ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	**ARB-2024-71: 400 Rio Rd. West Outdoor Storage, Display, and Sales**
Review Type	Conceptual Plan
Parcel Identification	04500-00-00-025C0, 04500-00-00-025C1
Location	400 Rio Road West
Zoned	Light Industrial (LI) / Entrance Corridor (EC) / Airport Impact Area (AIA)
Owner/Applicant	Virginia Telephone & Telegraph Co / Williams Mullen (Valerie Long)
Magisterial District	Rio
Context	Most of 45-25C is paved. Additional paving is adjacent on 45-25C1. Chain link fence encloses much of the paved area. The property contains two structures, a brick-faced office building at the front of the site along Rio Rd. and a large metal shed towards the rear of the paved area. The rear portion of 45-25C1 is wooded. To the south across Rio Rd. and separated from it by a solid wood screening fence is the Four Seasons residential development. Additional single-family detached homes are to the east. To the west is a light industrial parcel housing an HVAC company. (See Fig. 1.)
Proposal	Ferguson Enterprises, a wholesale plumbing business, proposes to occupy the existing office building and to establish outdoor storage, display, and sales (storage) of equipment and plumbing materials in the paved area north and west of the building on TMP 45-25C and a portion of 45-25C1. Site changes include creating a landscaped berm between the storage area and the EC, replacing chain link fencing along the frontage with security fencing, and relocating chain link fencing east of the building to behind the building.
Visibility	Based on the current concept plan layout, the materials and storage area are expected to be visible from Rio Rd. through and above the proposed security fencing and landscaped berm with increased visibility expected from the storage area entrance along Rio Rd.
ARB Meeting Date	January 6, 2025
Staff Contact	Khris Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY

The development of this site predates the establishment of the Entrance Corridor overlay. Equipment has been stored on the property for years. That storage has been continuous at the back of the property (parcel 45-25C1) where it is considered non-conforming and may continue without a Special Use Permit (SP). Storage within the parking lot has not been continuous; any storage in that area requires an SP. Vehicles and trailers used for business purposes is not considered storage. A pre-application meeting was held on November 4, 2024, to discuss the current proposal. Due to the nature of the storage and the screening, staff recommended that the applicant submit a conceptual plan for ARB review promptly, to obtain ARB input to inform the SP submittal. An SP application was received on December 16. ARB comment on the proposal will be forwarded to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors as part of the SP review process.

Figure 1: Pictometry image showing the project area along the Entrance Corridor.

