

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ZMA-2026-00010: Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge Rezoning
Review Type	Advisory Review for a Zoning Map Amendment (ZMA)
Parcel Identification	078000000055A6, -55A7; 078B0000000100 (portion); <i>078B000A001500, -16, 17; 078B0000B00400, -5, 5A, 6, 7, 8, 9; 078B0000C00100, -2, -3</i> (<i>Italics</i> denote parcels that fall outside the Entrance Corridor Overlay District.)
Location	250 Pantops Mountain Road (See Attach. 1.)
Zoned	Planned Residential Development (PRD), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge and WCBR Land Holdings LLC / Williams Mullen (Megan Nedostup)
Magisterial District	Rivanna
Proposal	To rezone the existing campus and expansion areas to Neighborhood Model District zoning to accommodate a long-term phased redevelopment and expansion.
Context	The expansion is proposed on wooded and vacant land east of the existing campus. Office buildings are located south of the existing campus along Rt. 250. Residential developments are to the north, west and east. The Peter Jefferson Place development is across Rt. 250 to the south.
Visibility	The proposed development will be readily visible from the Entrance Corridor.
ARB Meeting Date	October 19, 2026
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge was established through ZMA198700009. The ARB has reviewed many of the buildings and additions in the existing campus.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	<i>Purpose; Compatibility with significant historic sites; 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.	It is anticipated that buildings proposed with the height and mass in the locations illustrated in this submittal will not effectively reflect the traditional architecture of the area through building form or massing. A limited connection could be made with building materials. The proposal could support orderly and attractive development by minimizing scale and massing, limiting the use of retaining walls, and maintaining wooded area to more fully integrate buildings into the topography.	Based on the information provided, the proposed development is not expected to be consistent with the scale or general appearance of the surrounding area or the historic architecture of the county.
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.	Current submittal materials illustrate proposed building forms and massing. The Phase 2 and 3 buildings have large footprints and tall heights. The Phase 3 building is proposed at seven stories and is described as stepped and terraced with upper stories set into the slope to reduce perceived mass, reading as part of the wooded hillside, but the site sections don't seem to show that condition. (See sheets 12 and 13 in Attach.	Revise the proposal to reduce building scale, building mass, and the use of retaining walls, to maintain trees where they will soften the appearance of buildings, and to more fully integrate buildings into the topography.
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.	3.) The Phase 2 building is proposed at 12-14 stories and sits much higher on the slope. The siting will make the tall building even more prominent. The building forms do not relate to historic architecture or to other buildings in the area.	Reduce visual impacts of the building mass by using multiple smaller buildings more integrated with the landscape instead of fewer taller, more massive buildings to help reduce visual impacts.
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	A conceptual exterior materials sheet has been submitted. It shows three color/material palettes ranging from light tan/gray to darker gray, brown and red masonry and metal products. Most of the materials shown in the images have	The "subdued natural" color palette is not recommended.

	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.	textures that can help mitigate impacts of large wall areas. The lightest colors – those labeled “subdued natural” – may be less successful than the others. They recall the light-colored materials used in some of the earliest buildings on the campus that were considered by some to overly emphasize the scale and mass of the large building and to increase noticeability.	Indicate the full extent of visibility of the proposed buildings along the Entrance Corridor. Additional views of the proposed development from more distant vantage points along the Entrance Corridor would be useful to determine impacts. Viewshed studies are recommended to clarify the full extent of visibility of the proposed development. See additional comments below.
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.	The Code of Development (Attach. 1) states that building facades will include breaks to vary the form and features of the buildings. The taller the buildings, the more important the design of the forms and features will be. Phase 5 buildings are proposed to be located on a parcel that falls outside the Entrance Corridor Overlay District.	
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.	Some images have been provided to illustrate the mass and scale of the proposed buildings from various points along the Entrance Corridor between Pantops Mountain Road and Glenorchy Drive. While these are helpful, it is anticipated that the height and mass of the Phase 2 and 3 buildings will make them visible from greater distances along the Rt. 250 corridor and from other vantage points in the County. It is important to understand the full extent of visibility of the proposed development to fully understand impacts. Additional views from other vantage points on the Entrance Corridor and additional viewshed studies would help assess impacts. The perspective views from Rt. 250 (Attach. 3) show the Phase 3 building as a very prominent structure set several feet above the corridor. The taller Phase 2 building is shown beyond,	
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.		

