ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	**ARB-2021-127: Crozet Self Storage**
Review Type	Review of an Initial Site Development Plan and an architectural design
Parcel Identification	05600000003200 and 056000000032A0
Location	5696 Rockfish Gap Turnpike (See Figures 1 and 2.)
Zoned	Highway Commercial (HC) / Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Yousef LC / Merchants Retail Partners LLC (Andrew Lewis)
Magisterial District	White Hall
Proposal	To construct a 90,000 sf, 3-story self-storage building with associated site improvements.
Context	The surrounding area is a mix of residential development and wooded lots, with institutional and commercial development further west on Rt. 250.
Visibility	All four sides of the proposed building will be visible from the Entrance Corridors.
ARB Meeting Date	December 20, 2021
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY

Three conceptual designs for a storage building were presented for review at the September 7, 2021 ARB meeting. Comments from that meeting are included in the Analysis section of this report for reference. The current proposal is similar to one of the designs presented on September 7. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

ANALYSIS
Gray highlight = means the guideline can't be reviewed at initial site plan stage, but recommendations can be provided for final
Yellow highlight = means the guideline can only be reviewed for location/configuration at the initial plan stage
Regular text = means the guideline can be reviewed at initial plan stage, can be made a condition of initial plan approval, and can be the basis for denial

REF	GUIDELINE	ARB 9/7/21 COMMENTS	ISSUE 12/20/21	RECOMMENDATION 12/20/21
	Purpose; Compatibility with significant historic sites: **Compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor; Structure design**			
1	The goal of the regulation of the design of development within the designated Entrance Corridors is to insure 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.	Provide an architectural design that incorporates forms and features of local historic architecture and is coordinated with the scale of the surroundings. Provide perspective renderings to clarify the scale and visual impacts of the proposed building. Provide drawings to clarify the extent of visibility of the proposed building along the corridors.	Perspective images of the proposed building have been provided. However, they show the building as a stand-alone object – not as a building in the surrounding context. They do not illustrate the extent of visibility of the proposed building along the corridors. The proposed building material is precast concrete panels, some of which are colored and stamped with patterns to resemble brick and stone. Where the panels are not patterned to resemble other materials, they are scored to break up the expanse of the wall. The wall area using this treatment is extensive. The applicant states that the building "features articulated facades with varying material types including a chamfered corner element with storefront glass and a cooper roof" to coordinate with the historic buildings in Crozet. The treatment at the southeast corner of the proposed building follows a traditional method for emphasizing a building entrance, and the patterned	Provide perspective renderings that show the proposed building in the surrounding context to clarify the scale, extent of visibility, and visual impacts along both corridors. Revise the architectural design to incorporate forms, features and materials that reflect the traditional architecture of the area. Revise the architectural design to include architectural elements with greater relief.
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.			
3	New structures and substantial additions to existing structures should respect the traditions of the architecture of historically significant buildings in the Charlottesville and Albemarle area. Photographs of historic buildings in the area, as well as drawings of architectural features, which provide important examples of this tradition are contained in Appendix A.			
4	The examples contained in Appendix A should be used as a guide for building design: the standard of compatibility with the area's historic structures is not intended to impose a rigid design solution for new development. Replication of the design of the important historic sites in the area is neither intended nor desired. The Guideline's standard of compatibility can be met through building scale, materials, and forms which may be embodied in architecture which is contemporary as well as traditional. The Guidelines allow individuality in design to accommodate varying tastes as well as special functional requirements.			
9	Building forms and features, including roofs, windows, doors, materials, colors and textures should be compatible with the forms and features of the significant historic buildings in the			

