

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: Thanh Dang
Sent: Tuesday, August 19, 2025 4:08 PM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer
Cc: Adam Fletcher
Subject: Fw: Support For Link Rezoning

Pam,
This email was in my junk folder. Please forward to Councilmembers, etc.

Thanh Dang, AICP | Deputy Director of Community Development
(540) 432-7700 | Thanh.Dang@HarrisonburgVA.gov

From: Andrew Stigsell <andystigsell@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, August 8, 2025 9:22 PM
To: Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Support For Link Rezoning

WARNING: External email. Be cautious when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Good evening,

I'm in support of the link project downtown. I think the new apartments would be beneficial for the area and especially us younger people.

Best,
Andrew Stigsell

Sent from my iPhone

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Monday, August 18, 2025 3:33 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Mon, 08/18/2025 - 15:32

Submitted values are:

Name

Rick Nagel

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

6b on the August 12, 2025 City Council Agenda

Comment

I oppose rezoning this parcel from R-3 to B-1C

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

No

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Sunday, August 17, 2025 10:02 AM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Sun, 08/17/2025 - 10:01

Submitted values are:

Name

Kathy Hornick

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-09-23

Agenda Item Number

rezoning downtown

Comment

I will be watching the votes in September and taking notes. I will never vote again ever for anything for any yea voter ever again. I may be angry enough to vote for whoever their opponent is. This is important to all of us. The only residents who are pro are not old enough to witness the life cycle of off-campus student housing, and those who stand to gain from it financially. I have pretty much the same objections as everyone else. The sketch shows a building that does not belong in that spot. Some keep on referring to the Urban Exchange as if that building justifies building the link. But that building occupies a space that was uglier before the construction. And I've witnessed what follows. It will eventually be a poorly maintained slum. I don't think it will be a factor in whether or not students bring their cars to school. And there will be spillover onto the church lot and other neighbors. This vote will be a test for every voter that proudly brought us the current council. please make us all proud and vote for the good of the city and her residents.

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

No

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

plazamama@gmail.com

5404763687

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 2:50 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Tue, 08/12/2025 - 14:49

Submitted values are:

Name

Neil Raines

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

6B.

Comment

I am conflicted about the Link proposal. I want to support it, but based on my understanding, I think the Link complex is:

(A) Too tall for the site. The structure should be limited to not more than 4 stories. Forcing set-backs for green space on Main and/or Liberty would also enhance contribution of the Downtown 2040 Vision.

(B) It adds the wrong mix of housing types. It is designed for too many students. The percentage of student residents in the quad units (55-62%) is too high, and greatly reduces any contribution to our housing shortfalls for non-students.

I hope that the council will consider a temporary non-approval of the Rezoning, in favor of a future, modified proposal that reduces the height (and perhaps footprint) of the Link complex, and with a reduction of student-only residents (to, say, 40% by residential count not by unit count). Those or similar compromises would result in a more beneficial project that does not irredeemably change the core downtown area. Urban renewal did that once, and we're finally trying to make amends for that. Let's not repeat the mis-steps of the past.

Three points:

First, more housing is good. It is needed at most income levels. That is hard to argue against.

Second, the total number of residents. The materials I have read discuss the project in terms of numbers of units. This produces a misleading understating in my opinion. By working out the number of residents for the 265 and 165 max units plans, and accounting for the mix of single/studio, quad, and 2-or-3 bedroom, one finds that the actual mix by resident is :

Single/studio: 8-10%

Quad: 55-62%

2-or-3: 27-35%

So we see that the number of quad “student units” is not 40% by population, it is at least 55% to as much as 62%. This is a significant difference.

The total number of residents ranges from a low of 420 to a high of 767. The proffered parking is a maximum of 400, with 65 being provided to the city, for a resulting number of 335 for residents. There are also 90+8 bicycle spaces. Even if 98 residents have bicycles and no car, the number of car spaces is still insufficient in all but the smallest residency scenario. No amount of wishful thinking that students will not have cars and/or will walk to from campus will ameliorate these numbers. Parking will be problematic in all but the lowest-residency scenario, and in the most extreme, would produce 432 vehicles with no parking place.

Third. The impact of the size of the building. This is a very big building on a small amount of land. It will loom over the south end of town, dwarfing by both mass and height the Church, the City Hall complex, adjacent buildings, and the current and planned use for the farmer’s market, park, and stage area. I would note that in all of the materials I have seen, none of them provide a useful view of the size of the Link complex. I expect that is a deliberate omission, as being able to envision the actual scale of the Link in that location, amongst the existing building would show how enormous it is, and would reduce the likelihood of approval.

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

Yes

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

nissan.gtp@gmail.com

540-842-4128

Harrisonburg Growth with Guardrails

Executive Summary

Community growth and urban development is a balancing act that requires everyone to take broad perspectives, learn from past mistakes, and protect historic, cultural, and community foundations. The addition of new housing, businesses, and public spaces must not compete with our foundations, but use them to improve the existing livability and character that makes Harrisonburg successful today.

The proposed “The Link” complex does not support this approach to urban development and poses significant risks to businesses, livability, and the character of our downtown. These concerns are in no way associated with a Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) or No Growth community perspectives. This is about growing with guardrails. We respectfully ask this City Council to deny this request for re-zoning.