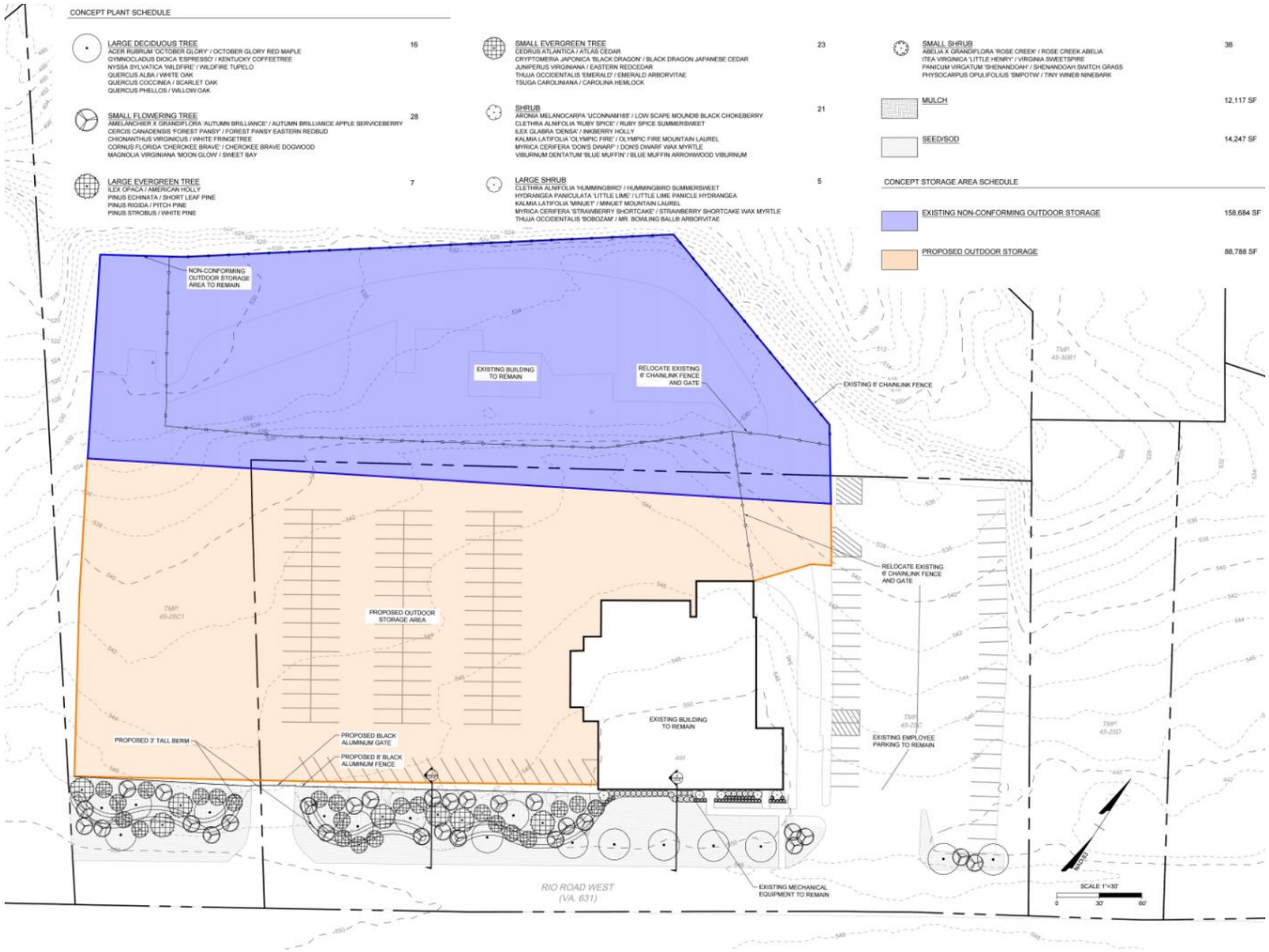

Figure 2: Proposed concept plan showing the buildings, travelways, outdoor storage, and parking.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	Purpose, *Compatibility with the Character of the Entrance Corridor*		
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.	This portion of the Rio Rd. EC is characterized by small- and large-scale (Cville Rio Rd. Apartments) residential developments with large trees near the frontage and wooded areas behind the developments on the north side of the street. The frontage of the subject parcel currently features a broad grass strip with little landscaping and unobstructed views of paving beyond. The proposed landscaping will help to fill in this area, visually connecting the parcel with the surrounding context and increasing the continuity along the EC.	See lighting and landscaping recommendations, below.
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.		
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.		
3, 4, 9-16	***Compatibility with significant historic sites, Structure Design***	No new buildings or changes to existing buildings are proposed.	
	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.	No accessory structures are proposed. The concept plan shows primarily deciduous shrubs added to screen existing ground-mounted mechanical equipment at the front of the building. The plant schedule provides examples of shrub species, some of which are not on the approved plant list. The standard mechanical equipment note is not shown on the concept plan.	See landscaping recommendations, below. Include the standard mechanical equipment note on the site plan.
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.”		

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.	The storage area (approximately 88,788 sf) is proposed in the existing paved parking lot located north and west of the existing brick building. The size and orientation of that building are not sufficient for screening the stored items. The applicant proposes to replace the existing chain link fencing located along the southern perimeter of the proposed storage area with a fence that is not opaque. The example suggested by the applicant is a black aluminum picket fence (Fig. 3) that conforms with EC criteria for security fencing (Attachment 3); however, it would not eliminate visibility of items within the storage area. A solid screening fence could more successfully reduce the visual impacts of stored items by limiting visibility to those that are taller than the fence. However, a screening fence in this location, at 368' long, would have visual impacts of its own, even with appropriate height, materials, and detailing, and a screening fence proposal might be accompanied by reduced frontage planting.  **Fig. 3:** Image of security fencing provided in the concept plan. To increase the screening of stored items, the applicant proposes to establish a 3-foot-tall berm along the new fence, with a mix of evergreen and deciduous plants on the berm. The planting arrangement shown exceeds the minimum requirements; however, the plants would not completely screen the storage area	Conditions of approval for the outdoor storage area might address: • Specific locations for materials and equipment • Landscaping and lighting New or relocated chain link fence must not be visible from the Entrance Corridor. Note the locations of any new or moved fence and provide details for all fence types visible from the EC. Revise the concept plan to provide a layout that shows how the proposed materials and equipment within the storage area will be organized. Revise the concept plan to show that the storage of materials and equipment taller than the fence height will be limited to the rear of the site. Provide the proposed locations of loading, service, and refuse areas with the site plan. Show how these locations will be screened from the EC.
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.		

