

Development Digest: Six- to eight-story apartment building planned for Stonefield  
written by Newspack Team | November 14, 2019



What is currently a parking lot in the Shops at Stonefield may become a six- to eight-story apartment building in a few years.

Mitchell-Matthews Architects and Planners has submitted a site plan to Albemarle County for the building on behalf of current Stonefield owners and developers, New York-based O'Connor Capital Partners.

The apartment building would continue to fill in the residential component of Stonefield originally envisioned with the shopping center. Up to 800 residences are allowed by the zoning. Roughly one-third are already built, and county staff are currently reviewing the application for another 160-unit apartment building on Inglewood Drive.

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The new 234-unit apartment building would fill the block between Hydraulic Road, Inglewood Drive and the Regal Stonefield on District Avenue. The existing Hyatt Place hotel and Bond Street border the fourth side of the block.

The application is part of a flurry of development activity at Stonefield in the past year, including a

second Hyatt hotel on District Avenue. Investment in the shopping center qualifies for tax breaks at the federal level, thanks to its location within an opportunity zone.

Opportunity zones were created by the

Federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 and are low-income census tracts targeted for reinvestment. Albemarle chose its tracts based on areas that already had plans based on community feedback, according to the county's economic development department.

The development team is applying for a special exception to build more than five stories on the site. Similar exceptions for six-story buildings have already been approved by the Board of Supervisors for the 160-unit apartment complex and hotel.

The new request goes slightly further and asks for seven to eight stories on District Avenue across from the movie theater. The building would appear to be six stories tall from all other angles.

O'Connor Capital Partners declined to comment on the project at this stage.

- location: Hydraulic Road, across District Avenue from the Regal Stonefield
- scale: 234 apartments, 6-8 stories
- amenities: courtyard, 440-space parking garage, fitness center, cafe
- next steps: Albemarle County staff review



The draft Strategic Investment Area form-based code sets standards for what buildings, sidewalks and public spaces should look like. Credit: Credit: DPZ/City of Charlottesville

City residents object to form-based code, commission decision deferred

Nearly every seat was filled in the Charlottesville Council Chambers on Tuesday for a seemingly dry topic that has kindled debates about affordable housing and belonging in the city's southern downtown.

The Planning Commission was considering whether to adopt form-based code, a new type of zoning for the city that focuses more on the outside of a building than what occurs inside. The code would replace the current zoning for a portion of the Strategic Investment Area that covers the IX property, Friendship Court and several other blocks.

Renters, lawyers and homeowners commented on the code and nearly all asked the commission to defer adopting it. Some, like Travis Pietila, of the Southern Environmental Law Center, asked the commission to nail down a few details, like a potential loophole in the affordability guidelines for penthouse apartments.

Others reiterated the arguments of the Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition that the city should hold its form-based code decision until it creates a comprehensive housing strategy, in case rezoning causes land values to rise and displaces low-income homeowners or renters. A consultant has been chosen to create that housing strategy and anticipates that creating the housing strategy will take 13 months.

Anita Morrison, who wrote the city's housing needs assessment and helped with the housing components of the form-based code, said that there are few people living in unprotected affordable

housing in the area and that the city could expand many existing initiatives to protect that group.

The Planning Commission decided to defer its vote temporarily but asked the audience to come back to later meetings to help them make the code better. Previous efforts at community engagement have been more sparsely attended.

- location: between the CSX railroad tracks and Elliott Avenue
- cost: \$311,000
- next steps: Planning Commission work session



A drawing of how one nine-story building on the Artful Lodger site could look like multiple smaller buildings. This is not a design proposal and the final design may look very different. Credit: Credit: Bushman Dreyfus Architects

Plan for nine-story building downtown moves to council

After the Charlottesville Planning Commission's hearing on form-based code, most of those filling the Council Chambers filed out of their seats. A dozen people remained in the auditorium to ask the commission not to approve a nine-story building for the current site of the Artful Lodger furniture store near the Omni Charlottesville Hotel.

Those who spoke said that the building was too tall for that location on the Charlottesville Downtown Mall and worried that it would decrease their sunlight, views, property values or the character of the mall.

The commission ultimately decided to recommend the project to the City Council for a final vote. Commissioner Rory Stolzenberg gave an impassioned defense of adding housing and a source of tax revenue downtown, where there are other tall buildings and it is possible to live without a car. Commissioner Lisa Green cast the sole vote against the project out of a concern that the developers had not committed to any amount of housing and the commission could not calculate how many units would be affordable.

- address: 218 W. Market St.
- scale: 134 studio to two-bedroom apartments or condominiums, with ground-floor commercial space, 101 feet tall
- amenities: green roof, shared parking
- next steps: Charlottesville City Council meeting



Albemarle County is beginning to develop a form based code to translate the vision of the Rio29 Small Area Plan into zoning rules. Credit: Credit: County of Albemarle

County staff and commission talk big-picture questions about form-based code

Albemarle County has experienced a much less controversial form-based code process than the city and is wrapping up several work sessions with the Planning Commission about the key guidelines that will be in its code.

The county's form-based code would be centered around the U.S. 29 and Rio Road intersection and the

older shopping malls, like Fashion Square, that surround it.

Unlike in the city, where a consultant team was hired, county staff has been leading the code writing process, from meeting with focus groups and holding open houses to writing the draft framework for the code. The county is also planning to make the code something developers can opt into rather than a replacement for the existing zoning.

On Tuesday, the county Planning Commission discussed the draft framework and topics like whether the Architectural Review Board still should regulate the design of buildings and whether to allow developers to build up to five stories after opting into the code and up to seven stories in certain cases.

- location: intersection of U.S. 29 and Rio Road
- scale: 391 acres
- next steps: Board of Supervisors work session scheduled for Dec. 18