



County of Albemarle
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

401 McIntire Road, North Wing
Charlottesville, VA 22902-4579
Telephone: 434-296-5832
WWW.ALBEMARLE.ORG

Memorandum

To: Kevin McCollum
Senior Planner

From: Emily Cox, PE
Deputy County Engineer

Date: 01/19/2022

Subject: Wawa - Vehicle Access Waiver
Special Exception Request (SE202100048)

Engineering has reviewed the special exception request to vary the minimum design requirements and improvements for vehicle access aisles as outlined in County Code § 18-4.12.17. The following is Engineering's analysis of this request:

Description:

This project is on Tax Parcel 061W0-02-0A-00100. The Applicant is requesting a waiver to increase the grade of the access aisle on Greenbrier Drive from the permitted maximum of 10% up to a maximum of 16% because of the existing topography and an existing gas line. The slope of the current entrance on Greenbrier Drive is 18.5%. This project would move the entrance west, away from a major intersection with Route 29 (US-29), and decrease that slope to a maximum of 16%, which is acceptable to VDOT and Albemarle County Fire Rescue for access purposes.

Relevant Information:

The Applicant provided a study showing that standard vehicles would not scrape their bumpers or undercarriage on the proposed slope. The proposed plan also includes grade breaks to promote gradual transitions.

VDOT prefers this second/alternate entrance on Greenbrier Drive because it is a low volume road. VDOT has reviewed and has no objections to the proposed plan and profile. VDOT has also approved an access management exception to restrict turning movements during peak hours.

Charlottesville City gas has reviewed and has no objections to the proposed plan and profile. Federal law requires a minimum of 36" of cover over the City's gas lines. This cover requirement restricts the grading allowed on the site, which results in this steep slope.

Albemarle County Fire Rescue has reviewed and has no objections to the proposed plan and profile. Its approval is based on the following:

- Another entrance to the site off of US-29 complies with the maximum grade of 10% permitted pursuant to County Code § 18-4.12.17(a).
- The Greenbrier Drive entrance is paved.
- The width of the entrance does not limit emergency apparatus access.
- The grade of Greenbrier Drive would not exceed 16%.
- Exemption requests to the 10% requirement are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with consideration of the surrounding road design, the topography, and any limitations presented. The design proposed in this exemption is in line with exemptions granted for other projects.

- The proposed design is an improvement to the current entrance from Greenbrier Drive to the business currently located on this site.

County Code:**The request is for a modification of County Code § 18-4.12.17(a):**

Grade for vehicle access aisles not adjacent to parking spaces. Vehicle access aisles that are not adjacent to parking spaces, shall not exceed a grade of ten percent. The Board of Supervisors may increase the maximum grade, upon a finding that no reasonable design alternative would reduce or alleviate the need and that the increase in grade would be in the best interest of public health, safety and welfare. The developer must request the waiver in writing and provide all information necessary to justify that no reasonable design alternative exists. In no case shall the grade exceed private road standards set forth in section 14-514 of the Code.

The process for a modification review is outlined in County Code § 18-4.12.2(c) and (c)(2):

The design requirements in sections 4.12.15, 4.12.16, 4.12.17, 4.12.18 and 4.12.19 may be modified or waived . . . in an individual case if the Board of Supervisors finds that the public health, safety or welfare would be equally or better served by the modification or waiver and that the modification or waiver would not otherwise be contrary to the purpose and intent of this chapter. . . .

The Board of Supervisors may modify or waive a design requirement in sections 4.12.15, 4.12.16, 4.12.17, 4.12.18 and 4.12.19 only after consultation with the county engineer, who shall advise the zoning administrator whether the proposed waiver or modification would equally or better serve the public health, safety or welfare.

Staff Recommendation:**Engineering recommends approval of this vehicle access waiver.**

Engineering staff believes that allowing the second entrance onto Greenbrier Drive would better serve the public health, safety and welfare for the following reasons:

1. It would meet VDOT entrance requirements.
2. It would meet City Gas requirements.
3. It would meet Albemarle County Fire Rescue requirements.
4. It would be a better situation than the existing entrance because it would be farther away from the US-29 intersection and have a reduced slope. Currently vehicles scrape their bumpers and undercarriage, as evidenced in the existing entrance. Per the applicant's analysis, this would not happen with the new entrance design.
5. It would allow vehicles to avoid travelling on a major roadway (US-29).
6. It would reduce vehicle conflicts and result in a safer condition for drivers wanting to avoid travelling on US-29.
7. It would allow access to the Greenbrier Drive traffic signal, which would reduce vehicle conflicts and result in a safer condition for all drivers, specifically those wanting to travel south on US-29.
8. It would reduce congestion on US-29 by allowing access directly to Greenbrier Drive.