Grounds for Denying Zoning Application

Legal Zoning & Planning Policy. This rezoning request does not offer clear public necessity or broad community benefit, and conflicts with multiple goals in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, including those related to gateway design, historic preservation, housing balance, and parking management. Key design elements are only loosely defined, leaving important aspects like building materials, colors, and parking garage treatment unenforceable. The building’s size and placement would overshadow the new downtown park and City Hall area, diminishing the quality of those investments (**Appendix A: Deny Rezoning: Legal & Policy**). Transportation and parking analyses rely on optimistic assumptions and do not reflect the heavier impacts of large, student-oriented units. Public parking arrangements are short-term, non-binding, and controlled by the developer. The unit mix is heavily student-focused, with no affordable and workforce housing requirements or limits on undergraduate leasing.

A rezoning is warranted only when the public benefits clearly outweigh the costs and risks. In this case:

- **Gateways & corridors:** Policies call for contextual massing, strong street relationships, and non-prominent parking. A six-story slab with garage exposure by Turner Pavilion conflicts with those directives. (**Appendix G, Figure G-1** site location and proximity to City Hall, Turner Pavilion, and the new park).
- **Heritage, parks, and place-based tourism:** Demolishing the Lindsey Funeral Home ensemble at the edge of the new downtown park undermines adopted goals for heritage-driven tourism and a high-quality public realm.
- **Historic resources:** The Downtown Historic District’s character and authenticity are central to the city’s identity and visitor economy. Proceeding with demolition and a flexible exterior package—without preservation or urban-design controls—runs counter to the Plan’s preservation/design (**Appendix G, Figure G-1**)
- **Housing Need:** City policy prioritizes balanced, workforce-oriented, and affordable housing downtown. The proposed “market rate” unit mix (up to 40% four-bedroom suites and only a minimum 25% studios/1-BRs) signals a student-leaning program that does not fill the gap the Plan identifies.
- **Transportation and curb management:** Large private parking garages are likely to bring more cars into the area and cause tenants or visitors to park on nearby streets.
- **Density of “The Link” and the Urban Exchange:** The Link has roughly 1.8× the bedroom intensity as Urban Exchange at a similar height cap (**Appendix D: Bedroom Density Comparison**).

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Applicants and supporters of rezoning have suggested that property tax revenues could be approximately \$600,000 per year (Appendix B: Refuting the Applicant's Claimed "Five Key Areas of Impact"). Harrisonburg's citywide budget is ~\$416.5 million (FY 2025–2026 proposal/approval), and the General Fund is ~\$175.2 million. A \$600,000 property-tax increment would equal roughly 0.14% of the total city budget or 0.34% of the General Fund—before accounting for added public costs (public safety, traffic/parking management, park operations next-door, infrastructure). If the building later becomes university-owned student housing, property tax revenues could fall to zero while costs remain. Fiscal health matters, but Virginia law does not permit rezonings to rest on revenue promises alone. Council must find public necessity, welfare, and good zoning practice, and weigh consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation and Parking. The application's transportation and parking plan do not satisfy Virginia's requirement to give reasonable consideration to traffic, safety, and public services. **Appendix F** Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) Critique — Methods & Assumptions (detail). **Appendix H** contains Parking Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Critique.

- The Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) assumes the project's 290 units will generate 107 trips during AM peak and 113 trips during PM peak. However, under the proffer, the project is likely to have 365–425 parking spaces and 600–700 beds. This could double the number of trips during both the AM and PM peaks.
- Various turning movements in the "Build 2027" part of the TIA and the "No-Build 2027" part of the TIA are identical because the TIA ignores the fact that some of the additional trips will be to/from the Food Lion Shopping Center, the Walmart Shopping Center, E. Market St. Shopping, and the East and West Campuses.
- The TIA ignores the fact that the "grid dispersion" of traffic through neighborhood streets (which it says will occur) has detrimental impact on safety (child pedestrian/bi-cycle traffic to/from Spotswood Elementary School) and public services.
- The Parking Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is not a durable public benefit. The MOU is expressly non-binding, preserves developer control over access and operations, and prohibits the city from sub-licensing spaces to meet merchant or event surges.

Virginia law requires reasonable consideration of transportation effects and adequate mitigation when amending the zoning map (Code § 15.2-2284). When the modeling basis (unit-based, commuter peaks, low-volume count days, assumed future projects) understates foreseeable impacts of a bedroom-heavy, student-leaning program, the record does not support a finding of "good zoning practice." If Council is inclined to continue rather than deny, require a re-scoped TIA (per the items in §G) and proffered, trigger-based mitigations before any vote.

Conclusion

Tabling for last-minute proffers is not appropriate. The six story, block style mass of up to ~760 student bedrooms would tower over two- and three-story historic buildings, block key sight lines on S. Main and Liberty, and pull daily life behind private garages, gyms, and pools—undermining the small-scale, mixed-use fabric the 2040 Plan seeks to safeguard. Material fixes needed to align this project with existing city plans and Virginia's rezoning standards, go well beyond proffer. They involve massing, preservation outcomes, durable public parking rights, TDM/curb management, and credible transportation analysis—changes that are substantial in nature. Under Virginia practice, substantial amendments ordinarily require re-advertisement and, where appropriate, a remand to the Planning Commission for a fresh recommendation (see Code §§ 15.2-2204, 15.2-2285). Approving a map change on the promise of future "band-aid" proffers risks arbitrariness and weakens the City's position if challenged. The prudent path is denial without prejudice.

