



March 11, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title

Consider rezoning and special use permit requests for 851 Madison Street — Nyrma Soffel, Community Development

Summary

Project name	NA
Address/Location	851 Madison Street
Tax Map Parcels	41-K-5 and 6
Total Land Area	+/- 12,944 square feet
Property Owner	Center for Health and Human Development
Owner's Representative	Sam Nickels
Present Zoning	R-2, Residential District
Proposed Zoning	R-8, Small Lot Residential District
Special Use Permit Request	Section 10-3-59.4(9) to allow a reduction in the required number of vehicle parking spaces
Planning Commission	March 11, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated April 14, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated April 28, 2026 (Second Reading)

Recommendation

Option 1. Recommend approval of the rezoning and special use permit requests with the recommended condition.

Context & Analysis

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

Site: Single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-2

North: Across the undeveloped alley, City-owned vacant property and single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-2

East: Across the undeveloped alley, Single-family detached dwellings, zoned R-2

South: Across Madison Street, duplex dwellings, zoned R-2

West: Single-family detached dwelling, zoned R-2

The applicant is requesting to rezone a +/- 12,944-square-foot property from R-2, Residential District to R-8, Small Lot Residential District. The property is addressed as 851 Madison Street

and is identified as tax map parcels 41-K-5 and 6. If approved, the applicant plans to subdivide the property into three parcels, one of which would contain the existing single-family detached dwelling, and the remaining two parcels would be for a duplex structure containing one (1) dwelling unit on each parcel. In addition, the applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) pursuant to Zoning Ordinance (ZO) Section 10-3-59.4(9) to allow a reduction in the required number of vehicle parking spaces to zero spaces.

The existing two-story single-family detached dwelling on the parcel is nonconforming to the R-2 district's front and side yard setback regulations. The proposed rezoning to the R-8 district would make the existing front yard setback conforming. The minimum side yard setback for a two-story dwelling in the R-8 district is seven (7) feet. The house is approximately five (5) feet from the property line and would continue to be nonconforming to side yard setback regulations along the northwest property boundary.

The R-8 district's area and dimensional regulations require that each duplex unit be located on its own parcel. For a duplex, a minimum lot width of 25 feet per unit and a minimum lot depth of 60 feet are required. If rezoned to the R-8 district, the two new proposed duplex lots would have sufficient depth to be further subdivided, for a total of four (4) new lots. Should the applicant desire to further subdivide the lots in the future, they would have to come before the Planning Commission and City Council to request a variance from the Subdivision Ordinance because the lots would not have public street frontage.

It should be noted that a significant portion of this parcel is in floodplain. The proposed duplex would be located within the 100-year floodplain and subject to a higher risk of flooding, which may impact financing and insurance. The elevation of the lowest floor, including basement, of each dwelling must be at least 1-foot above the base flood elevation (BFE), and the development will require a floodplain development permit and elevation certificates. In addition, the Design and Construction Standards Manual section 1.3.1.13 requires an engineered comprehensive site plan (ECSP) for any development in the floodplain.

Proffers

There are no proffers with this request. The conceptual site layout is not proffered.

Special Use Permit

Per the ZO, one (1) parking space is required per dwelling unit for single-family detached and duplex dwellings within all zoning districts. The SUP, if approved, would allow for the reduction in the required number of vehicle parking spaces provided that an equivalent amount of open space is reserved on the property. This area would be required to remain available should it be needed at some time in the future to accommodate parking needs. In addition, the open space used for this purpose must be noted in a deed and not used to meet other requirements of the ZO. The applicant is requesting to reduce the required number of parking spaces to zero and has shown the reserved area on the conceptual layout.

If the SUP request is approved, and if the applicant further subdivides the property in the future, the SUP would apply to all future and existing dwellings located on the site. While staff does not object to the proposed reduction in parking for the duplex shown on the conceptual layout, staff

believes that any additional subdivision and/or additional dwelling units should be evaluated for parking if/when such development is proposed. Therefore, staff recommends the following condition:

The special use permit shall apply only to the two planned dwelling units as shown on the conceptual layout.

Land Use

The Comprehensive Plan designates this site as Neighborhood Residential and states:

These areas are typically older residential neighborhoods, which contain a mixture of densities and a mixture of housing types, but should have more single-family detached homes than other types of housing. This type of land use highlights those neighborhoods in which existing conditions dictate the need for careful consideration of the types and densities of future residential development. Infill development and redevelopment must be designed so as to be compatible with the desired character of the neighborhood.

The surrounding neighborhood is an established residential neighborhood composed of a mix of single-family detached, duplex, and small multi-family dwellings. The proposed duplex would be compatible with the existing neighborhood.

Transportation and Traffic

A traffic impact analysis (TIA) was not required for the rezoning request.

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

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

Housing Study

The City's Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) places the subject property within Market Type D, which states:

Market type D has lower market activity as well as lower access to amenities. This could be because the areas are stable residential neighborhoods or because the area is less developed and therefore has fewer sales and fewer amenities. Strategies that would be appropriate in the latter case include concurrent development of the housing and economic opportunities through mixed-use developments to build commerce and housing centers across the City.

Staff believes that the requested rezoning to R-8 supports efforts to increase the availability of housing in the City.

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 Projects 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.

The Weldon Cooper Center report states that "[s]ample sizes were too small to reliability calculate duplex yields for Keister, Smithland, Stone Spring, and Waterman [attendance boundaries]," and therefore, the duplex student generation rate for the aforementioned attendance boundary is zero. For this reason, staff used the Weldon Cooper Center report's student generation rate for single-family detached dwelling units, and thus a development proposal for two single-family detached dwelling units is estimated to generate one K-12 student at full build-out. According to the School Board's current attendance boundaries, Waterman Elementary School, Thomas Harrison Middle School, and Harrisonburg High School would serve the students residing in this development.

Conclusion

The requested rezoning from R-2 to R-8 is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and allows for the development of additional housing in a mixed-density neighborhood. Staff recommends approval of the rezoning. Staff also recommends approval of the SUP request with the following condition:

The special use permit shall apply only to the two planned dwelling units as shown on the conceptual layout.

Options

1. Recommend approval of the rezoning and special use permit requests with the recommended condition.
2. Recommend approval of the rezoning and special use permit requests with other condition(s).
3. Recommend approval of the rezoning and special use permit requests as submitted by the applicant.
4. Recommend approval of the rezoning request and denial of special use permit request.
5. Recommend denial of the rezoning and special use permit requests.

Attachments

- Site maps
- Application and supporting documents