	area, exemplified by (but not limited to) the buildings described in Appendix A [of the design guidelines]. The standard of compatibility can be met through scale, materials, and forms which may be embodied in architecture which is contemporary as well as traditional. The replication of important historic sites in Albemarle County is not the objective of these guidelines.		masonry mimics traditional building materials, but the overall design does not have a strong connection to local historic architecture. Given the size and scale of the building and the proximity to the EC streets, the scoring is not expected to be sufficient to mitigate the building scale, and using patterns to resemble brick and stone rather than using the actual materials is not expected to be an effective method for establishing compatibility with local historic architecture. The length of the building is broken up with bays that include windows and colored and patterned precast. These bays are topped with a cornice that rises slightly above the main wall of the building. The bays do not appear to project beyond the main wall. As designed, they do visually break up the length of the wall, but they look like applied detail rather than true architectural forms. The applique appearance may be, at least in part, a result of the rendering program. One of the conceptual designs presented in the September 7 meeting (Figure 3) is similar to the current proposal and it shows more relief than is evident in the current drawings (Figure 4). Greater relief would be appropriate, but even with greater relief, these features do not sufficiently break down the mass of	

			the building. Placing a special element at the chamfered corner to address the intersection is an appropriate architectural treatment, but the bay window appears uncoordinated with the other building elements, and its scale and character appear out of sync with the rest of the building. Overall, the proposed design still does not reflect the traditional architecture of the area, and the scale and mass of the building are not expected to contribute to orderly and attractive corridors.	
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.	Provide an architectural design whose form and scale contribute to unity and coherence along the adjacent Entrance Corridors.	The proposed building measures 260' long, 120' deep, and 37'8" tall. Although the southwest corner of the building is chamfered and changes in materials break up the elevations, the design appears to be a simple block with applied decoration. The scale of the building is much larger than traditional buildings on the adjacent corridors and much larger than any buildings in the immediate vicinity. The monumental scale is highlighted by the building base that exceeds the height of the pedestrian door at the west end of the Rt. 250 elevation. The result of the design is a building that will not appear compatible with the surroundings and will not establish unity and coherence along the corridors. A combination of reduced footprint, reduced height, substantial	Revise the architectural design with a combination of reduced footprint, reduced height, substantial breaks in the building form, and substantial changes in depth for recesses and projections along the walls to reduce the mass and scale of the building.
10	Buildings should relate to their site and the surrounding context of buildings.			
11	The overall design of buildings should have human scale. Scale should be integral to the building and site design.			
12	Architecture proposed within the Entrance Corridor should use forms, shapes, scale, and materials to create a cohesive whole.			

			breaks in the building form, and substantial changes in depth for recesses and projections along the walls is needed.	
13	Any appearance of “blankness” resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.	Provide transparent glass in window openings.	The architectural elevations label the window glass as “clear”. Changes in material and color, bays with windows, and minor vertical projections are used to relieve blankness on the south and west elevations. An entry element at the southeast corner wraps to the east elevation, which also has two glass sectional doors and the brick- and stone-patterned base of the EC elevations. The east elevation, however, is lacking brick above the first floor, and the glass sectional doors appear to float in the large wall area. Because the building is built into the grade, the masonry pattern at the base of the north elevation is much reduced in height. Detailing of the wall above is limited to the scoring of the precast panels. The effect will be a blank, solid wall providing a backdrop for landscaping. Views of the northern elevation will be available from the north on the Crozet Ave. EC.	Revise the architectural design to eliminate blankness on all sides of the building.
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.	None.	A single building is proposed.	None.
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.	See recommendations above.	The building does not have the appearance of a trademark design.	None.
16	Window glass in the Entrance Corridors should not be highly tinted or highly reflective.	None at this time.	The architectural drawings note the	None.

