



COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: CPA 2018-00004 Rio29 Small Area Plan	Staff: Rachel Falkenstein, Principal Planner
Planning Commission Public Hearing: November 13, 2018	Board of Supervisors Public Hearing: December 12, 2018
Owner/s: Multiple	Applicant: Albemarle County
Tax Map Parcel: Multiple Location: The Rio29 Plan area is approximately a half mile radius from the intersection of Rio Rd and Route 29 intersection, but does not include areas of single family residential.	Acreage: 391 acres
Zoning District: Multiple	Magisterial District: Rio
Proposal: To amend the Comprehensive Plan and Places29 Master Plan to incorporate the Rio29 Small Area Plan. The Plan will become part of the appendix of the Comprehensive Plan and an addendum to Places29.	Comprehensive Plan Designation: The Plan identifies a new pattern of land use for the Rio29 area, described in more detail in the attached plan.
Use & Character of Property: The predominant land use of the area is commercial retail. There are some areas of multi-family residential in the eastern portion of the Plan area and some small office/service uses throughout the Plan area.	Use of Surrounding Properties: There are areas of single family residential to the east and west of the Plan area. South and north are areas of predominantly commercial/retail.
Factors Favorable: 1. The Plan is supportive of Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives for Growth Management, Development Areas, Economic Development, Transportation, and Parks. 2. The Plan is supportive of the Neighborhood Model Principles. 3. A Small Area Plan is recommended for the area around Rio Rd and Route 29 in the Places29 Master Plan, and the adoption of this plan will complete that implementation recommendation. 4. The Plan has been widely supported by the community through an over two-year planning process.	Factors Unfavorable: 1. The Plan recommends a long-term strategy of implementation that entails significant public investment; however, fiscal modeling indicated that increased tax revenues from redevelopment could more than offset the recommended capital costs.
Recommendation: Staff recommends the Planning Commission recommend approval of the Rio29 Small Area Plan.	

STAFF PERSON:
PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSESSION:

Rachel Falkenstein
November 13, 2018

CPA 201800004 Rio29 Small Area Plan

Rio29 Small Area Plan CPA20180004 - to consider proposed amendments to the Land Use Plan section of the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan and Places29 Master Plan by replacing portions of the existing profiles of Neighborhood 1, Neighborhood 2, consisting of an approximately 1/2 mile radius from the Rio Road and Route 29 intersection. The Small Area Plan establishes new land use policies, guidelines, recommendations, goals and strategies for future development within the Plan area. The Plan would establish the following for the Rio29 Plan area: a vision for the development and redevelopment of the area and supporting recommendations; place types with form and use recommendations; a plan for the transportation network and its integration with the place types; a plan for open space, trails and natural resource protection and enhancement, a plan for implementation and supporting community facilities and infrastructure. A copy of the full text of the Rio29 Small Area Plan is on available online and on file in the office of the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors and in the Department of Community Development, County Office Building, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Rio29 Small Area Planning process began in summer of 2016. Early visioning during the first Phase of the project examined a larger Rio29 study area and identified key themes including a desire for walkability, amenity spaces, and a wider mix of uses. The community embraced the concept of the 15-minute walkable community with development centered around nodes, but citizens felt planning efforts should concentrate on the Rio29 node in the short term. Phase I was funded through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment and was completed by March 2017.

Phase II developed a preliminary land use plan, urban design plan, transportation plan and implementation action plan for Rio29. A charrette in May 2017 developed three design alternatives, “Streets”, “Squares”, and “Station”. The transit hub featured in the “Station” concept received strong support, as did the organization in “Squares”. A design concept combining these two concepts into a connectivity plan and framework was endorsed by the Board of Supervisors in January 2018.

Phase III began in February 2018 and included further refinement of the design concept and fiscal and transportation modeling. Staff was directed to advance the design concept to a Comprehensive Plan Amendment in September 2018. At a work session on August 21 the Planning Commission discussed the final draft concepts for Connectivity, Character, Conservation, and recommendations for Implementation and provided feedback to staff. The table below summarizes the Commission’s feedback from August and discusses how the draft Plan addresses the comments.

