

ITEM #: 29
DATE: 01-27-26
DEPT: P&H

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: HEARING ON REZONING OF PROPERTY WEST OF THE INTERSECTION OF HARRISON ROAD AND WELBECK DRIVE, WITH A MAJOR SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND A PRELIMINARY PLAT

BACKGROUND:

The City currently owns the property located west of the intersection of Harrison Road and Welbeck Drive. On May 27, 2025, the City entered into an option agreement with Keystone Equity Group (KEG) to purchase the 1.81-acre property contingent on the developer receiving state workforce housing tax credit approval and entitlements to construct up to 12 owner-occupied single-family homes.

The developer was notified of the tax credit award in October. The Rezoning, Preliminary Plat, and Major Site Development Plan are the first approvals to be sought in connection with the option agreement. A Final Plat and Development Agreement are anticipated at the end of February prior to KEG closing on the property.

The subject property is unused right-of-way related to formerly planned extension of Harrison Road over the railroad tracks located to the west side of the site (see Attachment A for Location Map showing existing conditions). The Harrison Road extension is no longer viable and the City Council identified the site as an ownership housing infill opportunity site in 2024. More information on the history of this property, surrounding area, and outreach on development concepts can be found in the Addendum. The applicant's narrative of the project and its relationship to the PUD standards is included as Attachment B.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The site has frontage on Welbeck and widens towards the west/railroad tracks where the units are proposed to be located (see Attachment C for Site Plan excerpts and Attachment D for Preliminary Plat excerpts). The development concept has open area along Welbeck with homes located to the middle and rear of the site. The first home is approximately 150 feet from Welbeck. The layout includes a centralized private street (Harrison Court) with the 12 units situated on both sides.

The proposed plan includes 12 housing units with two different single-family attached types of configurations (see Attachment E for Architectural Plans). There are three buildings of two-story bi-attached homes (six dwellings total) plus two buildings with two-story three-unit attached homes (six additional dwellings). Each unit will have three bedrooms.

The bi-attached homes have two-car garages, while the three-unit attached homes have single-car garages. Each home includes a driveway that provides additional parking area. Three guest parking spaces are also provided along Harrison Court.

Harrison Court is located in an outlot along with open space area to be maintained by a

Homeowners Association. The private street is 22 feet wide with a “T” shaped dead-end to accommodate minimum fire access standards and take advantage of the shape of the property. A sidewalk will be located on one side of Harrison Court. A new public sidewalk is proposed to close the gap in the sidewalk along Welbeck Drive frontage. The private street design, in lieu of a typical 26-foot wide public street, is approvable as part of a PUD Overlay.

Landscaping within the project includes a street tree plan with 12 trees. Additional evergreen trees are proposed along the north and west sides of the site for aesthetics and buffering.

The Major Site Development Plan (MSDP) accompanying the PUD request will be the controlling plan for development of the site upon approval of the PUD Overlay with the pedestrian, parking, landscaping, and building features. The Preliminary Plat controls for lot layout and public improvements intended to serve the individual lots.

PUD OVERLAY:

The proposed rezoning to a PUD allows for flexibility in certain development standards such as setbacks and lot sizes, which supports different housing types and densities that otherwise may not be achievable under the base zoning.

Deviations from these zoning standards are allowed when specifically approved by City Council and compatibility standards are met regarding the design of the units (See Addendum for Findings and Standards). To meet these standards, main entrances are proposed to be defined with a covered porch and setback no more than 12 feet so that garage does not define the front façade.

DEVIATIONS:

The proposed PUD primarily allows for more individually platted lots than would otherwise be feasible under base zone requirements as a result of decreased minimum lot areas for the townhome units, reduced internal lot line setbacks, and other deviations. The overall unit count (12) is consistent with maximum site density calculations. The deviations allow for more ownership housing opportunities by allowing for individual lots to be created, and avoid larger, more uniform buildings with attached units.

A garage face setback deviation is requested from the required 25 feet to 20 feet for all lots. A 20-foot setback is a minimum expectation to ensure vehicles parked in front of a garage do not overhang onto the sidewalk. Due to a curve in the road and its position as a corner lot, Lot 3 requires an additional deviation for driveway dimensions. The driveway configuration ranges from 20 feet to a 17.5-foot setback for the southern half. The 20-foot segment allows for the parking of regular sized vehicle while the 17.5-foot section could only accommodate smaller vehicle without overhang. As the sidewalk is on the opposite side of the street, this does not present encroachment issues for pedestrians. Staff supports the partial driveway deviation as meeting the intent of providing for function driveway parking that does not impact pedestrian travel.

All requested deviations are summarized in the Addendum.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION:

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the proposed project at its January 7, 2026, meeting. The Commission received three letters of opposition and three members of the public spoke at the meeting opposing the project. All of the speakers were property owners west of the site with property along Ballentine. Primary concerns from the public and Commission related to loss of informal open space, potential traffic in the area, railroad proximity, and the compatibility of the number of units designed as attached homes.