	Window glass in the Entrance Corridors should meet the following criteria: *Visible light transmittance (VLT) shall not drop below 40%. Visible light reflectance (VLR) shall not exceed 30%. Specifications on the proposed window glass should be submitted with the application for final review.*		window glass as "clear."	
	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.	Relocate the dumpster to reduce visual impacts on the EC streets.	The dumpster has been relocated to the northeast corner of the parking lot. A note on the plan specifies an 8'-tall enclosure with brick veneer to match the building. Shrubs are proposed around the enclosure. An existing lift station is proposed to remain near the west end of the Rt. 250 elevation. Low-level planting would help screen this equipment from view. No new ground-mounted equipment is shown.	Include a detail of the dumpster enclosure in the plan. Add low level planting to screen the lift station from view.
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.			
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.			
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."	None at this time.	The note does not appear on the plan.	Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the site and architectural plans.
22-31	**Lighting**	Not at this time.	Lighting information was not included in the initial site plan submittal.	Provide a complete lighting plan for review. Include all proposed building- and ground-mounted lighting in the plan.
	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.	Not at this time.	Lawns and shade trees are characteristic of residential properties in the surrounding area, but are not typical of commercial properties. The portions of the site not occupied by structures or parking do not have the appearance of lawns.	None.
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	Not at this time.	Sycamores and dogwoods are proposed along the Rt. 250 EC.	None.

	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.		Littleleaf Lindens and Redbuds are proposed along Crozet Ave. These tree species are used throughout the corridors.	
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.	Add ornamental trees along the EC street frontages. Consider an informal arrangement of trees that is more consistent with the surrounding context without reducing quantities.	The Sycamores along the Rt. 250 frontage are proposed at 3½" caliper and are spaced at an average of 35' on center. Dogwoods in pairs and trios are proposed between most of the Sycamores. The arrangement is less regimented than in the conceptual plan, but it is still fairly regular. The Lindens along Crozet Ave. are proposed at 3½" caliper, are spaced closer than 35' and are grouped towards the center of that frontage. Trees are located to frame the chamfered building corner.	See other landscape recommendations, below.
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.	None.	The planting along Brownsville Rd. has been revised from a regular alternating row to alternating groups of trees (a mix of large shade and ornamentals) and shrubs where the proposed building fronts the street. The parking lot has been extended closer to Brownsville Rd., leaving only enough space for shrubs. At the east end of Brownsville Rd., the trees have moved away from the road edge and into an irregular arrangement, maintaining required sight distance. Overall, the quantity of trees along Brownsville Rd. does not meet the requirement, though the caliper of the large shade trees does.	Provide 16 large shade trees along Brownsville Rd., 2½" caliper at planting.
34	Landscaping along interior pedestrian ways: a. Medium trees should be planted parallel to all interior pedestrian ways. Such trees should	None.	Sidewalks are proposed between the parking spaces and the building, but	None.

	be at least 2½ inches caliper (measured six inches above the ground) and should be of a species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 25 feet on center.		there are no pedestrian ways elsewhere on site.	
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.	Revise the plan to provide landscaping along the east side of the parking area to minimize visual impacts. Include shrubs and perimeter trees spaced 40' on center.	The parking lot has increased in size from 7 spaces to 14. Two Willow oaks at 2½" caliper are proposed in planting islands at the end of the access drive, and two Willow oaks are proposed along the eastern perimeter of the parking lot. Frontage trees double as perimeter trees on the south side. Except for the northern parking lot perimeter where no trees are provided, the perimeter tree requirement has been met. Shrubs, 24" at planting, are provided along the parking lot perimeters.	Add a large tree on the north side of the parking lot, 2½" caliper at planting.
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.	None.	The trees proposed along Rt. 250 meet the size and quantity requirements for EC frontages, but they are not expected to be sufficient to mitigate the size and character of the proposed building. In addition to reducing the scale of the building, a substantial increase in planting and adjusting the spacing of the trees along Rt. 250 to coordinate with building features are possible options for further mitigating impacts. The Rt. 250 street frontage has no low-level planting along the building or the stormwater facility.	Increase the planting along the Rt. 250 side of the building to offset the impacts of the scale of the building. Add low level plantings all along the Rt. 250 frontage.
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)*.	Not at this time.	The plants are on the various lists.	None.
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		The note is on the plan.	None.