		perched further up in elevation. The views do not have enough detail to show how human scale will be achieved in the buildings or how the buildings will relate to the surrounding context. Given the proposed height and footprints of the Phase 2 and 3 buildings, it is anticipated that both will be a challenge to achieve. It cannot be confirmed from the current submittal that the proposed development will be compatible with the character of the Entrance Corridor.	
13	Any appearance of “blankness” resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.	The images that include proposed buildings are not rendered at a level of detail to assess this guideline. Architectural design detail enhanced by landscaping is recommended over vegetation alone.	None at this time.
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.	The submittal documents do not show physical connecting devices. The distance between most of the buildings would preclude such devices.	None at this time.
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.	It is anticipated that the proposed buildings will not have the appearance of trademark buildings.	None at this time.
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 choice of window glass for these buildings could have a significant visual impact.	Note that window glass in the Entrance Corridors should not be highly tinted or highly reflective; VLT must not drop below 40% and VLR must not exceed 30%.
	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.	Given the early stage of design, there should be ample opportunity to ensure that accessory structures and equipment, including rooftop equipment, are not visible from the Entrance Corridor.	As design development progresses, ensure that visibility of all accessory structures and equipment from the Entrance Corridor will be eliminated.
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.		
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.”		
22-31	Lighting	Limiting all ground- and building-mounted fixtures to full cutoff styles would be appropriate for this development to help reduce visibility and limit visual impacts.	Limit all ground- and building-mounted light fixtures to full cutoff styles.
	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.	Landscaping of the development will be important to help integrate it into the corridor, but landscaping alone will be ineffective in mitigating the height and mass of the Phase 2 and 3 buildings.	Site layout and architectural designs that are consistent with the Entrance Corridor Design Guidelines are preferred to inconsistent designs that require screening.
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.	The aerial images show some landscaping, including trees along the Rt. 250 frontage. One perspective image (sheet 11 in Attach. 3) suggests that a vegetated buffer will screen the Phase 3 building from the EC. While heavy landscaping might hide the proposed development from vantage points directly along the Phase 3 frontage, the preference is for site layout and architectural forms that meet the guidelines so that screening is not required and all views have an appropriate appearance.	
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 current plan does not meet this guideline. Sheet 9 in Attach. 1 shows extensive retaining walls along the west side of Glenorchy Drive and water and sewer lines along the east side. A sidewalk is shown along the south side of the connector road. The conceptual plans do not address the need for trees along interior roads. Street cross sections indicate landscaping in these areas as optional.	Revise the submittal to indicate that Entrance Corridor landscaping requirements for interior roads will be met.
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.	It is anticipated that this guideline could be met but the submittal does not address this level of detail.	None at this time.
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	The current plan does not meet this guideline. The Phase 3 parking lot and its associated retaining walls, which are adjacent to most of the perimeter of the lot, do not appear to accommodate perimeter trees.	Revise the submittal to indicate that Entrance Corridor landscaping requirements for parking lots will be met.

	should measure 24 inches in height.		
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.	Trees and shrubs will be important tools for mitigating impacts. However, given the height of the proposed Phase 2 and 3 buildings and considering the growth rate of trees, eliminating blankness with architectural massing, features and detailing would be more appropriate than relying on trees to mitigate blankness.	None at this time.
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> .	These requirements can be reviewed as part of the site plan process.	None at this time.
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.”		
	<i>Site Development and layout, Development pattern</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 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 narrative states that the Phase 2 building will be “largely absorbed into the tree canopy, with only the uppermost stories visible in leaf-on conditions”. It isn’t clear that this will be the case from the images that have been submitted. Additional information to show how this condition will be achieved would be helpful. The two proposed office buildings located just east of Pantops Mountain Road are oriented parallel to the EC, which continues the pattern of development already established to the west. The Phase 3 building is oriented parallel, but its form and massing are different, and it is separated from the street by a large parking lot and a connector road. This disrupts the pattern	Reduce visual impacts by: - Revising the Phase 3 building and parking to maintain linear buildings fronting the EC and parking behind the buildings... - Moving the connector road behind the Phase 3 building... - Dividing the Phase 3 parking lot into multiple lots, most of which are located
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.	of development. Moving the connector road further away from Rt. 250 and behind the Phase 3 building could reduce impacts. Dividing the parking area into multiple lots, with most of the parking behind and to the sides of the building, while maintaining a front elevation for the building that faces Rt. 250, could reduce impacts. A large part of the site is wooded; significant clearing will be required to accommodate the proposal. The clearing will open up visibility of the site and proposed buildings. It is anticipated that the tall buildings will project above the nearby tree lines from some vantage points, significantly changing existing views and vistas. The siting of the Phase 2 building will increase the prominence of the tall building. The Application Plan shows vehicular connections and states that pedestrian connections will be provided throughout.	behind and to the sides of the Phase 3 building... • Reducing building heights... • Maintaining wooded and mountain backdrops for buildings... ... all as viewed from the EC.
	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.	The proposal shows disturbance of steep slopes and relies on the extensive use of multiple tall and stepped retaining walls. (See Sheet 9 of Attach. 1). Notes indicate maximum retained heights ranging from 8' to +/- 30'. Walls at the Phase 2 building are noted as "maximum height 30' below a 20' parking structure". Many of the walls are expected to be visible from the EC. The height and quantity of the walls is expected to result in an overly engineered appearance for the overall site rather than an integrated, landscaped development.	Reduce visual impacts by reducing the use of retaining walls and shaping the terrain with rounded land forms that blend more with the existing terrain.
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.	A significant amount of tree removal will be required to accommodate the proposed development. It is likely that grading will occur	None at this time.

