

Project Narrative For: ZMA2021-00014 An Amendment to ZMA2019-00003 “Albemarle Business Campus”

Parcel ID: 76-54

Pre-App Meeting Date: October 25, 2021

Submit 1: November 15, 2021

Submit 2: February 07, 2022

	ACREAGE	EXISTING ZONING	ZMA PROPOSED	COMP PLAN DESIGNATION
TMP 76-54	7.07	NMD	NMD	Community Mixed Use

Additional Zoning Considerations:

Entrance Corridor, Steep Slopes – Managed, Airport Impact Area

Location:

Northern quadrant of the intersection of Fifth Street Extended and Old Lynchburg Road

Surrounding Uses:

The subject property is located on Fifth Street Extended, across from the County Office Building – 5th Street. The property is located immediately adjacent to Region Ten and Cavalier Crossing.

Project Proposal:

Fifth Street Forest LLC is the owner (the “owner”) of a 7.07 acre property identified as Albemarle County tax parcel 76-54 (the “subject property”). The subject property, together with tax parcels 76-46AB and 76-46AA, were rezoned to Neighborhood Model District (NMD) with the Board of Supervisors approval of ZMA2019-00003 (the “2019 NMD”), a project commonly known as “Albemarle Business Campus” (ABC). The owner requests to amend the 2019 ZMA to permit an alternative building form within Block 2 and to allow for reorganized amenity space within Blocks 2-4 on the subject property (the “ZMA amendment”). The zoning framework for Albemarle Business Campus establishes a walkable, workable, livable interconnected community and this ZMA amendment seeks to uphold and expand upon that framework.

Since the approval of the 2019 NMD in October 2020, ABC has been actively taking shape. A mixed use building with climate controlled self-storage and tenant spaces for restaurant and retail users is currently under construction and the final site plan for multi-family residences in Block 1 is under review by the County. Blocks 3 and 4 can accommodate a variety of users and are primed for future office and retail development.

Block 2 permits various uses including hotels, multi-family, general commercial, office/R&D/Flex. Although the zoning for Block 2 is flexible enough to permit a variety of future users that would contribute to the overall tenets of the community, the building and form regulations set forth in the 2019 NMD’s Code of Development do not support a building typology that supports the establishment of specific office/R&D/Flex users, namely those in the biotech and pharmaceutical manufacturing industries. This ZMA amendment seeks to modify the building and form regulations in Block 2 as well as the amenity program for Blocks 2-4 to allow for a building form to take shape within Block 2 that could support the development of a building form that is typically desired by the biotech industry.

ABC is uniquely positioned to serve the biotech industry; the mixed use development will have high-quality mixed-income residences, retail and commercial users, and employment opportunities. The biotech industry in Central Virginia is currently comprised of 67 firms with the goal of growing and expanding what is known as the “CvilleBioHub Region¹.” CvilleBioHub’s 2020 report on the region notes that “biotech industry infrastructure often comes with specific needs, especially for life science companies that require liquid and specimen handling (i.e., wet lab environment).” The report states that there is no available leasable wet lab space in the city of Charlottesville and that there are no incubator-style lab spaces for start-up companies. By allowing for a different building form to take shape within Block 2, there is an opportunity to meet this need for facilities and contribute to a growing biotech industry in Central Virginia which has a tremendous economic impact in the region. Biotech firms in Central Virginia are primarily export-based deriving revenues from primarily out of state; this is directly consistent with the statement of purpose of Albemarle County’s Economic Development Strategic Plan which states that, “Project ENABLE will utilize the labor force, resources, and structures to export goods and services that reflect the County’s comparative economic advantages...this approach will maximize Albemarle’s economic vitality and import wealth into the area.”

The Code of Development and Application Plan submitted with this ZMA amendment demonstrate the requested changes to the 2019 NMD, specifically, those changes are:

