

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB2025-02: Botanical Garden of the Piedmont
Review Type	Initial Site Plan
Parcel Identification	061000000193A0
Location	950 Melbourne Road
Zoned	Residential (R4) / Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Botanical Garden of the Piedmont (Jill Trischman-Marks) / Timmons Group (John Wilson)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	To establish a botanical garden with associated grading, retaining walls, paths, parking, shed, gathering spaces and landscaping.
Context	The site is a mostly wooded property adjacent to the John Warner Parkway and located south and east of the Charlottesville High School and its playing fields. Residential neighborhoods and additional wooded area are to the northeast and southeast. Of the overall garden area, approximately 4 acres is located in the County and subject to review.
Visibility	The site is readily visible from the Entrance Corridor street. The view is expected to be primarily of landscaped frontage along the Parkway, a retaining wall at the south end of the parking lot, and trees along the perimeter of the parking lot and Melbourne Road.
ARB Meeting Date	March 3, 2025
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

The ARB has no review history on this property.

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

Note: This analysis is limited to the portion of the proposal located within Albemarle County.

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	Purpose; Compatibility with significant historic sites; Compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor; Structure design		
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 buildings that are part of this proposal – the welcome center, pavilion, and maintenance building – are proposed outside the boundaries of the County parcel. The buildings, site walls, paths and landscaping are expected to appear unified and integrated in the landscape. The proposal is expected to promote orderly and attractive development along the corridor.	See 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 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.		
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.		
12	Architecture proposed within the Entrance Corridor should use forms, shapes, scale, and materials to create a cohesive whole.		
13	Any appearance of "blankness" resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.		
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.		
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.		
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>		
	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.	No mechanical equipment is identified on the plan. A shed is proposed between the discovery garden and the parking lot. The applicant has indicated that the shed will likely not be visible from the EC street, but the landscaping that will screen it is not currently shown on the plan.	Provide details on the appearance and structure of the shed or show on the plan the features that will eliminate visibility of it from the Parkway.
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.	 Deer fencing is proposed throughout the garden, but is not clearly labeled on the plan. Landscaping may screen some or all of it from view.	Clearly label the deer fence on the plan. If landscaping will be used to screen it from the Parkway, show that landscaping on the plan.
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 plan.	Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the plan.
22-31	Lighting	There is no lighting proposed with this initial site plan.	If lighting is proposed, add all details to the final site plan for review.
	Landscaping		
7	The requirements of the Guidelines regarding landscaping are intended to reflect the landscaping characteristic of many of the area’s	The existing conditions sheet shows a tree line along the Parkway frontage.	Clarify and coordinate existing conditions and

	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.	L101 shows no landscaping added along the parkway frontage and no tree line to remain, but the applicant has indicated that new trees will be added to existing trees in this area.	trees to remain in the areas adjacent to the Parkway.
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.		Revise the plans to show landscaping along the Parkway that is equivalent to the EC frontage planting requirement (large shade trees, 3½” caliper at planting, 40’ on center, with interspersed ornamentals).
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.	The development has no interior roads and only short travelways between parking areas.	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 (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.	The proposal includes sidewalks, paths and trails, all of which have trees or “mixed botanical garden planting” nearby.	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 southern part of the parking lot is located on the County parcel. Trees are proposed along the south and east sides and along the biofilters that are interior to the parking lot. The western side of the lot abuts the discovery garden. The landscaping there is not shown in detail. Two trees would meet the perimeter requirement, but the discovery garden planting likely exceeds that in equivalent planting.	Revise the plan to show that the landscaping proposed along the western side of the parking lot meets the perimeter planting requirement (large shade trees, 2½" caliper at planting, 40' on center).
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 proposal includes no long buildings in need of landscaping.	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> .	Myrica cerifera, which is included in the plant schedule, has recently been renamed "morella cerifera".	In the plant list, revise Myrica cerifera to morella cerifera.
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 does not appear on the plan.	Add the standard planting note to the 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	Proposed paths and parking areas contribute to an organized development. Proposed garden spaces are adjacent to McIntire Park. A new path would connect to an existing path	None.

	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.	in McIntire Park. Several existing trees would be removed from the property to allow for the development of the garden as proposed. Some existing trees would remain and they are shown with tree protection. Views are not expected to be impacted.	
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 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,	Significant grading is proposed to accomplish the garden design. Proposed grading is expected to result in rounded land forms. Several walls are proposed throughout the garden, though wall materials are not noted consistently throughout the plan. The applicant indicates that wall materials	Revise the plan to coordinate all retaining wall material notes. Include wall details for review. If gabion walls are proposed, show on the plan how their appearance will be made

	shall be terraced and planted to blend with the landscape.	are still in question, with gabion walls being one option. Gabion walls can have an industrial appearance that may not be appropriate for the EC.	appropriate for 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.	The limits of disturbance on C5.0 don't seem to align with tree removal that would occur along the Parkway. The Demolition Plan C2.2 doesn't show trees to remain near the Parkway that are shown on the landscape plan.	Coordinate all sheets of the site plan set regarding tree retention and tree removal.
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 cistern is proposed under the parking lot and biofilters are proposed within the lot. Planting there will integrate them into the development.	None.
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. The landscape treatment of the Parkway frontage.
2. The retaining walls visible from the Parkway.
3. ARB or staff level review of the final site plan.

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.
- Regarding recommendations on the plan as it relates to the guidelines: None.
- Regarding conditions to be satisfied prior to issuance of a grading permit:
 1. Maintain grading outside the driplines of trees to remain. Show tree protection fencing on, and coordinated throughout, the grading, landscaping, and erosion and sediment control plans.
- 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 in a final site plan to be reviewed by staff:

 1. Provide details on the appearance and structure of the shed or show on the plan the features that will eliminate visibility of it from the Parkway.
 2. Clearly label the deer fence on the plan. If landscaping will be used to screen it from the Parkway, show that landscaping on the plan.
 3. Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the plan. "Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated."
 4. If lighting is proposed, add all details to the final site plan for review.
 5. Clarify and coordinate existing conditions and trees to remain in the areas adjacent to the Parkway.
 6. Revise the plans to show landscaping along the Parkway that is equivalent to the EC frontage planting requirement (large shade trees, 3½" caliper at planting, 40' on center, with interspersed ornamentals).
 7. Revise the plan to show that the landscaping proposed along the western side of the parking lot meets the perimeter planting requirement (large shade trees, 2½" caliper at planting, 40' on center).
 8. In the plant list, revise *Myrica cerifera* to *morella cerifera*.
 9. Add the standard planting note to the 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."
 10. Revise the plan to coordinate all retaining wall material notes. Include wall details for review. If gabion walls are proposed, show on the plan how their appearance will be made appropriate for the EC.
 11. Coordinate all sheets of the site plan set regarding tree retention and tree removal.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: [ARB-2025-02: Botanical Garden Site Plan](#)