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Appendix A: Deny Rezoning: Legal & Policy

- Fails the threshold test: the record does not demonstrate public necessity, convenience, general welfare, or good zoning practice (Code § 15.2-2286(A)(7)).
- Conflicts with multiple Comprehensive Plan directives (gateway design, historic resource protection, active frontages, housing balance, parking management).
- Downtown 2040 alignment: density without enforceable design quality at a gateway and minimal mixed-use activation.
- Demolition of the Lindsey ensemble at the edge of the new park erodes the historic district's fabric and place-based tourism value.
- Transportation impacts hinge on assumptions about future projects and a generic apartment trip profile that under-represents a 4BR-heavy, student-leaning program.
- Parking spillover risk is foreseeable; the public parking "MOU" is non-binding, short-term, and developer-controlled.
- Unit mix skews student-oriented; no affordability or workforce set-asides; weak alignment with housing goals.
- Civic-space overshadowing: massing and garage adjacency compromise the quality of the new downtown park and City Hall setting.
- Process and community participation gaps for a gateway project (timing, outreach, and limited public design specificity).

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Appendix B: Refuting the Applicant's Claimed "Five Key Areas of Impact"

Claimed Impact	Record-Based Rebuttal (summary)
1) Transportation improvements	A variance-dependent Paul Street extension and sidewalk upgrades do not offset trip growth from ≈712–760 bedrooms. The TIA also notes several failing movements today and assumes unrelated future corridor changes. No proffered turn-lane or signal timing mitigations.
2) Parking solutions	≈400 on-site spaces vs. ≈712–760 bedrooms invites spillover to customer/church curb space. The 65 "public" spaces are governed by a non-binding MOU; access and renewals are uncertain. Not a durable public benefit.
3) Civic space synergy	A six-story wall and garage edge beside the new downtown park reduces sky exposure and adds service traffic. Optional "green walls/murals" are cosmetic and discretionary.
4) Community cohesion	A self-contained, amenity-rich block tends to turn residents inward; massing severs sight-lines at a gateway. Little active frontage; only ≈2,000 sf retail.
5) Fiscal benefits	Revenue claims (≈\$600k/yr) equal ≈0.14% of total budget or ≈0.34% of the General Fund and must be weighed against incremental public costs. If later tax-exempt, revenues disappear while costs persist.

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Appendix C: Comprehensive Plan Consistency Matrix (Color-coded)

Legend:  aligns |  partial |  conflicts

Comprehensive Plan policy (what the Plan says)	What "The Link" delivers	Fit / notes
Design & massing must fit context; regulate building bulk/height; address the placement of buildings and parking.(Ch.16, p.16-3 to p.16-4: Strategy 4.1.2 & 4.1.3)	Six-story apartment block (max 265 units) with ≈2,000 sf commercial and an integrated garage; façades committed only to "general conformance," with final colors/materials at site-plan stage. (PC Memo; Proffers I.a, I.e, I.f.)	 Near-max height slab with open-ended exterior/material latitude; weak street relationship.
Parking should not dominate frontages; set standards for the placement of parking areas/garages to avoid streetscapes dominated by parking lots/garage doors. (Ch.16, p.16-4)	Garage mass and exposure on the civic-park side; "screening/décor" at developer's discretion (min 60% coverage only). (Proffer I.g.)	 Visible garage undermines frontage quality at a signature edge.
Gateways & corridors: establish design standards/guidelines and overlays for key corridors and entrances (gateways).(Ch.16, p.16-3 to p.16-4; Ch.15, p.15-10)	Single primary use with minimal public ground-floor activity; garage edge near the park at a downtown gateway. (Proffers I.e, I.g; PC Memo summary of program.)	 Low-activity frontage at a marquee approach; no binding gateway-quality design controls.
Preserve historic resources; ensure City development and redevelopment respect older/historic resources and reflect historic character and site context. (Ch.9, p.9-7 to p.9-8)	No preservation/adaptive-reuse proffer for the existing Lindsey Funeral Home structures; exterior specifics non-binding beyond "general conformance." (Site context from PC Memo; Proffer I.f.)	 No binding design/preservation mechanism at a contributing gateway edge.

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Transportation: plan for impacts of new development; traffic impact analyses and mitigation are important components of plans. (Ch.15, p.15-9)

Applicant TIA finds minimal change to LOS but acknowledges several failing movements today; Paul St extension will require variances (width/radii/spacing). (TIA; PC Memo)

○ Process followed, but mitigation is not proffered; critical elements depend on later variances.

Complete streets & multimodal network serving driving, walking, biking, and transit. (Ch.12, p.12-1)

Auto-forward supply (min 400 structured stalls) vs. relatively modest secured bike parking (90 indoor + 8 exterior). (Proffers III.a & III.d.)

○ Multimodal elements present but out-scaled by parking program.

Vibrant, walkable mixed-use form; traditional neighborhood development with a retail core and pedestrian-oriented character. (Ch.6, p.6-2)

≈2,000 sf of commercial total; remainder private residential/amenities and garage. (PC Memo; Proffer I.e.)

● Near single-use block at a signature civic frontage; limited activation.

Meet needs for affordable housing (Goal 6). (Ch.2, p.2-4)

No affordability proffers; unit permissions allow up to 40% four-bedroom suites (student-leaning). (Proffer I.d.)

● Skews toward student typologies; misses workforce/affordability goals.

Public art & civic-space quality; celebrate gateways and the public realm.(Ch.9, p.9-7)

Discretionary garage décor (green wall/mural/lighting) with a 60% coverage minimum, but no binding public-art commitment. (Proffer I.g.)

○ Optional décor ≠ durable, curated public-realm art strategy at a gateway.

Use the Comprehensive Plan to guide rezonings and land-use decisions. (Ch.6, p.6-2; Ch.1, p.1-1)

Application emphasizes “more residents” but leaves unresolved conflicts with design, historic setting, parking/transport, and housing-balance policies documented above.

● Consistency requires considering all relevant policies, not just the Land Use Guide label.

