for subdivision and engineered comprehensive site plan approval.” In addition to the required development plan, the applicant proposed conditions further limiting the development. The applicant conditioned a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom units, pedestrian connectivity and transportation improvements, 1.3 parking spaces per dwelling unit, and environmental features such as solar panels and electrical vehicle charging stations. The SUP was approved to allow no more than 376 units with a minimum of 30% of the units required to be one bedroom and a maximum of 20% of the units able to be three-bedroom units. The development plan demonstrated one entrance along Peach Grove Avenue, three residential buildings, and a two-level parking deck. Staff and Planning Commission recommended approval of the request, which City Council approved. However, the SUP has since expired due to the lack of diligent pursuit of the SUP within 24 months of City Council’s approval.

Proffers for the Current Request

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

1. The Project shall contain no more than 739 bedrooms.
2. The Applicant shall construct a westbound right turn lane with a minimum length of 50 feet and a taper with minimum taper length of 100 feet on Peach Grove Avenue into the main entrance of the Project no later than issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Project. Public Works may, in its sole discretion, waive, in whole or in part, construction of the turn lane and taper.
3. The Applicant shall grant a bus shelter easement to the City, in a location on Peach Grove Avenue acceptable to the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT) and shall construct a concrete pad and bus shelter to HDPT’s specifications no later than issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Project or such later date as HDPT may request. HDPT may, in its sole discretion, waive, in whole or in part, the completion of this proffer.
4. The Project shall be developed in substantial conformance to the Conceptual Site Plan, entitled, Peach Grove-Harrisonburg, VA Rezoning & SUP Submittal” dated March 6, 2026, last revised May 1, 2026, prepared by Niles Bolton Associates (the “Conceptual Site Plan”). Substantial conformance to the Conceptual Site Plan refers to:
 - (a) the general location of building envelopes, travelways, parking structures (including any slip deck), green spaces, clubhouse and amenity courtyard as shown on the Conceptual Site Plan;
 - (b) the general location of perimeter sidewalks along the “Shared Access Drive” (the private drive bordering the northeast Project boundary where the secondary access is located, as shown on the Conceptual Site Plan), and a pedestrian connection to commercial property to the north shown on the Conceptual Site Plan; and

- (c) the general location of primary and secondary entrance locations as shown on the Conceptual Site Plan. The Department of Public Works, in their sole discretion, may waive the requirements of this proffer if other acceptable entrance location(s) can be provided.

The Conceptual Site Plan may be modified during site plan review as needed to meet applicable local, state, and federal requirements and otherwise deemed necessary/beneficial during the Comprehensive Engineered Site Plan (“Site Plan”) approval process with approval by the Department of Community Development.

5. The public sidewalk along the Property’s frontage on Peach Grove Avenue, in the area shown on the Concept Plan, shall be reconstructed to be a minimum of five (5) feet in width and shall include a minimum two (2) foot wide grass strip buffer between the back of curb and the sidewalk. The Applicant shall dedicate land for public-street right of way along the Property’s Peach Grove Avenue frontage at a minimum of 7.5-foot width from back of curb to encompass the public sidewalk plus the maintenance area. This proffer shall be satisfied no later than issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Project.
6. No later than issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Project, a minimum of fifty (50) exterior bicycle parking spaces shall be installed and maintained on the Property compliant with location and spatial requirements of Zoning Ordinance Section 10-3-25.1.
7. Upon request by the City, but no sooner than after issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Project, the Applicant shall dedicate a ten (10) foot wide shared non-vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle path easement from the Property to Tax Map Parcel 92-F-7 for a possible future bicycle and pedestrian connection. The location for the potential easement would be determined during site planning for the Project or, if the request is made after Project site plan approval, at the time of such request. In addition, no later than issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Project, the Applicant shall provide a five (5) foot wide pedestrian connection between the Property and Tax Map Parcel 92-F-11 (currently the Food Lion shopping center) in the location shown on the Conceptual Site Plan.
8. No later than issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the Project, the Applicant shall plant street trees along the Shared Access Drive and Peach Grove Avenue as follows: a minimum of twenty-six (26) large deciduous trees (at least two (2) inches in caliper and a minimum of ten (10) feet in height at planting and to exceed four (4) inches in caliper at maturity), spaced approximately every forty (40) feet. Tree locations along the street frontage are at the discretion of the Applicant / property owner.

9. Buildings along the Shared Access Drive shall have front facades facing the Shared Access Drive.
10. Patios on Peach Grove Avenue shall be enclosed with opaque six (6) foot tall wood or fiber composite fencing with perimeter plantings around the fencing consisting of the following minimum plantings or comparable, as determined by the Applicant / property owner in consultation with City Staff during site planning: evergreen shrub foundation planting at least three (3) feet in height at maturity with an additional row of at least one of the following: shrubs (18" – 24"), ground cover (6" – 18"), or ornamental grass (24" – 36") layered in front.
11. Siding on all multi-family buildings and clubhouse will be Hardie Board or similar quality siding and shall not be vinyl siding or aluminum siding.

