Albemarle County Planning Commission
Work Session and Regular Meeting
January 13, 2026

The Albemarle County Planning Commission held a public meeting on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Members attending were Luis Carrazana, Karen Firehock, Mary Katherine King, and Lonnie Murray.

Members absent: Corey Clayborne, Nathan Moore.

Other officials present were Michael Barnes, Director of Planning; Kevin McDermott, Deputy Director of Planning; Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager; Mariah Gleason, Senior Planner; Jenny Tevendale, Assistant County Attorney; and Carolyn Shaffer, Clerk to the Planning Commissions.

Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Ms. Shaffer called the roll.

Mr. Barnes established a quorum.

Public Comment on matters pending before the Commission, but not listed for a Public Hearing on this agenda

There were none.

Election of Officers: Chair and Vice Chair, appointment of Secretary, if needed

Mr. Barnes asked if there were nominations for the position of Chair.

Ms. Firehock nominated Mr. Carrazana as Chair. Ms. King seconded the nomination, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Mr. Clayborne and Mr. Moore were absent)

Mr. Carrazana asked if there were nominations for the position of Vice Chair.

Ms. King nominated Ms. Firehock as Vice Chair. Mr. Murray seconded the nomination, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Mr. Clayborne and Mr. Moore were absent)

Discussion of Planning Commission Rules of Procedure

Mr. Carrazana asked Mr. Barnes if there were any changes to the Rules of Procedure.

Mr. Barnes said that there had been no changes and the Rules of Procedure remained the same as last year.

Ms. Firehock motioned that the Planning Commission adopt the Planning Commission 2026 Rules of Procedure. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Mr. Clayborne and Mr. Moore were absent)

Discussion of committees/boards/bodies to which Commission members serve as liaisons

Mr. Carrazana said that they had received a list of vacancies on boards and committees. He said that the Commissioners should also have that information in their meeting package. He said that due to members being absent at this meeting, he would suggest that they defer the conversation and selection of those committee assignments until the Commission's January 27 meeting.

Mr. Murray motioned that the Planning Commission defer the discussion of committees/boards/ bodies to which Commission members serve as liaisons until the January 27 Planning Commission meeting. Ms. King seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Mr. Clayborne and Mr. Moore were absent)

Ms. Firehock said that before they proceeded, she just wanted to clarify that the Historic Preservation Committee typically met before the next Planning Commission meeting. She said that if that was acceptable, she would like to continue representing the Commission for at least one more meeting.

Mr. Carrazana said that there was also a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) that was covered as well.

Mr. Barnes said that he believed the liaisons appointed last year could continue to attend those assignments until new appointments were made.

Review and adopt meeting schedule for 2026 / PC Legal Notice

Mr. Carrazana asked their legal counsel to review this process.

Jenny Tevendale, Assistant County Attorney, said that the Commission had two options. She said that they could either make a motion to adopt the meeting schedule for 2026 and then make a second motion to adopt the resolution that outlined the meeting schedule in case of weather-related events, or they could make a combined motion that incorporated both of these actions.

Ms. Firehock motioned that the Planning Commission adopt the meeting schedule for 2026 as presented. Ms. King seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Mr. Clayborne and Mr. Moore were absent)

Ms. Firehock motioned that the Planning Commission adopt the Resolution for the 2026 meeting schedule. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried unanimously (4-0). (Mr. Clayborne and Mr. Moore were absent)

Consent Agenda

Ms. Firehock motioned that the Planning Commission approve the Consent Agenda as submitted. Mr. Murray seconded the motion, which carried (3-0-1). (Luis Carrazana, Karen Firehock, and Lonnie Murray voted aye; Ms. King abstained; Mr. Clayborne, and Mr. Moore were absent)

Public Hearings

ZMA202400005 Belvedere Amendment #2 (deferred from 10/28/25)

Rebecca Ragsdale, Planning Manager, said that she would review the details of this application. She said that this item was a request to remove an element of the originally approved Belvedere application plan. She said that Belvedere was what they referred to as a neighborhood model

district (NMD), which was approved in 2005. She said that this was actually the second amendment and therefore referred to as Proffer Amendment 2.

Ms. Ragsdale said that one of the primary focuses of the amendment was to remove a proffer, specifically Proffer 4.2, a 100-foot reserved road right-of-way. With the removal of that proffer, the proposal is to utilize that area to add 128 additional units to the Belvedere neighborhood model development.

Ms. Ragsdale said that along with this rezoning, the applicant was proposing changes to improve amenities, add greenways, and provide affordable housing commitments that aligned with the County's present-day Housing Albemarle policy. She said that this was a high-level review, and she would go through some of the details. She said that the map provided in her presentation outlined the parcels they were referencing as part of the rezoning.

Ms. Ragsdale said that a significant portion of that acreage was greenway, some of it was existing by right zoned R4, and she would explain why they had included that. She said that when they referred to Block 8 and the 100-foot right-of-way, they were talking about this specific area.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the Belvedere development was primarily accessed from Belvedere Boulevard, off Rio Road, and it was surrounded by the Northfields neighborhood, Dunlora, and developing sections of Dunlora Village. She said that the Rivanna River runs along the edge of it.

Ms. Ragsdale said that all of the parcels proposed to be developed on the property were designated as neighborhood density residential in the Comprehensive Plan, while the floodplain and Rivanna River were designated as green space in the Plan. She said that the original neighborhood model was approved for 775 units total.

Ms. Ragsdale said that neighborhood model districts get very detailed, so those 775 units were broken down across a number of blocks within the Code of Development. She said that this rezoning was focused on Block 8. She said that the total number of units possible within the Belvedere neighborhood model district would increase by 128. She said that it was originally approved at 3.7 dwelling units per acre, and this would increase to 4.34 dwelling units per acre.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the neighborhood density Comprehensive Plan designation was recommended at three to six dwelling units per acre, so the request remained consistent with that recommendation. She said that furthermore, it was entirely consistent with their Housing Albemarle policy, which required 20% of new units to be affordable within the 100-foot right-of-way area, and within the new NMD area.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the neighborhood model district was broken into blocks, and staff had some exhibits to highlight Block 8. She said that Block 8 currently includes the SOCA facility and the neighborhood community building that was under construction. She said that there was the existing Belvedere network of interconnected streets, and if the proffer was removed, this corridor would allow for primarily single-family attached units.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the proffer extended beyond the neighborhood model district area into the R4 area, which was why R4 areas were part of the conversation regarding proffer amendments. She said that she had provided another close-up image of the area, and staff's materials hopefully further explained that this was parallel and along the 100-foot right-of-way, from the railroad tracks.

Ms. Ragsdale said that behind the existing SOCA facility, units would face an amenity area and be served by an alley. She said that the applicant would likely provide more detail, but the street shown in purple on the application plan would not connect all the way through. She said that they

were providing additional greenway and shared use path commitments, building on the proffers included with the original Belvedere rezoning.

Ms. Ragsdale said that as part of the original rezoning, the County was dedicated the frontage along the Rivanna River. She said that as part of this specific rezoning, they would provide shared use paths down and improve access to the greenway area. She said that they had also made a commitment to provide 30% construction drawings for a future shared use path along the greenway corridor.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the applicants had worked closely with their Parks and Rec staff to plan for improved connections to the greenway. She said that this would be their contribution towards constructing a Class A trail improvement along the greenway. She said that next, Mr. McDermott to discuss the transportation analysis and what staff considered with the proposal.

Kevin McDermott, Deputy Director of Planning, said that the applicant submitted a traffic impact analysis (TIA) along with this rezoning. He said that the provided slide showed the intersections analyzed in red, as well as future planned improvements in yellow. He said that overall, the traffic impact analysis recognized that currently, Belvedere and Rio Road experienced extremely long delays, particularly when trying to exit Belvedere, especially during peak hours -- people often waited multiple minutes to exit during peak hours.

Mr. McDermott said that in the future, proposed projects would improve Belvedere and Rio, as well as the Rio-John Warner Parkway intersection. He said that following these improvements, the overall intersection at Belvedere and Rio would operate at a level of service B. He said that although left turns may have slightly longer delays than level service B, the intersection would still operate at level service B overall. He said that the analysis, taking into account additional traffic and future development, showed that the intersection would still operate at level service B after the build alternative was recognized.

Mr. McDermott said that with the improvements and new development, the overall level of service B at that intersection meant that specific left turn movements would have periods of time operating at level service C and D, but they did not consider that failing. He said that the TIA also conducted counts at Farrow Drive and Butler Drive, which provided access to Dunlora. He said that staff was interested in seeing if people currently utilized that route to avoid the problematic intersection down Belvedere.

Mr. McDermott said that the count showed that very few people used that route during peak hours. He said that they did not expect a significant change in that once the improvement was in place and people could more easily exit the area. He said that the Free State Road Bridge carried a significant amount of traffic, with approximately 1,700 vehicles per day during peak hours.

Mr. McDermott said that next, he would describe the improvements. He said that a concept plan had been provided by Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) for the designs of these improvements. He said that as they could see, the green-T intersection created a protected left turn lane, allowing people coming out of Belvedere to only look to the left to see oncoming traffic. He said that following their exit from the protected lane, they were able to accelerate and merge into the southbound traffic on Rio Road.

Mr. McDermott said that additionally, a left turn onto Belvedere remained protected, and a signal was visible. He said that this signal would operate to allow northbound to westbound movements on Rio Road, making it easier for people to enter and exit. He said that however, the southbound movements on Rio Road would not be stopped, as there was no cross traffic to interfere with their movement. He said that since they could utilize the acceleration lane, they did not need to stop the southbound Rio Road movements.

Mr. McDermott said that additionally, the proposed roundabout at Rio Road and John Warner Parkway was a hybrid design, featuring two lanes entering the roundabout and a single lane around the center for major movements. He said that this design was intended to improve the intersection. He said that both projects were expected to begin later this year in fall 2026, and the construction time was estimated to be about one year, so they would be completed before any of the impacts of this rezoning had occurred.

Ms. Ragsdale said that as staff had mentioned throughout the presentation and included in the staff report, their findings indicated that this proposal aligned with the land use and density recommendations of the Places 29 Master Plan for neighborhood density residential areas and Housing Albemarle. She said that furthermore, the greenway and shared use path improvements were consistent with some elements of the Places 29 Master Plan. She said that as they typically did, they also noted that there would be an increase in enrollment at the County schools associated with the request. She said that in conclusion, staff had recommended approval of the amendment based on their findings.

Mr. Murray asked if they were giving up the proffer for the Free State connector road extension. He asked what what the purpose of asking for that road in the first place was and why staff felt it was no longer necessary.

Mr. McDermott said that in their current Comprehensive Plan, the map of this area showed a dark dotted line along Rio Road, which turns onto Belvedere, and was considered a proposed addition to the roadway network. He said that this was from their Places 29 Master Plan, which was approved in 2011. He said that initially, the idea was to create a parallel road network to Route 29, carrying people from Route 250 to Polo Grounds Road and providing access to the Hollymead development area.

Mr. McDermott said that this was meant to be a major new roadway network that would carry people through the eastern portion of the Development Area from Route 250 up to Hollymead and back. He said that it would have crossed over the Rivanna River, gone along the railroad tracks, and connected to the Proffit and Polo Grounds Road area. He said that they expected it to carry about 20,000 vehicles per day.

Mr. McDermott said that that was evaluated in this Master Plan and at the time, they started to realize that it may not be the best option. He said that in this Master Plan, they only showed the road going in and providing access to Belvedere, so it did not actually cross over the Rivanna River like the older plans. He said that as they were looking at it now, for a couple of reasons they looked at the potential cost of a project such as that, which would be hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mr. McDermott said that it was near $100 million to build the Hillsdale Crossing of Rio on the other side, so to implement something similar on the other side would be likely more than $100 million, along with additional significant impacts in Belvedere as well as north of the river where they would need to acquire additional right-of-way and rebuild the Proffit/Polo Grounds Road area to accommodate all of that traffic. He said that when considering all of those factors, staff recognized that the road connection had a very low likelihood of getting built. He said that further, considering the improvements made to Route 29 and Hillsdale, staff did not see the necessity of a third connection across the river in this location.