	Adequate tree protection fencing should be shown on, and coordinated throughout, the grading, landscaping and erosion and sediment control plans.	within the dripline of some trees to remain. The aerial images show an area of trees to remain above the existing stormwater ponds.	
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 large stormwater pond is shown close to the EC, just west of Glenorchy Drive. Although the pond is described as having a water level below the elevation of the EC, the form of the feature and the related grading and topography will still make the area identifiable as a stormwater pond from the street. Extensive landscaping could help limit visual impacts.	Site the stormwater pond so that sufficient space remains available for landscaping that integrates the pond into the landscape.
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 recommend the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. Anticipated visual impact of the proposed development
2. Appropriateness of the height, mass, and scale of the proposed buildings
3. Location of the connector road
4. Compatibility of the proposed development with the surrounding context
5. The extensive use of retaining walls

Staff provide the following comments on the proposal:

1. Regarding general visual impacts:
 - a. Indicate the full extent of visibility of the proposed buildings along the Entrance Corridor.
 - b. Additional views of the proposed development from more distant vantage points along the Entrance Corridor would be useful to determine impacts.
 - c. Viewshed studies are recommended to clarify the full extent of visibility of the proposed development.
2. Regarding site layout; building height, mass and scale:
 - a. Based on the information provided, the proposed development is not expected to be consistent with the scale or general appearance of the surrounding area or the historic architecture of the county.

- b. Site layout and architectural designs that are consistent with the Entrance Corridor Design Guidelines are preferred to inconsistent designs that require screening.
 - c. Revise the proposal to reduce building scale, building mass, and the use of retaining walls, to maintain trees where they will soften the appearance of buildings, and to more fully integrate buildings into the topography.
 - d. Reduce visual impacts by:
 - i. Using multiple smaller buildings more integrated with the landscape instead of fewer taller, more massive buildings.
 - ii. Revising the Phase 3 building and parking to maintain linear buildings fronting the EC and parking behind the buildings as viewed from the EC.
 - iii. Moving the connector road behind the Phase 3 building as viewed from the EC.
 - iv. Dividing the Phase 3 parking lot into multiple lots, most of which are located behind and to the sides of the Phase 3 building as viewed from the EC.
 - v. Reducing building heights as viewed from the EC.
 - vi. Maintaining wooded and mountain backdrops for buildings as viewed from the EC.
 - vii. Reducing the use of retaining walls and shaping the terrain with rounded land forms that blend more with the existing terrain.
 - e. Site the stormwater pond so that sufficient space remains available for landscaping that integrates the pond into the landscape.
 - f. Revise the submittal to indicate that Entrance Corridor landscaping requirements will be met, including interior roads and parking lots.
3. As development of the architectural design progresses:
- a. The “subdued natural” color palette is not recommended.
 - b. Note that window glass in the Entrance Corridors should not be highly tinted or highly reflective; VLT must not drop below 40% and VLR must not exceed 30%.
 - c. Ensure that visibility of all accessory structures and equipment from the Entrance Corridor will be eliminated.
 - d. Limit all ground- and building-mounted light fixtures to full cutoff styles.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: ZMA-2026-00010: [Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge Rezoning – Application Plan](#)

Attach. 2: ZMA-2026-00010: [Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge Rezoning – Narrative](#)

Attach. 3: ZMA-2026-00010: [Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge Rezoning – Aerials, Perspectives, Sections](#)

Attach. 4: ZMA-2026-00010: [Westminster Canterbury of the Blue Ridge Rezoning – Exhibits](#)