



August 25, 2026 City Council Meeting

Title

Consider a request to rezone at 435, 445, 457, 473, 483 & 495 South Main Street and 282, 288, 294 & 298 South Liberty Street — Planning Commission and Thanh Dang, Community Development

Summary

Project name	The Lindsey (formerly The Link Apartments)
Address/Location	435, 445, 457, 473, 483 & 495 South Main Street and 282, 288, 294 & 298 South Liberty Street
Tax Map Parcels	25-J-2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 16, 17 and 18
Total Land Area	+/- 2.75-acres
Property Owner	Trenton Inc. and Bernard L C
Owner's Representatives	Timberwolf Capital Partners LLC and Clark and Bradshaw PC
Present Zoning	R-3, Medium Density Residential District
Proposed Zoning	B-1C, Central Business District Conditional
Planning Commission	July 9, 2025 (Invalid Public Hearing Date) March 11, 2026 (Public Hearing) July 8, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	August 12, 2025 (Invalid First Reading/Public Hearing) April 28, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing/Tabled) August 25, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated September 8, 2026 (Second Reading)

Recommendation

Staff recommend approval of the rezoning request. Planning Commission's motion to recommend approval of the rezoning failed with a split vote (3-3).

Context & Analysis

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

Site: Lindsey Funeral Home and vacant office building, zoned R-3

North: City Hall, Turner Pavilion, parking lots, zoned B-1

East: Across South Main Street, commercial properties, zoned B-1C and B-2C

South: Harrisonburg Baptist Church, zoned R-3

West: Across South Liberty Street, residential uses, zoned R-3

The applicant is requesting to rezone a +/- 2.75-acre site consisting of 10 parcels from R-3, Medium Density Residential District to B-1C, Central Business District Conditional. If the request is approved, with recent proffer changes the applicant is now proposing to construct a four-story multi-family building consisting of a maximum of 180 units (which is about 65 units per acre), between 2,500 to 5,000 square feet of non-residential space, and a five-level parking garage consisting of a minimum of 320 off-street parking spaces.

Planning Commission and City Council have previously reviewed requests to rezone the subject property in 2025 and earlier this year. On April 28, 2026, City Council tabled the request. Due to substantial revisions to the proffers by the applicant following the April 28th meeting, the rezoning request returned to Planning Commission for public hearing. Staff memorandums, application materials, and public comments are available at the following links:

- July 9, and August 12, 2025 - <https://harrisonburg-va.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7507770&GUID=BCCA5060-6091-4F84-B392-674CDE97EBE5&Options=&Search=> and
- March 11 and April 28, 2026 - <https://harrisonburg-va.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=7991334&GUID=05131103-00F1-40F8-BC7D-5007058D6DE2&Options=&Search=>.

Changes to Proffers

For the most up-to-date full list of proffers, please refer to the attached file “Applicant’s supporting documents,” which includes a document titled “Rezoning Request Proffer Statement.”

Since the April 28th City Council meeting, the applicant has amended proffers I.b., c., d., e., f., g., and h.; II. e.; III.a. b., c., d., and f.; IV.a.; and V.a..

The applicant has:

- Reduced the maximum number of dwelling units from 250 to 180 (Proffer I.b.),
- Reduced the maximum number of bedrooms from 555 to 440 (Proffer I.b.),
- Reduced the minimum number of studio or one-bedroom multi-family units from 110 to 72 (Proffer I.c.),
- Maintained the previously planned maximum number of four-bedroom units at 85 (Proffer I.d.),
- Reduced the proffered minimum number of structured parking spaces from 480 to 320 (Proffer III.a.),
- Reduced the proffered minimum number of electric vehicle charging stations from 14 to 10 (Proffer III.c.),

- Reduced the minimum number of secure indoor/covered bicycle storage spaces from 120 to 90 (Proffer III.d.), and
- Maintained the proffered minimum number of exterior bicycle parking spaces at 16 (Proffer III.d.).

In addition to the above details, the applicant has reduced the cash contributions for:

- Traffic-calming improvements from \$60,000 to \$45,000 (Proffer I.e.),
- Parking enforcement or enhancements from \$30,000 to \$22,500 (Proffer III.f.), and
- Affordable housing from \$93,738 to \$70,000 (Proffer V.a.).