Mr. McDermott said that the developer had proposed to build a new, parallel network to Belvedere within their development, and staff felt this would address the connectivity and congestion concerns with the existing road network. He said that the shared use path connection through there would also provide an alternative option. He said that looking at all of that in totality, staff

felt that it was not appropriate to continue to hold that 100-foot right-of-way in lieu of the different style of development as proposed here.

Mr. Murray said that on slide 6, the critical slopes were all in different colors of shading. He asked if staff could clarify what the purpose was for that different shading. He said that also, in terms of the critical slopes being protected, the slopes marked as critical in the County Geographic Information System (GIS) were proposed to be protected regardless of the shading on this map. He asked if that was correct.

Ms. Ragsdale said that she believed the map was illustrating a field-run verified preserved slopes and managed slopes versus what their GIS was showing, but the applicant had not proposed any impacts to steep slopes. She said that the application did not propose any exceptions for the steep slopes overlay district, and they agreed to comply with the steep slopes overlay district. She said that this was the distinction on this.

Mr. Murray asked if they would be protecting the steep slopes as they were shown in the GIS.

Mr. Barnes said that to clarify, the greenway trail proposed for this project would disturb some critical slopes, but it was an allowed use under the code. He said that he believed the stormwater infrastructure was being directed to connect down to the floodplains in the same corridor. He said that this was all permitted under the code.

Ms. King asked what the County's current access was to the property that was being dedicated as a greenway trail.

Mr. Barnes said that current access to the area was greatly facilitated by the Rivanna Trail Foundation, which had easements for single-track trails in that area. He said that long-range plans also included the development of a shared-use path to complement these trails.

Ms. King asked how the equipment would be brought to the shared use path when they built it.

Mr. Barnes said that they would need to address this issue during the construction project.

Ms. King said that she brought this up because she had noticed that in other recently developed neighborhoods in the County, developers dedicated greenways that the County accepted ownership of, but the developer did not provide them with access. She said that she believed it was essential that they be mindful of that in this particular application. She said that if the developer was going to be giving money to a future path, they needed to be able to get to it in order to build it.

Mr. Barnes said that it was a good point. He said that there was some minimal access to an easement along the river on the other side of the railroad track, and on the downstream side they had been working with the adjacent project being developed there in order to ensure they had access to that area as well. He said that staff was working to ensure they had adequate access for construction and maintenance of those trails.

Ms. Firehock said that she had questions about parking, but the applicant could likely address that.

Mr. Carrazana said that his questions pertained to housing, and he would hold those for the applicant as well. He said that he appreciated the thorough staff presentation, particularly the background on the traffic issues. He said that he knew there were concerns about that aspect. He asked if the funding was in place for the two improvements described by Mr. McDermott.

Mr. McDermott said that the funding was in place, and the contracts had already been finalized. He said that actually, this project was bundled with other VDOT projects that were currently underway. He said that construction had already begun on some of these projects, including one in Crozet. He said that as a result, they would be moving onto this location shortly.

Mr. Murray said that a common practice for maintaining railway areas was for trains to spray herbicides as they passed through. He asked if Mr. McDermott knew if there were exceptions to that practice as trains moved through neighborhoods, or if they had a no-spray program like VDOT had in place for certain areas.

Mr. McDermott said that he did not have information on how the railroad maintained their right of ways. He said that staff could look into that and follow up, but at this time, he did not have the necessary information.

Ms. King said that she had a question regarding the connectivity of the roadway. She said that there was a proposal for a public extension as part of this proffer. She said that she would like to clarify that the other roads in Belvedere were they all public VDOT-accepted roads, despite the application noting that they did not conform to VDOT standards.

Mr. McDermott said that there were sections that were still under construction and had not been accepted by VDOT. He said that the portion of Belvedere that had been completed had been accepted by VDOT. He said that the roads in this completed section met VDOT's standards. He said that VDOT did allow certain waivers to their standards, and they would have approved those waivers to enable those roads to be accepted.

Mr. Carrazana opened the public hearing. He asked if the applicant had a presentation.

Chris Schooley, Vice President of Land Development at Greenwood Homes and was also the President of the Belvedere Neighborhood Association. He said that tonight, he was representing only the developer. He said that the residents of Belvedere would speak on behalf of their perspectives.

Mr. Schooley said that it was worth noting that his own dual role was often perceived as a conflict within the Belvedere neighborhood. He said that, however, in his business, holding the President role in an homeowner’s association (HOA) was common during project development. He said that many of these neighborhood names were recognizable, as they were all located in Albemarle County and were currently under various stages of development.

Mr. Schooley said that Belvedere also had a substantial representation on the HOA board, with four seats held by Belvedere residents out of a total of seven. He said that this represented two more seats than any of the other neighborhoods. He said that the residents of Belvedere were well-represented on the board, with regular monthly meetings; in contrast, the other neighborhoods met annually.

Mr. Schooley said that finally, his term as president would conclude by September, and a Belvedere resident was likely to be appointed as the next president. He said that next, he wanted to highlight the neighborhood coordination that had taken place throughout the project. He said that the initial meeting was held in 2024 at a CAC meeting, where it was determined that a new traffic impact assessment was necessary. He said that this assessment took approximately a year to finalize and obtain approval from VDOT and the County.

Mr. Schooley said that following that, they set up a meeting, which was postponed from the October meeting to meet with residents at the Center at Belvedere. He said that as noted, the meeting had over 100 participants and was lively. He said that the recommendation from the

meeting was to avoid an impact on an HOA property that they had previously proposed. He said that they had planned to extend Addison Street, but this would have been limited by the narrow street widths in that section. He said that they needed to provide more parking for residents and SOCA.

Mr. Schooley said that these details could be seen on the displayed graphic. The HOA property was located in the top left corner, and the extension of Addison Street was shown here, previously intended to connect this street along the project. He said that they removed this connection due to the impact on the HOA property. He said that as noted, the street sections on Farrow Drive West and Addison Street were very narrow, and parking would have had to be removed to safely add more traffic. He said that they also discussed parking with SOCA, who currently had parking on Colvin Alley that was only for their use. He said that many neighbors on the Cole Street, Farrow Drive West section, had limited on-site parking.

Mr. Schooley said that to address this, they met with SOCA and requested to expand their existing lot to build a new lot on a parcel they owned next to that. He said that in lieu, SOCA agreed to share their parking with the neighborhood. He said that the preliminary response from SOCA had been positive, and they had included parking improvements in this area with this proposal. He said that parking at the SOCA Fieldhouse during events could be a challenge. He said that their proposal should add over 70 parking spaces that would be available to anyone during the week, alleviating some of the congestion.

Mr. Schooley said that this was a complicated project. He said that the 100-foot right-of-way reservation did not extend over the Fairview property; only over the Belvedere property, including across the R4. He said that this was shown in red on the graphic. He said that the yellow area represented the proposed Block 8 rezoning. He said that as noted, they had committed to extending the 20% affordable housing to the blue R4 area as well, which would add 16 additional affordable dwelling units to the project. He said that the rationale was that everything impacted by the 100-foot right-of-way should also be subject to the County's affordable housing policy. He said that the affordable housing units would be built in accordance with the 60% area median income (AMI) rule, and Greenwood Homes was currently committed to delivering approximately 150 affordable dwelling units in the area through 2026.

Mr. Schooley said that the proposal for Belvedere aimed to utilize their two-over-one unit, which had been successfully implemented in Glenbrook and Crozet. He said that this two-story townhouse featured a basement that served as a two-bedroom apartment. He said that the floor plan to the left illustrated the layout, with two bedrooms in the back and a shared living space and kitchen. He said that the upper two stories could accommodate three to four bedroom units. He said that notably, there were no garages, with on-street parking available. He said that to meet the required parking spaces, they provided additional parking on their site plan.

Mr. Schooley said that this product was slated for construction at Granger, Brookhill Square, and the City at South First Street within 2026. He said that he had provided an example grouping of units to show an ideal representation. He said that their proposed design for Belvedere met the County's affordability requirements, while also incorporating amenities and on-street parking. He said that they were proud of their work at Greenwood Homes, building high-quality neighborhoods throughout Albemarle County. He said that they were pleased to collaborate with the county to meet the affordable housing requirements. He said that Scott Collins from Collins Engineering was available to address engineering inquiries, and Carl Hultgren from Gorove Slade could provide insight into traffic-related questions.

Ms. King asked if the for-rent units and relevant affordability restrictions applied to those two-over-one units. She asked if there was no apartment building, they were planning to build.

Mr. Schooley said that there was no apartment building; the affordable units were integrated into the rest of the neighborhood.

Ms. King said that she had noted in the application narrative that there was a significant amount of information about how they tracked long-term data, which felt like an administrative burden for everyone. She said that she thought it was essential to note this moving forward.

Mr. Schooley said that there was a process in place, which involved an annual confirmation that each landlord must submit to the County, which was then approved. He said that they were entering a new era because this extension applied to 40- and 30-year leases. He said that this was exactly what the County had signed up for. He said that the development community had generally met this requirement fairly well. He said that they were excited to be a part of this because, as previously mentioned, building 150 units within the area, which was likely the largest nonprofit in the area to be building affordable housing.

Ms. King said that she was not familiar with a situation where a proffer was applied to something that was not also being rezoned.

Ms. Ragsdale said that technically what was described was actually a rezoning process. She said that the R4 area was subject to a proffer, and the only way to change a proffer was through the rezoning process. She said that it was a component of this rezoning, and the applicant had offered the right-of-way and to add the Housing Albemarle provisions to that. She said that staff determined that it was in line with policy.

Mr. Barnes said that additionally, off-site proffers could be made. He said that the proffers were not restricted to the rezoned parcel.

Mr. Schooley said that there was bonus density for R4, and the Glenbrook project was part of that affordability, so it had no proffer specifically, but it was on the site plan.

Mr. Murray asked for more information on the balance between affordable units that would be rented versus those that would be sold.

Mr. Schooley said that they would open it up to the market, so it would allow for both. He said that however, they anticipated they would be primarily rentals for these types of two-over-one units.

Mr. Murray asked if the applicant had considered working with the Land Trust.

Mr. Schooley said that they had; they worked with the Land Trust at Victorian Heights and saw the potential to work with them at Belvedere. He said that this seemed like a particularly good fit.

Ms. Firehock said that she would like to get some more detail on the parking arrangements here. She asked how much parking was going to be provided for each bedroom or for each unit. She said that also, more parking would be needed for SOCA when the neighborhood had more visitors.

Mr. Schooley said that with this proposal, they would effectively build two different product lines. He said that one product line consisted of standard townhouses with a garage. He said that each townhouse would have a two-car rear-loaded garage, and a driveway deep enough to accommodate two cars. He said that this meant that, in theory, they could park four cars on a townhouse lot if the garage was empty enough, and then two cars in the driveway. He said that to complement this, they would also have on-street parking.

Mr. Schooley said that the other product type they were proposing was the two-over-one. He said that each of these units provided approximately three and a quarter parking spaces. He said that two spaces were generally reserved for the upstairs unit, one space for the lower unit, and a visitor spot for every four units.

Ms. Firehock asked if the top had three bedrooms and two parking spaces, while the downstairs unit had two bedrooms and one parking space.

Mr. Schooley said yes, and one visitor space for every four bedrooms. He said that downstairs had one parking spot and upstairs had two parking spaces. He said that they also planned to provide on-street parking throughout the development. He said that regarding the SOCA parking, they would be doubling their current parking capacity, as well as the parking lot on their parcel that would have about 22 spaces, 15 spaces behind that for the entire community to use, along with about 70 on-street parking spaces. He said that they would be arranging specific staff parking spots with SOCA, but overall, it was a flexible arrangement.

