

MicroAire ARB Narrative

Project Description

MicroAire is a medium-sized business based in Charlottesville, VA who specializes in developing and manufacturing medical devices. In 2011, MicroAire purchased the existing post office off Grand Forks Boulevard to serve as their manufacturing facility. Since then, the company has grown, and they now require additional office space for their employees who are working off-site. Their goal is to expand the facility towards the adjacent Airport Road, bring all their employees to one location. In conjunction to the expansion, MicroAire is seeking to repaint their existing facility to unify the designs and enhance the views of their building from the Entrance Corridor.

The proposed addition connects to the north façade of the existing building which is in full view from the Entrance Corridor. This existing façade also has only 2 windows and no architectural features to inspire current employees who come to work here every day. Also, the existing building has no clear entrance visible from either Grand Forks Boulevard or Airport Road. Inspired by new construction in the surrounding area and along the Entrance Corridor, the proposed addition aims to remedy these two existing features by enhancing the visitor and employee entrances and maximizing daylight into the open office.

There are two entrances to the proposed office addition: one for visitors and one for employees. Both entrances are accentuated with a white canopy extending from the face of the building and full storefront system below. The soffits of each canopy are made of a material that looks like wood which is selectively used only at the entrances as a design feature. The wood-like material invites guests and employees into the space and provides a warm contrast against the main building elements. The design also incorporates a randomized pattern of metal panels of four alternating colors. Through strategically using simple base façade materials, these two design features enhance the contrast to the neutral backdrop and clearly identify the building entrances.

One common complaint from MicroAire is the lack of daylighting within their current facility. To address this, the design incorporates two different locations for storefront windows in addition to the entrances. Lower windows at grade level provide natural light into perimeter spaces, combined with interior glazing, light can penetrate through the perimeter space into the open office. In addition, clerestory windows are included to drive natural light to permeate deep into the office addition. These design measures will grant MicroAire employees an abundance of indirect light and views to the outside from every office space. It should be noted, exterior windows will abide by the design requirements of Albemarle County and not be highly reflective or tinted.

The relationship between the low point of the roof deck to the top of the parapet wall will provide adequate equipment screening from all points on the site, as well as Grand Forks Boulevard, and Airport Road. The addition also will utilize internal roof drains to eliminate the need for gutters, downspouts, or scuppers on the exterior façade. The proposed addition is designed with a similar scale to the existing building, providing a complimentary blend between old and new. Furthermore, MicroAire intends to paint the existing red concrete masonry block building to match the color scheme of the new addition, harmonizing the two buildings.

The site currently sits several feet above Airport Road and contains existing mature tree plantings along the property line. Visibility is significantly limited at the eastern corner of the property along Airport Road due to the change in topography leading up to the site. The view into the property from the intersection

of Grand Forks Boulevard and Airport Road is currently screened with existing trees and plantings around the monument sign and around the existing stormwater management facility. This plan proposed additional plantings of shade trees and flowering understory trees along Airport Road at the top of the slope. There are a variety of shrub plantings also proposed as part of the improved stormwater management facility. The new building addition will have new foundation plantings and parking lot landscaping to further enhance the site.

The parking lot lighting will be upgraded with new fixtures, selecting a style that matches the existing while utilizing modern LED dark sky compliant luminaires. There is not building mounted lighting proposed.

In conclusion, the office addition achieves three crucial desires for MicroAire. The addition provides a singular location for all employees to work, bringing well needed comradery to its staff. Size and placement of the exterior glazing will draw in needed natural light to office spaces, increasing staff productivity and morale. Lastly, the composition of building elements, textures, materials and placement enhances the building's appearance, providing its workforce with pride in their company and will complement the current and future development along the Entrance Corridor.