- Table A. Use Table
 - Blocks 2 & 3: Included parking structure as a permitted use
- Table B. Square Footage
 - Block 2: Request for an additional 25,000 SF of non-residential square footage
 - Maximum non-residential square footage approved with the 2019 NMD was 100,000 square feet, this ZMA amendment requests to revise the maximum non-residential square footage in Block 2 to 125,000 SF
 - Block 2: Increased minimum non-residential square footage from 0 to 20,000
- Table E. Lot & Building Regulation
 - Block 2: Request for an additional 15’ of building height
 - Maximum building height approved with the 2019 NMD is 60’, this ZMA amendment requests to revise the maximum allowable building height to 75’ (this revision is to allow for 16’ floor to floor plus required screening of roof-mounted mechanical equipment)
 - Block 2: Reduce primary front setback from 5’ to 0’
 - Block 2: Reduce maximum single building footprint from 40,000 to 30,000
 - Block 2: Remove setback requirement
 - Remove Note 10: *R&D/Flex and Light Industrial building footprints shall be limited to 20,000 SF.*

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan:

The Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan (the “Master Plan”) designates the property as “Community Mixed Use,” the community mixed designation identifies community serving retail, service uses and office uses as the primary uses that should take shape within the community mixed use areas. The uses permitted within Block 2 are consistent with those uses. The secondary uses that are imagined in the Master Plan within areas designated as Community Mixed Use include Office/R&D/Flex/Light Industrial uses. It is noted in the Master Plan that for secondary uses, compatibility with nearby and adjoining uses is a consideration for the Community Mixed Use category. The 2019 NMD permitted Office/R&D/Flex uses and this ZMA amendment seeks to retain those uses because those uses are compatible with nearby and adjoining uses. The property is directly across 5th St. from the Albemarle County Office

¹ The CvilleBioHub Region: A Report on the Local Biotechnology Industry, Metrics and Economic Impact. March 2020
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f57af2f844f693e7bdf7a7d/t/6108425638e7ff4b666add66/1627931223022/CBH_IndustryReport_Final_Digital_300.pdf>

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Building 5th St., which is a designated Center and is adjacent to Region 10; the area surrounding the property is a small employment hub primarily surrounded by residential use. Being within ABC, the Office/R&D/Flex use is directly consistent with the vision for the property and will contribute to building upon the existing employment hub by creating more job opportunities in close proximity to nearby residential areas.

A guideline put forth in the Master Plan notes that Office/R&D/Flex uses within Community Mixed Use designated areas are limited to a maximum single-building footprint of approximately 20,000 SF. The 2019 NMD noted that buildings serving any Office/R&D/Flex would be limited to 20,000 SF however; this is problematic from a future adaptive re-use of a building standpoint as well as from a marketability standpoint. If building footprints are limited by user instead of having an overarching building footprint limitation for all users, the footprint will limit the ability of the building to serve future tenants in Office/R&D/Flex industries. For example, a medical lab, probiotics lab, or any R&D user would not be permitted to occupy space within a building that was originally constructed as an office building with a 30,000 SF footprint. From a marketability standpoint, since the approval of the 2019 NMD, the owner has conducted extensive market research on R&D/Flex users and has found that a 20,000 SF footprint with a four story height limit, which is the building form permitted in Block 2, are limiting factors in seeking to attract R&D/Flex businesses. Increasing the non-residential square footage to 125,000 SF and allowing for the building footprint for any user to be 30,000 SF will create the opportunity for a building to take shape that is of a form that is desirable to a variety of biotech users.

The guidelines put forth for height of buildings in Community Mixed Use designated areas note that 1-4 stories are recommended and 2-3 stories are preferred. The 2019 NMD permits up to four stories in Block 2; Block 2 is set back from 5th St. Extended, separated from the 5th St. by Vision Lane and Block 3, the site of a future office building. The finished grade of the Block 2 site is approximately 10' lower than 5th St. Extended and so in addition to the horizontal distance from 5th St. Ext, a designated Entrance Corridor, the vertical elevation change from the Entrance Corridor will contribute to minimizing the height of the structure when viewed from the roadway. There is no request to change the number of stories permitted in Block 2 with this ZMA amendment however, this ZMA amendment does request to increase the total permitted building height to allow for 16' floor to floor separation and screening of rooftop mounted equipment. The 16' floor to floor separation is another building form element that is desirable for biotech users.

