

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2024-78: ColonialWebb Minor
Review Type	Minor Site Plan Amendment and Preliminary Review of Architecture
Parcel Identification	045B1-05-0C-00400
Location	2275 Seminole Lane
Zoned	Highway Commercial (HC), Airport Impact Area (AIA), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Colonial Webb Contractors Co / Thrive Architecture (Steve Davis)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	To renovate an existing building to accommodate a commercial mechanical contractor (ColonialWebb) and to undertake associated site improvements on approximately 1.15 acres.
Context	The subject property comprises an existing 2-story commercial building, surrounded by paving and set back approximately 130-156 feet from the road. The Rt. 29 right-of-way, Seminole Lane, a small planting strip and the paved parking lot are located between the building and the Rt. 29 Entrance Corridor. This portion of Rt. 29 is largely characterized by commercial development with Walmart to the southwest, car dealerships to the west, Acme Stove and Fireplace Center to the south, and a multi-tenant retail building to the north. Residential properties are directly adjacent to the east (Fig. 1).
Visibility	The proposed development will be readily visible from the Rt. 29 Entrance Corridor.
ARB Meeting Date	February 17, 2025
Staff Contact	Khris Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY

DATE	APPLICATION/REVIEW TYPE	RESULT
6/14/2007	ARB2007-63: Floors Are Us Sign	Wall sign approved
11/20/2017	ARB2017-111: Charlottesville Orthopedic Center Final Site Development Plan	The ARB approved the proposal, pending administrative approval of conditions by staff. This application was withdrawn in 2018 and resubmitted in 2022. Staff approved the proposal in October 2022; however, building permits were not received.

7/1/2019	ARB2019-60: Aqua Express Car Wash Preliminary Site Plan	The ARB provided comments on the site plan and architecture. No subsequent applications were received for this proposal.
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Figure 1: Pictometry Image showing project area along the Rt. 29 Entrance Corridor.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	GENERAL GUIDELINES		
	<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 ensure 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 existing building predates the establishment of the Entrance Corridors and does not have a strong connection to the historic architecture of the area. The proposed renovation would update the appearance of the building, but would not increase the building’s connection to historic architecture. The proposal includes the following changes: • Removing existing signage and awnings • Painting the existing stucco and masonry gray, the roll-up and pedestrian doors a darker gray, and the reveal below the building’s fascia blue • Installing a metal canopy above the building’s main entrance • Creating a new pedestrian entrance on the south side of the building. The proposed gray paint colors provide a coordinated design but the building’s overall appearance is uniform with little detailing to break up the elevations. Revising the design to incorporate a darker color at the base of the elevations would create a visual foundation for the structure, helping to break the uniformity and establish a clear base-middle-top pattern.	Consider revising the design to add canopies above the storefront windows along the north, west, and south elevations. Revise the elevation drawings to include a material/color schedule keyed to the elevations. Provide paint samples for the two shades of gray that are proposed. Revise the design to emphasize the building’s base.
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.		
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.		
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.		

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.		
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.		
13	Any appearance of “blankness” resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.		
10	Buildings should relate to their site and the surrounding context of buildings.	The current building design features proportions that are unbalanced, resulting in an overall uneven appearance. The proposed canopy above the main entrance helps to provide some sense of scale to the building's design. Revising the design to add canopies above the storefront windows along the north, west, and south sides of the building could further improve the building’s scale and proportions. Canopies above the storefront windows would also help provide a connection to historic architecture and to the Riverside Center located to the north.	Consider revising the proposed design to create a better sense of human scale.
11	The overall design of buildings should have human scale. Scale should be integral to the building and site design.		
12	Architecture proposed within the Entrance Corridor should use forms, shapes, scale, and materials to create a cohesive whole.		
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.	A single building exists and no new buildings are proposed, so a connecting device is not necessary.	None.
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.	The proposal does not have the appearance of a trademark design but the proposed grays accentuate ColonialWebb’s corporate color (a shade of blue).	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>	The architectural drawings note that the existing window film will be removed and replaced with a film that meets the EC requirements. The window glass note is present on the architectural drawings.	None.

	<i>Accessory structures and equipment</i>		
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.	A refuse area comprising four dumpsters on a dumpster pad is proposed to be located on the southern side of the existing building. This area is intended to be enclosed with screening fencing on the western side, which is visible from the EC, and chain link fencing along the south (side) and east (rear). Chain link fencing is acceptable in locations that will not be visible from the EC; however, filtered views of the fence line may be possible from the northbound lanes of Rt. 29. The landscape plan currently shows deciduous trees along this fence line. Revising the landscape plan to provide evergreen shrubs in this area would help eliminate any potential visibility from the EC.	Provide a color/finish sample for the proposed screening fence. The fence design and associated landscaping are to be reviewed during a work session at a future ARB meeting.
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 screening fence consists of 6-foot-tall black aluminum horizontal slatted panels with a ¾-inch gap between each slat. The gaps create visual breaks and texture, which is expected to reduce the fence's visual impact on the EC and meet the ARB's design criteria (Attachment 3) for screening fences. Details on the fence's finish have not been provided, but they are needed to ensure it will not be shiny or reflective.	Revise the landscape plan to show a row of evergreen shrubs along the chain link fence on the southern perimeter of the site.
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.	 Figure 2: Example of the proposed fence from the manufacturer's website The fence criteria also call for either one evergreen tree or three shrubs along each 40-foot section of fence. Here, asphalt would have to be removed to create planting beds, the rolling gates make regular distribution of plants along the fence impractical, and a parking space	See additional landscape recommendations below.