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Appendix D: Bedroom Density Comparison (Assumptions & Calculations)

Purpose: Provide a fair, apples-to-apples bedroom-density comparison between the Link (using its binding proffers) and Urban Exchange (assumed student-focused but 4BR-free mix), using most-likely mixes aligned with student-market practices. Rounding to whole units.

The Link (site ≈ 2.75 ac; ≤ 265 units; $\leq 40\%$ 4BR; $\geq 25\%$ studios/1BR; remainder split 60% 2BR / 40% 3BR): 4BR = 106 units (424 beds); studios/1BR = 67 units (67 beds); 2BR = 55 units (110 beds); 3BR = 37 units (111 beds). Total ≈ 712 beds $\rightarrow \approx 259$ beds/acre.

Urban Exchange (site ≈ 2.63 ac; 194 units; assumed 5% studios / 20% 1BR / 55% 2BR / 20% 3BR): ≈ 10 studios (10 beds); 39 1BR (39 beds); 107 2BR (214 beds); 38 3BR (114 beds). Total ≈ 377 beds $\rightarrow \approx 143$ beds/acre.

Head-to-head: Link ≈ 259 beds/ac vs. Urban Exchange ≈ 143 beds/ac $\rightarrow$ Link $\approx 1.8\times$ UE.

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Appendix E: Downtown 2040 Scorecard & Evidence (Color-coded)

Legend:  aligns |  partial |  conflicts

Downtown 2040 direction (source)	What The Link delivers (source)	Fit / notes
#16 & #17: Encourage mixed-use in key clusters and, long-term, add density and improve the urban design at key Downtown sites (Plan p. 58).	Max 265 units on ~2.75 ac and ≈2,000 sf corner retail; six stories near B-1 height cap; exteriors only in “general conformance” with elevations; final colors/materials deferred to site plan. (App. letter noting 265 units/2,000 sf, Plan cites pp. 16, 59–60; ; Proffer I.f “general conformance” & finish flexibility; PC memo summarizing pp. 58 actions:)	 Adds residents but lacks enforceable design guardrails the plan expects for key sites.
Target “South Downtown” for coordinated infill next to civic spaces; concept shows 270 units, 13,000 sf commercial , and a district parking strategy (Plan p. 60).	265 units on one site with ≥400 garage spaces ; City “ up to 65” stalls via non-binding MOU (not a recorded public easement). (Proffer III.a–b:)	 Concentrates units but under-delivers commercial and offers a short-term, non-durable public parking benefit compared with district-scale concept.
“Downtown needs more residents” (Plan p. 16), while acknowledging housing-type constraints and student market pressures (same page).	Mix allows up to 40% 4-BR suites; ≥25% studios/1-BR ; no affordability or student-lease limits proffered. (Proffers I.b–d: max 265 units; 25% studio/1-BR min; 40% 4-BR max.)	 Adds residents but tilts student-heavy and omits affordability tools that would broaden downtown’s resident mix the plan discusses.

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Public realm & streets:strengthen pedestrian links and improve the local grid; **activate Water Street/Blacks Run;** knit in housing by **City Hall/park**(Plan p. 60).

Paul St. extension (but with variances flagged), **sidewalk upgrades** to match City Hall/park, and **two new walk links** to park/City Hall. (Proffers II.a–d:)

○ Positive if built to standards, but reliance on later variances means the grid/public-realm benefit isn't guaranteed at rezoning.

Design excellence at gateways/key corridors(Plan action #17 emphasizes urban-design improvement at key sites, p. 58).

Garage edge faces the civic park; **garage décor/screening**discretionary beyond a **60% coverage minimum**; **materials/colors** not fixed. (Proffer I.g garage screening min; finish flexibility noted with "general conformance.")

● Lacks binding façade/materials and frontage activation standards expected for a signature downtown approach.

Appendix F: Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) Critique | Methods & Assumptions

What the TIA modeled vs. what the proffers allow

- **TIA land-use basis:** The submitted Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) modeled the project as **generic multifamily (ITE LUC 221, Mid-Rise)** using a **per-dwelling-unit** trip rate and an assumed project size of **≈290 units**. That is the correct ITE class for conventional apartments, but it **does not reflect a student-leaning program and does not scale by bedrooms**.
- **Proffer-constrained reality:** The applicant's proffers cap the project at **≤265 units** but permit a **student-oriented mix: ≤40% four-bedroom (4BR) suites and ≥25% studios/1BRs**. Under those caps:
 - **Upper-bound** (maximizing bedrooms within proffers): 4BRs at 40% (106 units → 424 beds), studios/1BRs at 25% (67 units → 67 beds), remainder all 3BR (92 units → 276 beds) = **≈767 bedrooms total**.
 - **Most-likely** (plausible student-market split for the remainder): 4BRs at 40% (106 → 424 beds), studios/1BRs at 25% (67 → 67 beds), remainder split **60% 2BR** (55 → 110 beds) / **40% 3BR** (37 → 111 beds) = **≈712 bedrooms total**.

Why this matters: A bedroom-heavy, student-leaning building generates trips, curb friction (pick-ups/drop-offs), and deliveries differently than a conventional apartment house. Modeling **per unit** (LUC 221) can **undercount trips** versus **per-bedroom** profiles and can **miss peak timing** characteristic of student housing.

Peak-hour timing: student housing ≠ commuter apartments

- **Modeled peaks:** LUC 221 emphasizes **commuter AM/PM** peak hours (work-trip oriented).
- **Likely peaks here:** For student-leaning buildings, **late-afternoon, evening, and weekend** periods often produce **higher curb and driveway churn** (classes, social trips, events, dining, delivery). If those periods are not explicitly modeled or sensitivity-tested, **queueing and curb conflicts** can be **understated** even if AM/PM commuter peaks look acceptable.