Proffer 1 limits the development to no more than 739 bedrooms. While the application does not establish a maximum number of dwelling units in the proffer, the bedroom proffer limits the overall occupancy of the development. Proffer 4 requires the development to be in substantial conformance with the submitted Conceptual Plan. The proffer establishes the general layout of buildings, access, circulation, parking, open space, and amenities, while allowing limited adjustments during site plan review.

Proffer 6 requires a minimum of 50 bicycle parking spaces to be installed and maintained on the property. Per the ZO's Article G Off-Street Vehicle and Bicycle Parking Regulation Section 10-3-25.1 (3), multifamily dwellings are required to provide one bicycle space per six units that are constructed. In the applicant's concept plan they reference that they plan to construct 207 units. Based on this calculation the project would be required to provide 35 bicycle spaces. With this proffer the applicant would be required to provide more than the minimum amount that would be needed to meet the ordinance.

The applicant has also proffered landscaping features and screening within the development in response to staff concerns about screening the decks and patios from the public street right-of-way. Proffer 10 requires screening by providing an opaque fence with landscaping for patios along Peach Grove Avenue.

Proffer 8 requires that at least 26 large deciduous trees be planted along the shared access drive and Peach Grove Avenue prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy. This would require trees where they would not typically be required. The ZO requires trees when a parking lot is adjacent to a public street. The applicant has designed the site to have the building between the parking lot and the public street and would not be required to plant trees along the public street right-of-way.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Mixed Use and Governmental/Quasi-Governmental and states:

Mixed Use

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.

Governmental/Quasi-Governmental

These lands include properties owned or leased by the City of Harrisonburg, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the federal government, and other governmental /quasi-governmental organizations. Examples of entities included in this category are City Hall, City administrative and support facilities, Harrisonburg City Public Schools, James Madison University, Rockingham County Administrative Offices, Rockingham County Public Schools, and the Massanutten Regional Library. Properties within this designation may already include uses supplied by the entities mentioned or are planned to be used by such public entities for any type of uses necessary for their services. Some Governmental/Quasi-Governmental uses, such as James Madison University, other state agencies, and the federal government are not subject to some of the City’s land use regulations. City parks are included in the Conservation, Recreation, and Open Space Category. Furthermore, it should be understood that properties that are owned or leased by the City, which may not be designated as Governmental/Quasi-Governmental by the Land Use Guide, may be

developed with public uses, as defined by the Zoning Ordinance, to operate and provide services supplied by the City in any zoning district, which as of the approval of this document, is every zoning district in the City.

The property addressed as 1361 Peach Grove Avenue is designated by the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Guide (LUG) as Governmental/Quasi-Governmental because it is owned by the James Madison University (JMU) Real Estate Foundation. The Comprehensive Plan states that Mixed Use areas outside of the downtown area should be around 24 units per acre. The proposed 207 units is about 13 dwelling units per acre.

Transportation and Traffic

A TIA was accepted by the Department of Public Works on February 20, 2026. Under the studied 2025 conditions, the TIA demonstrated that the surrounding roadway network is already beginning to experience operational delays, and those delays are expected to continue and incrementally increase through 2030. These impacts are primarily focused at the signalized intersection of Peach Grove Avenue and Port Republic Road and are anticipated with normal background traffic growth as well as with the addition of the proposed development. The intersection is operating at generally acceptable levels of service under existing conditions although approaches to Port Republic Road, including Devon Lane, Peach Grove Avenue, and Neff Avenue, experience noticeable congestion during the PM peak hour. While the TIA acknowledges that intersection delays will increase in the future, it states that “[a]ll queuing and storing issues at the Port Republic Road/Peach Grove Avenue intersection present under 2030 build conditions are extant without the proposed development.” The TIA also notes that, without improvements, the surrounding roadway network is expected to experience increased delays and queuing, including significant increases at existing commercial entrances.

The TIA identifies the need for turn lane improvements at the primary site access on Peach Grove Avenue to accommodate anticipated site-generated traffic and maintain acceptable roadway conditions. The turn lane warrant analysis results indicate that improvements are needed on Peach Grove Avenue at the main site entrance to install a minimum 100' right turn taper on the westbound approach. The applicant is proffering a westbound right turn storage of 50' and a taper of 100' in length to provide additional space for right-turning vehicles to leave the through lane on Peach Grove Avenue.

Proffer 3 requires the installation of a concrete pad and bus shelter that would be built to HDPT specifications. The shelter and concrete pad would be placed in a public easement and would be maintained by HDPT. Proffer 4 establishes the general layout of internal travelways and the perimeter sidewalk along the private shared access drive. Proffer 5 requires reconstruction of the existing public sidewalk along Peach Grove Avenue to a minimum width of five feet and includes dedication of 7.5 feet of public right-of-way from the back of curb to accommodate the sidewalk and associated maintenance area. The existing sidewalk along Peach Grove Avenue does not meet the standards for new sidewalk that would be constructed today. The existing sidewalk is four feet

in width and does not have a minimum two-foot-wide grass buffer between the sidewalk and the public street.

