



September 8, 2026 City Council Meeting

Title

Consider request to amend the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan — Planning Commission and Nyrma Soffel, Community Development

Summary

Project name	Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan
Address/Location	Study area boundaries: West: North Federal Street and North Main Street North: East Washington Street East: Tower Street and Old Furnace Road South: East Market Street
Total Land Area	+/- 186 acres
Comprehensive Plan Amendment	To incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan as Appendix A
Planning Commission	August 12, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	September 8, 2026 (Public Hearing)

Recommendation

Option 1. Staff and Planning Commission (6-0) recommend approval of amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan.

Context & Analysis

In September 2023, the City of Harrisonburg received a Community Connectors Program grant from Smart Growth America, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The grant was focused on building capacity to co-design projects alongside impacted communities to advance new infrastructure projects that repair damage from divisive infrastructure. The Community Connectors team included the Northeast Neighborhood Association (NENA), Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project (SVBHP), Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR), Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA), and the City of Harrisonburg.

Over the next two years, the Community Connectors team led efforts that included:

- Facilitated Community Dialogues,

- Historical research on the history of and impact of Urban Renewal on Harrisonburg residents and businesses,
- The Complete Streets Leadership Academy and North Mason Street Complete Street Demonstration Project, and
- The Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (SAP).

The Northeast Neighborhood SAP is the City's first small area plan for a neighborhood and is recommended in the Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 15. Revitalization. The Comprehensive Plan (page 15-4) states:

A number of neighborhoods around the City have experienced stress. Some are suffering from poorly maintained, deteriorating, or vacant homes and spot conversions of single-family homes to apartments, often for students. Other areas contain older deteriorating apartment buildings. Some are affected by encroaching commercial development or undesirable conversion of houses to non-residential uses. Impacts of traffic on highly traveled roadways may also be creating neighborhood stress. The Potential Small Area Plans map roughly identifies the boundaries of neighborhoods that could be prioritized for study. Actual boundaries for study will be identified at a future time in further consultation with community members. This plan recommends that for each of these areas a community-based neighborhood plan be developed to address these and other issues raised by the community.

The Northeast Neighborhood is identified in the Potential Small Area Plans map.

CHPlanning served as the planning consultant for the development of the Northeast Neighborhood SAP. Together, CHPlanning and the Community Connectors team worked with Northeast Neighborhood community members on a plan that “addresses displacement and other impacts of Urban Renewal, presenting possible early action steps and long-term solutions for addressing these impacts. The harms of Urban Renewal are generational. The plan proposes strategies to return functional control and ownership to community residents and organizations, and to restore a sense of engagement, place-making, and belonging.” (SAP, page 8)

Through this effort, the Northeast Neighborhood SAP was developed to guide future growth and investment in the area. Building upon Section 5 of the Northeast Neighborhood SAP, Section 6 includes an Implementation Matrix. The matrix identifies each SAP goal, strategy, and action, and assigns a priority, lead entity, potential partners, and potential funding sources. Lead entities and partners include City departments, other government agencies, and community organizations who can help implement or support goals, strategies, and actions.

Staff recommends that the Northeast Neighborhood SAP be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan as Appendix A. Once incorporated, the Northeast Neighborhood SAP will serve as a policy guide for City staff, Planning Commission, City Council, and other boards and commissions when evaluating future policies, studies, programs, funding opportunities, capital improvements, administrative approvals, and land use decisions affecting the neighborhood.

The Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan and additional information about the Community Connectors project is available at: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/community-connectors>.

Staff recommends approval of amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan.

Options

1. Approve amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan
2. Deny amending the Comprehensive Plan to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan

Attachments

1. Extract from Planning Commission
2. Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan (2025)
3. Planning Commission Resolution recommending approval of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (2018) to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan
4. Draft City Council Resolution Approving amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (2018) to incorporate the Northeast Neighborhood Small Area Plan