

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2021-59: Albemarle Business Center – Office Building – Preliminary
Review Type	Preliminary review of a Site Development Plan and an architectural design
Parcel Identification	07600-00-00-05400
Location	At the west corner of the intersection of Wahoo Way and 5 th Street
Zoned	Neighborhood Model District (NMD) / Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	5 th Street Forest LLC / BRW Architects PC (Bruce Wardell)
Magisterial District	Scottsville
Proposal	To construct a 4-story office building with a footprint of approximately 17,000 sf and associated site improvements.
Context	The surrounding area includes the County Office Building at 5 th Street, apartment communities, and the Region Ten Community Services Board office building, as well as single family detached residences.
Visibility	With frontage on 5 th Street Extended, the office building will be readily visible from the Entrance Corridor street.
ARB Meeting Date	July 6, 2021
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

The ARB recommended approval of the Initial Site Plan for the overall Albemarle Business Campus development on December 7, 2020. On February 1, 2021, the ARB approved the storage building in Block 5 of this development. Conditions of approval for Block 5 were satisfied on June 17, 2021. Grading and clearing of the overall site are under way.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	<i>Purpose, Compatibility with significant historic sites, Compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor, Structure design</i>		
1	The goal of the regulation of the design of development within the designated Entrance Corridors is to insure that new development within the corridors reflects the traditional architecture of the area. Therefore, it is the purpose of ARB review and of these Guidelines, that proposed development within the designated Entrance Corridors reflect elements of design characteristic of the significant historical landmarks, buildings, and structures of the Charlottesville and Albemarle area, and to promote orderly and attractive development within these corridors. Applicants should note that replication of historic structures is neither required nor desired.	The proposed building design is contemporary in style. It is not a strong reflection of the traditional architecture of the area. It features glass corners; the primary one at the southeast has a roof that angles up and out over the corner. The emphasis on glass is not a feature of local historic architecture, but the central portions of the proposed building are rendered in white brick above a darker brick lower story. Brick is representative of local traditional building materials. The elevations do not identify other materials.	Consider changes to the building design to establish a greater connection to the historic architecture of the area. Provide additional information to clarify the use of fiber cement panels in the window openings.
2	Visitors to the significant historical sites in the Charlottesville and Albemarle area experience these sites as ensembles of buildings, land, and vegetation. In order to accomplish the integration of buildings, land, and vegetation characteristic of these sites, the Guidelines require attention to four primary factors: compatibility with significant historic sites in the area; the character of the Entrance Corridor; site development and layout; and landscaping.	The proposed building height is 4 stories. That height is not typical of local historic architecture, but it is compatible with the nearby apartment buildings and the building height is modulated by the lowest story being set mostly below street level. The mass and scale of the building are tempered by the juxtaposition of the glass and brick forms.	Provide material samples, including glass samples and specs, for review. Revise the elevation drawings to include more complete materials identification.
3	New structures and substantial additions to existing structures should respect the traditions of the architecture of historically significant buildings in the Charlottesville and Albemarle area. Photographs of historic buildings in the area, as well as drawings of architectural features, which provide important examples of this tradition are contained in Appendix A.	Window openings in the brick are partially filled with fiber cement panels. This is not a traditional window treatment. Depending on the size and color, these panels could help visually connect the brick walls to the glass walls, which appear to include black spandrel glass. Additional information is needed to clarify the treatment of the	
4	The examples contained in Appendix A should be used as a guide for building design: the standard of compatibility with the area's historic structures is not intended to impose a rigid design solution for new development. Replication of the design of the important historic sites in the area is neither intended nor desired. The Guideline's standard of compatibility can be met through building scale, materials, and forms which may be embodied in		

	architecture which is contemporary as well as traditional. The Guidelines allow individuality in design to accommodate varying tastes as well as special functional requirements.	windows in the brick walls.	
5	It is also an important objective of the Guidelines to establish a pattern of compatible architectural characteristics throughout the Entrance Corridor in order to achieve unity and coherence. Building designs should demonstrate sensitivity to other nearby structures within the Entrance Corridor. Where a designated corridor is substantially developed, these Guidelines require striking a careful balance between harmonizing new development with the existing character of the corridor and achieving compatibility with the significant historic sites in the area.	Entrances are located on the east and west sides of the building. They are marked by canopies supported by steel tubing, the eastern one of which angles upward from the building.	
9	Building forms and features, including roofs, windows, doors, materials, colors and textures should be compatible with the forms and features of the significant historic buildings in the area, exemplified by (but not limited to) the buildings described in Appendix A [of the design guidelines]. The standard of compatibility can be met through scale, materials, and forms which may be embodied in architecture which is contemporary as well as traditional. The replication of important historic sites in Albemarle County is not the objective of these guidelines.		
10	Buildings should relate to their site and the surrounding context of buildings.		
11	The overall design of buildings should have human scale. Scale should be integral to the building and site design.	The lowest story of the building is held mostly below street level, but the top of the wall is visible from the street, where it acts like a water table and helps provide human scale.	None.
12	Architecture proposed within the Entrance Corridor should use forms, shapes, scale, and materials to create a cohesive whole.	The repetition of glass elements at the building's corners, the continuous dark brick base, and (possibly) the use of dark siding panels in the window openings of the brick walls help create a cohesive whole.	None.
13	Any appearance of "blankness" resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.	Blankness is not a characteristic of the proposed design.	None.
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.	The current proposal is for a single building. Physical connecting devices are not proposed between buildings in the	None.