	overall health of the plant."			
	Site Development and layout; Development pattern			
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; insuring 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.	Reduce visual impacts resulting from the scale of the building.	Much of the site is already developed. Groups of mature trees currently stand in two areas of the site. They are proposed to be removed. The proposed building is oriented parallel to Rt. 250 and has a chamfered corner at the intersection with Crozet Ave. The layout appears generally organized. Access is proposed off Brownsville Rd. No pedestrian connections or open spaces are proposed. It is anticipated that the form of this three-story building with a 30,000 sf footprint – a large block with relief primarily applied to the surface – will visually overpower the site and the streetscape.	Revise the design to reduce the scale of the building to not overpower the setting of the site.
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 land forms 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.	Revise the design of the stormwater facility and landscaping to result in a facility that is fully integrated into the landscape.	The shape of the stormwater facility has changed and frontage trees are proposed between it and the street, but it is still expected to have the appearance of an engineered feature. A pipe from the facility connects with an existing culvert located closer to the street in the right-of-way.	Indicate on the plan the material and color proposed for the retaining wall. A muted earth tone color is recommended. Include a detail of the retaining wall safety
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be			

	incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.			railing in the plan.
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.		A retaining wall is proposed along the north end of the parking and dumpster area. The wall reaches almost 5' tall. A safety railing will be required. The wall will be visible from Rt. 250 across the parking lot.	Add low-level landscaping in the vicinity of the stormwater facility to integrate it more fully into the landscape.
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.	None.	No trees are shown to remain.	None.
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.			

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. The scale of the proposed building.
2. The style and character of the proposed building.
3. The use of patterned masonry.
4. The amount and depth of architectural treatments.
5. Landscaping: quantity and character relative to the building scale and building design.
6. The location and treatment of the stormwater facility.

Staff recommends that the ARB forward the following recommendations to the Agent for the Site Review Committee:

- Regarding requirements to satisfy the design guidelines as per § 18-30.6.4c(2), (3) and (5) and recommended conditions of initial plan approval:
  - Prior to Initial Plan approval the following items shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the ARB: None.

- Regarding recommendations on the plan as it relates to the guidelines: None.

- Regarding conditions to be satisfied prior to issuance of a grading permit: None.

- Regarding the final site plan submittal:
  A Certificate of Appropriateness is required prior to final site plan approval. The following items and all items on the ARB Final Site Plan Checklist must be addressed:
  1. Provide perspective renderings that show the proposed building in the surrounding context to clarify the scale, extent of visibility, and visual impacts along both corridors.
  2. Revise the architectural design to incorporate forms, features and materials that reflect the traditional architecture of the area.
  3. Revise the architectural design to include architectural elements with greater relief.
  4. Revise the architectural design with a combination of reduced footprint, reduced height, substantial breaks in the building form, and substantial changes in depth for recesses and projections along the walls to reduce the mass and scale of the building.
  5. Revise the architectural design to eliminate blankness on all sides of the building.
  6. Include a detail of the dumpster enclosure in the plan.
  7. Add low level planting to screen the lift station from view.
  8. Add the standard mechanical equipment note to the site and architectural plans: Visibility of all mechanical equipment from the Entrance Corridor shall be eliminated."
  9. Provide a complete lighting plan for review. Include all proposed building- and ground-mounted lighting in the plan.
  10. Provide 16 large shade trees along Brownsville Rd., 2½" caliper at planting.
  11. Add a large tree on the north side of the parking lot, 2½" caliper at planting.
  12. Increase the planting along the Rt. 250 side of the building to offset the impacts of the scale of the building.
  13. Add low level plantings all along the Rt. 250 frontage.
  14. Revise the design to reduce the scale of the building to not overpower the setting of the site.
  15. Indicate on the plan the material and color proposed for the retaining wall. A muted earth tone color is recommended.
  16. Include a detail of the retaining wall safety railing in the plan.
  17. Add low-level landscaping in the vicinity of the stormwater facility to integrate it more fully into the landscape.