Count timing & representativeness

- **End-of-term bias:** Portions of the turning-movement counts occurred **near the end of the spring term**, when day-to-day student traffic typically **declines** (finals schedules, departures).
- **Holiday-week bias:** Some data were collected on the **Wednesday after Thanksgiving**, a period when **campus-related travel is depressed** and many households are out of routine.
- These timing choices **tend to lower observed baseline volumes**, which, in turn, **dampens modeled project impacts**.

Network assumptions that are not proffered

- The TIA's "future conditions" assume **Liberty Street corridor changes** (two-way protected bike lanes and intersection modifications) by 2027. Those are **not commitments of this rezoning**. If those capital works are delayed or value-engineered, the **absorptive capacity** assumed in the model **does not materialize**, but the rezoning would already be granted.

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“Grid dispersion” = Old Town cut-through (especially via Paul Street)

- The TIA asserts that the “surrounding grid” disperses trips, minimizing overload at any single intersection. In practice, that “grid” is the **Old Town residential network**, with **Paul Street** the shortest, unwound east-west link to **MLK Jr. Way**.
- **Behaviorally likely path:** From the site, many drivers will **avoid Main Street signals** by cutting east on **Paul Street’s hill**, then dropping to **MLK—no signals until the end**, faster by distance/time than staying on Main.
- **Street context:** Paul is **narrow, traffic-calmed, and parked both sides** in places. Added cut-through **raises friction and safety concerns** unless **hard mitigations** (turn restrictions, diverters, raised crossings, speed tables, curb management) are baked in **now**, not after entitlement.

Parking math & curb risk

- **Supply vs. likely demand:** With **≈400** on-site spaces and **≈712–767** beds permitted, the **spaces/bed ratio** is **≈0.56–0.52**. With **≈335** on-site spaces and **≈712–767** beds permitted, the **spaces/bed ratio** is **≈0.47–0.44**. Although good estimates of student car ownership are not available, it is very likely that car ownership of residents will exceed these values, **before** visitors, service providers, or retail patrons.
- **Public parking is not guaranteed:** The **up to 65** spaces discussed for public use are tied to a **non-binding MOU** (short-term, developer-controlled rates/access). That **does not** deliver a reliable curb relief valve once the rezoning is granted.
- **Liberty on-street removal:** Planned **removal of on-street parking on Liberty** for the bikeway shrinks nearby curb supply, **tightening the system** as this project comes online.

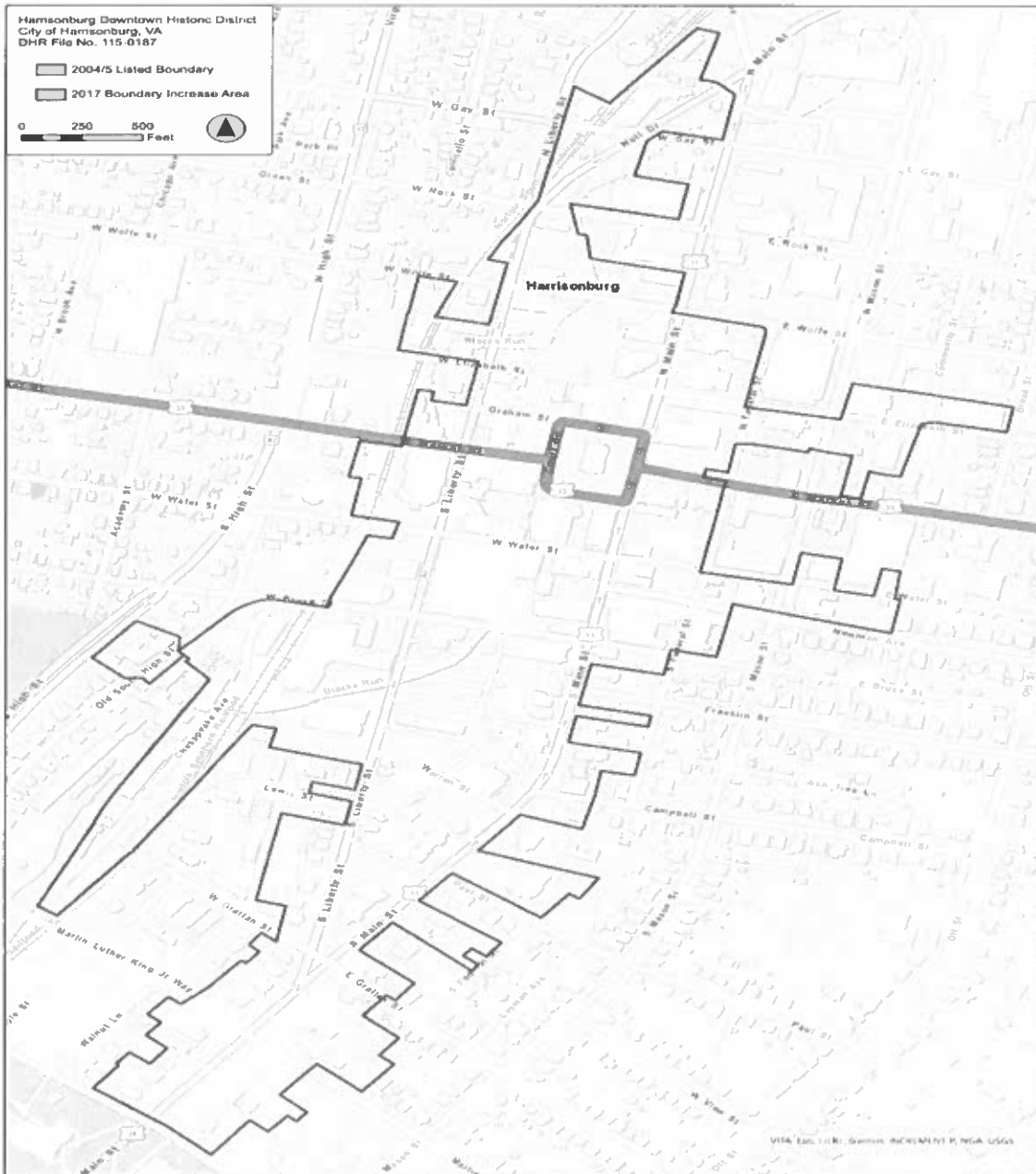
What a legally adequate traffic/parking plan should include (for a student-leaning project)

