

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2023-55: 999 Rio Initial Site Plan
Review Type	Initial Site Development Plan
Parcel Identification	06100-00-00-154B0
Location	At the east corner of the intersection of Rio Road East and Belvedere Boulevard. (See Figure 1.)
Zoned	Neighborhood Model District (NMD)/Entrance Corridor (EC) and Airport Impact Area (AIA)
Owner/Applicant	999 Rio LLC (Nicole Scro)/Shimp Engineering (Rachel Moon)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	To construct fourteen (14) multi-family attached units and ten (10) single-family attached units, for a total of twenty-four (24) dwelling units on approximately 1.92 acres. The proposal includes associated site improvements.
Context	The subject parcel is comprised of a ca. 1960 residence and associated outbuildings and wooded area. In the immediate vicinity on the Rio Road East Entrance Corridor is a mix of large-scale institutional development (Harvest Church of God to the northwest and CATEC to the south) and single-family detached residential development (Dunlora, two- to three-stories) to the south and east. Single-story commercial development is found on the north side of the corridor just west of the railroad tracks, with residential on the south side, and a mix of residential, institutional and office beyond. (See Figure 2.)
Visibility	This development will be highly visible from the corridor.
ARB Meeting Date	June 20, 2023
Staff Contact	Mariah Gleason

PROJECT HISTORY

In July 2020, the Architectural Review Board (ARB) reviewed an initial site plan (ARB202000063/SDP202000045) for the subject property which showed a 5,000 square foot office building fronting the Rio Road East Entrance Corridor (EC) and 21 dwelling units (single-family detached and attached, and multifamily) located to the back and side of the office building. The initial site plan was approved with conditions to be addressed with the final site plan application.

In April 2021, the final site plan (ARB202100027/SDP202100009) was reviewed by the ARB. Among the revisions to that plan was the replacement of the office building with a label reading “Phase 2: Non-Residential”. The final site plan was approved by the ARB with conditions and a Certificate of Appropriateness was issued on September 1, 2021.

Since the ARB last reviewed the proposal, the applicant has gained approval for a zoning map amendment (ZMA202200006, approved May 3, 2023) and a special exception (SE202300001) to remove the non-residential uses and building from the development. The approved application plan shows residential buildings and stormwater facilities in approximately the same locations shown in the current initial site plan. (See Figure 3.)



Figure 1: Aerial view highlighting the subject property.



Figure 2: Street view showing Harvest Church of God (left) to the northwest of the subject parcel, the subject parcel with the single-story brick residence (center), and the Dunlora residential development to the east (right).

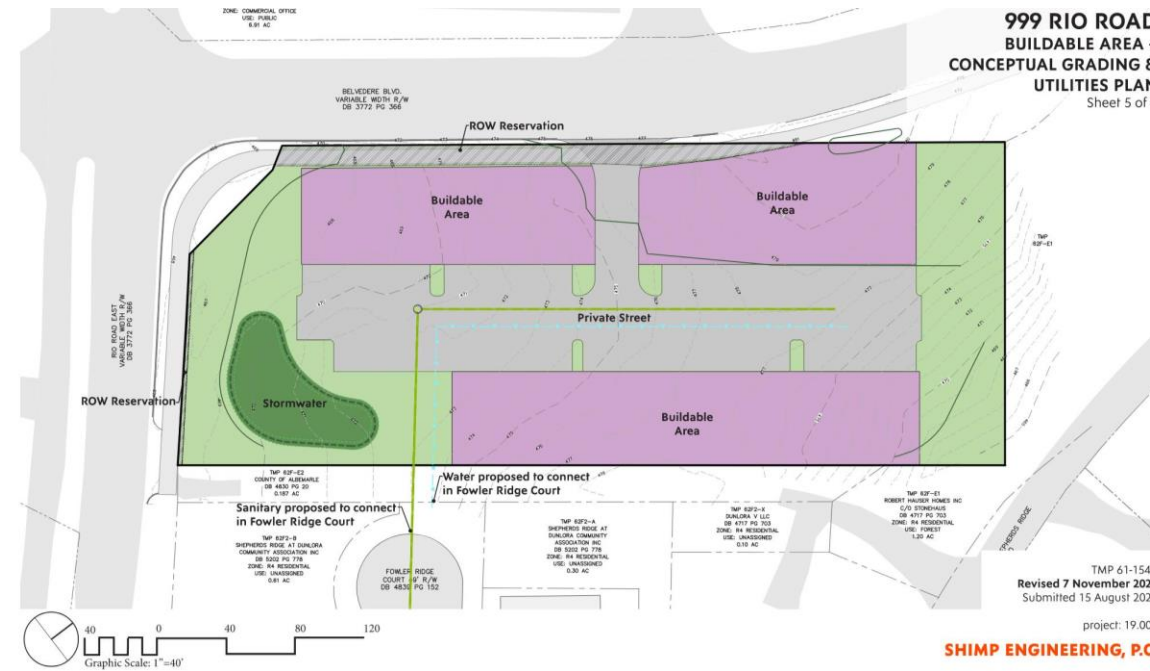


Figure 3: Buildable area and conceptual grading and utilities plan approved under zoning map amendment ZMA202200006 (approved May 3, 2023).