		could be lost as a result of the planting. This landscaping may have more impact at the front of the building. Three new ground-mounted HVAC units are shown south of the existing building, within the fenced refuse area. This proposed equipment is not expected to be visible from the EC.	
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 standard mechanical equipment note is present on the architectural drawings but not the site plan.	Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the site plan.
22-31	Lighting	The site plan does not include a lighting plan and the applicant has not indicated if new lighting is proposed.	Provide a lighting plan with the next submittal or add a note to the plan stating that no new ground- or building-mounted lighting is proposed.
	Landscaping		
7	The requirements of the Guidelines regarding landscaping are intended to reflect the landscaping characteristic of many of the 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.	Seminole Lane and the Rt. 29 right-of-way, which includes a wide grass strip, are located between the site and the EC. Consequently, the parcel’s frontage landscaping is set back approximately 58’-88’ from the Rt. 29 pavement. The landscape plan shows three large shade trees and deciduous shrubs along the western perimeter of the site. While the required quantity of large trees has been provided, the spacing exceeds 40’ in a few locations. Revising the landscape plan to include interspersed ornamentals would help fill in the gaps between the large shade trees and better integrate the site into the EC.	Revise the landscape plan to add ornamental trees along the frontage to achieve more consistent spacing and meet the minimum planting requirement.
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.		
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 (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.	There are no existing or proposed pedestrian ways within this site.	None.
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.	The proposed landscaping meets perimeter requirements on the south side of the parking lot, but the required large trees are not provided on the north side. There, one large tree and nine ornamental trees are proposed. The smaller ornamentals may be more compatible with adjacent landscaping, but one or two large trees could be substituted for some of the ornamentals. 22 parking spaces are proposed, requiring 2 interior parking lot trees.	Revise the landscape plan to show large trees, at 40' on center and 2½" caliper at time of planting, in the planting area along the north side of the parking lot. Provide 2 interior parking lot trees at 2½" caliper. Consider providing these along the building's façade, with shrubs.
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.	The existing building doesn't have long elevations, but landscaping at the front of the building could help mitigate its appearance.	

37	Plant species: a. Plant species required should be as approved by 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> .	The proposed plants are on the recommended species lists. However, two species are proposed for the total quantity (28) of shrubs and one species accounts for half of the proposed trees. This lack of diversity may not support a healthy landscape.	Revise the landscape plan to increase plant diversity such that no single species of tree or shrub exceeds 25% of the total proposed for that plant type.
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 is not present on the landscape plan.	Revise the landscape plan to include the standard landscape note.
	<i>Development pattern, Site Development and layout</i>		
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; ensuring 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.	The site is accessed from Seminole Lane, and no changes are proposed for the site access. The travelway and parking area have an organized pattern. The existing building is aligned parallel with the EC, and this proposal will not change that. This site has previously been developed, and this proposal is not expected to negatively impact the views around the site.	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: a. An organized pattern of roads, service lanes, bike paths, and pedestrian walks should guide the layout of the site. b. 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. c. Provisions should be made for connections to adjacent pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems. d. Open spaces should be tied into surrounding areas to provide continuity within the Entrance Corridor. e. 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 landforms 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 site has been developed previously. The disturbances shown in this proposal are limited to establishing the dumpster pad and a new water line connection.	None.
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.		
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.		
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.	There are no stormwater features proposed.	None.
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.		
	Signs	Signage is reviewed and approved by separate submission. However, the following preliminary comments are provided. The ARB may require that the color and scale of standard templates for trademarks, service marks, corporate logos and graphics be modified.	Sign applications are required for all proposed signs.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. The architectural design: the “blankness” of the building, paint colors, and canopies over the main entrance and storefront windows.
2. Landscaping at the fence, western perimeter of the property, northern perimeter of the parking lot, and along the front of the building

Staff recommends approval of the plan with the following conditions:

1. Consider revising the design to add canopies above the storefront windows along the north, west, and south elevations.
2. Revise the elevation drawings to include a material/color schedule keyed to the elevations.
3. Provide paint samples for the two shades of gray that are proposed.
4. Revise the design to emphasize the building’s base.
5. Consider revising the proposed design to create a better sense of human scale.
6. Provide a color/finish sample for the proposed screening fence. The fence design and associated landscaping are to be reviewed during a work session at a future ARB meeting.
7. Revise the landscape plan to show a row of evergreen shrubs along the chain link fence on the southern perimeter of the site.
8. Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the site plan: Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated.
9. Provide a lighting plan with the next submittal or add a note to the plan stating that no new ground- or building-mounted lighting is proposed.
10. Revise the landscape plan to add ornamental trees along the frontage to achieve more consistent spacing and meet the minimum planting requirement.
11. Revise the landscape plan to show large trees, at 40’ on center and 2½” caliper at time of planting, in the planting area along the north side of the parking lot.
12. Provide 2 interior parking lot trees at 2½” caliper. Consider providing these along the building’s façade, with shrubs.
13. Revise the landscape plan to increase plant diversity such that no single species of tree or shrub exceeds 25% of the total proposed for that plant type.
14. Revise the landscape plan to include the standard landscape note: 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.
15. Sign applications are required for all proposed signs.

ATTACHMENTS

- **Attach. 1:** [ARB2024-78: ColonialWebb Minor Site Plan Amendment](#)
- **Attach. 2:** [ARB2024-78: ColonialWebb Architectural Drawings](#)
- **Attach. 3:** [ARB2024-78: ColonialWebb Safety and Screening Fencing Design Criteria](#)