

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	SDP-2025-113: City Church Multi-Use Facility Initial Site Plan
Review Type	Initial Site Development Plan
Parcel Identification	061000000153A1
Location	1010 Rio Rd. East (See Figures 1 and 2)
Zoned	Residential (R4), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	New Era Properties LLC/Bohler Engineering (Daniel R. Hines)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	To construct a multi-use facility adjacent to the existing church and to expand the parking lot.
Context	The property contains an existing church, two parking areas, and a wireless facility. To the northeast and south of the property are institutional uses including the Charlottesville Albemarle Technical Education Center (CATEC) and other churches. Adjacent properties to the east and west consist primarily of single-family residential uses, including the Dunlora and Greenbrier neighborhoods.
Visibility	The building will be readily visible from the Entrance Corridor.
ARB Meeting Date	October 20, 2025
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

A special use permit (SP-2024-12) was approved for this expansion in early 2025.



Figure 2: Pictometry view of project location

ANALYSIS

Gray highlight = means recommendations on this guideline can be provided for the benefit of the final site plan submittal, but cannot be the basis for denial of the initial site plan

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; Structure design</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.	The existing church building has a traditional form and appearance and is constructed of red brick that is common in the County. The overall building is compatible with historic buildings in the area. The proposed building has a larger footprint than the existing building. Multiple entrances are shown on the elevation that faces the EC street. The two at the south end are protected by a canopy. Building materials, forms, scale and detailing will be important factors in establishing compatibility with the existing building and the broader architectural context of the County.	Provide architectural plans for review. Show how the EC design guidelines on structure design and architectural compatibility are being met. Perspectives showing the proposed multi-use building with the existing building as seen from the road would be helpful.
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.		
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.		
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.		
12	Architecture proposed within the Entrance Corridor should use forms, shapes, scale, and materials to create a cohesive whole.		
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.	The finished floor elevation of the proposed building (450') is well below the elevation of Rio Rd. in this area (approx. 468'), which could	

		help reduce the impact of the building's scale on the EC.	
13	Any appearance of "blankness" resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.	The multi-use building is labeled as a gym on the site plan. That building type is often designed with little fenestration, which could result in blankness.	
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.	Sidewalks connect the buildings, but the proposed building is not physically connected to the existing one.	
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.	The multi-use building is not expected to exhibit a trademark 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>	The window glass information will be needed 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.	A dumpster with a wooden enclosure is proposed at the west end of the southern parking lot. The location is visible from the street, but the wooden enclosure is expected to blend with the existing fence around the wireless facility located to the west, so it is not expected to have a significant visual impact.	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.		
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	A stormwater facility is proposed behind the new building where it will not be visible from the EC.	None.

	should not have the appearance of engineered features.		
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 appears on Sheet C0.1 of the site plan.	Add the mechanical equipment note to the architectural plans.
22-31	Lighting	Site lights are currently attached to a few utility poles throughout the site. The demolition plan shows one of these to be removed. No new site or building lighting is shown on the plan.	Clearly show all existing site lights on the plan and identify all of those to be removed. Provide a complete lighting plan for review showing all proposed building and site lighting.
	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.	North of the northern site entrance are four existing shade trees. They are located off site (near the sidewalk). Their quantity and spacing do not meet EC guidelines, but they are mature trees that contribute a positive appearance to the streetscape. Road improvements (Green-T intersection) are planned in the area. It isn't clear whether the improvements will impact the site's frontage.	Indicate whether planned Rio Road improvements will impact the site.
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.	Between the new parking lot and the EC are numerous utilities and easements that limit planting locations. Some trees are proposed very close to an existing underground telephone line and a proposed water line. The proposed location of the parking lot provides minimal space between it and the property line at the northern end of the lot, making it difficult to provide perimeter parking lot trees <u>and</u> on-site EC frontage trees. The mix of existing trees and proposed large shade trees and interspersed ornamentals meets the quantity and size requirements.	Consider increasing on-site planting area between the parking lot and the property line at the north end of the proposed parking lot.
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	Between the site entrances, three large shade	Without reducing quantities, shift trees away from existing underground telephone lines, the proposed water line, and any other utilities and easements.