ANALYSIS

Gray highlight = means the guideline can’t be reviewed at initial site plan stage, but recommendations can be provided for final

Yellow highlight = means the guideline can only be reviewed for location/configuration at the initial plan stage, and location/configuration can be made a condition of initial plan approval, and can be the basis for denial

Regular text = means the guideline can be reviewed at initial plan stage, can be made a condition of initial plan approval, and can be the basis for denial

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	GENERAL GUIDELINES		
	Purpose		
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.	Architectural designs were not provided with the initial site plan, but the applicant has said that the design of the buildings will follow the previously approved architectural designs. As such, side elevations are expected to face the EC. With the removal of the fronting commercial building along the EC, the side elevations will be more visible and prominent, which does not contribute to an orderly, attractive development.	Provide architectural designs with the next submittal. The Rio Road-facing elevations of the residential units must be fully designed elevations with sufficient detail and architectural design elements to eliminate blankness. Provide planting areas and landscaping to soften the appearance of the side elevations.
13	Any appearance of “blankness” resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.		
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.		
3-5, 9-16	Compatibility with significant historic sites; Compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor; structural design	Conformity with these guidelines can be fully assessed when architectural designs are submitted 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 removal of the EC-fronting commercial building from the development proposal increases the visibility of residential units and accessory structures and equipment from the EC street. The location(s) of mechanical equipment is not labeled on the plan, but the applicant has indicated that mechanical units will be placed on the EC side of Lot 1, which is a highly visible location.	Locate mechanical equipment to eliminate visibility from the EC street and revise the site and architectural plans to show all equipment locations with complete details on proposed screening.
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.		
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.		
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 plan does not include the standard mechanical equipment note.	Include the standard mechanical equipment note on the site plan and architectural drawings.
22-31	Lighting	A lighting plan was not included in the initial site plan.	Provide a lighting plan with the final site plan that satisfies all

			guidelines requirements.
	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.	Existing and proposed easements are located along the EC frontage. Trees cannot be planted in these easements. The stormwater facility is proposed at the south corner of the site, adjacent to the easements. This location severely reduces the ability to provide sufficient landscaping to integrate the facility into the site and corridor. Without landscaping to mitigate their appearance, the utilities and side elevations of residential units will be the most prominent and visible components of the development when viewed from the EC. This condition does not support an integrated site design nor an orderly and attractive appearance from the EC street. (See additional analysis provided under Guidelines 6 and 39 below.)	Provide a landscaping plan, elevations, and renderings with the final site plan to demonstrate how the stormwater management facility and residential units will achieve a unified, integrated, attractive appearance from the EC.
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.		
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.		
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.	A landscaping plan was not included with the initial site plan. Existing and proposed utility easements are located along the EC corridor, eliminating the ability to plant frontage trees on site.	Provide a landscaping plan with the final site plan that shows frontage trees meeting the guidelines requirement and an overall coordinated, harmonious appearance from the EC.
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.	No interior roads are proposed.	None at this time.
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.	A landscaping plan was not included with the initial site plan. The configuration of the units and interior sidewalks provides approximately 5-7 ft.-wide planting areas along interior pedestrian ways and portions of perimeter parking areas. The width of the planting	Provide a landscaping plan that shows landscaping along interior pedestrian ways (including the sidewalk connecting the residential units to the path along the EC),
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.	areas, together with the proposed building heights (35ft maximum), may not allow sufficient space for large tree species and their canopies. Spacing between trees will also be limited by proposed utility connections to individual lots. The parking area is not relegated and is expected to be highly visible from the EC street. The location of existing and proposed easements around the parking area will make it challenging to effectively screen this improvement from the EC. The plan shows a sidewalk connection between residential units and the multiuse path along the EC. Existing and proposed utility easements within 25 ft. of the EC will preclude trees from being planted at the southwest end of the sidewalk.	around the perimeter of parking areas, and screening of the parking lot stub-out.
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.	Side elevations of the residential units will face the EC. Since a landscaping plan was not included with the initial site plan, it is not known how plantings will be used to soften the appearance of the buildings or eliminate blankness.	Provide a landscaping plan with the final site plan that shows how plantings will be used to soften the appearance of the side elevations of residential units and eliminate blankness.
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>.	A landscaping plan was not included with the initial site plan. When provided, proposed plantings should align with the recommended planting list approved by staff. This guideline will be assessed when a landscaping plan is submitted.	Provide a landscaping plan with the final site plan.
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 required note is not provided on the plan.	Include the standard planting note on the site plan.
	Development pattern; Site development and layout		
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	The site layout does not establish an appropriate relationship between site elements and the EC. Residential units are arranged perpendicular to the EC and set back from it by approximately 90 ft. and 190 ft. This orientation and distance diminish the visual connection to the EC. The grouping of units is organized around the Belvedere Boulevard entrance –	Provide a landscaping plan and renderings with the final site plan that show how the site will incorporate new plantings to screen the appearance of utilitarian/service features, soften the appearance of side elevations of residential units,

