



A plan to build more apartments for students on Virginia Avenue hit an unexpected roadblock on Tuesday. Design Develop presented the four-story apartment building to the Charlottesville Board of Architectural Review. One of the developers of the project, Bo Carrington, of Seven Development, also was present during the meeting. “We’re a stone’s throw away from Beta Bridge. It’s a seven-minute walk to the Corner,” Design Develop project manager Kevin Schafer said in an interview. “The zoning allows for density in this location and, frankly, this is the best way to keep students from sprawling into our adjacent neighborhoods like Fifeville, 10th and Page and Fry’s Spring.”

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The BAR had met with the team previously and was complimentary of the way the design made the building look smaller than it would be and more appropriate for the neighborhood. The BAR said it needed a few more details, for example, on the faux wood and other materials that would be used for the outside of the apartment building. At this point, the board usually would vote on a partial approval on the general plan. However, the city’s legal team had advised city staff that these partial approvals were not easy to defend in court and recommended against this kind of process. Because this was the first time the recommendation was implemented, Design Develop said that they were blindsided by the

change in process. The team worried that the progress they had made from these meetings would be lost when several members of the BAR step down from their seats in January. The BAR's final vote was deferred to a later meeting, as staff recommended, but the body said that they agreed with Design Develop and pushed the city to come up with a compromise. Members of the board argued that their process should mimic the design process for large projects, so architects do not waste money designing the details of a building when the overall layout is wrong for the neighborhood. If the rest of the BAR process goes smoothly, Schafter said he hopes to start construction by early summer.

- address: 1532-1536 Virginia Avenue
- scale: four-story, 20-unit (64-bedroom) apartment building and existing house
- price points: market-rate, but exact rent to be determined
- affordability requirement: none required
- amenities: front courtyard, 26 parking spaces
- next steps: Charlottesville Board of Architectural Review meeting



A parking lot, self-storage facility and trail would be located behind the apartment complex on 664 Rio Road West. Credit: Credit: Greenscape Development Partners

County design board pushes developer to shield Rio Road self-storage building

Albemarle County officials continue to be concerned about a developer's two-phased approach to an apartment and self-storage building on Rio Road West. Utah-based Greenscape Development Partners and Charlottesville company Shimp Engineering have planned to build the four-story apartment building after the storage building to avoid disturbing residents with construction noise. When complete, the apartment building would flank Rio Road West and the storage facility largely would be hidden behind it. The Albemarle Architectural Review Board voted not to approve the initial details on the layout of the project on Monday and asked for a plan for how trees, shrubs or other landscaping would improve the appearance of the storage building before the apartments are built. The county Board of Supervisors had worried previously that the developer could walk away without building the apartments, which would detract from the county's new, urban vision for the area in its Rio29 Small Area Plan. The team won approval from the Board of Supervisors in August by agreeing to a fine if construction of the apartments did not start soon after completion of the storage facility.

- address: 664 W. Rio Road
- scale: four-story building with 112 apartments and a five-story storage building
- amenities: multiuse path, underground parking, parking lot
- next steps: Architectural Review Board initial site plan approval



The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors reviewed the framework for a new Rio29 Form-Based Code on Wednesday afternoon. Credit: Credit: County of Albemarle

County form-based code to be more carrot than stick

The first legal steps are in a draft outline form to turn the intersection of Rio Road and U.S. 29 and its surrounding shopping centers into a walkable city center. The Albemarle County Board of Supervisors reviewed the framework for a new Rio29 Form-Based Code during a work session on Wednesday afternoon. The board directed staff to keep working on the code as a zoning overlay, which developers could opt into, rather than replace the zoning that currently governs what can happen on all properties.

This means that the requirement to build affordable housing will apply to all new housing built under the code. Albemarle staff has been working on the code since early 2019, meeting regularly with neighbors, stakeholders and the county Planning Commission. A formal vote on the final code will likely take place next year.

- location: intersection of Rio Road and U.S. 29
- scale: 400 acres
- affordability requirement: 5-15% of housing units required to be affordable, depending on the depth of affordability
- amenities: parks, plazas, bike lanes, transit stops, public art