

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2024-40: Montclair Initial Site Plan
Review Type	Initial Site Plan
Parcel Identification	05600-00-00-091A0, 056E0-00-00-00200 (portion)
Location	On the south side of Rt. 240 between the Wickham Pond subdivision to the east and Park Ridge Drive to the west.
Zoned	Neighborhood Model District (NMD) / Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	White Gate LLC (56-91A) / Highlands West LP (56E-2) / Shimp Engineering (Justin Shimp)
Magisterial District	White Hall
Proposal	To construct 88 attached townhouse units with associated site improvements, on approximately 14.48 acres.
Context	The subject site is bounded by Rt. 240 to the north, the Wickham Pond subdivision to the east, railroad tracks to the south, and Park Ridge Drive to the west. The site's development is shown in four blocks, with attached units on Blocks 1, 2, and 3. On Block 4 the plan shows a stream buffer and conservation area. The project area consists of two parcels, 56E-2 which is partially wooded and vacant, and 56-91A which contains two residences and associated outbuildings. The houses and outbuildings have been removed to accommodate the development. (See C1 for the block plan.)
Visibility	Townhouses on lots 1-9 and 68-72 will have the greatest visibility from the EC, with the level of visibility possibly reduced when the frontage landscaping matures. At full build-out, the visibility of the townhouses to the south is expected to be limited to side elevations; however, timing and sequence of construction could make all of the units visible for some time. Views of the houses on lots 73-84 will be available from the intersection of Park Ridge Drive and Rt. 240.
ARB Meeting Date	June 17, 2024
Staff Contact	Khris Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY

In 2020 and 2022, Design staff provided comments on ZMA2020-12, a rezoning for this site. The comments focused on the depth and types of plantings proposed for the landscape buffer between the development and Rt. 240 in addition to building orientation, treatment, and massing.



Figure 1: Pictometry image showing the site along the Entrance Corridor, the approximate project area boundaries are highlighted in orange.

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		
	<i>Purpose, Compatibility with significant historic sites, Compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor</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 approved Code of Development for the site states that “building facades in Blocks 1 and 2 shall be designed as front building facades unless a landscape screening buffer is provided”. Architecture has not been provided; however, the townhouses fronting Rt. 240 appear to be oriented so that the fronts will face the EC. A landscape buffer has also been provided but more information is needed to evaluate.	Provide architectural designs with the next submittal. See landscaping recommendations below.
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 characteristics 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, 9-15	<i>Compatibility with significant historic sites</i> , compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor, structure design		
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>	Architectural designs that include specifications for the proposed window glass have not been provided with the initial site plan.	Provide window glass specifications with the next submittal. Include the standard window glass note on the architectural drawings.
	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.	Information on accessory structures and equipment is not provided on the plan.	Update the plans to include information on accessory structures and equipment.
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 site plan does not show any fencing. The layout of the townhouses within Block 1 does not appear to be conducive to fenced yards. However, the lots within Block 2 (lots 73-84) have areas where fencing is possible and would be visible from the EC.	Revise the site plan to either note that there will not be any fencing or provide a fence detail to ensure appropriate design and consistency. Chain link and white vinyl are not appropriate fence material choices.
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 note does not appear on the site plan set. Architectural drawings have not been submitted at this time.	Include the standard mechanical equipment note on the site and architectural plans.
22-31	Lighting	A lighting plan has not been provided with the initial plan.	Provide a lighting plan with the next submittal addressing site and building-mounted fixtures
	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.	The landscape plan notes a 100’ buffer between the frontage and the development. Out of the 100’, approximately 57’ has been reserved for plantings. These depths match what was approved with the rezoning for the site; however, the landscape plan provides no details regarding the proposed buffer plantings.	Revise the landscape plan to provide specifics on the planting proposed for the landscape buffer.
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.	The landscape plan shows irregularly spaced large shade trees with medium and ornamental trees interspersed. The irregular spacing appears to be consistent with the surrounding context; however, based on the length of the frontage (431’) an additional large tree is required (11 provided, 12 required).	Revise the landscape plan to provide an additional large shade tree along the frontage.
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.	Large shade trees are shown along Wickham Way Extended and Public Road B; however, the spacing regularly exceeds 40’ on the west side of Public Road B and on both sides of Wickham Way Extended. Revising the landscape plan to provide large shade trees 40’ on center would be consistent with EC Guidelines and with what was approved for the adjacent Wickham Pond subdivision.	Revise the landscape plan to provide large shade trees 40’ on center along Wickham Way Extended and Public Road B.
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.	Sidewalks are proposed along the public roads interior to the development. The interior street trees provided there also act as interior pedestrian way trees.	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.	A parking lot with 27 spaces is shown along the interior of lots 73-88 which requires 3 large trees. Within this area, the landscape plan shows four large shade trees. The perimeter of the parking lot will be bounded on the north, west, and south sides by townhouses. Medium and ornamental trees are shown in the available planting area between and near the townhouses. Based on the layout of the parking area and nearby townhouses, this layout is expected to have an appropriate appearance.	None.
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.	Architectural designs have not been submitted for review. The Code of Development specifies “that no building façade may extend for more than 30”, measured horizontally, without a physical or visual break in the plane of the façade.” The use of physical or visual breaks in the façade along with landscaping between the frontage and the development is expected to sufficiently mitigate the length of the townhouse blocks.	None.
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 plan does not include a plant schedule at this time.	Provide a complete plant schedule with the next submittal.
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 standard plan health note does not appear on the site plan set.	Add the standard plant health note to the site plan.
	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; 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 proposed landscape buffer, if consistent with the buffer along the frontage of Wickham Pond, is expected to maintain a more natural/less formal appearance typical of the surrounding context. The building layout has a generally organized appearance. Overall, the residential units are oriented parallel to the EC street. The backs of many of the townhomes will face toward the EC; however, they will be screened by intervening townhouses.	Consider connecting the Wickham Way Ext. and Block 2 sidewalks for improved connectivity.
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.	Connections to adjacent vehicular circulation systems are shown on the plans. Pedestrian connections along Public Road B are provided to the proposed shared-use	See architecture and landscape recommendations.