Consistency with the Neighborhood Model:

Pedestrian Orientation:

This ZMA amendment retains a commitment to pedestrian orientation throughout ABC. The following text describes the pedestrian orientation committed to with the 2019 NMD that will not be compromised with this ZMA amendment. The area surrounding ABC is predominately residential; these areas include the Villas at Southern Ridge, Cavalier Crossing, The Woodlands, Brookdale, and Redfields, among others. The considerable number of existing residents in nearby proximity to the property creates an ideal opportunity for supporting active transportation networks that are proposed to be constructed within ABC. ABC intends to attract users with a mixture of uses and provide the pedestrian infrastructure to these destinations. Currently there are areas that lack sufficient infrastructure, barring safe movement for pedestrians, specifically along Country Green Road and Mountainwood Road. Old Lynchburg Road features an existing asphalt path, however, this is only on one side of the road with intermittent crosswalks. The Southern and Western Urban Neighborhoods Master Plan identifies improvements to be made on 5th Street Extended and Old Lynchburg Road, such as bike/ped connectivity, street trees, and better stormwater management (curb & gutter). ABC proposes right-of-way reservation on both sides of the property to reserve ample area for sidewalks/paths and landscape buffers. The application plan provides circulation diagrams on both sides of the development, which contribute to heightened internal and external connections. Notably, the existing asphalt path on 5th Street will be improved to a two-way shared use path 10' in width (with additional 2' graded shoulder on either side), with primary pedestrian routes branching off of the path into the mixed-use development.

Multi-Modal Transportation Networks:

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This ZMA amendment retains a commitment to multi-modal transportation networks that was established with the 2019 NMD. The transportation network proposed with this development includes sidewalk installations and improvements as well as shared-use path improvements. Existing and proposed street sections provided with this rezoning application support a variety of transportation modes, with an emphasis on 5th Street Extended as a main transportation corridor.

Interconnected Streets and Transportation Networks:

Transportation networks consist of “1) streets and roads, 2) pedestrian paths, 3) bikeways, 4) bus routes, and 5) light rail lines.” Interconnected streets are not exclusive to cars, but call for multimodal connections. There are a multitude of connectivity improvements proposed with this application including sidewalk, multi-use path, pedestrian pathway, and bus stop improvements.

Parks, Recreational Amenities, and Open Space:

As a mixed-use development, recreational and open space within Albemarle Business Campus will be an integral community gathering space. As discussed, the surrounding areas are predominately residential; mixed-use development and thoughtful greenspace provides destination points. Although Azalea Park is only 0.5-mile away from these neighborhoods, the I-64 bridge creates a barrier to those without car access, as the underpass bars safe pedestrian movement. With additions and improvements of sidewalks and shared-use paths, greenspace within this NMD could serve people within the community who had previously lacked access to greenspace. This ZMA amendment proposes a reconfiguration of amenity space within ABC but retains a commitment to providing a minimum of 20% of greenspace and amenity space within the development.

Neighborhood Center:

The Southern and Western Urban Neighborhoods Master Plan identifies the County Office Building on 5th Street Extended as an existing center, which is a neighbor to ABC. Neighborhood Centers are intended to be “a focal point of a neighborhood. A mix of uses is important to a neighborhood and usually, the mix will occur at the center...a center will be a high-intensity area, containing a mixture of businesses, services, public facilities, and employment that connects to residential areas and attracts activities of all kinds.” Around the COB 5th center are single-family detached housing and the Covenant School, with the multifamily uses and Region Ten across the street. As an immediate neighbor to COB 5th, Albemarle Business Campus is able to further bolster COB 5th as a center by providing a strong presence of a mixture of uses and interconnectivity. Additionally, the proposed active transportation improvements would contribute to the walkability around this Center.

Buildings and Spaces of Human Scale:

This ZMA amendment proposes a realigned amenity program that shows a larger central greenspace while maintaining north/south and east/west pedestrian connections throughout the site. Although this ZMA amendment requests for additional building height, a feeling of human scale can be achieved through thoughtful architectural design. A preliminary mock-up of the building design for Block 2 shows a building with a high-level of transparency and regular articulation to break up the mass of the building. This property is subject to ARB review and so further review of building design will occur at site plan submission.