Mr. Carrazana asked if street parking was included in the calculation of spaces per unit.

Mr. Schooley said that street parking was part of the quarter.

Mr. Carrazana said that he could see in the illustrative plan that they had included street parking along one of the streets. He asked if there was also parking in the back.

Mr. Schooley said yes, there was parking in the back. He said that parking could be tricky, and it became even more complicated with townhouses. He said that when residents downsized from a larger home to a townhome, they often used their garages for item storage rather than their cars, so the cars ended up getting pushed out into driveways or the street. He said that it was important to ensure that driveways were deep enough to accommodate parked cars. He said that in this area, it would be an alley, and sometimes the sidewalk could interfere with parking in the alley without extending out.

Mr. Schooley said that attached parking product was difficult in every neighborhood. He said that they provided as much as they possibly could and worked through sight distance issues to make sure, they met all VDOT requirements.

Mr. Carrazana said that the application did not ask for any modifications to the parking. He asked staff if their evaluation determined that this was meeting the County's parking policy.

Ms. Ragsdale said that the applicant must meet the parking policy requirements or return to the office to obtain a special exception. She said that this was a concept plan. She said that although she had not personally reviewed the parking calculations, Mr. Langille's review and analysis did not express any concerns about the calculations not meeting the minimum requirements.

Mr. Carrazana said that he understood the housing arrangement was a bit complicated and they shifted over to Block 4, but they were all in one location. He said that at least from what he was seeing here in the preliminary plans, it looked like they were all going in one section of the block.

Mr. Schooley said that he would point to part of the illustrative plan. He said that the two-over-one units would be on the ends so they could access more parking, and there would be a side entry to those units. He said that the internal units would be townhomes.

Mr. Carrazana asked if the affordable housing was all being put into one section.

Mr. Schooley said that no, it would be mixed in throughout the development. He said that the by-right section of Phase 4 also had affordable housing units included. He said that to clarify, they did not put all the affordable housing units in one corner of the neighborhood.

Mr. Carrazana asked if in Block 8, the affordable units would be dispersed throughout.

Mr. Schooley said that they had approximately 40 affordable dwelling units (ADU) in a section with about 140 townhomes, so they would mix them up within that configuration.

Mr. Carrazana said that he was glad to hear that, because he had not seen that in the report.

Mr. Murray said that some of the comments they received discussed the potential impact of building houses near the railway, specifically the noise that might be coming from the railway. He asked what steps would be taken to address the impacts of sound from the railway. He said that additionally, Norfolk Southern had been recently sued in December for toxic herbicides drifting from their railway to adjoining properties. He said that when considering the impact of derailments, or other potential issues, he would like to know how they were ensuring that they were developing this in a safe manner near the railway.

Mr. Schooley said that regarding train derailments, while they did not have a grading plan in place there, the houses in that area were likely 30 to 40 feet above the rail line. He said that the rail line itself was significantly depressed in that section, which created a barrier that prevented derailments from having significant impacts to the homes nearby.

Mr. Schooley said that the question about herbicides was a valid one. He said that they often considered the rail area between Old Ivy and Ivy, as it was a prominent feature in Charlottesville and sometimes received herbicide treatment. He said that he believed the County's response would be similar to theirs, which was to look into the risks and better understand the situation. He said that as for the sound, while he was not a rail expert, he would note that this was not the same train that came from Crozet.

Mr. Schooley said that they had not heard it to be a significant issue in Belvedere over the years. He said that however, some residents may disagree with this point later tonight. He said that if they did find that it was an issue, they could consider adding soundproofing and changing windows to mitigate the problem.

Mr. Carrazana asked if any members of the public wished to comment on this item.

Denise Kirchner, Rio District, said that she was one of the early homeowners in the Belvedere neighborhood. She said that she was before the Commission tonight regarding ZMA 2024-00005. She said that she was here to ask that the Commission do all that they could to preserve the design and intention of the Belvedere neighborhood. She said that when she built her home in 2010, Belvedere was one of, if not the first, neighborhood model district in the area, which promised a new urbanism featuring walkability, abundant green spaces, preservation of the topography, and a nature-by-design approach that would include an organic farm.

Ms. Kirchner said that it featured a town center with shops, a civic core with neighborhood amenities, and architecture that showcases a diverse range of materials, colors, elevation, and landscaping. She said that the original developers shared this vision with potential homeowners, and buying a home in the area was not just about purchasing a house, but about investing in the vision and lifestyle that the neighborhood promised. She said that however, with each subsequent developer, the vision has been eroded, and the original 775-unit build-out has been expanded to 903 units.

Ms. Kirchner said that the promised elements of the design and livability of the neighborhood had largely been abandoned. She said that they were aware that their governing covenants and restrictions, particularly Article 2, Section 2, permitted the addition of properties to the original scope of the neighborhood, which had led to an increase in the number of lots. She said that the current developer had taken advantage of this by adding properties multiple times.

Ms. Kirchner said that they supported the construction of affordable housing, such as small homes or carriage house apartments, which many of them had initially built on their properties to promote variability and affordability. She said that however, the original covenants and codes, which had been last updated in 2014, did not support the development of rows of townhouses that dominated the newer acquired blocks.

Ms. Kirchner said that this rezoning request would shift the focus from creating a community of homeowners to creating opportunities for investors. She said that to preserve the neighborhood's design and intention, as embodied in the Belvedere Historic District NMD, the Commission should not to move forward with the rezoning of Block 8 parcel in Belvedere.

Terry Bosford, Rio District, said that she lived in the Belvedere neighborhood. She said that regarding the proposed rezoning and development in Block 8, she first wanted to address tenet 2 of the 12 tenets outlined in the County neighborhood development document adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2001. She said that this tenet emphasized the importance of open space in overall design, allowing residents and workers to walk to a public park, experience preserved and natural areas, and enjoy public gathering spaces.

Ms. Bosford said that she noted that there were parallels to this tenant in the original plan for Belvedere, as outlined in the glossy brochure that many residents had been given when considering purchasing there. She said that in the section entitled "This is Belvedere Sustainability," it stated, "Every home is within 250 feet of green space because we believe nature is something to be protected, preserved, and most of all, enjoyed."

Ms. Bosford said that another tenet in the County document stated, "Adapts development to site terrain so that natural topography can be preserved." She said that as a Belvedere resident, she had already seen both of these tenants violated, if not outright discarded. She said that in fact, she had passed the tipping point. She said that she knew she spoke for her neighbors when she said that many of them had thought they were buying into a place with a respect for nature, with a proportionate number of green spaces for the number of houses being built.

Ms. Bosford said that instead, they had seen the clear-cutting of many old-growth trees, clusters of tall, dense townhomes with no green space other than a small mulch playground, hills leveled in the newest section, and major destruction of the natural wildlife habitat, with almost none of the preserved natural areas promised by the original sales materials or County document tenet 2. She said that this destruction was not only unsightly but also brought in pests like disease-carrying ticks via deer, which threatened health as well as residents' cherished gardens.

Ms. Bosford said that this affected the proposed development plan for Block 8 because the current proposal, as seen in the drawing, did not exist in a vacuum but was part of the community as a whole. She said that as proposed, it would be an unbroken line of hyper-dense horizontal development of over 150 units, replacing the existing green space that also connected to and into Phase 4, resulting in the loss of green space forever to the community. She said that it was already past the tipping point for a reasonable proportion of green space to housing, and within 250 feet of every home that they were sold.

Ms. Bosford said that the lack of green space would only add to the urban heat island effect, which was contrary to the sustainability goals. She said that there was plenty of data supporting the

positive psychological effects of nature and green spaces within communities, so she thought they should strive for a win-win solution. She said that one possible solution was to break the proposed solid line of units into segments, comprising four to five units with areas of green space in between, so that Block 8 would afford future residents a better quality of life and help achieve the original goals of Belvedere as a whole.

Lori Taylor, Rio District, said that she resided in the Belvedere community. She said that she was here with her neighbors to support and advocate for Albemarle County's affordable housing plan. She said that specifically, they stood in support of and requested the Commission's support for the relevant objectives and strategies for affordable for-sale housing in Block 8. She said that these included: objective one, to increase the housing supply to meet the diverse housing needs of county residents; objective three, to improve access to affordable home ownership opportunities and promote long-term affordability of for-sale housing, targeting households earning between 80% and 120% of AMI.

Ms. Taylor said that they also supported these relevant strategies, which included strategy 3B, to provide incentives to increase production of affordable and workforce for-sale housing; strategy 3D, to develop procedures for monitoring and enforcing occupancy and sales price restrictions required by law and/or funding sources; strategy 3E, to develop mechanisms to ensure affordable for-sale units developed with County incentives remain affordable for a minimum of 40 years.

Ms. Taylor said that they supported the delivery of affordable for-sale housing in block eight and asked for the Commission's support as well. She said that she believed that this option was better because it supported families buying affordable homes, added to the diversity of their community, met a County housing goal to provide longer-term permanent affordable housing options, and enabled households to manage their budgets without a 3% year increase in rents, as offered in the developer's proffers for rental housing. She said that however, she would like to point out that the County's requirements for awarding the density bonus to the developer for this for-sale housing and the developer's proffers did not ensure that such housing would actually be delivered to eligible households.

Ms. Taylor said that therefore, they supported for-sale affordable housing in Belvedere, provided the County advanced its Housing Albemarle strategies by requiring the county to provide an established structure assuring that the homes were sold to qualifying affordable families, that the developer submitted documentation on a per-unit basis regarding the affordable sales price and the home's homeowners eligibility and purchase of the home.

Ms. Taylor said that such measures would meet the County's housing strategies, ensure developer compliance for the bonus, and demonstrate how such a program could be implemented and delivered on the County's strategic plan. She said that this approach would make the County's plan real and bring homeownership to the working families of their County.

Amy Richardson, Rio District, said that she lived in the Belvedere community. She said that she was joining her neighbors this evening to express serious concerns regarding this rezoning request. She said that in the original Belvedere Code of Development, Block 8 was approved for 33 townhomes only in the neighborhood model of development. She said that the total now requested by Greenwood Homes was 161, representing a nearly 500% increase in density.

Ms. Richardson said that she urged the Commission to carefully examine the proposed plan for Block 8 and what Greenwood Homes was actually seeking. She said that they were asking the COmmission to allow them to create a hyper-dense, de facto horizontal apartment complex with a density of R16. She said that this compared to R12 for the reserves and R16 for Rio Point. She said that this sprawling complex, situated along the railroad tracks, lacked its own amenities and apartment complex management services. She said that important of note was that it had very

limited and ill-defined green spaces, grossly inadequate parking and very small streets and alleyways.

Ms. Richardson said that upon zooming out, it was clear that this horizontal apartment complex continued north through Phase 4, further stressing the already inadequate infrastructure. She said that as previously discussed, this density and design violated many of the core tenets of the neighborhood model of development. She said that members of the Belvedere community recognized that the original density of less than R4 in Block 8 did not support Albemarle County's AC44 goal of significantly increasing housing density within development zones.

Ms. Richardson said that the community believed there was a rational and acceptable density greater than the original design but less than apartment complex density that could result in a win-win-win for the County, the developer, and the community. She said that she urged the Commission to consider Greenwood's track record in Belvedere to date, which included a complete lack of green spaces, a couple of mulch-covered playgrounds, and a fake parking plan that benefited only SOCA, as well as broken promises and strong-arm tactics around the community center, second garden space, and other amenities.

Ms. Richardson said that if they wanted to stay true to the Belvedere model of development, a decades-old social contract between Belvedere homeowners and the County, the Commission should not support this request. She said that they should send the developer and the County planning staff back to the table with the community to find a better solution. She said that the community welcomed the opportunity to participate in such a process.