The applicant describes the cash contribution reductions as “generally proportionate to the number of units and bedrooms proffered for the Project.”

Table 1, attached to this staff report, summarizes the evolution of the proffers specifically associated with the number of units and bedrooms and how they have changed throughout the different public hearings in August 2025, April 2026, and for July 2026.

With regard to building height, Proffer I.h. has been revised to restrict building height to 52-feet. Without this proffer, the B-1 district allows buildings and structures to be a maximum of 75-feet in height by right. The proffer also clarifies that building height will be measured from the midpoint of the curb along the Paul Street extension, consistent with the Zoning Ordinance’s methodology for measuring height from the curb of a public street, private street, or travelway in front of the building. Depending on how the site is graded, the building height measured from the ground may be taller on the northern side since height is measured from Paul Street. Existing ground contour data indicates an approximate 10-foot drop in elevation from the southern to northern side of the property. Additionally, Proffer I.h. allows rooftop structures such as solar panels, HVAC units and other mechanical equipment, and parapets to be up to 55 feet in height so long as those structures are screened from public view.

With regard to non-residential uses, the applicant has increased the proffered minimum square footage from 2,000 to 2,500 but retained the maximum of 5,000 square feet along the southeast corner of the building at the proposed Paul Street and South Main Street intersection (Proffer I.e.). The proffered 5,000-square-foot maximum reflects the largest non-residential space evaluated in the Traffic Impact Analysis.

The applicant previously proffered to restrict occupancy in a way that staff believed would be overly restrictive in certain circumstances for non-student living arrangements. Staff believes that shared housing scenarios for the City’s non-student population can at times make housing attainable for some residents. In response to staff’s concern, the applicant removed previous proffer I.f.

Also note the previously proffered Parking Agreement with the City to reserve up to 65 parking spaces for municipal/public uses in the parking garage has been removed.

While the language of Proffer I.a. has not changed, there are some changes to the Concept Plan referenced in that proffer. Previously, the parking deck was separate from the mixed-use building and the west and east courtyards were slightly larger. While the general locations and footprints of the parking deck and mixed-use building have not significantly changed as they are viewed from the public streets and from City Hall, the footprint of the mixed-use building has been expanded within the center of the development.

Land Use, Downtown 2040 Plan, and Housing Study

The applicant has stated they plan for a mixture of one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom apartments. The revised proffers require a minimum of 72 one-bedroom units and continues to permit up to 85 four-bedroom units. Staff encourages developers to provide a balanced mix of bedrooms per unit so that such buildings can serve a variety of needs. There can be disadvantages to providing too many four-bedroom/four-bathroom units, which the applicant states is their intended design. Such designs typically best serve college students and can be difficult to accommodate for non-student users. However, staff continues to recognize the advantages of providing student housing in close and walkable proximity (about ¼-mile) to the JMU campus as well as to the downtown area. Providing college housing in such locations can help reduce daily vehicle trips on City streets—especially Reservoir Street and Port Republic Road, off of which many college students currently reside.

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.

Staff continues to believe that the proposed uses, with the submitted proffers, generally conform with the Mixed Use area designation.

Additionally, the proposed development would support the Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 Plan goal to “Grow Downtown as a Neighborhood.” The development would further support the following two action items from the same plan:

- #16: Encourage mixed-use and residential development in key clusters (page 58) and
- #17: In the long-term, seek opportunities to add density and improve the urban design at key Downtown sites (page 58).

The Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 plan describes that “[w]hile the number of housing units and residents have grown Downtown, there is need for more housing to support local businesses.” Additionally, the subject property is within a key cluster area for potential residential development identified as “South Downtown.” The Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 plan is available at the following link: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/downtown-2040>.

The Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study (Housing Study) identified that there is strong demand for expanding rental housing inventory at the lowest and highest income spectrum because the number of households in the lowest and highest income groups significantly exceed the number of housing units available for and affordable to them. The Housing Study is available at the following link: <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/housing-study>.