Architect's Rendering of Block 2 Building (credit: BRW architects)



Relegated Parking:

“Restricted Parking Areas” remain designated on the application plan with this ZMA amendment to provide a buffer between surface parking areas and the Entrance Corridor. This buffered area is in addition to the area required to provide multi-use path improvements in accordance with the section shown on Sheet 19 of the application plan. The multi-use path section will work in conjunction with the “restricted parking area” to provide *at least* a 20’ buffer between the 5th St. travel way and any future surface parking area on the site. The “amenities” section of the Code of Development also notes a linear greenway improvement adjacent to the multi-use path which would contribute to additional buffering between the surface parking areas and the 5th St. corridor. The topography of the site contributes to screening of parking areas in the southeast corner of the site; this will diminish the appearance of any surface parking lot in this location from the Entrance Corridor as vehicles approach the site from the northeast on 5th St. An outdoor amenity that is envisioned as a “gateway plaza” is sited at the intersection of Old Lynchburg Rd and 5th St. and there are buildings proposed to help frame this plaza and this heavily traveled intersection. The plaza and the proposed buildings at this intersection will aid in screening surface parking areas in Blocks 3 and 4 as travelers approach the site from the south on 5th St.

This ZMA amendment permits structured parking within Block 2 and this structured parking is sited to be behind the proposed building within Block 2. The future Block 2 building will work to screen the parking structure from 5th St.

Mixture of Uses:

A mixture of uses will be realized within ABC and has already begun to take shape with the construction of the mixed-use self-storage and retail building and the pursuit of final site plan approval for multi-family units in Block 1. This ZMA amendment retains a mixture of uses in the code of development which ensures both residential and commercial uses will be realized on the property. Community Mixed Use calls for the “a mixture of residential and retail uses and services that serve the community...[with] the proportion of non-residential uses to...residential uses [as] area dependent.” Such land use designations, and the appropriate mixture of uses is achieved through this application plan.

Mixture of Housing Types and Affordability:

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This Neighborhood Model principle was met with the approval of the 2019 NMD which included a commitment that 15% of the total residential dwelling units built within areas designated for residential use shall be Affordable Dwelling Units (the “15% Affordable Housing Requirement”). Concurrent with the approval of the 2019 NMD, a special exception waiving the requirement for a Neighborhood Model District to have a minimum of two housing types was approved because of the context surrounding the development where there is an established mixture of housing types including single family, single family attached, and multi-family.

Redevelopment:

The property is currently undeveloped, and sits within the County’s Development Areas. The development is located across from a designated neighborhood center, is on a major City/County transportation corridor, 5th Street, and is 0.5-mile from I-64, a major regional transportation corridor. The Albemarle Business Campus aims to attract desirable employers and industries, by providing a build-to-suit approach for future businesses, ample programmed amenity areas, and workforce and affordable housing within the NMD development. With full build-out, the Albemarle Business Campus would become a major employment center for the County.

There is limited office space in the vicinity of the proposed Albemarle Business Campus and moreover there is minimal, if any, available office space in the immediate area. The office space at Albemarle Business Campus could provide ample space for a few start-ups or growing local businesses. According to the “City of Charlottesville Office and Retail Market Study” from 2018, which also includes information about office and retail space in Albemarle County, the office vacancy rate for the County is 2.3% and the City has a 1.7% office vacancy rate. These numbers show the City and County have ample demand for more office space as a typical office market sees a 5-10% vacancy rate. Albemarle Business Campus NMD has the potential to step in as the missing link in the immediate community, becoming a significant center in the Old Lynchburg/5th St. area by fulfilling commercial/service and housing needs, south of the I-64 interchange.

Respecting Terrain and Careful Grading and Regrading of Terrain:

Managed slopes are present on the property and any grading in managed slopes will comply with Section 18-30.7.5 of the Albemarle County Code.

Zoning Intent:

Section 20A.1 of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance states, “The purpose of the Neighborhood Model District (hereinafter referred to as the "NMD") is to establish a planned development district in which traditional neighborhood development, as established in the county's Neighborhood Model, will occur.” The 2019 NMD sets forth a code of development and application plan that will inform future development on the property that is consistent with the intent of the Neighborhood Model District by regulating building mass and placement, programmed green space and amenity areas, connected pedestrian networks, and a mixture of complimentary uses to contribute to a more connected community hub in the Southern and Western development areas. This ZMA amendment upholds the intent of the Neighborhood Model District and only requests changes to the building form in Block 2 so that a future building within that block could serve a biotech user. The Neighborhood Model ordinance states, “the mixture of uses shall be based upon the uses recommended in the land use element of the comprehensive plan,” and Albemarle Business Campus proposes a development that aligns with this regulation as the code of development allows for commercial uses and residential densities that are recommended for areas designated as “Community Mixed Use” and “Urban Density Residential” by the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan.