	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.	trees are proposed on site close to the street at the required size and spacing. Ornamentals are interspersed.	
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.	There are no interior roads, but there are travelways in front of the existing building and along the southern side of the site. There are existing utilities in both 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.	A sidewalk is proposed around most of the new building and along the northwest side of the existing building. Two of the proposed interior parking lot trees are located in front of the proposed building as viewed from the EC street. These trees could help soften the appearance of the new building; however, one tree is proposed approximately 7' from an underground water line. The need for additional trees in this area can be assessed when architectural plans are submitted for review.	Shift new trees proposed in locations that are close to utility lines to avoid conflicts as the trees mature.
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.		
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);	Wooded area to remain borders the north and northwest perimeters of the proposed parking lot. Trees are proposed along the eastern perimeter of the parking lot where utilities and easements allow, with the size and quantity meeting perimeter planting requirements. There are 15 trees proposed in planting islands	None.

	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.	in the new parking lot which has 86 spaces, so the quantity exceeds the requirement. Eleven of the trees are large shade trees. Planting size for eight of those are 2.5" or 3.5" caliper. Four of the 15 trees are small ornamentals with a 2" caliper planting size. The mix of trees meets the intent of the interior tree requirement. There are 42 spaces in the parking lot on the south side of the site. Four interior trees are proposed. There are two perimeter trees at the west end.	
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 lists.	None.
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 appears on sheet L2.0.	None.
	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; 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.	The proposed addition is aligned with the existing church; both are oriented at an angle to the EC street. A large, proposed parking lot separates the addition from the street. A Special Exception was approved for a total of 161 parking spaces (33 spaces over the required + 20% over max) at this site. A total of 131 spaces is proposed, with 86 of them in the lot adjacent to the EC. The size of the new parking lot will have increased visual impacts on the EC. The north end of the lot is very close to the property line, which limits locations for planting. This layout is not ideal for the EC, but the location and orientation are as illustrated on the concept	Consider increasing on-site planting area between the parking lot and the property line at the north end of the proposed parking lot.

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.	plan approved with the SP. The travelways appear organized. Sidewalks are proposed along the north side of the existing building and around the new building. A sidewalk exists along Rio Rd. Most of the wooded area is proposed to be removed. A few small areas of the wooded buffer along the railroad are to remain – one at the north corner of the property, and one to the north of the new building, and an area at the southwest corner of the property. No views are expected to be impacted by the proposal.	
	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.	Grading is proposed to establish the new parking lot. It is not expected to change the basic relationship of the site to the EC. The EC elevation in this area is approximately 468'. The parking lot elevation ranges from 448' to 458'. The finished floor elevation of the new building is proposed at 450'. Significant grading is proposed behind the new building to accommodate a stormwater management facility that is not expected to be visible from the EC.	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	Some of the grading proposed along the western property line could fall within the drip line of trees to remain.	Show tree protection fencing on the plan.

	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.	No tree protection is shown in the initial site plan.	
43	Preservation areas should be protected from storage or movement of heavy equipment within this area.		
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.	A stormwater facility is proposed behind the new building where it is not expected to be visible from the EC street.	None.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Landscaping: Frontage and perimeter parking lot
2. Proximity of expanded parking lot to the property line along the EC
3. The size and orientation of the proposed building

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.
 1. Consider increasing on-site planting area between the parking lot and the property line at the north end of the proposed parking lot.
- 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:

 1. Provide architectural plans for review. Show how the EC design guidelines on structure design and architectural compatibility are being met. Perspectives showing the proposed multi-use building with the existing building as seen from the road would be helpful.
 2. Add the mechanical equipment note to the architectural plans: “Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated.”
 3. Clearly show all existing site lights on the plan and identify all of those to be removed. Provide a complete lighting plan for review showing all proposed building and site lighting.
 4. Indicate whether planned Rio Road improvements will impact the site.
 5. Consider increasing on-site planting area between the parking lot and the property line at the north end of the proposed parking lot.
 6. Without reducing quantities, shift trees away from existing underground telephone lines, the proposed water line, and any other utilities and easements.
 7. Clarify on the plan the extent of the easements located along the Rio Road frontage.
 8. Show tree protection fencing on the plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: SDP-2025-113: [City Church Multi-Use Space Addition Initial Site Plan](#)