1. **Sensitivity tests** using **bedroom-based generation** and **evening/weekend peak periods**.
2. **Curb activity modeling** for **rideshare (Uber/Lyft)**, **delivery (DoorDash/Instacart)**, and **short-term loading**, with designated on-site pick-up/drop-off zones that **protect travel lanes and bike routes**.
3. **Paul Street cut-through mitigation package** (pre-specified and **proffered**): turning restrictions at peak periods, traffic-calming elements, and neighborhood safety measures.
4. **Trigger-based mitigations** (turn lanes, signal timing, protected phases) that **must be built** when observed volumes/queues cross thresholds—**enforceable in the proffers**.
5. **Binding Transportation Demand Management (TDM)**: unbundled/priced parking; student transit passes; secure indoor bike capacity scaled to beds; annual mode-share reporting with corrective actions.

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Appendix G — Historic District Location Map

Figure G-1. 473 S. Main within the National Register-listed Harrisonburg Downtown Historic District (source: City of Harrisonburg).



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Appendix H: Parking Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Critique

The applicant points to a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** offering the City up to 65 garage spaces at \$55/space/month for an initial 5-year term, with 10% rate escalations beginning in year six and every three years thereafter, and renewals only by mutual agreement. The MOU is expressly non-binding, preserves developer control over access and operations, and prohibits the City from sub-licensing spaces to meet merchant or event surges. In plain terms, Council would trade a permanent zoning entitlement for a time-limited, optional, and developer-controlled benefit.

- **No enforceability at rezoning.** Because the MOU is non-binding and the proffers only promise to “enter into a Parking Agreement consistent with” it later, the City has no guaranteed benefit at the time the map change is granted.
- **Short term + rate risk.** Initial cost is \$42,900/year ($65 \times \55×12). The first escalation lifts it to ≈\$47,190/year (year 6), and a second escalation to ≈\$51,909/year (year 9), without CPI caps. Renewals require mutual consent, giving the owner leverage to reprice or withdraw post-entitlement.
- **Operational control remains private.** The developer may gate or manage the deck for safety/commercial reasons. Without a recorded public-parking easement and a separate public entrance, “public” spaces can become functionally difficult to access, especially at peak times.
- **No sub-licensing right.** The City cannot reallocate spaces for festivals, merchant validations, or evening events, limiting the policy value of the spaces the City pays for.
- **No defined remedies.** If spaces are unavailable (e.g., construction, outages, owner choice), there is no liquidated-damages schedule, no right to withhold COs, and no default cure process.
- **Spillover incentives remain.** Because the project minimum is ≥400 spaces for ≈700+ beds, leasing 65 spaces to the public reduces resident supply, increasing the spillover pressure onto customer curb spaces unless the total supply is raised proportionally.
- **Assignment/sale risk.** If the property is sold (including potential university acquisition), the lease could be renegotiated or terminated, leaving the City with ongoing traffic/parking impacts but no public spaces.
- **Disproportionate exchange.** A major up-zoning justified by a small, time-limited parking lease does not satisfy Virginia’s proffer standards for specific, proportional, and related mitigation.
- The MOU states that the City is responsible for ensuring the proper use and upkeep of the leased parking spaces.

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: Thanh Dang
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 1:22 PM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer; Adam Fletcher
Subject: Fw: Public Comment - the link

Thanh Dang, AICP | Deputy Director of Community Development
(540) 432-7700 | Thanh.Dang@HarrisonburgVA.gov

From: William Domonoske <william.domonoske@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 12:36 PM
To: Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Public Comment - the link

WARNING: External email. Be cautious when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Hi Thahn!

I was told your address was the place to leave public comment? If that's wrong I apologize.

I just wanted to say I think, overall, The Link is a good idea. Harrisonburg needs more housing and more density, especially downtown. I appreciate that there will be a lot of bike parking, and that car parking is not tied to rent.

I also want to thank the planning commission for working with the developer to create something that moves us a little closer towards a more walkable and livable city.

Thanks!
William Domonoske

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 1:33 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Tue, 08/12/2025 - 13:32

Submitted values are:

Name

Alison Raines

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

6.b

Comment

I'm conflicted about The Link. If it were two stories shorter, I'd support it. Question: PowerPoint Presentation 'proffers' slide compares if 265 units are built, vs if 165 units are built. Does the developer already have a Plan A and a downsized Plan B for this site?

