

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2026-16: Flow Pre-Owned
Review Type	Major Amendment
Parcel Identification	078000000014A0
Location	1381 Richmond Road
Zoned	Highway Commercial (HC), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Flow 1381 Richmond LLC/Design Develop (Kevin Schafer)
Magisterial District	Rivanna
Proposal	Renovate the existing showroom building by adding a new entrance element and painting the building’s exterior gray.
Context	The site is located on the south side of Route 250 East in the Pantops commercial area. This part of Pantops is characterized by several automobile dealerships, many of which have received ARB-approved renovations.
Visibility	The front elevation of the existing building is readily visible from the Entrance Corridor, although it is set back approximately 100’ from the road. Visibility of the side elevations is limited due to the proximity of buildings and trees; however, the roof of the building is visible above the nearby development for greater distances along the corridor.
ARB Meeting Date	October 5, 2026
Staff Contact	Khrist Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY

DATE	APPLICATION	RESULT
2/5/1999	ARB-1998-16 and ARB-1998-63	Certificate of Appropriateness issued for the Brown Mercedes building.
9/9/1999	ARB-1999-64	Wall and freestanding signs approved.
11/16/2010	ARB-2010-116	Wall signs approved.
12/3/2012	ARB-2012-141	Proposal to renovate the building to meet corporate branding standards denied by the ARB.
11/4/2013	ARB-2013-138	Renovation of the facade and west elevation approved by the ARB.
2/3/2015	ARB-2015-09	Wall and freestanding signs approved.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	GENERAL GUIDELINES		
	<i>Purpose</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 existing Mercedes building is a one-story structure divided into two sections: the showroom at the front and the service area at the rear. The proposed changes are limited to the showroom. The showroom’s existing façade (north elevation) features a central entrance portal flanked by storefront windows beneath a gable with a circular accent window. Additional windows are situated on either side of the main entrance. The showroom’s east and west elevations each contain three bays that include entrances and windows. The northern and southern bays are topped with gables with a circular accent window. A canopy supported by metal columns extends over the center and southern bays of the west elevation.	Revise the height of the entrance element to align with the top of the existing cornice line. Revise the framing of the entrance element to coordinate with existing divisions along the façade. Revise the building design to retain the red brick.
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.	The applicant is proposing changes to the showroom building’s mass and color palette. The structural modifications include removing the gable and accent window from the façade and replacing them with a large entrance element consisting of opaque white spandrel glass and silver and red ACM panels. Additionally, the showroom exterior, which includes red brick, black and tan EIFS, and white accents, will be uniformly painted gray.	Provide line drawings with the next submission that clearly identify all materials and proposed changes.
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.	In 2012, following revisions, the ARB approved a comparable entrance element for the adjacent Toyota showroom building. The element as applied to the Toyota building corresponds to the horizontal rhythm along the building’s façade as well as the building’s flat roof.	Revise the architectural drawings to show how the existing roof will be repaired to achieve an appropriate appearance.
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.	In contrast, the entrance element’s application on the Mercedes building disrupts the established architectural harmony. The feature’s scale clashes with the prominent hipped and gabled roof, and its framing does not coordinate with the detailing and rhythm present along the façade. Additionally, the monochromatic gray paint would remove a strong tie to local historic architecture and instead emphasize corporate identity.	
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	Adjusting the entrance element’s height to match the existing cornice line, coordinating its framing with the façade’s existing divisions, and retaining the red brick could help better integrate the feature into the existing building while maintaining elements that reflect local historic architecture.	

	harmonizing new development with the existing character of the corridor and achieving compatibility with the significant historic sites in the area.	Along the north elevation, the drawings show metal roofing replacing the removed gable, but more information is needed to confirm that the new material will coordinate with the existing.	
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.		
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.	The proposed renovation would significantly alter the scale and proportions of the existing building. Adjusting the height of the proposed entrance element to align with the cornice line would help maintain the human scale and balance in the façade and preserve the roof's overall form.	
11	The overall design of buildings should have human scale. Scale should be integral to the building and site design.		
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>	Based on correspondence with the applicant, no changes are proposed to the existing window glass. The new glass panels that will comprise the façade of the portal are designed to match those that were previously approved during the review of the Toyota showroom building.	Revise the drawings to include a note that confirms that no changes are proposed to the existing window glass.
	<i>Site development and layout</i>		
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	No site changes are proposed with the building renovation.	None.

	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.		
17-18, 21	Accessory structures and equipment	No new buildings or equipment are proposed with the building renovations. The existing roof-mounted mechanical equipment is not visible from the EC, and the building renovation will not affect this visibility.	None.
22-31	Lighting	The drawings appear to show that two building-mounted fixtures on the façade will be removed. No information has been provided on whether any new lighting is proposed. Based on previous ARB review, the entrance portal's construction includes internal illumination. However, the use of illumination to highlight building materials is not appropriate in the EC.	If any new building lighting is proposed, provide complete information for review. Revise the drawings to include a notation indicating the glass panels will not be illuminated.
	Signs	The drawings show a sign that appears minimal in nature. Note that signage is reviewed and approved by separate submission.	All proposed signage will be reviewed and approved by a separate submission.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

- 1. The entrance element: scale, material, color, compatibility with the original building and the EC
- 2. The proposed showroom color palette.

Staff recommends the following changes to be reviewed by the ARB at a future meeting:

- 1. Revise the height of the entrance element to align with the top of the existing cornice line.
- 2. Revise the framing of the entrance element to coordinate with existing divisions along the façade.
- 3. Revise the building design to retain the red brick.
- 4. Provide line drawings with the next submission that clearly identify all materials and proposed changes.
- 5. Revise the architectural drawings to show how the existing roof will be repaired to achieve an appropriate appearance.
- 6. Revise the drawings to include a note that confirms that no changes are proposed to the existing window glass.
- 7. If any new building lighting is proposed, provide complete information for review.
- 8. Revise the drawings to include a notation indicating the glass panels will not be illuminated.
- 9. All proposed signage will be reviewed and approved by a separate submission.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: [ARB-2026-16: Flow Pre-Owned Architectural Drawings](#)