

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2025-20: Albemarle High School Solar
Review Type	Building Permit
Parcel Identification	060000000078A0
Location	2775 Hydraulic Rd. (Figure 1)
Zoned	Rural Areas (RA), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	County of Albemarle School Board/Noah Carter (Madison Energy Infrastructure)
Magisterial District	Jack Jouett
Proposal	To install solar panels on the rooftop of Albemarle High School.
Context	The building is located in the Lambs Lane Campus. Institutional, office, and residential uses are nearby.
Visibility	The school is located approximately 350' from the Entrance Corridor street and is visible for an approximate distance of 1300' along the corridor. The solar panels are expected to have limited visibility from the Entrance Corridor.
ARB Meeting Date	September 2, 2025
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

The ARB has reviewed and approved several applications for Albemarle High School between 2000 and 2019.

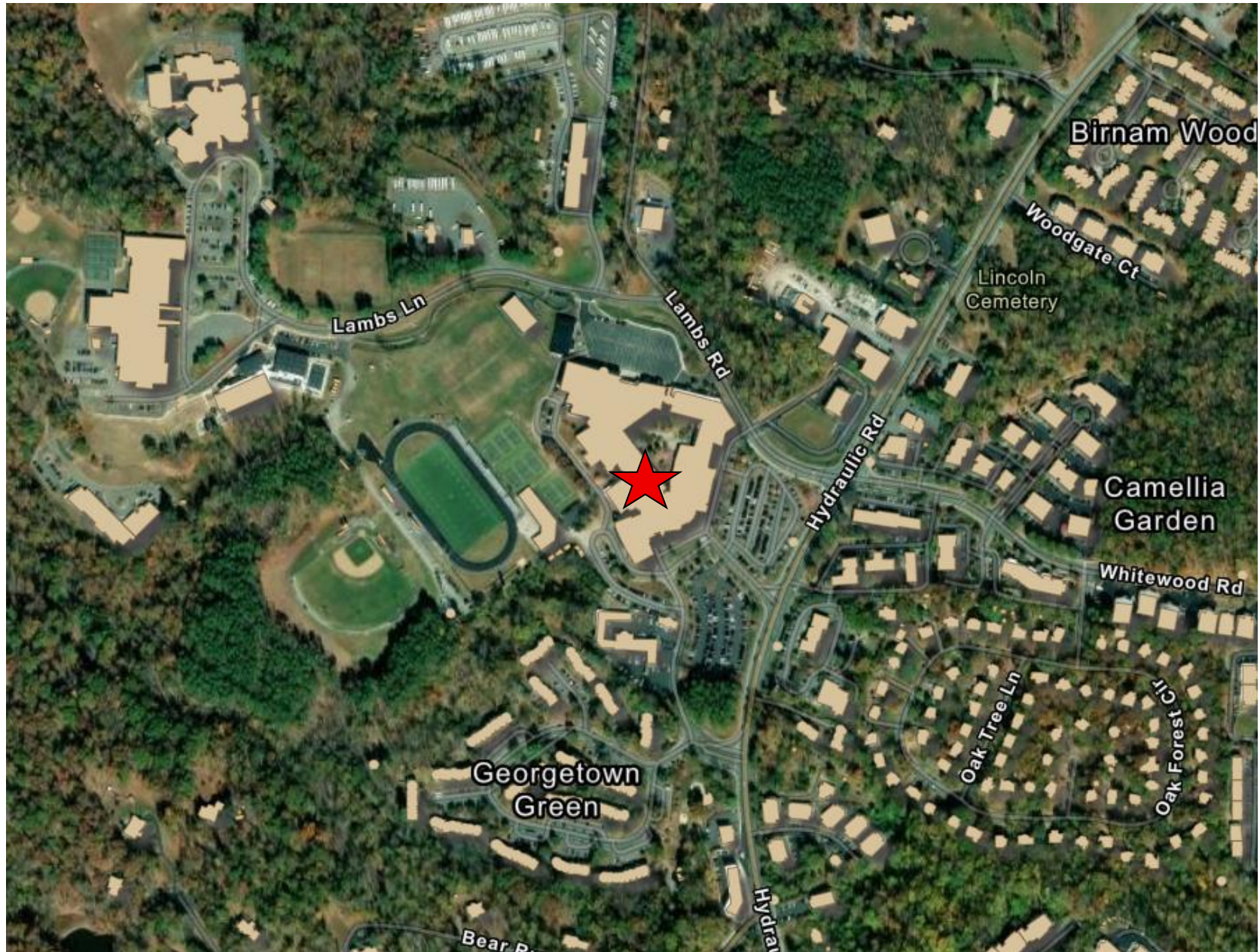


Figure 1: Project location

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	<i>Purpose; Compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor and significant historic sites</i>		
1	The goal of the regulation of the design of development within the designated Entrance Corridors is to insure that new development within the corridors reflects the traditional architecture of the area. Therefore, it is the purpose of ARB review and of these Guidelines, that proposed development within the designated Entrance Corridors reflect elements of design characteristic of the significant historical landmarks, buildings, and structures of the Charlottesville and Albemarle area, and to promote orderly and attractive development within these corridors. Applicants should note that replication of historic structures is neither required nor desired.	For the reasons described below, the proposed solar installation is not expected to have a negative visual impact on the Entrance Corridor (EC) or building. The campus is expected to continue to appear orderly and attractive.	None.
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.		
9-16	<i>Compatibility with significant historic sites; Structure design</i>	No changes to the architectural design of the building are proposed.	None.
	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.	Solar panels are proposed for most of the rooftops of the building (excluding the lower roof at the southern end of the building which has greater visibility, the section to the left of the main entrance, and areas already occupied by equipment). Panels are black with aluminum frames and each one measures approximately 7'6" x 3'9" x 1.4". The panels are organized in parallel rows, in most cases aligned with the edges of the roofs for an organized appearance. Panels are to be mounted with a tilt of 10 degrees, placing the tops of the panels at a maximum height of 12-15" above the roof. The elevation of the Hydraulic Road EC is generally at or above the elevation of the building's roofs. This allows for open views of the lower rooftops and objects on those rooftops, and views of rooftop elements on the taller roofs. Two large parking lots are located	None.
