

CITY OF HARRISONBURG



September 8, 2026 City Council Meeting

Title

Consider a request for a Special Use Permit at 291 West Wolfe Street & 336 West Market Street
— Planning Commission and Adam Fletcher, Community Development

Summary

Project name	N/A
Address/Location	291 West Wolfe Street & 336 West Market Street
Tax Map Parcels	35-R-23
Total Land Area	+/- 5.35 acres
Property Owner	VG Harrisonburg Storage LLC
Owner's Representative	High House Capital
Present Zoning	M-1, General Industrial District and M-1C, General Industrial District Conditional
Special Use Permit Request	To allow for recreational and leisure time activities, which may include non-transient dwelling units per Section 10-3-97(10)
Planning Commission	August 12, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	September 8, 2026 (Public Hearing)

Recommendation

Option 1. Staff recommend approval of the special use permit request with suggested conditions. Planning Commission (6-0) recommended approval of the special use permit with an amendment to condition #2 as shown below:

1. All recreational and leisure-time activities shall occur entirely within an enclosed building. No outdoor recreational activities shall be permitted.
2. The recreational and leisure-time activity use shall be limited to recreational, athletic, fitness, and sports-related activities, including but not limited to indoor rock climbing, pickleball, gymnastics, soccer, futsal, basketball, volleyball, tennis, racquetball, dodgeball, cheerleading, martial arts, dance, bowling, trampoline parks, and substantially similar recreational uses, as determined by the Zoning Administrator.
3. Non-transient dwelling units are not permitted.

Context & Analysis

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

Site: Vacant building, formally Artisan Packaging, zoned M-1 and M-1C

North: Across West Wolfe Street, residential uses, zoned R-2

East: Residential uses, zoned R-3
South: Across West Market Street, residential uses, zoned R-2
West: Across North Brook Avenue, residential uses, zoned R-2

The applicant is requesting a special use permit (SUP) per Section 10-3-97(10) of the Zoning Ordinance (ZO) to allow for recreational and leisure time activities, which may include non-transient dwelling units in the M-1 General Industrial District. The +/- 5.35-acre property is addressed as 291 West Wolfe Street and 336 West Market Street and is identified as tax map parcel 35-R-23. The request does not include residential occupancy or non-transient dwelling units.

The property is the former location of Artisan Packaging, which ceased operations in October 2023. The applicant plans to make modifications to physically separate the building into two. In the northern building adjacent to West Wolfe Street, the applicant plans to operate a by-right self-storage facility. And in the southern building, close to West Market Street, the applicant plans to operate an indoor recreational facility. The applicant has identified two potential tenants. One tenant would like to operate an indoor rock-climbing facility and another that would like to operate an indoor pickleball facility.

The applicant's letter states that the indoor rock-climbing gym may include climbing walls, bouldering areas, fitness equipment, instructional and training areas, youth and family programming, merchandise and refreshment sales, and may have tournaments or events in the future. The indoor pickleball facility could include courts for open or league play, lessons, clinics, and youth and adult programming.

The applicant has noted that all proposed recreational activities would occur indoors.

Land Use

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

Neighborhood Residential

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.

Industrial

These areas are composed of land and structures used for light and general manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing, high-technology, research and development, and related activities. They include the major existing and future employment areas of the City.

Staff finds that the proposed use can be compatible with the adjacent Neighborhood Residential land use designation when considered in the context of surrounding development patterns and

existing site conditions. Although recreational and leisure-time activities are not residential uses, the proposed indoor recreational use would provide a lower-intensity transition between industrially zoned land and nearby residential properties than many industrial uses permitted by right.

Staff also finds that the proposed use can be appropriate within the industrial land use designation because it would utilize the existing industrial building. Compared to many of the by-right M-1 industrial uses, the proposed indoor recreational use would generally be expected to have fewer impacts related to noise, odor, outdoor storage, truck traffic, or heavy equipment.

Transportation and Traffic

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

Public Water and Sanitary Sewer

Staff has no concerns with the requested special use permit regarding water and sewer matters.

Conclusion

Staff believes that the proposed use does not adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood and recommends approval of the SUP with the following conditions:

1. All recreational and leisure-time activities shall occur entirely within an enclosed building. No outdoor recreational activities shall be permitted.
2. The recreational and leisure-time activity use shall be limited to indoor rock climbing, pickleball, and substantially similar indoor recreational uses, as determined by the Zoning Administrator.
3. Non-transient dwelling units are not permitted.

Options

1. Approve the special use permit with the suggested conditions.
2. Approve the special use permit as submitted by the applicant.
3. Approve the special use permit with other conditions(s).
4. Deny the special use permit.

Attachments

- Extract from Planning Commission
- Site maps
- Applicant's supporting documents