	and height to a scale that does not overpower the natural settings of the site, or the Entrance Corridor.		
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.	not organized to establish a coordinated appearance from the EC. The stormwater management facility, the stub-out of the parking area, and mechanical units – all service and utilitarian features – are oriented to the EC. The location of existing and proposed easements will severely limit, and in some areas preclude, the ability to plant appropriate landscaping for screening or softening the visual impacts of these components. The result is a development whose back is turned to the EC with and insufficient space for mitigation. This layout does not contribute to the creation of an orderly or attractive appearance along the corridor, but the site elements are in approximately the same locations as shown on the approved application plan.	and how the development will contribute to an orderly and attractive appearance from the EC. Consider replacing the stairway with an ADA accessible ramp.
	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.	Site grading will create a bermed stormwater management facility at the southwest corner of the site, along the EC, with a level area at the center of the site for parking. Moving away from the corridor, the site rises gradually in elevation and then descends at the rear of the property, blending with the existing terrain. The location of the stormwater facility, and the grading proposed to create it, establish it as a prominent engineered feature adjacent to the EC. The central parking area and parking area stub-out, and side elevations of residences closest to the EC, which are located at higher elevations than the stormwater facility, will also be highly visible from the EC street.	Provide planting areas and landscaping to soften the appearance of the bermed stormwater management facility, elevated parking area, and the side elevations of residential units that face the EC.
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 or other existing features are designated for preservation.	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.		

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Treatment of the EC frontage; utilities and easements
2. Landscaping of the stormwater management facility and parking lot
3. Side elevations facing the EC

Staff recommends that the ARB forward the following recommendations to the Agent for the Site Review Committee:

- Regarding requirements to satisfy the design guidelines as per § 18-30.6.4c(2), (3) and (5) and recommended conditions of initial plan approval:
 - Prior to Initial Plan approval the following items shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the ARB: None. The ARB recommends approval of the Initial Plan without conditions.
- Regarding recommendations on the plan as it relates to the guidelines: Consider replacing the stairway with an ADA accessible ramp.
- Regarding conditions to be satisfied prior to issuance of a grading permit: None.
- Regarding the final site plan submittal: A Certificate of Appropriateness is required prior to final site plan approval. The following items and all items on the ARB Final Site Plan Checklist must be addressed:
 1. Provide architectural designs with the next submittal. The Rio Road-facing elevations of the residential units must be fully designed elevations with sufficient detail and architectural design elements to eliminate blankness.
 2. Provide planting areas and landscaping to soften the appearance of the side elevations.
 3. Locate mechanical equipment to eliminate visibility from the EC street and revise the site and architectural plans to show all equipment locations with complete details on proposed screening.
 4. Include the standard mechanical equipment note on the site plan and architectural drawings: “Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated.”
 5. Provide a lighting plan with the final site plan that satisfies all guidelines requirements.
 6. Provide a landscaping plan, elevations, and renderings with the final site plan to demonstrate how the stormwater management facility and residential units will achieve a unified, integrated, attractive appearance from the EC.
 7. Provide a landscaping plan and renderings with the final site plan that shows:
 - a. frontage trees meeting the guidelines requirement and an overall coordinated, harmonious appearance from the EC;
 - b. landscaping along interior pedestrian ways (including the sidewalk connecting the residential units to the path along the EC), around the perimeter of parking areas, and screening of the parking lot stub-out;
 - c. planting areas and landscaping to soften the appearance of the bermed stormwater management facility, elevated parking area, all utilitarian/service features, and the side elevations of residential units that face the EC; and
 - d. that the development will contribute to an orderly and attractive appearance from the EC.
 8. Include the standard planting note on the site 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.”

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: [ARB-2023-55: 999 Rio Initial Site Plan](#)