Mike Moore, Rio District, said that he and his wife made the decision to move to Charlottesville eight years ago to stay closer to his children and grandchildren. He said that they looked at a number of different places in Albemarle County to find a good home, and their search was over once they found Belvedere. He said that Belvedere embodied everything they were looking for, meeting all their desires. He said that since that time eight years ago, the development had grown tremendously. He said that lots of people and young families with children had moved to the area.

Mr. Moore said that as a result, most of his discussion would focus on safety concerns related to Belvedere Boulevard, from its center to the soccer building, where construction traffic frequently passed by their house. He said that he assumed this traffic would continue with the new development. He said that one of his primary concerns was the presence of parked cars along Belvedere Boulevard. He said that children often played outside, but it could be hazardous. He said that he was seriously concerned that a child may enter into the road from behind one of those parked cars and the oncoming traffic would not see them. He said that the road's narrow design and lack of adequate safety features made it particularly concerning.

Mr. Moore said that additionally, that road was used for a lot of the construction traffic, and it was also a primary route for emergency vehicles, but the road's design was inadequate for those larger vehicles. He said that it was narrow and the curbs were tight, so vehicles often run over curbs and made a mess of anything bordering the street. He said that this situation would not change, as the new construction would still use those ways. He said that additionally, he was concerned about the people living so close to the railroad tracks.

Mr. Moore said that to conclude, he wanted to reiterate that the community's main concern was safety. He said that he wanted to ask the Commission to consider this in terms of talking to developers, and ask them what they were doing for the safety around them. He asked what the developers were doing to protect the kids and other people who were already there. He said that they needed to hope for the future but plan for disaster.

Lori Casteen, Rio District, said that she owned a townhouse in Belvedere. She said that she also served as chair of an ad hoc safety committee appointed by the HOA to address serious safety concerns that predate this proposal. She said that she would like to address three interconnected safety issues. She said that first, the proposed rezoning characterizes the units as attached single-family homes, which was misleading. She said that in reality, each structure was a three- to four-bedroom apartment above a two-bedroom apartment, served by a single parking pad for just two vehicles and limited street parking.

Ms. Casteen said that although plans produced in December indicated garages, the developer had confirmed that none exist. She said that this created a density significantly greater than that of the nearby Belvedere Reserve apartment complex. She said that the average American household owned at least two vehicles, and many had three or more, particularly families with driving-age children. She said that yet, this proposal provides extremely limited on-street parking and suggests that residents would park several blocks away, which was wholly unrealistic for families carrying infants, toddlers, or groceries; this reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of daily life.

Ms. Casteen said that as a result, residents would park in no parking zones, as they already did throughout the existing phases of Belvedere, with no meaningful enforcement. She said that this lead to illegal street parking, which narrowed roadways and posed a serious risk to emergency vehicles and life-saving equipment. She said that second, a safety committee survey found that the vast majority of residents exercised or engaged in outdoor activities daily, and nearly half had children who walked to and from school bus stops.

Ms. Casteen said that current traffic volume and excessive speeds by residents, visitors, service vehicles, and construction traffic already posed a serious risk. She said that there had been countless near-misses, many involving children. She said that these conditions existed before the current build-out in the northern part of the neighborhood and the adjacent Dunlora development, all of whose traffic flows directly through the center of Belvedere. She said that this proposal would add 150 or so more dwellings and an estimated 300 to 500 additional vehicles. She said that third, ingress and egress from the neighborhood were already inadequate before the proposed expansion.

Ms. Casteen said that all were located at the south end, and the primary entrance and exit feeds onto Rio Road, while the second requires a circuitous route through Dunlora and was rarely used due to its inconvenience. She said that the third was a single-lane wooden railroad bridge owned by CSX with no posted weight limit, no clear maintenance schedule, and dubious longevity and structural integrity. She said that in the event of a major fire or disaster near the south end of the neighborhood, individual escape or full evacuation would be nearly impossible.

Ms. Casteen said that more likely, a fire in the north end of the neighborhood, including in the proposed redevelopment area, could become catastrophic before emergency responders could even reach that far through the neighborhood. She said that this was assuming the roads were passable, considering the existing illegal parking. She said that she urges the Commission to listen to the families who lived here and simply wanted a safe place to call home, including affordable housing, as had been mentioned. She requested the Commission to reject this untenable zoning proposal.

Steve Rose, Rio District, said that he owned a home on Belvedere Boulevard. He said that he was here to summarize the concerns of his neighbors regarding this rezoning request, ZMA 2024-00005 and ask the Commission to consider several actions prior to any recommendation to the County Board of Supervisors. He said that when a developer, a County planner, and a neighborhood representative walked into a conference room, they should create a win-win-win solution to a complex issue. He said that that was the key to their presentations.

Mr. Rose said that they sought a voice and a chance to be heard. He said that this neighborhood welcomed development and welcomed alignment with the County's goals. He said that he and his wife had lived in Belvedere for three years and had been in Albemarle County for 50 years. He said that he had a background as a tradesman and lead AP construction manager. He said that he looked forward to seeing an environmentally friendly, smart, and planned development in the County. He said that in summary, tonight they had heard his neighbors discuss the history of their community, their proactive support for the neighborhood model, including green space and natural topography, and support for affordable housing.

Mr. Rose said that their concerns about the revised density in this proposal included the potential for infrastructure strain, future maintenance and parking issues, and the life safety reality of emergency vehicle access, particularly due to the proximity to a very active freight and passenger rail line. He said that he and his neighbors urged the Commission to visit the site and see the railroad cut and constrained emergency vehicle routes. He said that the Commission should keep the neighborhood model in mind while making a decision, and work to preserve the foundational document. He said that they also requested a meeting with a developer, Planning staff, and a Belvedere community representative to find a better solution that aligned with the goals of AC44.

Tammy Rubel, Rio District, said that she was a resident of the Villas at Belvedere. She said that the Villas was a small neighborhood of 26 homes located at the end of Free State Road, situated at the entrance to Belvedere. She said that many of her neighbors had met with the residents of Belvedere, and they shared their concerns about the proposed rezoning. She said that although their issues are not identical, there was a clear overlap of concern regarding safety.

Ms. Rubel said that there was only one exit from her neighborhood, which lead to Free State Road and Belvedere Boulevard. She said that opposite their exitwasis the entrance to Fairview Swim and Tennis Club. She said that even on an average weekday, it could be challenging to exit their neighborhood and make the left turn onto Belvedere Boulevard. She said that there were often walkers, joggers, and parents with strollers walking along the sidewalks in this area. She said that this already posed a serious safety issue for both current Belvedere residents and residents of the Villas. She said that during the summer, when the swim club was open, the number of pedestrians increased as many club members walk easterly down Free State Road through the Villas and up the abandoned portion of Free State Road near Loring Run to shorten their walk home.

Ms. Rubel said that the area at Free State Road and Belvedere Boulevard was extremely crowded with cars, traffic going in multiple directions, and pedestrians trying to cross the street. She said that adding more vehicles to that intersection would inevitably result in a much higher risk to the safety of vehicle drivers, pedestrians of all ages, and bicyclists. She said that another consideration was the location of the Center at Belvedere, which was filled most days of the week with vehicles driven there by senior citizens.

Ms. Rubel said that as the main road out from Belvedere passed the center, it should be a concern that increased traffic will pose an increased safety consideration for the older persons leaving the center and turning left onto Belvedere Boulevard. She said that the increased traffic that would result from the proposed rezoning would also have a deleterious impact on those vehicles. She said that finally was the issue of public transportation. She said that one of the principles of the Albemarle County neighborhood model of development included ready access to public transportation.

Ms. Rubel said that the only public transportation that comes close to her neighborhood was available at the Center, which was three quarters of a mile from the Villas. She said that the relatively narrow streets and dense street parking in the area would already be a challenge, but adding the vehicles that would result from the proposed rezoning might be the death knell to any

hope of public transportation in the area. She said that for these reasons, as well as those discussed by the residents of Belvedere, she urged the Planning Commission not to support this rezoning request. She said that the increased density will adversely affect both Belvedere proper and the neighborhoods around it.

Kim Eddyburn, Rio District, said that she was a resident of Dunlora. She said that as County employees, she expected them to be good stewards of the land and to be thoughtful of the current residents. She said that if this proffer were approved, Belvedere would be nearly three times larger than the original plan. She said that she asked the Commission to please address the following issues. She said that traffic had increased substantially on Loring Run and Dunlora Drive, serving as a pass-through to Belvedere. She said that vehicles speeding to and from Belvedere posed a significant danger due to the road's width, curves, and noise. She said with this plan, traffic would increase exponentially.

Ms. Eddyburn said that it was not certain when the traffic survey was conducted, but she invited the Commission to observe the traffic firsthand at their home. She said that unfortunately, the safety of their children and adults was at risk without sidewalks. She said that many drivers disregarded pedestrians, and some pedestrians had even been run off the road by traffic. She said that a road survey in the proffer noted three exits to main roads, Dunlora, Free State Bridge, and Belvedere Boulevard. She said that Dunlora did not ask to be a main exit for Belvedere. She said that Free State's one-car bridge was owned by the railroad and was not being maintained. She said that this left one exit for Belvedere.

Ms. Eddyburn said that she would ask that the road exit problem in Belvedere be addressed before any additional housing was granted. She said that infrastructure was vital for this area, and this proposal would result in the total of 903 residences in Belvedere, most with multiple cars. She said that in summary, she had walked through Belvedere and met with the residents, who shared her concerns. She said that forests were being destroyed, wildlife was being displaced, and historic land was being disrespected. She said that she asked the Commission to respect the current residents and deny any additions to Belvedere.

Ms. Eddyburn said that if they approved it, she asked that the County work with Dunlora to solve the traffic and speeding problem and to add additional roads out of Belvedere to a main road, rather than through Dunlora. She said that in Dunlora, they respected their residents, wildlife, trees, and roads, and hoped to maintain that for years to come. She said that they also respected their neighbors in Belvedere.

Sonia McGrath, Rio District, said that she appreciated the attention to this matter. She said that she was disappointed the Rio District representative on the Commission was not present at tonight's meeting. She said that she recalled selling Belvedere under a tent on red clay in 2005, so she was aware of the vision and promises they had made to their buyers. She said that she was embarrassed to see what had transpired since then. She said that she had heard from the County and VDOT that the roads they made there were a mistake. She said that however, the neighbors had to live with those acknowledged mistakes, while the County was allowing additional vehicles in Belvedere.

Ms. McGrath said that her point was not to reiterate the justified concerns of previous speakers. She was asking, in the midst of this discussion, if anyone was aware of yet another development in Dunlora Farm that would bring 300 to 400 units, and subsequently impact traffic through Belvedere. She said that it was surprising that this had not been discussed, given the magnitude of the traffic it would generate. She said that she felt that this was very significant considering this proposal to add more houses to Belvedere as well. She said that she did not understand how Belvedere Farm got accepted, considering what it was like to go through that area.

Ms. McGrath said that as a former realtor who had sold Belvedere, she was concerned to see the lack of concern from the developers. She said that she had worked with many of those developers, and she implored everyone to have respect for those who were genuinely concerned about the impact of these developments. She said that in her opinion, this was a perfect example of the lack of understanding and concern shown by the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. McGrath said that she was not sure if the Commission or the Board had visited these locations and seen the projects firsthand, but the end result was that the County continued to approve and approve without proper consideration. She said that it seemed to be driven by financial gain rather than a genuine commitment to affordable housing. She said that the Belvedere deal had been touted as affordable housing, but she believed that was a misnomer. She said that the affordable housing being provided was a small cottage above the garage, 400 to 500 square feet, priced at $1,000 to $1,400. She said that she did not see this as truly affordable.