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: **ARB2021-127: Crozet Self Storage Site Plan**
Attach. 2: ARB2021-127: Crozet Self Storage architectural drawings

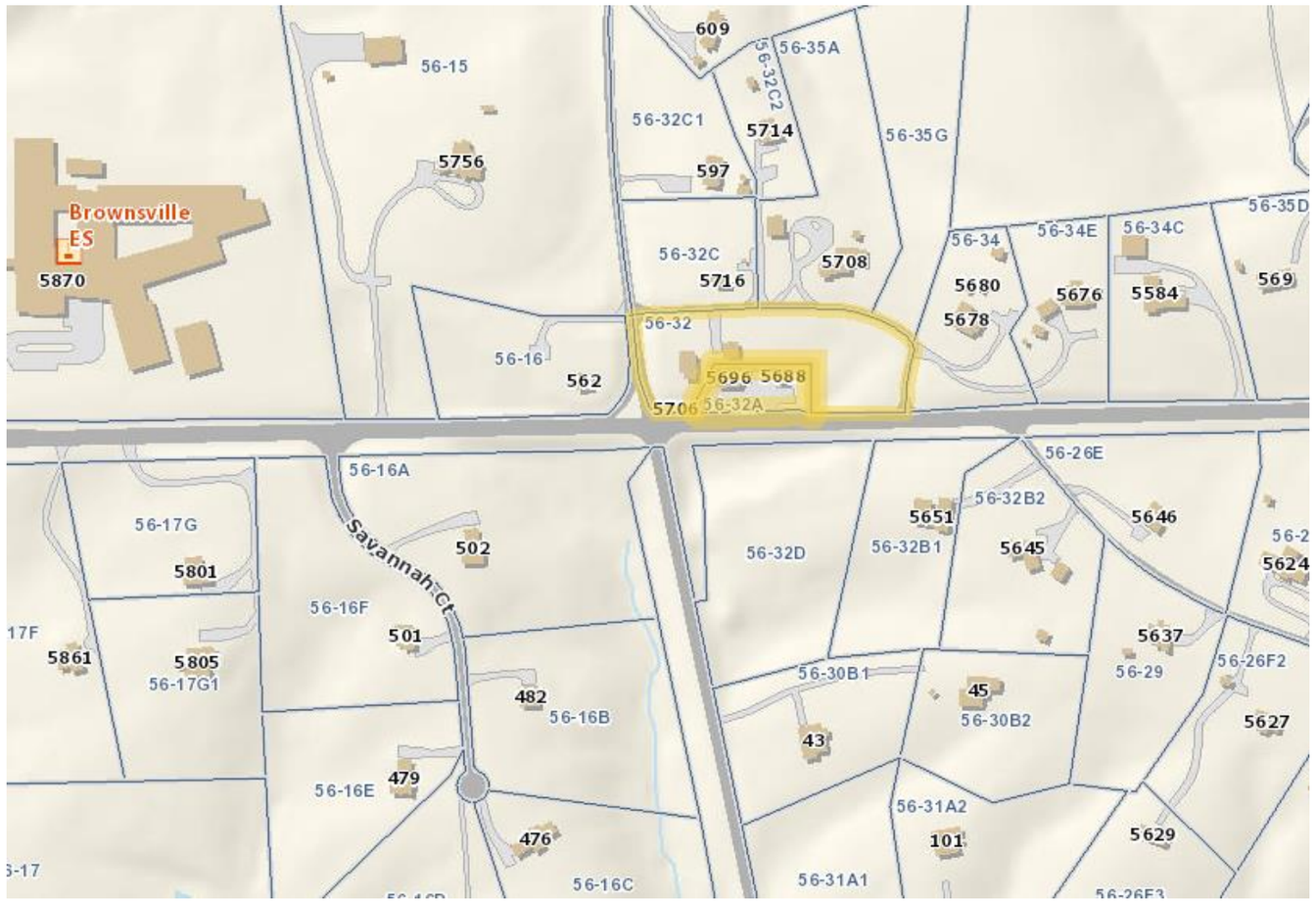

Figure 1: Project location.

Figure 2: View of existing development at proposed site, looking west on the Route 250 West Entrance Corridor.

Figure 3: One of three conceptual designs presented at the September 7, 2021 ARB meeting.

Figure 4: The current design proposed for the Crozet Self Storage Building.