James Madison University’s campus strategic plan

On April 24, 2026, the James Madison University (JMU) Board of Visitors endorsed the campus strategic plan (The Madison Promise, <https://www.jmu.edu/madison-promise/index.shtml>). The strategic plan states that JMU plans to grow overall enrollment and to build more on-campus housing to house approximately 60% of the students on campus by 2040. In a JMU Breeze article, President Jim Schmidt is quoted saying that “JMU currently only houses 28% of students” and

“[t]he goal is to build 1,000 beds per year for 10 years¹² Table 2 below summarizes current conditions and planned future conditions.

Table 2. Current and Future JMU enrollment, number of students on campus, and number of students off campus

	Current (Fall 2025)	Future (2040)	Change
JMU enrollment	23,157³ (Undergraduate & Graduate)	30,000⁴ (per draft JMU strategic plan)	+6,843 (30,000-23,157)
Students residing on Campus	6,484 (28% ⁵ of 23,157)	18,000 (if 60% of students live on campus per JMU strategic plan)	+11,516 (18,000-6,484) Or +10,000⁶
Students residing off Campus	16,673 (23,157-6,484)	12,000 (30,000-18,000)	-4,673 (12,000-16,673)

If JMU executes its recently proposed strategic plan targets by increasing the student population to 30,000 and housing 18,000 students on campus, the total number of JMU students residing off-campus would decline by roughly 4,673 students. Given this anticipated decline in the off-campus student population, staff questions the need for continued growth in off-campus student-oriented housing over the long term.

² Newsom, Alexa. “President Schmidt outlines strategic plan at SGA meeting.” *JMU Breeze*, March 11, 2026. https://www.breezejmu.org/news/president-schmidt-outlines-strategic-plan-at-sga-meeting/article_edcc8b9e-212c-4e61-90bd-74e8ed3d18b8.html.

³JMU Facts & Figures: <https://www.jmu.edu/about/fact-and-figures.shtml>, accessed on July 1, 2026

⁴ The published JMU strategic plan (The Madison Promise) website’s frequently asked questions page states a guidepost goal to “[g]row overall enrollment” (<https://www.jmu.edu/madison-promise/faqs.shtml#guideposts>). However, the website does not state a goal of 30,000 students by 2040, but this number was available in prior drafts (https://www.jmu.edu/pair/strategic-planning/docs/jmu_strategic_plan_final_draft_april2026.pdf).

⁵ Newsom, Alexa. “President Schmidt outlines strategic plan at SGA meeting.” *JMU Breeze*, March 11, 2026. https://www.breezejmu.org/news/president-schmidt-outlines-strategic-plan-at-sga-meeting/article_edcc8b9e-212c-4e61-90bd-74e8ed3d18b8.html.

⁶ Newsom, Alexa. “President Schmidt outlines strategic plan at SGA meeting.” *JMU Breeze*, March 11, 2026. https://www.breezejmu.org/news/president-schmidt-outlines-strategic-plan-at-sga-meeting/article_edcc8b9e-212c-4e61-90bd-74e8ed3d18b8.html.

Conclusion

As JMU increases its supply of university-managed housing, demand for off-campus student-oriented housing is expected to change. Staff believes that such changes will not affect all off-campus housing equally: student-oriented housing located further from campus may see a greater shift toward vacancy or non-student households, while student-oriented housing that is easily walkable to campus and that provides convenient access to services such as those located downtown, would be better positioned to continue having students reside there. For this reason, staff believes the subject site is among the more appropriate locations in the City for student-oriented housing. Its proximity to campus and downtown supports walkability and may help reduce reliance on personal vehicles compared to student housing located further away and in less accessible areas.

Staff also recognizes that the geographic distribution of student-oriented housing is an important community policy question that extends beyond this rezoning request. As JMU's housing strategy advances and off-campus demand patterns shift, the community will need to consider where student-oriented housing is most appropriate, where broader community housing needs should be prioritized, and how those decisions align with future land use and other City and community goals. Staff believe that discussion would be best addressed through a focused initiative on that topic.

In conclusion, staff believes rezoning the property to B-1C has more advantages than disadvantages and it generally conforms with the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 Plan.

Staff recommends approval of the rezoning request.

Options

1. Approve the rezoning request.
2. Deny the rezoning request.

Attachments

- Planning Commission Extract
- Table 1. Comparison of Proffered Number of Units and Bedrooms
- Site maps
- Applicant's supporting documents
- Public comments received prior to 12noon July 2, 2026
- Public comments received between July 2 and July 9, 2026