	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.	path along Rt. 240. Sidewalks are proposed along Wickham Way Ext. and in two locations in Block 2, ending at Park Ridge Drive. None of these connect to each other, to the path on the opposite side of Park Ridge Dr., or to the shared-use path on Rt. 240. The majority of the site is being cleared to accommodate development. No significant natural features are visible from the EC and views from the EC are not expected to be negatively impacted.	
	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 proposed grading is not expected to have a significant visual impact on the EC street. No retaining walls are proposed.	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.	The landscape plan notes that existing cedar trees are to be located and saved where possible along Rt. 240. Revising the site plan to show which trees are to remain and tree protection fencing around those trees will be needed.	Revise the landscape plan to identify the cedar trees that are to remain and tree protection fencing around those trees.
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.	A stormwater facility is shown within the landscape buffer and the EC. However, no details have been provided on the appearance of this feature as viewed from the EC.	Revise the site plan to relocate the stormwater facility out of the landscape buffer.
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.		

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Landscaping: the buffer along Rt. 240, the interior road trees.

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:
 - o 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: None.
- 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.
 2. Provide window glass specifications with the next submittal.
 3. Include the standard window glass note on the architectural drawings: Visible light transmittance (VLT) shall not drop below 40%. Visible light reflectance (VLR) shall not exceed 30%.
 4. Update the plans to include information on accessory structures and equipment.
 5. Revise the site plan to either note that there will not be any fencing or provide a fence detail to ensure appropriate design and consistency. Chain link and white vinyl are not appropriate fence material choices.
 6. Include the standard mechanical equipment note on the site and architectural plans: Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated.
 7. Provide a lighting plan with the next submittal addressing site and building-mounted fixtures.
 8. Revise the landscape plan to provide specifics on the planting proposed for the landscape buffer.
 9. Revise the landscape plan to provide an additional large shade tree along the frontage.
 10. Revise the landscape plan to provide large shade trees 40' on center along Wickham Way Extended and Public Road B.
 11. Provide a complete plant schedule with the next submittal.
 12. Add the standard plant health note to 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.
 13. Consider connecting the Wickham Way Ext. and Block 2 sidewalks for improved mobility.
 14. Revise the landscape plan to identify the cedar trees that are to remain and tree protection fencing around those trees.
 15. Revise the site plan to relocate the stormwater facility out of the landscape buffer.

POSSIBLE MOTIONS

- Should an ARB member choose to recommend approval of the request:
 - I move to recommend approval of ARB2024-40: Montclair Initial Site Plan without conditions, and provide the comments outlined in the staff report for the final site plan.
- Should an ARB member choose to recommend approval with revised conditions:
 - I move to recommend approval of ARB2024-40: Montclair Initial Site Plan with conditions (state conditions).
- Should an ARB member choose to recommend denial of the request:
 - I move to recommend denial of ARB2024-40: Montclair Initial Site Plan for (state the reasons).

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: ARB2024-40: Montclair Initial Site Plan