County of Albemarle Planning Staff Report

Project Name: ZMA202600004 Rivanna Futures	**Staff:** William D. Fritz, AICP
Planning Commission Hearing: July 28, 2026	**Board of Supervisors Public Hearing:** September 16, 2026
Owners: County of Albemarle	**Applicant**: County of Albemarle
Acreage: Total parcel acreage is approximately 116 acres. Approximately, 0.46 acres are proposed for rezoning.	**Rezone from:** Request to change the designation of approximately 0.46 acres from Preserved Steep Slopes Overlay District to Managed Steep Slopes Overlay District
TMP: 033000000001D0	**Location:** Route 29 North at Boulders Road
School Districts: Baker-Butler (Elementary); Lakeside (Middle School); Albemarle (High School)	**By-right use:** Light Industry
Magisterial District: Rivanna	**Proffers**: No
Proposal: Rezone approximately 0.46 acres from Preserved Steep Slopes Overlay District to Managed Steep Slopes Overlay District.	**Requested Dwelling Units:** No dwellings are proposed.
DA (Development Area): Piney Mountain, Places 29	**Comp. Plan Designation:** Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial – commercial, professional office; research and development, design, testing of prototypes; manufacturing, assembly, packaging; residential is a secondary use (no maximum density).
Affordable Housing Provided: No residential development is proposed.	**Affordable Housing AMI (%):** No residential development is proposed.
Character of Property: The property is a mixture of open and forested land. The slopes proposed for rezoning are in a forested area.	**Use of Surrounding Properties:** Surrounding uses include the Rivanna Station federal complex to the south. Residential development, Briarwood, is located on the west side of Route 29. Properties to the north and east are rural with a mixture of open and wooded land with scattered residential development.

Positive Aspects:	**Concerns:**
1. The recommendations of the comprehensive plan for this area; 2. The suitability of the land for industrial use; 3. The recommendations of the Albemarle County Economic Strategic Plan; 4. The identified need in the comprehensive plan and the Albemarle County Economic Strategic Plan for industrial land; 5. The slopes display some characteristics of managed slopes.	1. The slopes display more preserved slope characteristics than managed slope characteristics.

Recommendation:
Staff recommends approval of ZMA202600004 Rivanna Futures.

STAFF PERSON: Bill Fritz, AICP
PLANNING COMMISION: July 28, 2026
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: September 16, 2026

PETITIONS:

PROJECT: ZMA202600004 Rivanna Futures
MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: Rivanna
TAX MAP/PARCEL(S): 033000000001D0
LOCATION: Route 29 North and Boulders Road
PROPOSAL: Rezone approximately 0.46 acres from Preserved Steep Slopes to Managed Steep Slopes.
PETITION: Request to rezone approximately 0.46 acres from Preserved Steep Slopes Overlay District to Managed Steep Slopes Overlay District.
ZONING: LI, Light Industry and RA, Rural Areas
OVERLAY DISTRICT(S): AIA – Airport Impact Area; EC – Entrance Corridor Overlay District; FH – Flood Hazard Overlay District; Steep Slopes Overlay District – Managed and Preserved
PROFFERS: No
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial – commercial, professional office; research and development, design, testing of prototypes; manufacturing, assembly, packaging; residential is a secondary use (no maximum density).

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The property is a mixture of open and forested land. The slopes proposed for rezoning are in a forested area. The properties to the north and east are RA, Rural Areas and include scattered residencies and both wooded and open areas. The property to the south is the federal Rivanna Station installation. The property to the west of Route 29 is the Briarwood residential development.

BACKGROUND/PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY

Approvals and actions taken by the County are listed below. Staff has not listed the various subdivisions resulting in existing lot lines and easements.

ZMA 1977-19 Rivanna Estates LTD – Approved a rezoning to RPN, Residential Planned Neighborhood for 350 residential units on 10/19/1977. During the 1980 comprehensive rezoning this designation was changed to PRD, Planned Residential Development.

ZMA 2007-03 NGIC Expansion – Approved a rezoning of 15 acres from RA, Rural Areas to CO, Commercial Office on 8/1/2007. This proposal also included SP 2007-31, a special use permit for a 120 unit apartment and SP 2007-32, a special use permit for 178,800 square feet of office space for research and development.