		when the use commences, and the western site entrance from Rio Rd. would create a permanent gap in the screening. Although the picket fence and landscaped berm will not completely screen the storage area from the EC, eliminating chain link fencing would have a positive impact, the aluminum fence would help establish an organized appearance, and the mix of plants on the berm would enhance the current frontage condition and better integrate the site into the surroundings, resulting in a more orderly and visually appealing development on the corridor. One of the site sections notes maximum storage height as 12' and shows material storage (a pipe storage rack) that is the same height as the fence (8') along the fence line. Exhibit D in the applicant's narrative outlines the materials that will be stored at this location. The exhibits show a variety of materials distributed throughout the storage areas with no clear method of organization. Many of the items are stacked; some are not. Positioning items with lower overall stacked height closer to the EC, and taller items further from the fence line may help to minimize the negative visual impact on the EC. The ARB has typically required that storage/display/sales spaces for vehicles must be striped like standard parking spaces. This requirement allows for distribution and orientation that is more like standard parking lots. In this case, vehicles would not be stored but depending on the vehicle type and size parking them towards the front of the storage area may also help reduce the visual impact on the EC and provide for a more consistent and orderly appearance as viewed from the street. The concept plan shows a portion of the existing chain link fence to the east of the building relocated west, behind the building. Any portion of this relocated fencing visible from the EC would be subject to ARB review. The loading, service, and refuse areas have not been labeled on the concept plan. Siting these areas in locations where they will not be visible from the EC would be appropriate.	
	Lighting		
22	Light should be contained on the site and not spill over onto adjacent properties or streets;	The concept plan does not include a lighting plan, and the applicant has indicated that no new lighting is proposed. If new lighting were proposed in the storage area, standard conditions would be recommended. (Those conditions include limiting illumination at the ground to 30 footcandles for display lots and 20 footcandles for other uses, restricting pole light height to a maximum of 20 feet,	Provide a lighting plan with the site plan or add a note to the plan stating that no new ground- or building-mounted lighting is proposed.
23	Light should be shielded, recessed, or flush-mounted to eliminate glare. All fixtures with lamps emitting 3000 lumens or more must be full cutoff fixtures.		

24	Light levels exceeding 30 footcandles are not appropriate for display lots in the Entrance Corridors. Lower light levels will apply to most other uses in the Entrance Corridors.	restricting color temperature to a range between 2000K and 3000K, and limiting finishes for pole fixtures to dark brown, dark bronze, or black.)	Maximum light levels must not exceed 20 footcandles.
28	In determining the appropriateness of lighting fixtures for the Entrance Corridors, the individual context of the site will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis.		
25	Light should have the appearance of white light with a warm soft glow; however, a consistent appearance throughout a site or development is required. Consequently, if existing lamps that emit non-white light are to remain, new lamps may be required to match them.		All fixtures must have lamps whose color temperature is between 2000 and 3000 Kelvin.
26	Dark brown, dark bronze, or black are appropriate colors for free-standing pole-mounted light fixtures in the Entrance Corridors.		The finish for freestanding poles must be either dark brown, dark bronze, or black.
27	The height and scale of freestanding, pole-mounted light fixtures should be compatible with the height and scale of the buildings and the sites they are illuminating, and with the use of the site. Typically, the height of freestanding pole-mounted light fixtures in the Entrance Corridors should not exceed 20 feet, including the base. Fixtures that exceed 20 feet in height will typically require additional screening to achieve an appropriate appearance from the Entrance Corridor.		Pole-mounted fixtures must not exceed 20’ in height maximum.
29	The following note should be included on the lighting plan: “Each outdoor luminaire equipped with a lamp that emits 3,000 or more initial lumens shall be a full cutoff luminaire and shall be arranged or shielded to reflect light away from adjoining residential districts and away from adjacent roads. The spillover of lighting from luminaires onto public roads and property in residential or rural areas zoning districts shall not exceed one-half footcandle.”		Include the standard lighting note on the lighting plan.
30-31	*Guidelines for the Use of Decorative Landscape Lighting*		Provide a lighting plan with the site plan or add a note to the plan stating that no new ground- or building-mounted lighting is proposed.
	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.	The site has approximately 674’ of frontage along the EC including the site entrances. A grass strip separates the street from the building and parking lot. Its depth varies from 12 feet near the employee parking lot entrance to 55 feet along the storage area and it contains five existing trees. The proposed concept plan shows a 3-foot-tall berm between the storage area and the EC, planted with a combination of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs. A row of large trees is also proposed between the existing building and the street, accompanied by a row of shrubs placed closer to the building. This arrangement of landscaping	Provide a complete landscape plan with the site plan. See recommendations provided with the Guidelines on accessory structures and equipment.
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.	exceeds frontage landscaping requirements but details on planting size have not been provided. The plantings are also expected to increase the continuity along the EC; however, the landscaping would not provide complete screening of the materials and storage area when the use commences.	
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.	There are no interior roads within this site.	None.
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 should measure 24 inches in height.	The existing parking lot on the east side of the parcel would remain. The area south of the lot serves as the parking lot perimeter and street frontage. In this area, the concept plan shows plantings that could meet the frontage landscaping requirements. Along the east side of the parking lot between the lot and parcel boundary is existing vegetation but this is not shown on the concept plan. The existing employee parking lot does not meet the requirement for interior parking trees. Four large shade trees would be required based on the 42 parking spaces.	See recommendations provided with the Guidelines on site grading. Consider adding one interior parking lot tree for every ten parking spaces in the employee parking lot.
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 concept plan shows that the existing sidewalk along the front of the building that leads to Rio Rd. will remain. No other interior sidewalks are shown.	None.