Matt Lichter, Rio District, said that he had lived in Belvedere for 16 years, being part of the first group to move in. He said that he would refrain from repeating what others had already stated. He said that he would like to ask the Commission one thing. He said that given the large number of people watching remotely, he was wondering if it would be possible to get on record the number of people calling in remotely. He said that he was aware that many residents in the Belvedere neighborhood, including those with small children, were unable to attend tonight due to various reasons.

Mr. Lichter said that he would like to acknowledge their presence as part of this already large group. He said that he would also like to bring to their attention a printout provided by Greenwood Homes at one of their neighborhood meetings. He said that based on the facts and the misleading information presented, he did not trust this developer. He said that if the Commission were interested in understanding the extent of their deception and manipulation of facts, there were multiple people present who could share concrete evidence of these actions.

Mr. Carrazana said that if there were no further speakers, he would close the public comments. He asked if the developer had a response to the comments raised by the public.

Mr. Schooley said that Ms. Kirchner outlined the neighborhood model principles and the initial components of the Belvedere neighborhood, which were established at the same time as the neighborhood model principles were implemented in Albemarle County. He said that each rezoning, from the initial rezoning to this one, was evaluated against a neighborhood model checklist as part of the staff report to ensure consistency with the neighborhood model principles. He said that these principles were very much the same as those in Belvedere.

Mr. Schooley said that additionally, he would like to note that they may have underemphasized the importance of the greenway system, which was integral to this proposal and related to a number of comments provided by the public. He said that Ms. Bosford mentioned that the original proposal included green space within 250 feet of every residence, and this greenway would count as such. He said that it was included through Phase 4 and connected into the floodplain, so they were integrating the green space as much as possible. He said that they were also doubling the size of the park within Block 8, from 2.8 acres to 6.5 acres.

Mr. Schooley said that he also wanted to acknowledge Ms. Taylor's suggestion regarding 80% to 120% AMI for-sale product. He said that he agreed that this was very important in Albemarle County, and he believed the best way to achieve this was by allowing density in areas with adequate infrastructure, and by allowing townhouses in Block 8, it would allow them to meet the 120% AMI for sale product. He said that therefore, the best way to achieve that affordability was with townhouses in this area.

Mr. Schooley said that there was a significant point made regarding this being a horizontal apartment complex. He said that as a reminder, they were proposing 20% affordable housing within this project. He said that the initial Belvedere neighborhood also included 20% affordable housing. He said that the Belvedere neighborhood did not currently resemble a horizontal apartment complex, and the proposed density showed the same. He said that several individuals discussed safety, and he believed it was an important issue.

Mr. Schooley said that there were multiple conflicts regarding safety, and street safety, children's safety, and crosswalk safety were very important and should be addressed here. He said that the County should address it and they should address it with each one of their projects. He said that conflict arose, particularly with parking. He said that on-street parking posed a significant challenge to crosswalk pedestrian safety. He said that street trees also could not be installed because of utility easements, but that created visibility issues.

Mr. Schooley said that they could also see the transition from the initial section of Belvedere Boulevard to the other side of the village green, where the median was gone, and the road width was approximately 40 feet, with parking on both sides and fast-moving traffic. He said that this highlighted the challenges they faced in Belvedere and throughout the county. He said that finally, Fire and Rescue had reviewed the proposal, and their comment in the staff report indicated they had no concerns or comments. He said that he did not believe they should interpret this as a carte blanche to disregard safety concerns. He said that however, they should acknowledge the mechanisms within the review process that allowed for safety to be considered.

Mr. Carrazana asked if the Commissioners had any further questions for the applicant. He said that hearing none, he would close the public hearing and the matter rested with the Commission.

Ms. King asked staff why Dunlora Park did not have an exit through Dunlora Farm Road.

Mr. McDermott asked if Ms. King was referring to Dunlora Village, the new development at the back of that area.

Ms. King said yes.

Mr. McDermott said that when the original Dunlora was approved, there were different County requirements at that time, so they did not create stub-outs to connect to future developments. He said that when Belvedere was built under the new County code requirements, they had to make those connections. He said that therefore, Dunlora Village was able to connect to Belvedere but was unable to connect to the original Dunlora.

Ms. King said that there was an old farm road that led down to that location.

Mr. McDermott said that the farm road was privately owned by the Homeowners Association, and as such, they were the only ones with access through that road.

Ms. King said that she thanked Mr. McDermott for that answer. She said that one of her thoughts was that if they expected residents in this neighborhood to use public transportation in the future to minimize vehicular traffic and ultimately less parking, they should plan for bringing public transportation into the neighborhood. She said that for instance, could the bus route be extended to the circle in Belvedere and back out, allowing residents to actually ride the bus without having to walk to the Center? She said that this was a legitimate concern. She said that she also heard residents suggesting that reducing the number of units and increasing parking could be a win-win solution. She said that she understood this perspective and did not disagree with it based on what they had heard so far.

Ms. Firehock said that she would like to add to that. She said that as a general statement, when she had proposals for more density, she tended to favor them because they aligned with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. She said that however, her experience of navigating a large vehicle in this particular neighborhood was truly a challenge. She said that she did not have a problem with the design of the proposed units; they looked fine. She said that she was concerned that it was really packed in there, and the access and egress points seemed limited.

Ms. Firehock said that it appeared that residents would have limited choices in that regard. She said that it was not a neighborhood grid system, so it was not conducive to flexibility, and the development may force residents through an already-congested area. She said that she was not convinced by the parking plan as presented. She said that she understood they must meet the County's parking requirements, but she believed that the parking plan did not address the reality of social gatherings and visitors parking in the neighborhood. She said that it did not look like there was enough overflow for those uses. She said that she could not do a detailed analysis of the parking plan from the dais with the information given this evening, but this was her observation at this juncture. She said that she thought it could be denser than what the current plan had been, but she also agreed that this proposal was too much.

Mr. Murray said that as someone with an interest in sustainability, he remembered when this development was first presented and how highly regarded it was for the design.

Ms. Firehock said that she also recalled the videos and brochures that were presented. She said that at the time, none of them were members of this body, and therefore, they were not aware of the specific details or context of the project.

Mr. Murray said that he just pulled up an article from 2011 that mentioned a green Belvedere beginning to take shape, and the green sustainable features that were supposed to be part of the development. He said that it was a shame, as he had hoped that they could incorporate more sustainable features into this project, aligning with the original vision. He said that the County probably could not require that, but there were certainly ways to achieve it. He said that he agreed with the earlier comment that they also could break up the row of townhouses to allow more gren space in between them.

Ms. Firehock said that she agreed with the neighborhood's suggestion to incorporate "fingers of green" to break up the area and make it feel less like a mass. She said that she understood that the greenway trail and Rivanna River covered a significant amount of acreage, but in reality, many families, such as a mom with two young children, may not want to travel that far to access green spaces. She said that they were looking for convenient, accessible green areas right outside of their home. She said that she perceived that there were limited opportunities for small clusters of pocket parks and green spaces.

Mr. Carrazana said that he had some similar points he would like to raise. He said that one, the County realized that this road would probably never happen, and that created an opportunity for some development. He said that however, he did not think this was it. He said that keeping within the typical model that was there was appropriate, and they had done that to some degree, but he was not convinced about the parking, circulation, or the overall density. He said that there was certainly opportunity there, and it was a development worth doing, but the developer did not have it quite right yet. He said that he also agreed with the other points made by his colleagues.

Ms. King said that the application also mentioned the SOCA fieldhouse and the parking challenges that came with that. She said that she was familiar with that and how the users of that facility were spilling over into this neighborhood. She said that the street system and parking were currently inadequate. She said that she recognized that the proposal attempted to address some of that, but adding parking and adding houses did not equate to an appropriate solution.

Mr. Murray said that he also thought the neighborhood and the developer needed to have conversations about what kinds of green space they really wanted to have, since there seemed to be a mismatch there. He said that there should be meaningful green space within this built environment. He said that the University of Virginia was a great example of that; it was a dense space that incorporated high-quality green space within the campus.

Ms. King said that she would like to reiterate her initial comment about access. She said that she currently lived in a neighborhood in the County where they had a dedicated strip of land proffered for transfer to the County, which had happened, but it was inaccessible to the neighborhood and the public. She said that she did not know how many years it would take for people to be able to utilize that green space, but this application felt similar. She said that she recognized the concept was that people would come from either end, from Still Meadow and the southern end, but if they were going to build something for the community to use, they needed to allow access. She said that if they wanted people to go down to the Rivanna and use the Albemarle trail, they needed to be able to get there without hiking five miles.

Mr. Carrazana said that he agreed with Mr. Murray's suggestion of more dialogue between the developer and the community. He said that he believed that more dialogue would be beneficial in addressing parking concerns, especially during events when large crowds were expected. He said that he commended the efforts to address that. He said that however, in his opinion and that of the dais, he did not believe this proposal was ready to move forward.

Ms. Firehock motioned to recommend denial of ZMA202400005 due to the findings regarding the density, recreational space, and parking as they related to existing issues in the neighborhood.

Mr. Schooley said that the applicant would like to request deferral to a date specific. He said that he appreciated all of the comments from the Planning Commission and the neighborhood. He said that he believed there was an opportunity for them to find the right plan moving forward, and he welcomed further collaboration with the neighborhood. He said that he would like to request that members of the neighborhood meet with the applicant and provide a plan best suited for the Belvedere neighborhood and the County.

Ms. Firehock said that in that case, she was willing to withdraw her motion.

Mr. Barnes said that he was unsure of the exact scope of the changes they would be making. He said that they could defer it without a date specific, and advertise it and schedule it when appropriate.

Mr. Murray motioned that the Planning Commission accept the request to defer to an unspecified date. Ms. Firehock seconded the motion.

Ms. Firehock said that she wanted to clarify that the deferral was not deferring an approval of the application; rather, it was meant to provide opportunity for a better proposal to be presented, incorporating some of the additional dialogue as requested by the community. She said that the Commission tried to be fair, and if this was a completely hopeless project they would recommend denial. She said that this area was slated to be developed in some way, so they would like to see a better project that the community could support, and that was the reason for the deferral.

Ms. King said that this was what she had heard, as well: a desire for density, affordable housing, and safety. She said that that was what she believed they all wanted to see.

Mr. Carrazana called the vote on the motion to accept the applicant's request to defer the application.

The motion carried unanimously (4-0). (Mr. Clayborne and Mr. Moore were absent)

Recess

The Commission took a seven-minute recess.

Work Session

ZTA202400001 Rio29 Form-Based Code Update

Mariah Gleason, Senior Planner, said that she would be presenting the ZTA202400001 Rio29 Form-Based Code updates. She said that staff would be bringing this to the Planning Commission in two work sessions. She said that in the first meeting tonight, they would discuss the proposed overarching changes, which they were referring to as fundamental changes. She said that in the second session, they would focus on more detailed regulatory and technical changes.

Ms. Gleason said that she had tailored this presentation to focus on the proposed changes to the current Rio29 Form-Based Code, but the staff report contained more information, and she would be happy to answer any questions about the staff report or presentation. She said that they were sharing a significant amount of information tonight. She said that while most of the changes work together, she would stop periodically to invite discussion on the questions staff has for the Planning Commission.

Ms. Gleason said that for background, the County adopted its first form-based code (FBC) in September 2021. She said that form-based codes differ from traditional conventional zoning districts by focusing on how buildings relate to sidewalks and streets to create a place, rather than governing development through land use or residential density. She said that in other words, it focused on the outside of the building rather than the inside. She said that the Rio29 Form-Based Code was adopted as an implementation tool of the Rio29 Small Area Plan that preceded it. She said that the vision of that plan was to create a vibrant, connected, mixed-use community with enhanced amenity spaces.