ZMA 2008-04 NGIC Expansion – Amendment of ZMA 2007-03 to allow an additional 22,100 square feet of basement storage area in Building #1 and an additional 44,200 square feet of basement storage area in Building #2 in two 4-story buildings of 89,400 square feet each. This proposal also included two concurrent special use permits SP 2008-45, an amendment to SP 2007-031, to allow relocation of the 120 unit apartment building and SP 2008-46, an amendment to SP 2007-032, to allow additional basement storage space in the proposed office buildings. These amendments were approved on 11/12/2008

ACSA 2009-02 – On 2/10/2010 the Board of Supervisors amended the Albemarle County Service Authority Jurisdictional Area to include Tax Map 32, Parcels 5C, 5C1, 5C2; Tax Map 33, Parcels 1A, 1D, 1D1, 1G, and that separate western portion of Parcel 14 located within the Development Area for "Water and Sewer" service,

and Tax Map 33, Parcel 1 for Water and Sewer service only for the portion of the property zoned PRD as of 12/2/09.

SDP 2009-33 University Village Retirement Community Final Site Plan – Administrative approval of 15 attached condominium units on 12/14/2010.

Public Hearing concerning the development of business and industry on the Rivanna Station Futures property and to reaffirm use of the property for such purposes. On June 21, 2023, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution that the property may be used for public uses and/or the development of business and industry.

ZMA202400002 and SP202400014 Rivanna Futures – On June 12, 2024 the Board of Supervisors approved the rezoning of approximately 172 acres from RA, Rural Areas and PRD, Planned Residential Development to LI, Light Industrial and approved a special use permit to allow office use in accord with Chapter 18, Section 26.2(a) Independent offices; within structures not established or not vested until after April 3, 2014.

SE-2025-00033 and SE-2025-00034 – On November 5, 2025 the Board of Supervisors approved two special exceptions. SE-2025-00033 allowed the building height to be increased from 65 feet to 140 feet and SE-2025-00034 decreased the stepback from 15 feet to zero feet.

SDP2025-00068 Land Bay 30 (July 1, 2025), SDP-2026-0003 Land Bay 55 (May 8, 2026) and SDP-2025-00127 Land Bay 82 (January 23. 2026) – These are initial site plans that have been approved showing tree clearing.

SPECIFICS OF THE PROPOSAL

The applicant has submitted a narrative detailing the request. (Attachment A). The request is to rezone approximately 0.5 acres of preserved steep slopes to managed steep slopes. Rezoning to managed steep slopes will allow the slopes to be disturbed for development. Appendix A of the attached narrative shows the slopes proposed to be rezoned in detail.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial – commercial, professional office; research and development, design, testing of prototypes; manufacturing, assembly, packaging; residential is a secondary use (no maximum density).

REVIEW

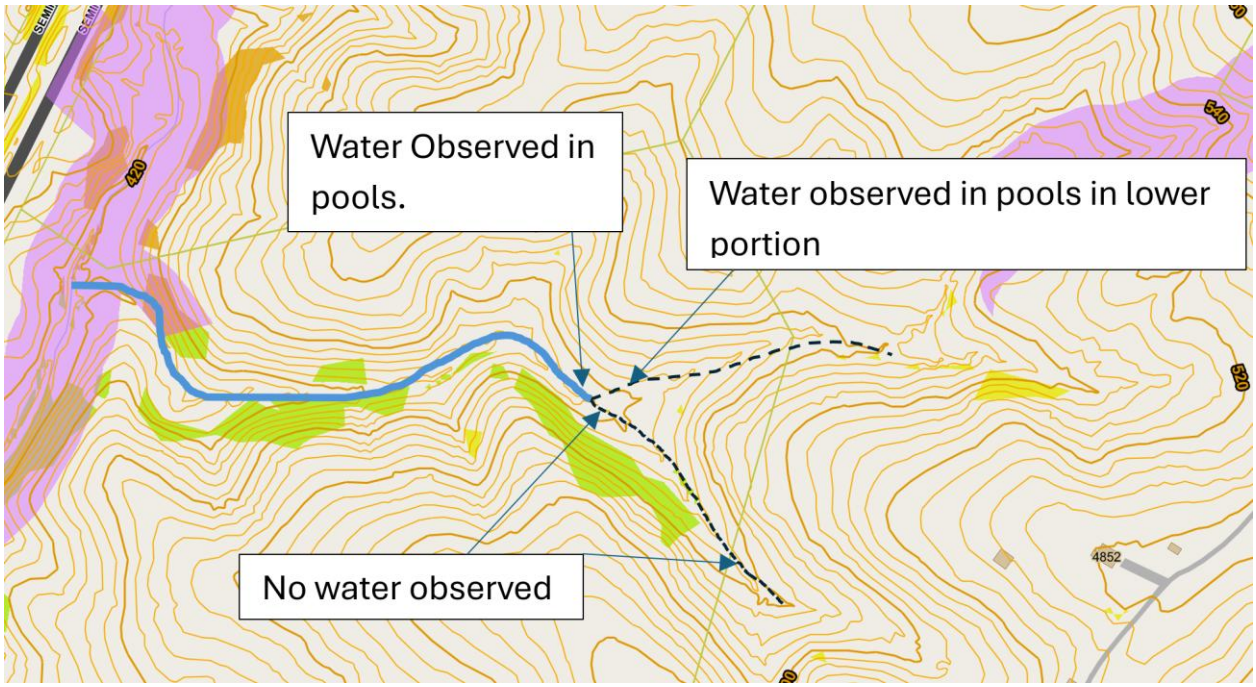
The State Code and Albemarle County Code (Chapter 18, Section 33.6) include factors to be considered when reviewing and acting upon zoning map amendments. Below are the factors included in the ordinance and staff comment for each factor.