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

Yes

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

itsmpfc@gmail.com

5408423988

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: Thanh Dang
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 11:15 AM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer; Adam Fletcher
Subject: Fw: Public comment about The Link

Thanh Dang, AICP | Deputy Director of Community Development
(540) 432-7700 | Thanh.Dang@HarrisonburgVA.gov

From: Isaac Witmer <isaaclw@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 11:13 AM
To: Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Public comment about The Link

WARNING: External email. Be cautious when clicking on links or opening attachments.

To whom it may concern,

Hello, I'm a resident of the Northwest Neighborhood.

We just had the hottest summer on record. The summer before that was the hottest summer on record.

This is a trend that is going to continue.

I know everyone is concerned about climate change, but we don't yet understand how drastic we are going to have to adjust to meet this new reality.

Part of the transition will be moving to much more efficient city layouts. Cities that promote walkability and bikeability. Cities that are dense. Apartment buildings that can hold a lot of people, and reduce energy costs.

When I bought my house in 2017, after living in the city for 7 years, I wanted to buy a place that was near downtown, because I wanted to be able to walk to Klines or Court Square Theatre. Living downtown is a dream, and right now only a few people can participate in that: those that are willing to pay for very expensive housing.

The house I bought was 20 minutes walk away. These houses will be a 5 minute walk.

That transforms the way people do life in our city. More people close to businesses, and less cars on the road.

Everyone knows that sitting in traffic is no fun, but yet we continue to build our cities in a way that requires more traffic, not less.

Today a project is before us that has an opportunity to lean into what the more dense version of Harrisonburg City could look like.

We need to lean into that instead of pushing it away. It will make the "fundamental change" that we're required to make, a bit easier to swallow.

Please vote to support The Link, and other high density projects like it.

Thank you

- Isaac

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 1:25 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Tue, 08/12/2025 - 13:24

Submitted values are:

Name

Allan Hadfield

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

6b-

Comment

As a resident nearby to this location. I strongly disagree with the plan to change the zoning here. It will seriously damage the vibe of downtown and add tons of traffic we do not need. It will add crime, and put tremendous pressure on our public services / EMS. Please do not allow this .

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

Yes

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

allanhadfield2@gmail.com

4349424742

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: Thanh Dang
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 1:22 PM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer; Adam Fletcher
Subject: Fw: The Link Public Comment

Thanh Dang, AICP | Deputy Director of Community Development
(540) 432-7700 | Thanh.Dang@HarrisonburgVA.gov

From: Gabriella Crivilare <gabrycrivee@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 1:06 PM
To: Thanh Dang <Thanh.Dang@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: The Link Public Comment

WARNING: External email. Be cautious when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Hello,

I am writing in support of the Link. While I understand that the changing landscape of downtown is a concern for some, I believe that this change would benefit Harrisonburg. The cost of housing, both for single-family homes and rent for apartments, is continuing to rise, and the addition of more housing will help temper price increases. This plan is supported by the Planning Commission and Staff, who have the expertise necessary when it comes to making decisions for our community. I also believe that this will be beneficial for our downtown merchants, as residents living within a walkable distance will lead to an increase in foot traffic. I want to see Harrisonburg continue to grow and thrive, and I believe that the Link is a step in the right direction.

Thank you,

Gabriella Crivilare

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 1:42 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Tue, 08/12/2025 - 13:42

Submitted values are:

Name

Saul Harris

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

6b

Comment

I am very disturbed by the building of six story apartments in the center of Harrisonburg. It will make the beauty of the funeral home and greenery around it absolutely ugly. Downtown Harrisonburg should not be destroyed. It will also cause tremendous crowding and increase traffic conditions in the downtown area and the areas around it. Please do not approve this horrible project.

Thank you,

Saul Harris

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

Yes

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

photodad5@aol.com

540 3831813

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 9:47 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Tue, 08/12/2025 - 21:46

Submitted values are:

Name

Kevin Wheeler

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

6b

Comment

As someone who works downtown and currently lives in the County, there is a dearth of housing in city limits. Approving this project will provide more units for locals and students alike that will enable additional housing to become available to small and growing families like mine who want to move to the city but as a dual wage earning family cannot afford to do so. Freeing up houses around town currently being used for rentals by enabling more people to live downtown in this new proposed building will help expand housing access to people who want to live in the city and who currently work there.

We need more housing approved, and we need more housing built and sold/developed yesterday. Our downtown needs to develop and increase density in order to meet the growing needs of our populace.

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

No

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

kevin.wheeler1018@gmail.com

4344203317

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 6:38 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Tue, 08/12/2025 - 18:37

Submitted values are:

Name

Doug Skelley

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

6b

Comment

Availability of street parking principally on Sunday mornings for this area's churches is my concern for the rezoning and building of the proposed complex. I am a member of Harrisonburg Baptist Church and am also a tax paying city resident. I am very much in favor of increased revenue for the city, but I am wary that there will sufficient parking for the number of people in the complex. I would ask that parking be reassessed since it was last done April 2019. The proposal doesn't take into account the proposed loss of Liberty Street parking and potential changes to the permit parking on Main Street on Sundays. There is no mention that I see regarding available parking on the new extension of Paul Street. It is naive to think that many apartment dwellers, especially students, will not have cars. The proposal ignores the costs that will be imposed on our church for policing our two lots as Link tenants park opportunistically in the church lots, especially on weekends. We urge council to press the developer to provide more parking than they are committed to in this proposal.