Impacts to Public Facilities and Infrastructure:

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This ZMA amendment requests 25,000 additional square feet of non-residential area beyond what was approved with the 2019 NMD. This additional 25,000 SF of non-residential square footage is expected to have a minimal impact beyond what was previously evaluated with the 2019 NMD.

Transportation:

Since the approval of the 2019 NMD, a major transportation improvement along the 5th St. corridor has been funded via the Smart Scale program, this funding will ultimately result in the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Old Lynchburg Road and 5th St. Ext. The 2019 NMD contributed a cash proffer to the County's Capital Improvement Program for the construction of transportation improvements along the 5th St. corridor; the proffered cash amount was based on a pro-rata share of trip generation impact from ABC that is anticipated to pass through the 5th St./Old Lynchburg Road intersection.

The Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) submitted with the 2019 NMD analyzed conservative estimates for the anticipated land uses within ABC. The impacts evaluated in the TIA will likely never be realized from this site as the Code of Development became more restrictive in some aspects throughout the review of the 2019 NMD and as specific development plans within ABC have become clearer since the approval of the 2019 NMD. For example, the impacts from 150 residential units were evaluated in the TIA however; the approved Code of Development only permits 128 residential units. The transportation impacts from 102,000 SF of office space and an 125 room business hotel were evaluated however, architectural concepts have been mocked up for office space in Block 3 and that building will likely only be 69,000 SF. A business hotel may never take shape if a biotech user occupies Block 2. A variety of anticipated uses was evaluated in the TIA for the 2019 NMD and an additional 25,000 SF of non-residential square footage in Block 2 will not compromise the analysis and results of that study that ultimately concluded a roundabout at the intersection of 5th St. and Old Lynchburg would permit all approaches to operate at a level of service A in the future build condition. The trip generation analysis from the 2019 NMD is included below for reference:

Table 1: Trip Generation Details

Use	Square Footage	LU Code	IV	AM			PM			Daily Total
				In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
Office	102,000	710 - General Office Building	102 (1,000 SF GFA)	105	17	122	19	97	116	1082
Retail	5,000	932 - High Turnover (Sit-Down) Restaurant	5 (1,000 SF GFA)	27	23	50	30	19	49	561
	5,000	876 - Apparel Store	5 (1,000 SF GFA)	4	1	5	11	10	21	332
	4,000	814 - Variety Store	4 (1,000 SF GFA)	7	6	13	14	13	27	254
Hotel		312 - Business Hotel	125 Rooms	20	29	49	22	18	40	514
Self Storage	100,000	151 - Mini Warehousing	100 (1000 sq ft GFA)	6	4	10	8	9	17	151
			COMBINED	169	80	249	104	166	270	2894
Residential	150 units	221 - Multifamily Housing	150 Units*	14	40	54	40	26	66	816

*128 Units at Site 2 (West of Old Lynchburg Rd) and 22 Units at Site 1 (East of Old Lynchburg Rd)

ITE trip generation figures from the ITE Trip Generation Manual 10th Edition for 25,000 SF of office are below:

LU Code	IV	AM			PM			DAILY
		In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
701 – General Office Building	25 (1,000 SF GFA)	43	7	50	5	26	31	277

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As previously stated, these 277 daily trips affiliated with 25,000 SF of additional non-residential space are likely captured by the TIA completed with the 2019 NMD.

Public Safety:

There are no additional impacts to public safety anticipated by the addition of 25,000 SF of non-residential space beyond the impacts evaluated by the 2019 NMD.

Schools:

There are no additional residential units requested with this ZMA amendment and therefore there will be no impacts to schools.

Impacts to Environmental Features:

All design and engineering for improving the property will comply with applicable County and State regulations. Regional Stormwater Management facilities have been constructed for the Sterling University Housing project (Wahoo Way). These facilities have been designed to accommodate some of, if not all, of the proposed runoff from the property. Any additional stormwater management design will be consistent with similar urban development projects and will utilize a combination of features, such as on-site surface facilities, on-site underground stormwater management facilities, and/or off-site nutrient credits.

Proffers to Address Impacts:

There are no changes proposed with this ZMA amendment to the proffer statement adopted with the 2019 NMD. The realigned amenity program will be reviewed by the Economic Development Authority and the Board of Supervisors to determine that the amenity program is in substantial conformance with the amenity program put forth with the 2019 NMD that is referenced in The Performance Agreement that is the subject of Proffer 3.