Proffer 7 provides for a potential future pedestrian and bicycle connection to the adjacent property to the northwest (tax map parcel 92-F-7). The final location of the easement would be identified during the site planning phase for the development or at the time of the City's request for the easement. Know that while the applicant has proffered a 10-foot-wide easement for the future connection, the City's standard for a shared use path is a 20-foot-wide easement to accommodate construction of a 10-foot-wide path and 2-foot-wide graded shoulders on each side. This proffer would allow for interconnectivity between parcels to be explored in the future. Additionally, Proffer 7 requires the applicant to provide a five-foot-wide pedestrian connection between the development and Tax Map Parcel 92-F-11 (Port Crossing Shopping Center), as shown on the conceptual plan. Staff has emphasized to the applicant that interconnectivity between adjacent parcels is encouraged in all developments.

The applicant's letter states that they are proposing to install an eastbound left-turn lane on Peach Grove Avenue at the main site entrance by converting the existing two-way left-turn lane. In the letter they identify that the turn lane would have 100' of storage with a 100' taper. At this this time this turn lane is not proffered and would not be required as part of the rezoning if approved as presented. If the applicant chooses to proffer the eastbound turn lane prior to the May 13, 2026 Planning Commission meeting, and update will be provided at the meeting.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

While staff does not anticipate issues regarding water or sanitary sewer service availability for the proposed development, the applicant has been advised that they will be responsible to complete a study of the water and sanitary sewer capacity as part of the ECSP process. Any public system improvements required to meet the increased demands resulting from the project will be the responsibility of the developer.

Housing

The City's Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) places the subject property within Market Type C. Along with other details of this market type, it is the smallest but fastest growing market type in the City. Among other characterizations, Market Type C has a large number of university students. The Housing Study states "[l]ike Market Type A, Market Type C has above median overall access to amenities such as public transit within walking distance, full-service grocery stores, and multiple parks and recreation facilities." It goes on to say that "Market Type C has above median access to amenities yet is the most affordable market type in the City. The creation and preservation of affordable housing and construction of middle income housing would be appropriate here as there are already amenities in place that would make these areas attractive locations for housing..." The Housing Study also notes that "[h]aving an adequate supply of smaller apartments in Market Types A and C is important because these block groups have higher scores for access to amenities such as jobs, parks, full-service grocery stores, and public transit."

The proposed development is intended to target “young professionals and/or graduate or undergraduate students” and offers a unit type of predominantly four-bedroom/four-bathroom units. While the applicant has stated that the four-bedroom units could be converted to serve the needs of families in the future, such a conversion would require considerable additional investment; therefore, staff does not consider this proposed project to provide affordable and middle-income housing suggested by the Housing Study.

Building purpose-built student housing can still be appropriate in the City in locations that support pedestrian access to academic buildings and other university amenities. While the applicant states that the project is approximately 2/10th of mile to Sentara Park (located at the corner of Neff Avenue and Peach Grove Avenue) and approximately 9/10th mile from JMU's Port Republic campus entrance, the proposed development is over one mile from academic buildings when following public streets and existing shared use paths or trails.

While James Madison University (JMU) has made it known through their strategic plan (The Madison Promise, <https://www.jmu.edu/madison-promise/index.shtml>) that they plan to grow overall enrollment, they also have plans to build more on campus housing. The strategic plan states that the university would like to house approximately 60% of the students on campus by 2040. As JMU increases its supply of university-managed housing, demand for some forms of off-campus student housing may shift over time. Staff has concerns about how this site could be used in the future if students were no longer the ones living in the units. The proposed amenities and overall site design, such as a clubhouse instead of more family-oriented features like a playground, suggest the development is more narrowly tailored and may have limited adaptability for a broader range of the population. While the applicant has provided an example of how a unit could be converted to serve a non-student household, staff believes it would be better for the community to not have to rely on someone being willing to make the financial investment to physically convert the units at some point in the future. Instead, it would be better for the community to provide the appropriate style of units at the initial time of construction.

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 calculation, this development’s proposed 207 residential units are estimated to generate 25 to 116 K-12 students at full build-out. While the project may be intended for student housing, areas vacated by students may then create the availability of 207 apartments elsewhere in the community. According to the School Board’s

current attendance boundaries, Stone Spring Elementary School, Skyline Middle School, and Rocktown High School would serve the students residing in this development.

Conclusion

Staff does not believe that more student-oriented housing is needed at this time. Staff recognizes that someone can already build units that are marketed to students with the existing zoning and approved ECSP on a portion of the site addressed as 1351 Peach Grove Avenue. However, staff believes there is an opportunity here to provide for other housing that is greatly needed for our community and to encourage off-campus student housing to be located closer to JMU's academic buildings. Staff has consistently encouraged the applicant to consider a greater proportion of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units to better align with community housing needs and to reconsider the general design of the buildings and layout of the site.

Staff recommends denial of the rezoning and SUP request.

Options

1. Recommend denial of the rezoning and special use permit requests.
2. Recommend approval of the rezoning and special use permit requests with other condition(s).
3. Recommend approval of the rezoning request and denial of the special use permit request.

Attachments

- Site maps
- Application and supporting documents
- Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) report, January 2026