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

No

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

scvaconn@aol.com

5404218248

Pamela S. Ulmer

From: noreply@harrisonburgva.gov on behalf of City of Harrisonburg, VA
<noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, August 12, 2025 5:27 PM
To: Michael E. Parks; Pamela S. Ulmer
Subject: Webform submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on Tue, 08/12/2025 - 17:27

Submitted values are:

Name

David Pulgar

Type of Meeting

Harrisonburg City Council

Date of Upcoming Meeting

2025-08-12

Agenda Item Number

Rezoning – 435, 445, 457, 473, 483 & 495 South Main Street and 282, 288, 294 & 298 South Liberty St (R-3 to B-1C)

Comment

I am against rezoning 435, 445, 457, 473, 483 and 495 South Main Street and 282, 288, 294 & 298 South Liberty S to allow for a residential housing complex. I oppose rezoning this parcel from R-3 to B-1C.

While Harrisonburg needs more housing, this proposed housing development is NOT what Harrisonburg needs.

The building itself would be an eyesore in contrast to the historic downtown. Its construction would also heavily congest traffic and negatively impact the downtown space we all share as part of this community.

The website and word document do not list an agenda item number, so I hope the description I provided is sufficient. If not, please contact me to discuss.

Would you like to be contacted by city staff?

Yes

If you would like to be contacted, please provide preferred contact information

dcp.spambox@gmail.com

786-228-6322



To: Harrisonburg City Council
From: Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
Date: 8/12/2025
Subject: Comments on the Link Development Rezoning and Site Plan

Dear Harrisonburg City Council Members,

On behalf of the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Link development. As an organization dedicated to building better communities for biking and walking, we believe projects of this scale deserve careful consideration, not just for their impact on adjoining parcels but also for how they shape the future of our transportation network, land use patterns, and downtown's overall vibrancy.

We approach this project with our mission in mind: advancing safe, accessible, and equitable opportunities for walking and biking. Housing, transportation, and land use are inseparable. Choices made here will ripple across our community for decades.

Why a Development such as the Link Matters:

Walkability and Bikeability

The project's downtown location, adjacent to existing and planned bike/ped infrastructure (including the future Liberty Street two-way cycle track), makes it easier for residents to choose walking and biking for daily trips. Placing more homes within a short ride or walk of jobs, groceries, schools, and services reduces car dependence and builds a stronger, more connected downtown.

This location is within a short walk or ride to JMU, downtown jobs, grocery stores, the farmers market, and multiple transit stops. We should add housing in places like this in our downtown core to reduce car dependency and give people real transportation choices.

Downtown Housing Density

Harrisonburg's adopted Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown 2040 plan call for more people to live downtown. We believe this is essential for our region and will support local businesses, reduce sprawl, and preserve surrounding green space and agricultural lands. Higher residential density in the urban core also supports transit and makes active transportation more practical.

Parking Policy

The reduced parking ratio is a meaningful shift toward a more walkable and bikeable future. We appreciate that the project is not overbuilt with parking, which can otherwise inflate costs and



encourage car use. We believe more developments should separate the cost of parking from monthly rent.

Building Frontage & Street Activation

We commend the city staff's work securing the proposal to front the building directly on the street with active ground-floor uses. This creates a better, more engaging pedestrian environment by reducing dead zones and making the block feel shorter and more walkable. Developments that meet the sidewalk with entrances, windows, and activity—not blank walls or surface parking—make walking and biking more appealing and safer.

Areas for Improvement and Caution

Neighborhood Impacts

We acknowledge resident concerns about parking spillover, the building's scale and design, and compatibility with surrounding streets. Solutions could include targeted permit parking, enhanced architectural detailing, and landscaping that softens the visual impact.

Housing Affordability & Inclusion

While the project increases supply, it does not guarantee affordability. We urge the city and developer to explore ways to include a range of price points or to contribute to housing affordability programs so that the benefits of downtown living are accessible to more people.

Shared Micromobility (Bike Share/Scooter Share)

We would love to see the City of Harrisonburg further explore a shared micromobility solution integrated with James Madison University and developers of properties like the Link. Such a system could consist of shared bikes, scooters, or other small electric mobility devices for residents to rent short-term. We believe this is an important step towards a city with more trips taken by human-scale transportation options.

Street-Level Activation & Mixed Use Potential

While we commend the proposal to front the building directly on the street with active ground-floor uses, we believe this is a rare opportunity to go further. True street activation comes from ground-floor spaces alive throughout the day and evening, where residents and visitors can run errands, grab a coffee, browse a shop, or access community services without getting in a car.

We encourage the developer to increase the mixed-use space at the street level. More retail, service, and community-oriented uses would help knit this project into the surrounding



downtown fabric, support local businesses, and create a more engaging and welcoming experience for people walking, biking, or taking transit along Liberty Street. The more reasons people have to linger at street level, the safer, more connected, and more vibrant our downtown becomes.

Why the Bicycle Coalition is Commenting

Some may ask why a Bicycle Coalition is weighing in on a private development. The answer is simple: how and where we build determines how and whether people can walk and bike. Development in the urban core often makes active transportation safer and more appealing, while building on the outskirts or more suburban settings often makes active transportation harder and more dangerous.

We are not taking a blanket position of support or opposition. Instead, we highlight what works for a walkable, bikeable Harrisonburg and where refinements could better serve the community. We believe our city is strongest when development decisions reflect adopted plans, respond to resident concerns, and advance a future that allows for more transportation choices while making a range of active transportation options easier.

Of course, no project is perfect. It's also valid to raise questions about affordability, design, and long-term neighborhood impact. But we also believe in confronting those questions without defaulting to fear of change.

Thank you for your service and for considering these comments as part of your deliberation.

Sincerely,

Kyle Lawrence

On behalf of the Board of the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition

Joel Jordan 1191 Dale Circle, Harrisonburg 22801 - in favor of Link Project