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.		

		between the building and the EC. Trees in and around the parking lots reduce views of the building and its roofs, and are expected to do the same for the solar panels, particularly in the months when leaves are on the trees. 8"-tall parapets exist in many locations on the building. Given their minimal height and the angle of view from the EC, the parapets aren't expected to provide much screening of the panels from the street. An assortment of equipment already exists on the building, some of it visible from the EC. The solar array is in character with that current condition, and the panel color is expected to blend with the dark roof color. Given the proposed design and anticipated visibility, the solar array is not expected to detract from the appearance of the building or the character of the corridor.	
20	Surface runoff structures and detention ponds should be designed to fit into the natural topography to avoid the need for screening. When visible from the Entrance Corridor street, these features must be fully integrated into the landscape. They should not have the appearance of engineered features.	No new or altered stormwater facilities are proposed with this application.	None.
21	The following note should be added to the site plan and the architectural plan: "Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated."	Previously existing equipment is visible from the street. The level of visibility anticipated for the new equipment associated with this proposal is not expected to have a negative impact on the EC.	Any new equipment not included with this proposal is subject to ARB review.
22-31	Lighting	No lighting is proposed with this application.	None.
7, 8, 32-38	Landscaping	No landscaping is proposed with this application.	None.
6, 39	Site Development and layout; Development pattern	No changes to the site layout are proposed with this application.	None.
40-44	Site Grading	No grading is proposed with this application.	None.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Visibility of the solar panels from the EC
2. Panel colors and arrangement

Staff recommends approval of the proposal with the following condition:

1. Any new equipment not included with this proposal is subject to ARB review.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: [ARB-2025-00020: Albemarle High School Solar Architectural Drawings](#)

Attach. 2: [ARB-2025-00020: Albemarle High School Solar Site Plan](#)