The Commission's initial discussion focused on open space and the effects of allowing for a private street, including parking.

City staff described City Council's prior discussion of the site as informal open space and how it relates to the City's parks policies. Staff also described infill development as excepted from the PUD-required 10% open space and a determination of open space as a case-by-case review. In this case, due to the clustering of the dwellings and reduced lot sizes, the site provides approximately 50% open space. The largest area of open space is in the front of the subject property, between Welbeck and the dwellings. Staff also described how perimeter setbacks and stormwater management features affected the layout of the site and common areas.

Staff noted that even if the open space were required, the Zoning Ordinance would not require it to be public, as is the desire of neighboring property owners. City Council previously determined not to use the site as a public park due to its proximity to other existing parks.

A Commissioner asked if on-street parking would be permitted. Other than the three guest parking spaces, no on street parking is permitted. The guest spaces would be managed by the HOA. All units provide at least two parking spaces in an attached garage or associated driveway.

The Commission discussed how common private streets are and how they differ from public streets. Staff responded by describing private streets allowing reduced right-of-way widths that can better accommodate an infill development. They are allowed by the subdivision standards to serve a small group of dwellings and are common for developments with single-family attached homes. Harrison Court is a dead-end street but does have a turnaround to accommodate a fire truck and meets other Fire Code standards for lane widths and hydrants. The road width is four feet less than a public street, and a cul-de-sac would be required with public streets rather than a hammerhead. Without the private street, the proposed configuration would not be viable.

Regarding the railroad, the Commission discussed other nearby properties along the railroad and setbacks. The two three-unit buildings are proposed to be setback 28 feet from the shared property line with the railroad. The 28 feet includes the small area of private rear yard and the intervening common area. This setback was necessary due to the shape of the lot and need to shift all units west to ensure setbacks from the north and south perimeter property lines were met without reducing the bi-attached home sizes.

The Commission deliberation focused on the compatibility of the 12-unit proposal with the surroundings. The Commission voted 4-1 to recommend approval of the proposed rezoning with PUD, Preliminary Plat, and Major Site Development Plan.

Since the Commission meeting, the landscape plan for the development has been revised by the applicant to include seven coniferous trees on along the railroad property line to provide a buffer to the railroad. These trees were included with the Site Plan since the area they are proposed to be planted in is common area and individual homeowners would not be able to choose their own landscaping for the rear yard.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve for Harrison Pointe, a proposed development located on City surplus land west of the intersection of Harrison Road and Welbeck Drive:
 - a. On first reading the rezoning to Suburban Residential Low Density (FS-RL) with a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Overlay
 - b. A Major Site Development Plan
 - c. A Preliminary Plat
2. Approve with modifications or conditions to any one of the rezoning to Suburban Residential Low Density (FS-RL) with a PUD Overlay, Major Site Development Plan, or Preliminary Plat for Harrison Pointe, a proposed development located on City surplus land west of the intersection of Harrison Road and Welbeck Drive.
3. Deny on first reading the rezoning to Suburban Residential Low Density (FS-RL) with a PUD Overlay, Major Site Development Plan, and Preliminary Plat for Harrison Pointe, by finding the proposal does not meet rezoning requirements or the standards of the Chapter 23 Subdivision Code.
4. Defer action on this request and refer it back to City staff and/or the applicant for additional information.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff finds that the proposed Rezoning to a Planned Unit Development (PUD) with a Major Site Development Plan and Preliminary Plat complies with the proposed underlying base zone standards and the PUD standards, with the deviations identified on the site plan and preliminary plat and described within the addendum. The proposed development of the site is consistent with Ames Plan 2040 policies for infill. The development maintains a scale compatible with adjacent single-family homes.

The PUD Overlay tool is designed to allow for unique designs on smaller sites, which is especially beneficial for infill sites. The PUD allows for “postage stamp” lots for the single-family attached homes, maintaining significant open space and clustering the development at the western end of the site. The design supports creation of ownership housing lots. In this case with the City as the property owner, a covenant will be recorded against the property at the time of sale requiring the homes to be owner-occupied.

In addition, architectural features of the buildings and site layout with a sidewalk connection to Welbeck Drive meet the intent of the PUD and compatibility standards for deviations.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1, as described above.

City Council should also be aware that with approval of Alternative #1, the Developer will need to proceed with Final Plat and approval of the Development Agreement to complete the terms of the sale of the property. Staff anticipates the Final Plat and Development Agreement to be available for approval at February 24 City Council meeting.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Harrison Pointe Attachments A-F.pdf](#)

[Harrison Pointe Addendum.pdf](#)

[Harrison & Welbeck Rezoning.docx](#)