Overall Feedback	How the Plan addresses the feedback
Suggestion that this plan is an invitation plan	Introduction page added to draft document – “Rio29 is an Opportunity Plan and Invitation” (pg 5).
Select one quadrant to focus on; use as case study to see if our plan is feasible	Staff feels the concept is too far along in the planning and engagement process to scale back; however, there is flexibility built into the plan that would allow redevelopment to occur one quadrant at a time, if the market should support that.
Focus more on details; nervous about reliance on graphics instead of substance	More detail and description has been added to the draft document.
Concerned that scale is too big, no sense of "there"; center of 29 and Rio not a core, it's a highway intersection; reconsider smaller nodes	Concentrating development in proximity to 29 will be critical for the success of future transit along Route 29. Staff also felt that focusing on Rio as the “core” street can improve the likelihood of success of first floor commercial space in mixed use buildings, which was something that was important to property owners and developers. Proposed traffic calming measures and streetscape improvements along Rio can help transform the street into a more vibrant and pedestrian friendly street.
Connectivity Feedback	How the Plan addresses the feedback
Concerned about traffic issues in longer-range plans	Transportation modeling demonstrates that the proposed network can handle the projected traffic and maintain the current level of service (see appendix).
Prioritize transit above other projects, Commuter bus stop should be a priority; move it up the list	The Plan concept is organized around the possibility of future transit, recommending a transit-oriented design with a central transit station at or near the Rio29 intersection. The addition of a Route 29 commuter bus stop is recommended as a “Catalyst” project (pg 48). The Plan also includes several recommendations around transit such as increasing frequency of service and improving ease of route transfers.
Concern about Rio becoming main street when it has such high traffic volume	Rio Road streetscaping is recommended as a “Catalyst” project (pg 47) to provide traffic calming on Rio and make this a more pedestrian friendly street.

Make sure there are "sticking points" that make people want to hang around a street	A central recommendation of the plan is that streets be designed as complete streets that are designed to be safe and comfortable pedestrians. The plan recommends uses and designs that will encourage more pedestrian activity along streets.
Connect neighborhoods	Trails have been added to connect the NE neighborhoods to adjacent public spaces. Many neighbors who provided feedback during the planning process did not support vehicular connections to their neighborhoods, though the plan would not preclude the possibility of future neighborhood connections.
Character Feedback	How the Plan addresses the feedback
Architecture should be more interesting than "brick and column" feel; something unique to Rio29	Staff agrees, though we did not feel far enough along in our planning process to recommend a specific architectural style for Rio29. The plan recommends a visual preference survey to identify preferred styles for the area and subsequent policy and zoning updates (pg 29).
Need preservation of mountain views/vistas	Some preliminary viewshed analysis was done with the Plan and there are recommendations for a more detailed analysis and subsequent zoning and policy updates for viewshed protection (pg 29).
Make usage more clear for developers	Detailed use descriptions were added to the Plan (pg 28).
Conservation Feedback	How the Plan addresses the feedback
Open space on East-side too marshy/buggy; have "pause" areas between larger parks/plazas.	Smaller pockets of open space are recommended as part of all private development and redevelopment (see pg 37).
Seating too rigid in parks	Haven't addressed this directly in the Plan. Future planning efforts around designs of public spaces should accommodate this.
More greenery/parks too urban: more green, less impervious surface (savannah-feel, not volcanic-surface feel); plazas likely to be miserable because of heat	Language has been added to highlight the importance of tree canopy. Language is added to state that plazas need not be hardscape. This Plan does not intend to design future public spaces, only to identify their location and function.
Not green or inspiring enough to be adopted in current form	More detail has been added to discuss the need for additional tree canopy and open space within private redevelopment. Recommendations were added about increasing tree canopy, use of LID and sustainable design.