	the ground) and should be of a species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 25 feet on center.		
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.	No changes are proposed to the buildings that are to remain. A combination of deciduous and evergreen shrubs is proposed along the southern edge of the building. This landscaping is expected to filter the view of the existing mechanical equipment from the EC.	None.
37	Plant species: a. Plant species required should be as approved by the Staff based upon but not limited to the *Generic Landscape Plan Recommended Species List* and *Native Plants for Virginia Landscapes (Appendix D)*.	A conceptual landscape plan has been provided with this submittal. The plant schedule provides example shrub species but some of the species shown are not on the approved plant list.	Provide a complete landscape plan with the site plan. Ensure that the proposed species are on the approved plant list.
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."	The standard plant health note does not appear on the plan.	Include the standard plant health note on the landscape plan submitted with the site plan.
	Development pattern		
	Site development and layout		
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; ensuring 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 site is a developed light industrial parcel with no changes proposed to the existing site layout.	None.
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 *Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance* 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.		
	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 landforms 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.	Grading is necessary to create the proposed 3-foot-tall berm between the storage area and the Rio Rd. Entrance Corridor. The plan shows the berm will be landscaped with a mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees and shrubs that are expected to help integrate it into the surroundings.	None.
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. Adequate tree protection fencing should be shown on, and coordinated throughout, the grading, landscaping and erosion and sediment control plans.	Along the parcel's eastern and western boundaries is existing onsite vegetation. However, this vegetation has not been shown on the concept plan.	Revise the concept plan to show that vegetation near the parcel's eastern and western boundaries will remain.
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.		
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.	There are no existing stormwater facilities, and none are proposed in the concept plan.	None.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Primary points of discussion:

1. Fencing between the storage area and the EC:
    a. Aluminum picket fence versus opaque screening fence.
    b. The increased visibility of the storage area from the gate and entrance along Rio Rd.
2. The extent to which the proposed berm and landscaping mitigate the visual impacts of the outdoor storage area.

Recommended revisions to the Concept Plan to be reviewed by the ARB prior to Planning Commission review:

1. Revise the concept plan to provide a layout that shows how the proposed materials and equipment within the storage area will be organized.
2. Revise the concept plan to show that storage of materials and equipment taller than the fence height will be limited to the rear of the site.
3. Revise the concept plan to show that vegetation near the parcel's eastern and western boundaries will remain.

Draft Conditions on the Special Use Permit:

1. Materials and equipment must be stored only in areas indicated for storage on the Concept Plan. Materials and equipment taller than the fence height must be located at the rear of the site.
2. Materials and equipment must not be stored within 45' of the fence located along the southeast perimeter of the parking lot.
3. Site plan approval is subject to ARB approval of the landscape plan (submitted with the site plan). Landscaping shown on the plan may be required to be in excess of the minimum requirements of the ARB guidelines and/or the Zoning Ordinance to mitigate the visual impacts of the proposed use.
4. Any new lighting is subject to ARB approval. Maximum light levels must not exceed 20 footcandles. The maximum height of pole lights must not exceed 20'. All fixtures must have lamps whose color temperature is between 2000 and 3000 Kelvin. All site- and building-mounted fixtures must be full cutoff.

Recommendations for the Site Plan

1. Include the standard mechanical equipment note on the site plan: Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated.
2. Provide the proposed locations of loading, service, and refuse areas with the site plan. Show how these locations will be screened from the EC.
3. New or relocated chain link fence must not be visible from the Entrance Corridor. Note the locations of any new or moved fence and provide details for all fence types visible from the EC.
4. Provide a lighting plan with the site plan or add a note to the plan stating that no new ground- or building-mounted lighting is proposed.
5. Provide a complete landscaping plan with the site plan. Ensure that the proposed species are on the approved plant list.
6. Consider adding one interior parking lot tree for every ten parking spaces in the employee parking lot.
7. Include the standard plant health note on 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.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attach. 1: ARB2024-71: 400 Rio Rd. West Narrative
- Attach. 2: ARB2024-71: 400 Rio Rd. West Concept Plan
- Attach. 3: Entrance Corridor Safety and Screening Fencing Design Criteria