Ms. Gleason said that to implement that vision, the Rio29 Form-Based Code allows for dense urban development by right, with an emphasis on streets and recreation spaces. She said that lastly, the code functions as an optional zoning district, enabling landowners to choose between by-right development under the standards of the Rio29 Form-Based Code or those of the underlying zoning district assigned to the property. She said that given that the County was new to form-based codes, staff anticipated that the first few development projects would reveal problems with the code, which had proven to be the case.

Ms. Gleason said that some of the problems experienced with the first few approved site plans, highlighted on the map, included street requirements that did not align with County transportation plans, a lack of standards for required elements, unintended loopholes in the requirements, and several others. She said that in April 2024, the Board approved a resolution to amend the Rio29 Form-Based Code to address these issues. She said that based on feedback from applicants, the development community, architects, and the consultant group, staff had proposed changes that address these problems while still achieving the vision of the Rio20 Small Area Plan.

Ms. Gleason said that to clarify, the Rio29 Form-Based Code was currently in effect. She said that the proposed changes staff were presenting tonight and at the upcoming meeting were updates intended to address known administration and implementation challenges identified since adoption. She said that staff had discussed many of these changes with the development community and the local Community Advisory Committee (CAC), and feedback from both groups was generally positive and supportive of the overall direction.

Ms. Gleason said that she had also provided a slide with the questions staff would be asking the Planning Commission to consider tonight. She said that additionally, staff would be happy to answer any other questions they had regarding the staff report or presentation. She said that staff was proposing six fundamental changes to the Rio29 Form-Based Code, and she would go through each one in turn.

Ms. Gleason said that the Form-Based Code was organized into three character areas, which helped define the intensity of development and level of activity. She said that the core character areas, shown in red, acted as the heart of the district, featuring the densest development, highest levels of activity, and most urban forms. She said that one could think of this as the district's focal point or destination. She said that to give a sense of the feel of this character area, one would see the tallest buildings positioned close to the street, typically with parking behind and highly transparent first floors to support commercial uses.

Ms. Gleason said that the flex areas, shown in white, allowed for greater variation in building form and scale. She said that buildings in flex areas were shorter than those in the character area and were generally subject to less prescriptive requirements. She said that developments in this character area focused on providing safe, comfortable bike and pedestrian connections from the edges of the district to core areas. She said that the edge areas, shown in blue, had the lowest development intensity. She said that buildings in these areas were typically one to three stories in height and were designed to provide an intentional transition between denser urban development and surrounding single-family neighborhoods. She said that the provided map showed the current configuration of character areas within the Rio29 Form-Based Code.

Ms. Gleason said that staff had consistently received questions and feedback on the requirements of the core, but they found that the feedback was actually indicative of a location issue. She said that first, the core area was centered on the intersection of Route 29 and Rio Road, two high-speed, high-volume roads. She said that this created a concern for pedestrian safety and the ability to create a successful pedestrian-oriented environment. She said that there was a tension between the design intent of the core area and the character of adjacent arterial roadways. She said that the second issue was that the Rio29 Form-Based Code required commercial or retail uses on ground floors of every development within the core; however, at 109 acres, the core area was too expansive for this requirement, which diluted instead of concentrating commercial and pedestrian activity.

Ms. Gleason said that also, the design standards intended to support these commercial uses, such as mostly transparent facades and ground floor ceiling heights of 15 feet, increased development costs for every building within the core, which may not have achieved the active commercial centers envisioned. She said that this was again related to the extent of the core area. She said that to resolve these issues, staff proposed two changes. The first was to shift the core area designation to align with existing shopping centers, such as Rio Hills Shopping Center, Albemarle Square, and Fashion Square Mall, where a density of commercial activity was already present and the ownership was not as fractured.

Ms. Gleason said that separation of the primary pedestrian systems from the high-speed vehicular corridors better accomplished the goals of both, accommodating regional transportation through the area and creating safer, more pleasant pedestrian focus centers where people might feel invited to stay, walk, and pop into multiple businesses they might not otherwise visit. She said that parcels that were no longer considered core were proposed to be redesignated as flex areas, shown in white, with no changes proposed to the locations or extent of the edge areas, shown in blue. She said that this proposed concept was similar to the squares design alternative presented in the Rio29 Small Area Plan.

Ms. Gleason said that staff's second change was the addition of a new destination street type, which was exemplified by Bond Street at The Shops at Stonefield. She said that similar to Bond Street, these street types were envisioned to be at least 1,200 feet in length, approximately a quarter mile. She said that design standards for commercial uses would be tailored to this street type, rather than applying to every street within the core. She said that examples of design standards included wider sidewalks, visually engaging streetscape furniture, and mostly transparent building frontages, as well as taller building ground floor ceiling heights and other aspects that encouraged an inviting, walkable, and comfortable pedestrian experience.

Ms. Gleason said that to summarize, staff were proposing two changes to address the challenges identified with the current character area boundaries: shifting the core areas to existing shopping centers and introducing destination street types. She said that this brought them to their first question: Does the Planning Commission agree with moving from a single core area centered on Rio Road and Route 29 intersection to core areas centered on existing shopping centers?

Ms. Firehock said that yes, she agreed with the move from single-core area to the core areas centered on existing shopping centers. She said that she was serving on the Commission the first time they designed the Rio29 Form-Based Code and knew that there was concern at the time about having Rio and 29 as the center. She said that unfortunately, the concern was ignored at that time and they were here today. She said that she felt the same way as she did originally.

Mr. Barnes said that staff was happy to prove her right. He said that he also wanted to note a certain nuance in this situation, which was that there was a vision to create a sort of district that went beyond that particular intersection. He said that they initially envisioned the entire 109 acres was meant to be walkable and full of commercial activity. He said that the scale of that plan was difficult to achieve, even without considering the difficulties of that intersection. He said that they looked to the Shops at Stonefield to see what a good street length was for that kind of commercial development. He said that whether that type of mixed-use commercial core would be a single street or two streets that crossed each other, they had left that up to the developer to see how it could be achieved with these existing conditions. He said that there may be aspects of the Code that could allow for further flexibility in terms of the technical measurements.

Ms. Firehock said that to be clear, she supported the concept of form-based code and believed it could be a valuable tool. She said that however, she still had some questions about how they could encourage developers to create a different type of product in an existing built environment. She said that during her time in Charlottesville, they did a lot of work in Belmont, including new medians, tree plantings, narrowed streets, benches, and vegetation which was done by the City as an effort to redevelop vacant properties.

Ms. Firehock said that at the time, people thought it was pointless and that no one would ever reinvest in that area, but that clearly was not the case. She said that her point was that she was unsure whether this Form-Based Code did enough to encourage that type of investments. She said that it was outside of her purview on the Commission, but it was a possibility that the County may need to invest more substantively to spur this type of development.

Mr. Barnes said that staff had the same conversation with Mr. Carrazana yesterday.

Mr. Carrazana said that he would not get on his soapbox today.

Mr. Barnes said that he agreed this was a tough thing to do. He said that tonight, staff was presenting the Commission with the rules. He said that Ms. Firehock had mentioned incentives, and they would have to work with VDOT to get approval for those types of streetscaping improvements they had discussed tonight. He said that there were several other things the community would need to do to support that, as well. He said that the question before the

Commission was more focused on the market conditions and the location. He said that there were other things that needed to be included in this ordinance to make it attractive to developers, in addition to the potential further investments that may be needed.

Ms. Firehock said that there were many interesting incentives they could look into. She said that there were many improvements that went beyond density bonuses for developers who provided affordable housing.

Mr. Carrazana said that he agreed with staff's proposed change. He said that he was the Commission's UVA representative at the time they had their initial conversation on this item, and it did make sense to break it up into manageable pieces. He said that they could develop and market themselves in various ways, as they already had a distinct identity today. He said that he believed they all agreed that this was the right decision. He said that moving forward, he hoped they could work on incentives. He said that it could be a qualitative comment on what could be done, rather than solely focusing on regulations. He said that they could make more developable spaces but also more amenity spaces.

Mr. Barnes said that he believed staff agreed with that.

Mr. Murray said that he thought this did need to be paired with incentives, but they also needed to include more in the Form-Based Code itself about low-impact development.

Ms. Firehock said that she believed they would be working on that in the next phase, but she agreed it should be elevated.

Mr. Murray said that there were some details that he thought could be improved in that regard. He said that rather than "allowing" certain improvements, they could "encourage" or "require" them if it was going to contribute towards low-impact development.

Ms. Gleason said that examining the code, she believed it was beneficial to consider it as minimum standards rather than expectations. She said that the Code served as a baseline, setting the threshold for what a development must achieve. She said that to exceed these standards, they must explicitly state the requirements and definitions necessary to regulate and review them. She said that one of the issues they would likely address in their next discussion was that they did not define green infrastructure clearly. She said that they had mentioned it as a requirement, but they had not specified what would meet that standard.

Ms. Firehock said that she had several meetings with staff in the past about what specific things she would like to include in those green infrastructure regulations, and while staff intended to specify those things, it was never done.

Mr. Murray said that he would like to mention a guide that was produced a long time ago, titled "Before the Storm," which focused on good stormwater management. He said that this standard had been available for a while, he believed they should at least strive to achieve it. He said that the proposed layout for was a significant improvement. He said that they needed to address the large shopping centers, such as Fashion Square Mall and Albemarle Square. He said that to achieve this, it would likely require the use of multiple tools.

Mr. Carrazana asked Ms. Gleason to continue with her presentation.

Ms. Gleason said that the second fundamental change was the recommendation for a street-centric framework. She said that typically, form-based codes organized regulations based on character areas or streets. She said that the current Form-Based Code used both, which had created confusion in understanding how the regulations applied to a given property. She said that

to resolve this issue, staff was proposing a framework where the Form-Based Code regulations were primarily determined by a specific street type. She said that by organizing requirements around streets, they were able to promote a more consistent experience along each street.

Ms. Gleason said that the second issue was that the current Rio29 Form-Based Code treated streets as having equal and interchangeable priority, which could lead to inconsistent and unpredictable building orientation. She said that this approach lacked the sophistication to allow changes to building form and function along secondary side streets. She said that to address this, they had created a street hierarchy, which was shown in the provided table. She said that the hierarchy directed building form and orientation to be prioritized and consistent along high-ranking primary streets, while allowing greater flexibility along secondary streets. She said that destination streets had the highest priority to support continuous engaging building frontages along commercial streets and a welcoming pedestrian experience.

Ms. Gleason said that avenues and boulevards were ranked second and third to encourage travel along streets that functioned as key bike and pedestrian connectors. She said that collectively, the street hierarchy balanced pedestrian-focused placemaking with regional transportation needs. She said that this brought them to the second question: Does the Planning Commission support the approach of using a street-centric framework to organize regulations and inform built form? She said that she had also provided a copy of the street hierarchy here for ease of reference.

Ms. King asked, if Rio Road was considered the boulevard, and 29 was designated as the corridor, what would be an example of a local street?

Ms. Gleason said that a local street was the last mile of one's journey that got them to a destination. She said that using this map, the intended purpose was to break up the district into a more grid-like system through form-based code. She said that currently, the blocks were enormous, stretching approximately 1,000 feet in length, and lacked sidewalks. She said that walking through these blocks could be challenging, especially for those concerned about safety. She said that one requirement of the form-based code was to start breaking up these blocks and adding streets to bisect or trisect them, regardless of their length.

Ms. Gleason said that for instance, imagine dividing the Rio Hill Shopping Center into nine or 12 blocks, creating local streets that led directly to the front door. She said that these would be distinct from the main streets, such as avenues and boulevards, which had already been built and were public. She said that local streets, on the other hand, would likely be new, constructed streets in this area.