Factors to be considered when acting. The Commission and the Board of Supervisors will reasonably consider the following factors when reviewing and acting upon zoning text amendments and zoning map amendments:

(i) the existing use and character of property;

The area of slopes proposed to be changed from Preserved to Managed is approximately 0.46 acres. The steep slope area is wooded. The County's GIS mapping does not show a perennial stream in the valley associated with these slopes. During a field visit, a dry eroded stream channel was observed adjacent to most of the slopes. At the point where two drainage swales converged water in pools was observed in the stream channel. Flowing water was not observed. The stream channel is significantly eroded. The map

below indicates the areas where water was observed. The map also shows, in purple, the stream buffers from the County's GIS.



(ii) the comprehensive plan;

Comprehensive Plan, adopted October 15, 2025, designates this area as Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial. The description of this land use designation is:

> "Vibrant employment centers and mixed-use areas with employment-generating uses and basic industries that are supported by secondary commercial/retail and residential uses". The primary land uses of this designation are "Non-residential uses such as offices, research & development facilities, flex spaces/uses, and light industrial uses".

This land has been purchased by the County to facilitate the use of this land for the purpose identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

The availability of land for development is discussed in the Comprehensive Plan.

> "Data from both the 2022 and 2025 Land Use Buildout Analyses estimated that the Development Areas contained enough theoretical capacity to accommodate projected growth (both residential and business) for the next 10 to 20 years. However, it is important to understand limitations of this analysis; the figures are estimates, and theoretical capacity measures the maximum development potential of the Development Areas. The analysis also found that development projects often cannot realize their maximum development potential due to a variety of constraining factors. These factors limit the actual buildout of the Development Areas, which undermines the Growth Management Policy as well as other goals, such as goals related to housing and economic development.
>
> However, demand forecasts are projections based on historical trends of development. It is expected that constraining factors, including the availability of land, cost of development, and environmental constraints

will limit the buildout potential of available land. As a result, actual buildout is expected to be less than the maximum buildout estimate."

The Comprehensive Plan includes Development Areas Priorities. Some of these include:

• Effective use of limited Development Areas land, including through infill, higher density development, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment.

• Providing spaces for current and future employers and businesses, especially in Activity Centers and Employment Centers.

• Balancing density with the protection and restoration of the natural environment."

Approval of this rezoning increases the potential density of industrial development of the property allowing the development potential recommended by the comprehensive plan to be achieved. If this rezoning is approved disturbance of the slopes will be subject to the design standards of the zoning ordinance and any development will be subject to site plan review. The wooded area of the slopes will be included in the calculations of required tree canopy that will have to be established post-development.

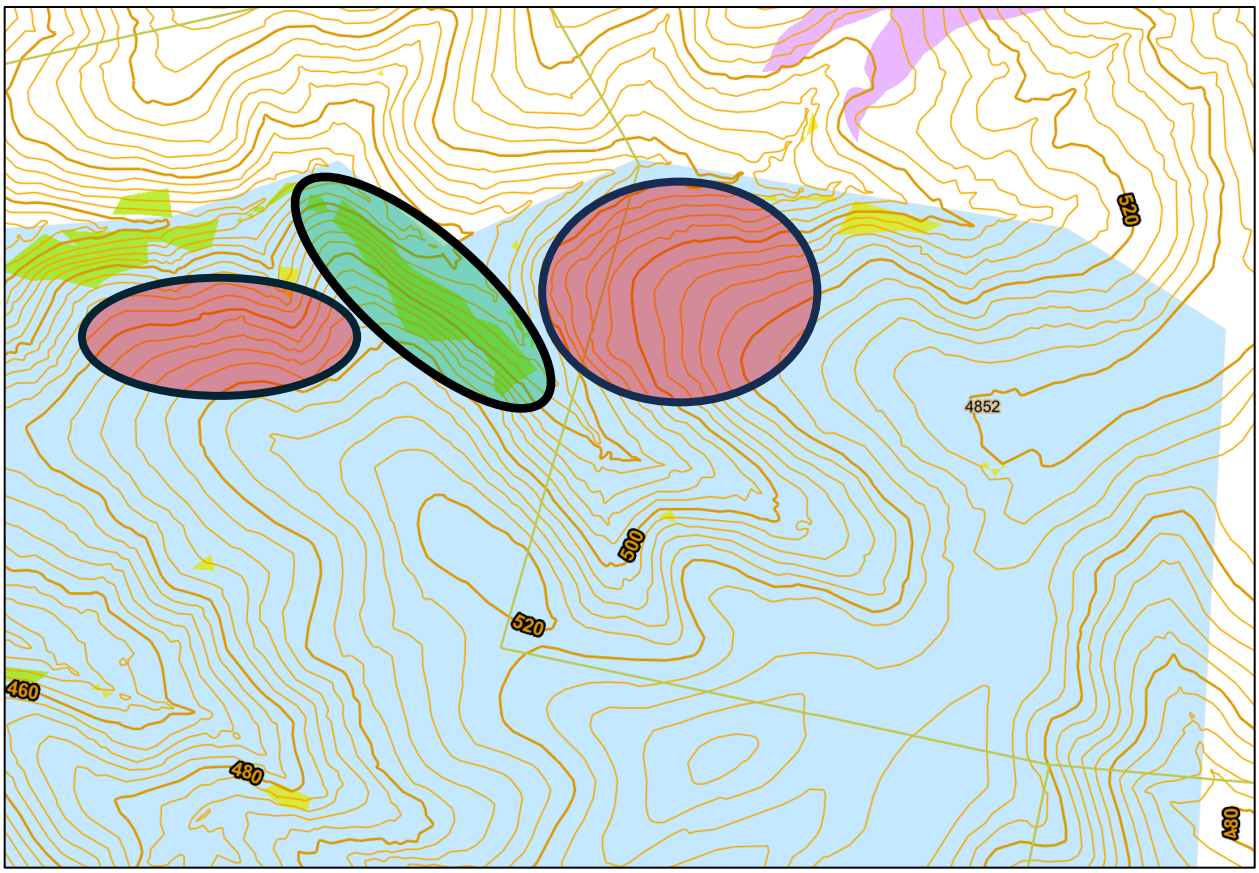
(iii) the suitability of property for various uses;

The property is zoned for industrial use. The topographic need of industrial development is different from residential and commercial development. Residential and commercial development typically have a smaller footprint per unit than industrial development and can be broken up into smaller buildings, parking spaces and loading areas. Large scale industrial users require large flat land areas so that buildings of a single floor level can be constructed. In addition, industrial users need to construct travelways and loading areas for truck traffic. Large turning radiuses are required and grades in these areas need to be minimized for efficient and safe operation. The terrain of industrially zoned land may need to be significantly altered to allow these improvements.

The designation of the slopes as preserved effectively restricts their disturbance for any development. Due to the location of the preserved slopes, areas to the east and west, which are not designated as Steep Slopes, have limited suitability for development due to the fragmentation of developable area. These areas are highlighted in red below. The designation of slopes as preserved impacts the ability to use the property for industrial use far beyond the area of the slopes.

Approval of this request would allow development consistent with the comprehensive plan land use designation and the light industry zoning designation of the property.

The exhibit below shows the location of the slopes under consideration in red. The areas in green are those that have limited suitability for development are shown in green.



(iv) the trends of growth or change;

This area is within the development areas and has been designated for development. Approval of this request is consistent with the trends of growth in the area.

(v) the current and future requirements of the community as to land for various purposes as determined by population and economic studies and other studies;

As previously noted, the Comprehensive Plan discusses the availability of land in the development areas for a variety of uses and notes that environmental constraints will limit the buildout potential of available land. This report has noted that the location of the preserved slopes impacts the potential development of the property beyond the limits of the preserved slopes.

The Albemarle County Economic Strategic Plan includes the following statements:

> "The County's investment in Rivanna Futures creates a generational opportunity to turn this quiet strength into a signature identity. Strategies focus on land readiness, talent pipelines, branding, and coordinated sector engagement.
> Develop and implement a Rivanna Futures Innovation Hub plan to align land use, infrastructure, and development priorities with targeted business attraction and expansion efforts to bring the potential of Rivanna Futures as a major employment hub to fruition.
>
> Proximity to the University of Virginia and assets like North Fork Discovery Park give Albemarle a clear research and talent edge. Yet fast-growing firms face a recurring challenge; there isn't enough space to

scale. Stakeholders pointed to a shortage of lab-ready facilities, limited wet lab capacity, and a lack of growth-stage capital as key risks.

Per the Comprehensive Plan, 5% of land in Albemarle County is designated for development and much of that land is either built out, constrained by sensitive features, or have challenging-to-serve infrastructure gaps. Stakeholders cited water and sewer infrastructure, outdated zoning codes, and protracted permitting timelines as top barriers to growth—particularly for key clusters like biotech, clean tech, and food processing, which require specialized facilities and utility-ready sites.

These comments indicate the importance of this property to the achieving the County's vision of the future. Approval of this rezoning allows use of more of the property which is supportive of the Albemarle County Economic Strategic Plan.

(vi) the transportation requirements of the community;

This rezoning does not impact transportation.

(vii) the requirements for airports, housing, schools, parks, playgrounds, recreation areas and other public services;

This rezoning does not impact on these services.

(viii) the conservation of natural resources;

When the Board of Supervisors adopted the Steep Slopes Overlay District the stated purpose and intent of the ordinance included:

"The board of supervisors finds that whenever steep slopes within the overlay district are disturbed, their disturbance should be subject to appropriate consideration and care in their design and construction in order to protect the integrity of the steep slope areas, protect downstream lands and waterways from the adverse effects of the unregulated disturbance of steep slopes, including the rapid or large-scale movement of soil and rock, or both, excessive stormwater runoff, the degradation of surface water, and to enhance and preserve the character and beauty of the steep slopes in the development areas of the county.

The board also finds that certain steep slopes, because of their characteristics, should be preserved to the maximum extent practical, and that other steep slopes, whose preservation is not required, should be managed. Preserved slopes are those slopes that have characteristics that warrant their preservation by the prohibition of disturbance except in the limited conditions provided in this overlay district. Managed slopes are those slopes where development may occur, provided that design standards are satisfied to mitigate the impacts caused by the disturbance of the slopes."

The characteristics of managed and preserved slopes are found in Chapter 18, Section 30.7.3 of the Code of Albemarle. Each characteristic is addressed below: (The language of the ordinance is shown in bold. Staff comments are in plain text.)

The characteristics of the steep slopes within the overlay district are as follows:

a. *Managed slopes*. The characteristics of managed slopes are the following:

(i) the contiguous area of steep slopes is limited or fragmented;

The area is approximately 0.46 and is not fragmented. These slopes do not have the characteristics of a managed slope.

(ii) the slopes are not associated with or abutting a water feature, including, but not limited to, a river, stream, reservoir or pond;

The slopes are not adjacent to a perennial stream or other water features. The stream below the slopes is intermittent. These slopes do have some of the characteristics of a managed slope.

(iii) the slopes are not natural but, instead, are manufactured;

The slopes appear to be natural and have large trees on them. The applicant has submitted information indicating that these slopes have been previously disturbed and potentially altered. This information is based on aerial photographs from the 1930s. While the slopes may have been disturbed and potentially altered, they appear to be stable and have naturalized.

(iv) the slopes were significantly disturbed prior to June 1, 2012;

As previously stated, these slopes may appear to have been disturbed based on photography from the 1930s. The extent they were disturbed or altered cannot be verified. No disturbance to these slopes has been approved by the County for any building, grading or other development activity.

(v) the slopes are located within previously approved single-family residential lots; or

The slopes are not associated with single-family development. These slopes do not have the characteristics of a managed slope.

(vi) the slopes are shown to be disturbed, or allowed to be disturbed, by a prior county action.

The slopes are not shown to be disturbed by any prior County actions. These slopes do not have the characteristics of a managed slope**.**

b. ***Preserved slopes*. The characteristics of preserved slopes are the following:**

(i) the slopes are a contiguous area of 10,000 square feet or more or a close grouping of slopes, any or all of which may be less than 10,000 square feet but whose aggregate area is 10,000 square feet or more;

The area is approximately 20,000 square feet. These slopes have the characteristics of a preserved slope.

(ii) the slopes are part of a system of slopes associated with or abutting a water feature including, but not limited to, a river, stream, reservoir or pond;

The slopes are not adjacent to a perennial stream or other water features. The stream below the slopes is intermittent. These slopes do have some of the characteristics of a preserved slope.

(iii) the slopes are part of a hillside system;

The slopes are part of a valley system associated with an intermittent stream. These slopes do have some of the characteristics of a preserved slope.

(iv) the slopes are identified as a resource designated for preservation in the comprehensive plan;

The slopes are not identified as a resource in the comprehensive plan. These slopes do not have the characteristics of a preserved slope.

(v) the slopes are identified as a resource in the comprehensive plan;

The slopes are not identified in the comprehensive plan. These slopes do not have the characteristics of a preserved slope.

(vi) the slopes are of significant value to the entrance corridor overlay district; or

These slopes are not visible from the entrance corridor overlay district. These slopes do not have the characteristics of a preserved slope.

(vii) the slopes have been preserved by a prior county action, including, but not limited to, the placement of an easement on the slopes or the acceptance of a proffer or the imposition of a condition, restricting land disturbing activity on the slopes.

These slopes have not been considered in any prior county action. These slopes do not have the characteristics of a preserved slope.

The slopes under review display characteristics of both managed and preserved slopes. Having characteristics of both managed and preserved slopes is not uncommon. Generally, these slopes appear to have more characteristics of preserved slopes than of managed slopes.

It must be noted that the zoning ordinance includes standards designed to prevent and mitigate impacts from development, including development on slopes.

(ix) the preservation of flood plains;

No floodplain is impacted by this proposal.

(x) the protection of life and property from impounding structure failures;

No impounding structures currently exist on the property. The design of any new structures will require review by the County to ensure adequate design. Any new impounding structure will be subject to maintenance requirements.

(xi) the preservation of agricultural and forestal land;

The area is not designated as agricultural or forestal land.

(xii) the conservation of properties and their values;

Changing the designation of these slopes from Preserved to Managed will not impact on other properties or their value.

(xiii) the encouragement of the most appropriate use of land throughout the county; and

This area is recommended for intensive development in the Comprehensive Plan and is an important part of the County's economic development strategy. The County's investment in the land demonstrates a clear indication that use of the property for large scale activity is appropriate.

(xiv) equity.

Approval of this rezoning will not impact other properties or individuals.

Summary

The steep slopes overlay district in the zoning ordinance establishes criteria for determining which slopes should be designated as managed or preserved. The slopes under review display characteristics of both types of slopes. On balance, staff opinion is that the slopes display more preserved slope characteristics. However, the factors to be considered when drawing zoning district boundaries goes beyond just the characteristics of the steep slopes. Chapter 18, Section 33.6 of the Code of Albemarle requires the Board to consider multiple factors. Staff has analyzed all of the factors contained in the ordinance. Based on this analysis staff is able to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve this rezoning application. This recommendation is based on the following favorable factors:

1. The recommendations of the comprehensive plan for this area;
2. The suitability of the land for industrial use;
3. The recommendations of the Albemarle County Economic Strategic Plan;
4. The identified need in the comprehensive plan and the Albemarle County Economic Strategic Plan for industrial land;
5. The slopes display some characteristics of managed slopes.

The following factor is not favorable to this application:

1. The slopes display more preserved slope characteristics than managed slope characteristics.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of ZMA202600004.

PLANNING COMMISSION POTENTIAL MOTIONS ZMA202600004 Rivanna Futures

Should a Planning Commissioner **choose to recommend approval** of zoning map amendment **ZMA202600004 Rivanna Futures**:

Move to recommend approval of* ZMA202600004 *for the reasons stated in the staff report.

Should a Planning Commissioner **choose to recommend denial** of this zoning map amendment:

Move to recommend denial of* ZMA202600004*, (outline. reasons for denial).

Attachments

Attachment 1 – ZMA-2026-00004 Rivanna Futures – Applicant's Narrative