		development.	
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.	The building does not have the appearance of a trademark design.	None.
16	Window glass in the Entrance Corridors should not be highly tinted or highly reflective. Window glass in the Entrance Corridors should meet the following criteria: <i>Visible light transmittance (VLT) shall not drop below 40%. Visible light reflectance (VLR) shall not exceed 30%. Specifications on the proposed window glass should be submitted with the application for final review.</i>	Glass samples have not been provided, but a note in the plan states, "Clear glass storefront system will meet entrance corridor guidelines."	Provide glass samples and specs for review.
	Accessory structures and equipment		
17	Accessory structures and equipment should be integrated into the overall plan of development and shall, to the extent possible, be compatible with the building designs used on the site.	The plan shows an unlabeled symbol on the EC side of the building that could be equipment. This is not an appropriate location for equipment.	Revise the site plan to label the symbol shown on the EC side of the building.
18	The following should be located to eliminate visibility from the Entrance Corridor street. If, after appropriate siting, these features will still have a negative visual impact on the Entrance Corridor street, screening should be provided to eliminate visibility. a. Loading areas, b. Service areas, c. Refuse areas, d. Storage areas, e. Mechanical equipment, f. Above-ground utilities, and g. Chain link fence, barbed wire, razor wire, and similar security fencing devices.	The elevations show a rooftop structure, but no details are provided.	Show the locations of ground- and building-mounted equipment and show how visibility from the Entrance Corridor will be eliminated.
19	Screening devices should be compatible with the design of the buildings and surrounding natural vegetation and may consist of: a. Walls, b. Plantings, and c. Fencing.		Revise the drawings to clarify the rooftop structure.
20	Surface runoff structures and detention ponds should be designed to fit into the natural topography to avoid the need for screening. When visible from the Entrance Corridor street, these features must be fully integrated into the landscape. They should not have the appearance of engineered features.	No above-ground stormwater facilities are proposed.	None.
21	The following note should be added to the site plan and the architectural plan: "Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated."	The note appears on the cover sheet of the site plan, but it is not included on the architectural plans.	Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the architectural plans.
22-31	Lighting	The site plan includes no lighting.	None at this time.
	Landscaping		
7	The requirements of the Guidelines regarding landscaping are intended to reflect the landscaping characteristic of many of the	Pin Oaks are proposed, 3½" caliper at planting, 35' on center, along the EC street,	None.

	area's significant historic sites which is characterized by large shade trees and lawns. Landscaping should promote visual order within the Entrance Corridor and help to integrate buildings into the existing environment of the corridor.	in the right-of-way. Weeping cherry trees are also proposed, interspersed at irregular intervals. The planting strip is 8' wide.	
8	Continuity within the Entrance Corridor should be obtained by planting different types of plant materials that share similar characteristics. Such common elements allow for more flexibility in the design of structures because common landscape features will help to harmonize the appearance of development as seen from the street upon which the Corridor is centered.		
32	Landscaping along the frontage of Entrance Corridor streets should include the following: a. Large shade trees should be planted parallel to the Entrance Corridor Street. Such trees should be at least 3½ inches caliper (measured 6 inches above the ground) and should be of a plant species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 35 feet on center. b. Flowering ornamental trees of a species common to the area should be interspersed among the trees required by the preceding paragraph. The ornamental trees need not alternate one for one with the large shade trees. They may be planted among the large shade trees in a less regular spacing pattern. c. In situations where appropriate, a three or four board fence or low stone wall, typical of the area, should align the frontage of the Entrance Corridor street. d. An area of sufficient width to accommodate the foregoing plantings and fencing should be reserved parallel to the Entrance Corridor street, and exclusive of road right-of-way and utility easements.		
33	Landscaping along interior roads: a. Large trees should be planted parallel to all interior roads. Such trees should be at least 2½ inches caliper (measured six inches above the ground) and should be of a plant species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 40 feet on center.	Trees along interior roads in this development are addressed in other site plans.	None.
34	Landscaping along interior pedestrian ways: a. Medium trees should be planted parallel to all interior pedestrian ways. Such trees should be at least 2½ inches caliper	Interior road and parking lot perimeter trees double as pedestrian way trees in many places. Trees are provided along both sides	None.

	(measured six inches above the ground) and should be of a species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 25 feet on center.	of the path located in the park west of the building.	
35	Landscaping of parking areas: a. Large trees should align the perimeter of parking areas, located 40 feet on center. Trees should be planted in the interior of parking areas at the rate of one tree for every 10 parking spaces provided and should be evenly distributed throughout the interior of the parking area. b. Trees required by the preceding paragraph should measure 2½ inches caliper (measured six inches above the ground); should be evenly spaced; and should be of a species common to the area. Such trees should be planted in planters or medians sufficiently large to maintain the health of the tree and shall be protected by curbing. c. Shrubs should be provided as necessary to minimize the parking area's impact on Entrance Corridor streets. Shrubs should measure 24 inches in height.	London Planetrees are proposed along the south and east sides of the parking lot, averaging 40' on center, 2½" caliper at planting. 111 parking spaces are proposed, requiring 11 interior trees. 9 interior trees are proposed. No shrubs are provided around the parking lot. Shrubs on the east side and the eastern end of the south side of the parking lot would soften the view from the EC street.	Add two interior parking lot trees, 2½" caliper at planting. Add a row of shrubs along the east side, and along the eastern end of the south side, of the parking lot, 24" high minimum at planting.
36	Landscaping of buildings and other structures: a. Trees or other vegetation should be planted along the front of long buildings as necessary to soften the appearance of exterior walls. The spacing, size, and type of such trees or vegetation should be determined by the length, height, and blankness of such walls. b. Shrubs should be used to integrate the site, buildings, and other structures; dumpsters, accessory buildings and structures; "drive thru" windows; service areas; and signs. Shrubs should measure at least 24 inches in height.	European Hornbeams, Regent Scholartrees and London Planetrees are proposed in the park area on the west side of the building. They will help soften the appearance of the west elevation. EC frontage trees will help to soften the appearance of the south side of the building, but there is no landscaping proposed directly adjacent to the building. A group of cryptomeria is proposed at the southeast corner of the site. There appears to be an opportunity to include the retaining walls, screening trees and parking lot trees in a more coordinated landscape along the frontage. There are no shrubs proposed on site. Shrubs could help integrate the retaining walls into the landscape and could soften the appearance of the parking lot.	Add shrubs to help integrate the retaining walls into the landscape. Add shrubs along the east and south sides of the parking lot. Revise the plan to provide more coordination among the retaining walls, screening trees, parking lot trees, and additional landscaping along the south side of the site.
37	Plant species: a. Plant species required should be as approved by	The species are found on the various lists.	None.

	the Staff based upon but not limited to the <i>Generic Landscape Plan Recommended Species List</i> and <i>Native Plants for Virginia Landscapes (Appendix D)</i> .		
38	Plant health: The following note should be added to the landscape plan: “All site plantings of trees and shrubs shall be allowed to reach, and be maintained at, mature height; the topping of trees is prohibited. Shrubs and trees shall be pruned minimally and only to support the overall health of the plant.”	The note appears on the landscape plan.	None.
	Site Development and layout		
	Development pattern		
6	Site development should be sensitive to the existing natural landscape and should contribute to the creation of an organized development plan. This may be accomplished, to the extent practical, by preserving the trees and rolling terrain typical of the area; planting new trees along streets and pedestrian ways and choosing species that reflect native forest elements; insuring that any grading will blend into the surrounding topography thereby creating a continuous landscape; preserving, to the extent practical, existing significant river and stream valleys which may be located on the site and integrating these features into the design of surrounding development; and limiting the building mass and height to a scale that does not overpower the natural settings of the site, or the Entrance Corridor.	A 10’ wide path is shown along the EC street. Steps are proposed leading down from street level to a park on the west side of the building. A path is proposed through the park, connecting to sidewalks interior to the site. A sidewalk is also provided east of the parking lot along Wahoo Way. The proposed building is oriented parallel to the street. A greenway is proposed along the corridor frontage. Trees and rolling terrain will not be preserved. Street trees are proposed, as is interior landscaping. Existing views are not expected to be impacted.	None.
39	The relationship of buildings and other structures to the Entrance Corridor street and to other development within the corridor should be as follows: - An organized pattern of roads, service lanes, bike paths, and pedestrian walks should guide the layout of the site. - In general, buildings fronting the Entrance Corridor street should be parallel to the street. Building groupings should be arranged to parallel the Entrance Corridor street. - Provisions should be made for connections to adjacent pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems. - Open spaces should be tied into surrounding areas to provide continuity within the Entrance Corridor. - If significant natural features exist on the site (including creek valleys, steep slopes, significant trees or rock outcroppings), to the extent practical, then such natural features should be reflected		

	in the site layout. If the provisions of Section 32.5.2.n of the <i>Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance</i> apply, then improvements required by that section should be located so as to maximize the use of existing features in screening such improvements from Entrance Corridor streets. f. The placement of structures on the site should respect existing views and vistas on and around the site.		
	Site Grading		
40	Site grading should maintain the basic relationship of the site to surrounding conditions by limiting the use of retaining walls and by shaping the terrain through the use of smooth, rounded land forms that blend with the existing terrain. Steep cut or fill sections are generally unacceptable. Proposed contours on the grading plan shall be rounded with a ten foot minimum radius where they meet the adjacent condition. Final grading should achieve a natural, rather than engineered, appearance. Retaining walls 6 feet in height and taller, when necessary, shall be terraced and planted to blend with the landscape.	The ground story of the proposed building is mostly below street level. Retaining walls extend from the building to the east and the west. At the west, the wall is punctuated by steps leading down to the park. At the east, the wall is not coordinated with the parking lot or with landscaping. Retaining wall material is not identified on the site plan, although the renderings suggest that it matches the darker brick of the building base.	Revise the plan to provide more coordination among the retaining walls, screening trees, parking lot trees, and additional landscaping along the south side of the site. Indicate retaining wall material on the site plan. Provide coordination with the material of the building's base.
41	No grading, trenching, or tunneling should occur within the drip line of any trees or other existing features designated for preservation in the final Certificate of Appropriateness. Adequate tree protection fencing should be shown on, and coordinated throughout, the grading, landscaping and erosion and sediment control plans.	No trees are proposed to be retained.	None.
42	Areas designated for preservation in the final Certificate of Appropriateness should be clearly delineated and protected on the site prior to any grading activity on the site. This protection should remain in place until completion of the development of the site.		
43	Preservation areas should be protected from storage or movement of heavy equipment within this area.		
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.	The utility plans show new stormwater pipes connecting to existing systems to the east.	None.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. The architectural design, the amount of glass used, the fiber cement panels in the window openings
2. The landscape design, frontage planting, shrubs
3. The retaining wall on the south side of the site

Staff offers the following comments on the preliminary plan:

1. Consider changes to the building design to establish a greater connection to the historic architecture of the area.
2. Provide additional information to clarify the use of fiber cement panels in the window openings.
3. Provide material samples, including glass samples and specs, for review.
4. Revise the elevation drawings to include more complete materials identification.
5. Revise the site plan to label the symbol shown on the EC side of the building.
6. Show the locations of ground- and building-mounted equipment and show how visibility from the Entrance Corridor will be eliminated.
7. Revise the drawings to clarify the rooftop structure.
8. Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the architectural plans: “Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated.”
9. Add two interior parking lot trees, 2½” caliper at planting.
10. Add a row of shrubs along the east side, and along the eastern end of the south side, of the parking lot, 24” high minimum at planting.
11. Add shrubs to help integrate the retaining walls into the landscape.
12. Add shrubs along the east and south sides of the parking lot.
13. Revise the plan to provide more coordination among the retaining walls, screening trees, parking lot trees, and additional landscaping along the south side of the site.
14. Indicate retaining wall material on the site plan. Provide coordination with the material of the building’s base.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: ARB2021-59: [Albemarle Business Center Architectural Drawings](#)

Attach. 2: ARB2021-59: [Albemarle Business Center Site Plan](#)

TABLE A This report is based on the following submittal items:

Sheet #	Drawing Name	Drawing Date/Revision Date
Site Plan		
	SHEET INDEX C1 COVER C2 EXISTING CONDITIONS: OVERVIEW C3 EXISTING CONDITIONS C4 EXISTING CONDITIONS C5 SITE PLAN C6 SITE PLAN C7 SITE PLAN C8 GRADING & UTILITY PLAN C9 GRADING & UTILITY PLAN C10 LANDSCAPE PLAN C11 LANDSCAPE PLAN C12 LANDSCAPE PLAN C13 LANDSCAPE DETAILS	10-5-2020
Architectural Plans		
-	Cover sheet, context map, project narrative and views from street, site plan, elevations – overview, southeast conceptual render, south and east elevations, west conceptual render, west elevation, conceptual renders – office park, representative materials and finishes	May 24, 2021