Mr. Barnes said that the ultimate goal was to have a building fronting every street and a parking deck nearby. He said that they aspired to find an urban form like that, but the practicality was that the area would intensify over time to reach that form. He said that they could get the grid network established, orient the buildings towards the destination streets, and it would create the sense of place that would make it successful. He said that Bond Street was an example of that, where the buildings fronted the street and the parking was behind. He said that if that development had been able to build out as originally intended, they would have had parking decks and buildings on every street. He said that the point of the street hierarchy was to promote the buildings to face the destination street first, then create continuity along the avenues.

Ms. King said that she had asked for a definition or example of a local street because she was having trouble visualizing what that would be in the context of this area, between Rio and 29. She said that she was seeing a missing designation between destination street and avenue. She said that she was thinking about the street that ran in front of Costco, where nothing fronted it. She said that she was struggling to imagine what a local street would look like, but she could see the

potential for an intermediate designation between destination and avenue. She said that she did support the concept.

Mr. Barnes said that when they returned next time, they would discuss the different street sections outlined in the code. He said that each of these sections was defined by standards, which served as a fundamental template governing how these areas should be built out. He said that referencing the shops at Stonefield, some of the local streets in that development had been well-executed, but the other more local streets with less intense use would likely need a different form. He said that it was difficult to articulate, but they were not like Rio, Route 29, or Berkmar.

Mr. Murray said that he was trying to understand how they could correlate the relationship between density and street types, as they were pulling this together. He said that to him, the overall density of the built environment should determine the form of the surrounding streets. He said that for example, with more tall buildings, the streetscape became more critical. He said that if they considered Charlottesville, for instance, as the buildings increased in height, bike lanes and street trees became much more important. He said that he was wondering how they could tie the streetscape to the density that it correlated with.

Ms. Gleason said that one of the key elements they were missing in this plan was a map that outlined the most accommodating locations for pedestrians and bicycles. She said that when examining the map, it became apparent that a network of primary pedestrian routes and primary bike routes was formed by the layout of the district's streets. She said that the destination streets, avenues, and boulevards served as the primary axes for reaching most destinations, while the local streets acted as connectors to individual residences, other buildings, and other areas. She said that by prioritizing pedestrian access along these destination streets, avenues, and boulevards, they could effectively capture and address most of the pedestrian needs.

Mr. Murray said that when considering the placement of destination streets, he believed that they needed to look at not only where pedestrians wanted to go, but also where they were going. He said that currently, there were many people who walked and ran through the Route 29 corridor, not just along 29 itself, but also along the Meadow Creek Parkway. He said that with a better understanding of the existing patterns, this would enable them to tie together the various elements and create a more cohesive plan.

Mr. Barnes said that to clarify, this was an optional district, and one thing they were not doing here was establishing clear guidelines for road placement as part of this district. He said that in fact, they were trying to step back from that. He said that the planners could not predict the future, and they could not anticipate how individual developers might utilize the space. He said that as a result, they were attempting to create a system where they set standards, such as a grid network, and then specified that within that network, certain streets would be designated as destination streets, while others would be local. He said that there would be standards in place for these local streets.

Mr. Barnes said that West Main Street was relevant, as the original vision for that area was present, although the density developed over time. He said that with this district, their goal was to allow for a more flexible approach, where they could establish a foundation for urban form, even if they did not have all the answers in the initial iteration. He said that by not being overly prescriptive, the local government could set a framework that allowed developers to build the desired form and density, with some flexibility in the types of uses they could include. He said that this approach was different from their typical zoning methods in their communities.

Ms. Firehock said that she thought Mr. Mmurray had made a really good point about the density needing to relate to the street. She said that the taller the buildings, the wider the sidewalks needed to be, as otherwise there would be a noticeable cavern effect. She said that it was similar

to how if they wanted to distinguish a boulevard from an avenue or the other streets, it was essential to consider the widths of the sidewalks in relation to the density of the area. She said that in higher density areas, they should have more room, so that pedestrians could walk along without feeling constrained.

Mr. Carrazana said that as an organizing framework, that was how streets were used, so it made sense. He said that the key that Mr. Barnes had mentioned was that they should not be too prescriptive. He said that for instance, Fashion Square Mall was an area where significant density was possible, and it may end up with a larger street to accommodate that density, allowing for street trees and pedestrian walkways.

Mr. Carrazana said that the goal was to encourage people to walk, with wider sidewalks and streets, as wider sidewalks and streets would be needed to accommodate stores, apartments, and other multi-user facilities. He said that this required flexibility in the design, which would be the challenging part. He said that while they likely agreed that this was a suitable organization strategy, the devil was in the details in terms of how it would be implemented.

Mr. Barnes said that one of staff's questions to the Commission was asking what they wanted to talk about next time, and he believed this was certainly one of the things they would discuss. He said that they would make sure they got the spatial relationships of the streets correct and what they were proposing within the template to meet the Commission's observations.

Mr. Carrazana said that they needed to make sure they were providing the infrastructure that would encourage the higher density they were seeking. He said that in those three zones they had called out, those were ripe for higher density, particularly Fashion Square Mall because it was the largest one.

Ms. Firehock said that while she understood form-based code, she was struggling with how they could incentivize people to come in and put in the dense structures and diversity of uses they wanted without the County doing something about the street network. She said that she thought it needed to be master-planned.

Ms. Firehock said that she would like to see an example of where this was done without the street network already in place. She said that the street network also needed to connect out. She said that she understood the concept and the desired end result, but she did not see the path to get between the two.

Ms. Gleason said that she would like to address that point briefly. She said that this location was always going to be a challenging place to implement form-based code, as it was built for cars and everything was surrounded by parking. She said that in fact, 39% of this district was comprised of parking lots or paved areas, making it a challenging place for this project.

Ms. Gleason said that it was correct that most form-based codes were applied to areas where streets were already established, and when new streets were recommended, they often connected existing, disconnected streets. She said that staff agreed that this was a challenge, and they were struggling to offer incentives to encourage development. She said that she believed that the core area designation was intended to convey to developers that they saw them as destinations, and that both parties wanted that. She said that there was an overlap of intention in this regard. She said that given that they had a code in place that was not working well, part of the effort was to make it work. She said that they would still face struggles, and she thought they needed to discuss these further, potentially distinguishing between policy-oriented and regulation-based approaches. She said that perhaps they could have those discussions at different times.

Mr. Barnes said that in terms of creating new streets, he thought the realignment of Hillsdale was relevant. He said that it would come into Fashion Square, cross Rio, and tie into Albemarle Square. He said that if they were able to connect that all together, it would be possible for other streets to fill in as destination streets or local streets, as best determined by the development that was occurring there.

Ms. King said that her final thought was that when it came to having the street type as the framework, she wondered if that was not enough form. She said that in essence, a developer might argue that they did not want to meet this requirement, so they would simply call it an avenue or, more broadly, they would have the option to build a different road to circumvent the requirement the County was trying to impose.

Ms. Gleason said that perhaps in some ways, but also the development that went first had a greater ability to decide the type of street that would be built. She said that then, the next developer had to continue that street. She said that she did not think they would ever see a street that transitioned seamlessly from an avenue to a boulevard to a local street. She said that there was a continuation of the design, and the first development got to choose that direction. She said that in this case, there was an emphasis on identifying the most impactful accesses that encouraged pedestrian travel.

Ms. Gleason said that once they reached smaller blocks of 400 feet or less, they were looking at something roughly the size of the longest section of Water Street garage. She said that this was something that was walkable, and it allowed someone to progress through a district and feel comfortable in that scale.

Mr. Barnes said that they would review some further detail about this form-based code next week. He said that he appreciated the Commission's insight and their concerns regarding the functionality of this ordinance.

Ms. Gleason said that shifting away from streets and back to the proposed zoning map, in addition to the character areas, the zoning map identified where certain types of publicly accessible recreation space, also known as civic space in the code, were required. She said that in these maps, civic spaces were typically represented by black dots, and required linear parks, which were a type of civic space, were shown as black lines. She said that several changes had been made in the proposed map. She said that the first change aligned required civic spaces with known development plans or guidance from Albemarle County's Parks and Recreation Department.

Ms. Gleason said that as a result, three civic spaces that were previously circled on the left had been removed, and the locations of two others had been adjusted, indicated by arrows. She said that second, the proposed map also revised the types of civic spaces to align required civic spaces with the revised design standards. She said that lastly, the proposed map recommended a new linear park space along the northern boundary of the Albemarle Square property to extend and connect the planned linear parks in that area She said that this addition was consistent with the recommendations of the Rio29 Small Area Plan. She said that removing these spaces did not eliminate the requirement for recreation; instead, it provided developers opting in on those properties with more flexibility regarding the location and type of civic space that would be required.

Ms. Gleason said that every development that opted into the Form-Based Code was still required to provide a recreation space. She said that in the initial few developments, particularly one with smaller recreation space requirements, they had realized that the current regulation, which required all recreation spaces to be dedicated to the County, could result in a County maintenance burden of around 60 individual and dispersed recreation spaces. She said that this created

operational and maintenance challenges and risked the long-term quality of the spaces. She said that recognizing the importance of recreation spaces, they did not want to lose that aspect, but they needed to find a way to balance how recreation space was provided and its quality.

Ms. Gleason said that the proposed change offered an alternative approach, wherein recreation spaces one acre or more in size would be dedicated to the County, while required recreation spaces one acre or less would be privately owned and maintained. She said that this approach concentrated County ownership and maintenance on larger or higher-impact sites and could result in theoretically 20 spaces that the County would maintain, assuming every property opted into the Rio29 Form-Based Code. She said that staff believed this approach would provide a suitable distribution of public recreation spaces.

Mr. Murray said that an issue he had seen occur in other areas was when a public space was implied as green space or open space by a developer. He said that he thought there was a middle round in this situation where they could use easements. He said that a property could remain owned by an HOA, but the County could have an easement on them so they controlled the future use of those spaces.

Ms. Firehock asked if Mr. Murray was referring to an easement for trail access or something similar.

Mr. Murray said that even in a scenario where they had a dedicated community garden, he believed it was still worthwhile for the County to have an easement on that garden land, ensuring it remained a designated green space. He said that this would provide a safeguard, even if a developer were to control the HOA and attempt to redevelop the property, allowing the County to maintain a stake in that space.

Ms. Gleason said that one aspect to consider was the easement for access temporarily until redevelopment occurred. She said that this allowed the developer to redevelop the property in a way that best suited the intended use of the recreation space. She said that this provided the developer with flexibility, especially as the property underwent changes over time. She said that however, the easement did not waive the requirement to provide a recreation space. She said that the developer would still be required to have a recreation space on the property, regardless of an easement.

Mr. Murray said that he understood that, but he believed that putting things under easement provided a level of certainty that was not guaranteed by simply designating them as a type of space. He said that he thought this certainty was particularly important as leadership and organizations changed over time. He said that he thought easements provided a safeguard against these designations being lost, and this could be seen in other communities.

Ms. Firehock said that people may come in for a rezoning or change their proffer and then want to change that green space.

Mr. Murray said that exactly, and having an easement on that space carried some weight when considering the broader redevelopment of an area.

Mr. Barnes said that as staff looked at all of the green spaces that may come under County maintenance as part of this code, it became overwhelming to see that they may have 60 spaces they would be responsible for. He said that they were concerned that the 60 spaces would multiply as they enacted this in other parts of the County. He said that Planning staff worked closely with the Parks and Recreation Department to right-size this so as not to create an undue burden of maintaining all of these small parks. He said that it was agreed upon that the County needed to

have a more robust urban parks system, and that was the direction they were going with this proposal.

Mr. Murray said that he believed there was a middle ground between the County owning and the developer owning the land. He said that he thought there were multiple models that could accommodate this, and that was what he was trying to convey. He said that looking at the Comprehensive Plan, he thought that one of the positive changes they had made was allowing developers to contribute to a Parks fund in lieu of providing a pocket park.

