



CITY OF HARRISONBURG COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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October 22, 2025

**TO THE MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

SUBJECT: *Consider a request to rezone 320 South Main Street*

**EXTRACT FROM THE DRAFT MINUTES OF HARRISONBURG PLANNING
COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON: November 12, 2025**

Chair Baugh read the request and asked staff to review.

Ms. Rupkey said due to an error in advertising for the Planning Commission public hearing that was held on July 9, 2025, for the rezoning of the property addressed as 320 South Main Street, a new public hearing must be held for the request. This ensures compliance with notification requirements and provides the opportunity for all interested parties to attend and comment on the request.

There are no changes to the application or to the staff report that was presented on July 9. Please refer to the attached July 9, 2025, staff memorandum for staff's analysis of the rezoning request and recommendation.

The applicant is requesting to rezone a +/- 11,146-square foot property from B-2, General Business District to B-1C, Central Business District Conditional. If the request is approved, the applicant plans to continue operating as an office and commercial building.

The existing structure is approximately 4,670 square feet and has space for twelve tenants. The existing tenants include a variety of office uses. In 1960, the property had a building permit approved for a one-story addition. A note on the permit described that the building could not be used for commercial uses until 20 parking spaces were provided. Under the current Zoning Ordinance, there are different parking requirements for professional offices and for retail. Professional offices require one space per 300 square feet of gross floor area (GFA) while retail establishments under 10,000 square feet of GFA require one space per 200 square feet of GFA. For any combination of office and retail space, the 4,670 square foot structure would require a minimum of 16 to 24 parking spaces. The B-1 Central Business District has no minimum off-street parking requirements; therefore, rezoning the property would allow additional flexibility for other uses, such as more retail, on the property without requiring additional off-street parking.

The site currently includes a one-way, angled parking lot with 22 delineated parking spaces (which do not meet the Design and Construction Standards Manual's (DCSM) dimensional sizing requirements). The one-way design does not have an appropriate outlet because the parking lot does not provide a turnaround, and thus, unless there are unused parking spaces, requires people to back out of the parking lot into public street right-of-way. If the site were to be redeveloped, any parking provided would need to meet the current DCSM requirements. While not eliminating all of the issues, the applicant plans to remove the closest parking spaces off of Federal Street on each side of the parking lot to eliminate the ability for people to directly back into Federal Street. If they choose to do this, it would reduce the number of parking spaces to 20.

Proffers

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

1. Drive-through facilities are prohibited.
2. No parking lot (including travel lanes and drive aisles) shall be located between any building and South Main Street.
3. All traffic generating uses shall be limited to a combined total of 100 vehicle trips in either the AM or PM peak hour as calculated using the latest edition of the Institute of Transportation Engineer's Trip Generation Manual unless the property owner first, at their cost: (1) completes a Traffic Impact Analysis approved by the City Department of Public Works and (2) implements all identified mitigation measures or improvements. The City Department of Public Works may, in its sole discretion, waive, in whole or in part, completion of a Traffic Impact Analysis or any identified mitigation measures or improvements.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Mixed Use and states:

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.

As noted above, the property is designated as Mixed Use in the Comprehensive Plan, which, among other things, is a designation that promotes “live-work” environments and traditional neighborhood development (TND). The Mixed Use designation description refers to TND, which is explained further in the Comprehensive Plan on page 6-9, and includes promoting walking, biking, and taking public transit. Proffers #1 and #2 promote pedestrian friendly design by prohibiting drive-throughs and restricting vehicle parking areas and drive isles from being located between buildings and South Main Street.

Transportation and Traffic

The Determination of Need for a Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) form (“TIA determination form”) for the proposed rezoning is attached. The TIA determination form indicated that the planned uses would not generate 100 or more new peak hour trips, which is the threshold for staff to require a TIA. Therefore, a TIA was not required for the rezoning request.

While the applicant is not planning to redevelop the site and is not anticipating a significant change in the use of the property,, it could redevelop in the future. Proffer #3 requires that any use shall not produce 100 or more new trips in the peak hours and if a proposed use were to generate more than 100 new trips, the applicant would need to complete a TIA and may need to construct street improvements.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

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

Conclusion

Staff believes that rezoning the property to B-1C with the submitted proffers generally conforms with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and recommends approval of the rezoning.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any questions for staff.

Councilmember Dent said while I appreciate staff acknowledging and rectifying the order of not publishing the Public Notice, it just so happens, fortunately, that neither one of the projects that we have to have a do over for are really affected. This one is essentially bringing itself into compliance and the other one was going to have to come back to Planning Commission anyway. Nobody was itching to get their shovel in the ground. That was fortunate, and I appreciate staff’s transparency about all that.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any more questions for staff. Hearing none, he invited the applicant or applicant’s representative to speak to their request.

Ed Price, representative, Elm Properties, LLC, came forward to speak to the request. We are just happy to be able to come back and also accept the approval that was done at the July 9 meeting and hope it goes through on this meeting also. We have had the building since 1960 in the family, and we are continuing in the same manner that they, my father and his partner, did. We do not have any plans to put a drive-through or anything else through it.

Chair Baugh asked if there were any questions for the applicant.

Vice Chair Porter said I just wanted to ask a quick question about the fact that you are looking to eliminate some of the current spaces to provide more space for turnarounds within the actual parking lot itself.

Mr. Price said yes, the last two spaces. We are waiting for signage to come in to designate a “no parking” area for turnaround purposes.

Vice Chair Porter said that makes it safer on Federal [Street], thank you.

Chair Baugh opened the public hearing and invited anyone in the room or on the phone wishing to speak to the request.

Panayotis Giannakouros, a City resident, called in to speak to the request. Short comment on this application, two comments actually. One, a number of our elected and appointed bodies have been very enthusiastic about reducing parking minimums without thinking about what they are doing. Now, in general, the business behind these questions, these parking minimums, comes from an ideological commitment to privatizing public spaces. I hope people will look into this and think about it and think about what that means. In this case, we have a better reason for reducing the minimums. As Commissioner Porter pointed out, a turning radius that is a potential public safety. The idea that if we reduce parking minimums, it will change the incentives and then more people will ride bicycles. That is already an ideologically loaded commitment to how human beings function. That is treating them as homo economists, rational optimizers. That is not how people work in society. Second, looking at the public purpose, the public hearings that were scheduled for these items are for the benefit of the public. We saw that in the upcoming item, the public had a strong interest in it. It was not the processes that we conduct are not for the benefit of the developers alone. Often, we get tunnel vision that everything is between the City staff, elected and appointed officials, and developers. We have 50,000 people who are affected by these decisions, and they do not have concentrated interests to be constantly following what is going on. We, the people, need notice. These mistakes that were made with regard to notice, contrary to what Councilmember Dent said, [unintelligible], it is a fundamental fail. So, I hope that we will be able to cope with the bigger picture of people in the City. I thank you so much for your time.

Chair Baugh closed the public hearing and opened the matter for discussion.

Vice Chair Porter said I will start by thanking the applicant for coming back a second time. I supported this the first time it came before Planning Commission. It seems like a common sense request. I will briefly speak to the parking issue. I think, in this particular case, it does make a lot of sense just because of the way the parking lot is currently configured. I will not get into the broader issues of reducing parking limits. I will say that I am always in favor of increased flexibility in terms of being able to make best use of the land and the opportunities that might come by reconfiguring those restrictions a lot of times have different factors to them. It is not always a simple case of simply reducing parking.

Commissioner Kettler said I do think that flexibility is also particularly helpful downtown where there is a much greater capacity for people to be walking and biking. If there is a lot of excessive parking that does tend to contribute to more traffic and making it less walkable and bikeable. The fact that the applicant is interested in some flexibility with that, I am happy to see. I am also happy to see that the first proffer, that no drive-through facilities will be permitted. I did not think that was particularly likely with the property, but drive-through facilities are a great way to introduce new conflict points particularly where there are a lot of people walking and [drive-through facilities] have no business being there. I appreciate seeing that as well.

Councilmember Dent said I think this is good creative use of the space that you have so thank you for that.

Vice Chair Porter said I will make a motion to recommend approval of the rezoning request.

Councilmember Dent seconded the motion.

Chair Baugh called for a roll call vote.

Commissioner Seitz	Aye
Councilmember Dent	Aye
Commissioner Alsindi	Aye
Commissioner Kettler	Aye
Vice Chair Porter	Aye
Chair Baugh	Aye

The motion to recommend approval of the rezoning request passed (6-0). The recommendation will move forward to City Council on November 12, 2025.