Concern about floodable park	This is a new concept for the County, but we think it addresses the need for more public spaces and the need to provide a more efficient utilization of land. More detailed design work and a plan for operations is still needed to fully realize this concept.
Concern over purpose of Woodbrook natural area; who is it for?	The use of the space should be open for the entire community. The plan acknowledges that the location adjacent to established neighborhoods should be taken into consideration with the design of the space. The first phase for this space is a detailed design and engagement process. The design process will be in collaboration with the neighbors to understand their desires for this space, how their concerns can be addressed with the design of the space, and to identify future location of trails and facilities (pg 47).
Restore previous geomorphology	The plan recommends stream daylighting and the protection of existing areas of preserved slopes and stream buffers.
Implementation Feedback	How the Plan addresses the feedback
Difficult to convince developers to build parking garages as of now: financial incentives?	The Implementation chapter highlights the importance of the County acting as a partner in the redevelopment of this area. Shared parking is one possibility for a public-private partnership.
Underpass safety	Added language to recommend safety be a primary element in the design of the underpass (pg 50).
For transformative projects, years seem overly precise and too full of promise	Projects have been recategorized to be either “catalyst” (first five years) or “long term” (more than five years out) (pg 45).
Test out the idea of a Library plaza more	This concept generated positive feedback from the community, library patrons, and staff. More engagement is needed around the future design of the facility. Though the popularity of this library branch and anecdotes from library staff and patrons indicate a desire for more public/civic space in this area.
Incentivize; parking, affordable housing, the likes	The Plan recommends future policy and code that require and/or incentivize affordable housing (pg 30). The plan also recommends that parking standards be reexamined, and structured parking be encouraged (pg 29). The Implementation Chapter discusses the

	importance of County investment and partnership in the implementation of the Plan.
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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

Comprehensive Plan

The Rio29 Small Area Plan is supportive of multiple goals of the Comprehensive Plan including goals and objectives for Growth Management, Economic Development, Development Areas, Transportation, and Parks and Recreation/Greenways/Blueways/Green Systems. The Plan also recommends a development pattern consistent with the Neighborhood Model Principles.

Places29 Master Plan

The Places29 Master Plan recommends a Small Area Plan be completed for the area around the Rio Road and Route 29 intersection to allow the coordination of the future development and transportation improvements. The Master Plan calls for the small area plan to be used as a tool to guide land use, zoning, transportation, open space and other capital improvements at a higher level of detail. The draft Plan provides recommendations in each of these areas for Rio29.

Portions of Rio29 are currently designated as Urban Mixed Use in and around centers, Urban Density Residential, and Office/R&D/Flex/LI. The current land use designations from Places29 would still be allowable with the updated land use recommendations of the Rio29 Plan; however, the draft Plan focuses less on prescribing a specific mix of land uses and focuses instead on how the County can allow and encourage a mixture of uses in a flexible manner. The draft Plan emphasizes the importance of encouraging an active street life through the form and placement of buildings and the design of streets.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION:

Favorable for consideration are listed below.

Factors Favorable:

1. The Plan is supportive of Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives for Growth Management, Development Areas, Economic Development, Transportation, and Parks
2. The Plan is supportive of the Neighborhood Model Principles
3. A Small Area Plan is recommended for the area around Rio Rd and Route 29 in the Places29 Master Plan, and the adoption of this plan will complete that implementation recommendation.
4. The Plan has been widely supported by the community through an over two-year planning process

Factors Unfavorable:

1. The Plan recommends a long-term strategy of implementation that entails significant public investment; however, fiscal modeling indicated that increased

tax revenues from redevelopment could more than offset the recommended capital costs.

Staff recommendation:

Staff recommends the Planning Commission adopt the attached resolution (attachment C) to recommend approval of the Rio29 Small Area Plan.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A – [Draft Rio29 Small Area Plan](#)
- B – [Recommended updates to Places 29 Master Plan](#)
- C – [Draft Resolution](#)