He said that he believed this was a valuable tool for flexibility in some of these spaces. He said that sometimes, the individual piece being rezoned may not have been in the right location for the sidewalk. He said that by contributing to a Parks fund, they could actually get the greenway or larger park where they needed it.

Ms. Gleason said that to address one point, once a property opted into the form-based code, it was permanently bound to that district and could not redevelop under a different district. She said that therefore, she did not think they would be dealing with many instances of developers attempting to change their land uses to eliminate recreation spaces. She said that last year, they had retained the option to provide a cash-in-lieu of recreation spaces, acknowledging that smaller parcels may face challenges in providing recreation spaces, and the cash-in-lieu would provide district-wide recreation investments.

Ms. King said that the required size was not the parcel development size; rather, it was the size of the required recreation space. She asked what size parcel would have less than a 0.3-acre recreation requirement.

Ms. Gleason said that it would depend on what character area the parcel was located in. She said that in a core character area, it would be 10% of the available land, and if that 10% was less than 0.3 acres, there could be a cash-in-lieu option.

Ms. King said that she appreciated the clarification. She said that in general, she was in favor of having the one acre or more be publicly maintained. She said that she believed that was a smart decision. She said that she would actually be in favor of having more of that type of dedication throughout the County as well. She said that it would be greatly beneficial to have a developer build the recreation to its full potential and then handed it over to the County for full public access and the County would maintain it.

Ms. Firehock said that to clarify, this provision would not remove the ability for developers to create pocket parks.

Ms. Gleason said no; it would simply require private maintenance of the pocket park.

Ms. Firehock said that there were a few examples that came to mind where it was impossible to just sit down and eat a sandwich without walking a long distance to the closest available green space.

Ms. Gleason said that the Shops at Stonefield had a green space near the back that was a good example of what they were looking for as a public square or public green. She said that however, that area of Stonefield was slated for development.

Mr. Murray said that he believed that the balance they should strive for was achieving a better balance between what a neighborhood desired and the practical considerations involved. He said that sometimes, a neighborhood may have wanted a small pocket park where residents could

engage in activities. He said that however, it appeared that they often built pocket parks that did not quite meet the community's needs.

Ms. Gleason said that feedback from the development community, including architects and designers, expressed a desire for greater flexibility in the Form-Based Code to better accommodate site-specific challenges. She said that participants in follow-up meetings also expressed support for administrative approval of modifications, noting that this approach could reduce application costs and enable quicker reviews and approval of site plans. She said that in the proposed changes, they were recommending 25 agent-approved modifications and waivers, if specified criteria or may be met, and expanded Board-approved special exceptions from 6 to 10 within the Code, to address site-specific constraints.

Ms. Gleason said that staff carefully considered all proposed modifications, waivers, and special exceptions to ensure they did not undermine the ability to achieve a cohesive urban development pattern consistent with the vision of the Rio29 Small Area Plan. She said that staff intentionally avoided providing administrative flexibility for elements central to the plan's goals, such as provision of recreation space, or issues where more direction from the Board of Supervisors was needed to establish clear approval criteria such as alternative affordable housing unit mixes and area median income thresholds. She said that the regarding the organization and formatting, feedback on the Form-Based Code was that it was difficult to navigate and inconsistent with the County's current effort in the Zoning Ordinance Modernization.

Ms. Gleason said that therefore, the proposed changes aligned with the Zoning Ordinance Modernization effort, consolidating requirements through formatting or new sections, and reordering sections to align with information needed at conceptual planning and development review stages, reflecting the Rio29 Small Area Plan's emphasis on streets and recreation spaces. She said that this reformatting consolidated requirements and avoided cross-referencing throughout the sections. She said that in their next meeting, they would like to discuss the regulatory and technical changes in more detail. She said that they had made significant changes, with approximately 50 pages of revised code. She asked if there were specific aspects or sections that the Planning Commission would like them to focus on or explore further.

Ms. Firehock asked if staff would consider a street type that was specifically a green street. She said that she meant not only street trees, but low-impact development and enhanced pedestrian access. She said that she would like to see something very progressive, and perhaps they could tie an incentive to that. She said that the County did something similar on the street near the Crozet Library.

Mr. Barnes asked if Ms. Firehock was envisioning that as an option within the Code.

Ms. Firehock said that yes, it would be an option and not a requirement. She said that without illustrations, she was left wondering where all the bioswales and natural stormwater management facilities would be located.

Mr. Murray said that he believed there was room to increase the standard in terms of stormwater management.

Ms. Firehock said that there was a standard that if a new development did not exceed the impervious surface of the prior development, the new development did not have to add any stormwater management. She said that with that in mind, the question remained how they could get those features put in by the private sector. She said that by taking out a few parking spaces in a parking lot, they could install an effective bioswale. She said that she knew staff would be working on that, but she would like to emphasize the need for more green incentives, particularly a complete green street in the streetscapes.

Mr. Barnes said that their next meeting would have a more thorough review of the Code they had just received. He said that in fact, there was a green street in the Code. He said that staff could point out some things in the Ordinance that were meant to improve stormwater management and similar issues. He said that however, he would acknowledge that those types of regulations were limited in this Code. He said that this was mostly because this area was difficult to redevelop. He said that he worried about trying to make something that was flexible and cost-effective for developers.

Ms. Firehock said that she recalled she had worked with some developers in Charlottesville on an infill code that offered a 50% density bonus for incorporating green features, and it worked.

Mr. Barnes said that density bonuses did not work in this district because there was a maximum height limit for buildings.

Ms. Firehock said that they did include a bonus for affordable housing.

Ms. Gleason said that the incentive was a bonus story on the building.

Ms. Firehock said that yes, and she thought that green infrastructure should have been part of that exchange.

Mr. Barnes said that they could do those types of things, but he wanted to ensure they were not adding too many requirements so that the incentive was not attractive.

Ms. Gleason said that one of the changes they made was adding a new requirement for a tree canopy in parking lot areas. She said that she believed there were different ways to incorporate environmental aspects and make the sites more resilient without overly complicating the administrative process or discouraging development. She said that in this revised Form-Based Code, they partnered with Jamie Powers on the Climate Action Plan.

Ms. Gleason said that they conducted a site visit and drove around the area and explained the challenges they were facing, as well as the goals of the Climate Action Plan. She said that she and Mr. Powers were working together to identify areas that could encourage both development and align with the Climate Action Plan, with the goal of making this area more resilient. She said that perhaps there were more things they could do, but she could confirm they were working to address that topic.

Mr. Barnes said that under current stormwater regulations, these sites were approximately 100% impervious, which limited their ability to change the impacts. He said that he had been discussing this with the County Engineer, and they were exploring ways to modify the curve numbers or reduce the impacts on nearby streams. He said that it would be challenging to require these changes under current regulations.

Mr. Barnes said that this highlighted some of the realities of the situation. He said that the issue ultimately came down to incentives. He said that while they could offer some incentives by providing additional floor space in the building, the most significant incentives likely came from the public sector pushing for policy changes. He said that to be honest, staff had not initially pursued this approach in terms of green infrastructure.

Ms. Firehock said that Fairfax County introduced a half-penny or penny to their property taxes to create a fund to put in green infrastructure projects on private developments to help the County reduce the load on local streams. She said that the County built them, and the private sector helped maintained them. She said that the County built hundreds of these projects. She said that

she brought this up to illustrate that there were models available for local governments, and this program was extremely popular.

Mr. Barnes said that those types of initiatives could certainly be implemented County-wide, but this Ordinance was specific to a very small area of the County.

Mr. Murray said that form-based code had the potential to highlight the features that they considered ideal design. He said that by doing so, they could encourage developers to build projects that met their standards, rather than dragging them through a lengthy and costly process. He said that they could say that if developers built something to this form, the County would make it easy to do so. He said that however, he believed that there was a tier where they acknowledged that a project not only met the minimum requirements but also exceeded them.

Mr. Murray said that in this case, they could offer incentives, such as automatic qualification for tax increment financing (TIF) or other built-in incentives. He said that this was where he believed they could make significant differences. He said that he strongly believed that how they managed stormwater and landscapes had a direct impact on the quality of life and the quality of design in an area. He said that areas that effectively managed stormwater were far more livable than those that did not.

Ms. Firehock said that she wanted to note there was a demographic who would choose to go to an area that had environmentally friendly practices and good stormwater management. She said that they could also create more beautiful landscapes using aesthetically pleasing stormwater management techniques. She said that she felt that there were improvements they could make beyond just transforming a shopping mall into a pedestrian-friendly shopping area.

Ms. King said that the Board of Supervisors' recent vote included some clear amendments to the form-based code, which were intended to address the actual problems they were experiencing with implementing the Code. She said that revamping the entire Code from scratch with new ideas may be a desirable outcome, but that was not what they were supposed to be discussing.

Ms. Firehock said that she did not think they had proposed that. She said that because they had been asked to provide input for the next session, and that was what Ms. Gleason had mentioned at the beginning. She said that some of the green infrastructure elements were not completed by County staff. She said that it was not't because developers or anyone else did not want to see them, but rather that the staff simply did not get the work done. She said that as a result, they were coming back to address these issues along with the other items they had discussed.

Ms. Firehock said that she thought what they had heard tonight suggested that they needed more incentives to make this Code work, so that they were not stuck in a situation in two or three years where this attempt yielded no tangible results. She said that she did not have any concerns with the improvements proposed in staff's presentation this evening, but she did want to mention what she thought was missing.

Mr. Carrazana said that there were some fundamental shifts in how they conceived the corridor, shifting from the Rio Road/Route 29 intersection to multiple areas. He said that this conceptual approach was quite different from the previous method of looking at it as a whole. He said that he believed that this shift in perspective could also impact how they marketed and brought in economic development. He said that he would like to forward Mr. Barnes and his fellow Commissioners some information on how malls had been transformed in the country, including in the eastern region. He said that it was a very interesting topic, and it was often associated with public-private partnerships (P3) initiatives.

Mr. Carrazana said that a lot of them revolved around healthcare, as well. He said that given they were in a population center in close proximity to a major academic medical center, this presented opportunities. He said that he would send the relevant information, which included an interesting read on how old malls had been revitalized with a variety of new uses.

Ms. Gleason said that she would conclude the presentation. She said that she first wanted to acknowledge Ms. King's point was a good one. She said that they were trying to thread the needle between not recommending things that were too ambitious and not being too conservative, while addressing the existing regulatory issues and encouraging the use of their Form-Based Code. She said that they were working within a time constraint, as many developers were eager to move forward with projects that aligned with their new Code, and they were waiting for the County to finalize it. She said that this created a bit of tension, but they were striving to make the Code as user-friendly and accessible as possible to facilitate these developments and encourage more in the future.

Mr. Barnes asked the Commissioners to please reach out to staff if they thought of other items they would like to discuss in their next discussion on the Form-Based Code. He said that he completely understood Mr. Carrazana's suggestion as well, but also thought it may be outside the scope of this project. He said that it may be of interest to the Board of Supervisors and their AC44 implementation.

Committee Reports

There were none.

Board of Supervisors: January 7, 2026

Mr. Barnes said that January 7 was the Board's organizational meeting. He said that they elected Mr. Gallaway as Chair and Fred Missel as Vice Chair.

Old Business/New Business

Mr. Murray asked when the Riparian Buffer Ordinance was expected to be presented.

Mr. Barnes said that the Commission should have received an email today about that item. He said that they would be talking about that at the next work session as well as the second part of the Form-Based Code. He said that the Ordinance and staff report had been emailed to all of them today.

Items for follow-up

There were none.

Adjournment

At 9:18 p.m., the Commission adjourned to January 27, 2026, Albemarle County Planning Commission meeting, 6:00 p.m.

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Michael Barnes, Director of Planning

(Recorded by Carolyn S. Shaffer, Clerk to Planning Commission & Planning Boards; transcribed by Golden Transcription Services)

Approved by Planning Commission
Date:
Initials: