CITY OF HARRISONBURG

October 14, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting

Title
Consider a request to amend the Zoning Ordinance to amend the definition of "shopping center" and to provide a parking calculation for shopping centers — Nyrma Soffel, Community Development

Summary

Zoning Ordinance	Amend Sections 10-3-24 and 10-3-25(17)
Purpose	To revise the definition of "shopping center" and add "shopping center" to the parking regulations
Ordinance Initiation	By Planning Commission on April 8, 2026
Planning Commission	October 14, 2026 (Public Hearing)
City Council	Anticipated November 10, 2026 (First Reading/Public Hearing) Anticipated November 24, 2026 (Second Reading)

Recommendation
Option 1. Recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendment.

Context & Analysis
The proposed Zoning Ordinance (ZO) amendment would amend the definition of "shopping center" in Section 10-3-24 and add "shopping centers" to Section 10-3-25 (17). The intent is to codify a standing interpretation for applying the minimum off-street parking regulations for retail establishments to developments that qualify as a shopping center.

The ZO currently defines a shopping center as follows:

> Commercial development of more than one (1) retail sales or service establishment on a single parcel of common ownership attached by common walls or if located in separate buildings are interconnected by walkways and/or access ways, providing common parking facilities for all establishments, having multiple tenancy of a single or several large common structures, and otherwise present the appearance of one continuous commercial area.

The proposed amendment would revise the definition of "shopping center" to clarify the types of businesses allowed within a shopping center and establish a minimum combined floor area of at least 10,000 square feet. The definition of shopping center is proposed to be amended as follows:

> ***Shopping center:*** ~~Commercial~~ A development of more than one (1) ~~retail sales or service establishment~~ mercantile establishment; personal service establishment; restaurant; office; place of assembly for the purpose of entertainment or education; or house of worship. The uses must be located on a single parcel of common ownership attached by common walls, or if located in separate buildings, are interconnected by walkways, ~~and/or~~ access ways, or both, providing common parking facilities for all establishments, having multiple tenancy of a single or several large common structures, having a combined floor area of at least 10,000 square feet, and otherwise present the appearance of one continuous commercial area.

The ZO does not currently include a minimum parking requirement for shopping centers. When the uses of a proposed shopping center are unknown at the time of site plan or building permit review, staff has applied the parking requirement for retail stores, sales rooms, and similar mercantile establishments when the shopping center has a combined floor area of at least 10,000 square feet. When the proposed uses are known, parking has been calculated based on the parking requirements for the individual uses. In addition, because uses within a shopping center may change over time, calculating parking based on individual uses could require parking to be recalculated when a new business occupies a tenant space under staff interpretation of the existing definition.

All of the existing developments currently identified as shopping centers have a combined total floor area of more than 10,000 square feet. Existing shopping centers include uses such as, but are not limited to, restaurants, offices, and houses of worship, not just retail sales or service establishments. Although the minimum floor area and range of uses were not included in ZO, staff has consistently applied the shopping center interpretation to these developments. The proposed amendment would codify this longstanding practice without expanding the types of developments currently identified as shopping centers or changing applicable parking ratios.

The proposed amendment would also add the use of "shopping centers" to Section 10-3-25(17), which establishes the parking calculation for retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments, as follows:

> (17) Retail stores, sales rooms and similar mercantile establishments, shopping centers, and tobacco, smoke, or vape shops (applicable where no other specific retail standard is set forth): If ten thousand (10,000) square feet or less of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred (200) square feet of gross floor area; if over ten thousand (10,000) square feet of gross floor area, one (1) parking space for each two hundred and fifty (250) square feet of gross floor area.

Developments that meet the definition of "shopping center" would have a parking calculation based on one (1) parking space for each 250 square feet of gross floor area.

The amendment would establish a consistent parking calculation for shopping centers and allow changes in tenancy within an existing shopping center without requiring parking to be recalculated.

If a shopping center is redeveloped in a manner that no longer meets the definition of a shopping center, the associated parking requirements would be calculated at the time of redevelopment.

Staff recommends approval of the ZO amendment.

Options

1. Recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendments.
2. Recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance amendments with modifications.
3. Recommend denial of the Zoning Ordinance amendments.

Attachments

- Current Ordinance Reflecting Recommended Amendments