

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2023-118: Home Depot Minor Amendment
Review Type	Minor Amendment
Parcel Identification	06100000013100, 06100000013200
Location	1531 Rio Road East (Fig. 1)
Zoned	Planned Development Shopping Center (PDSC), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Home Depot USA Inc./Williams Mullen (Valerie Long)
Magisterial District	Rio
Context	The project is located at the north end of the Fashion Square Mall. A mix of commercial and office buildings is found nearby.
Proposal & Visibility	The applicant proposes demolishing the Sears store and a portion of the north end of the Fashion Square Mall and building a new wall at the northern end of the mall, as a preliminary step to building a new Home Depot store. The proposed wall measures approximately 350' long with four steps in height along its length, ranging in height from 18' to 25'. There are vertical joints in the EIFS at intervals varying from approximately 16' to 27' in width. The proposed mall wall will be visible from the ECs until the Home Depot store is built. It will be visible from Rt. 29 at an angle and more directly from Rio Rd., though at a distance from both locations, with some site features reducing some views. The distance from Rt. 29 to the new wall is approximately 525' at the closest point. Distances from Rio Rd. to the new wall range from approximately 675' to 800'. (See Figs. 2 and 3 for views from the ECs. See Fig. 4 for identification of the portion of the mall to be demolished.)
ARB Meeting Date	February 5, 2024
Staff Contact	Margaret Maliszewski

PROJECT HISTORY / DETAILS

- The ARB recommended approval of the Home Depot initial site plan on May 15, 2023. The initial site plan was approved on May 18, 2023.
- The ARB reviewed the proposal for a Special Use Permit (SP) for the outdoor display use on August 7 and December 4, 2023. The ARB recommended approval of the proposal with conditions.
- The ARB reviewed an application for preliminary architectural review of the main Home Depot store on September 5, 2023 and provided comments for the applicant's next submittal.
- The Planning Commission (PC) reviewed the SP proposal on September 26, 2023, and January 9, 2024, and recommended approval with conditions.
- The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to review the SP on February 21, 2024.
- An ARB Final Site Development application is scheduled for ARB review in March 2024.
- Demolition of several existing features is required before construction of the new Home Depot building can begin. This minor site plan amendment is required to identify those features and to show how the site will function during the interim. An approved minor amendment will document the approved site condition until another approved plan replaces it. Consequently, the new mall wall will be visible from the ECs until the Home Depot store is constructed, as documented in an approved final site plan. With approval of that plan, the wall would remain as the new northern wall of the mall along the south side of the new travelway until such time as the property owner redevelops the remainder of the site. (See Fig. 4 for the area of the mall to be demolished and the location of the new mall wall. See Fig. 5 for the concept plan showing the proposed travelway and new north end of the mall.)

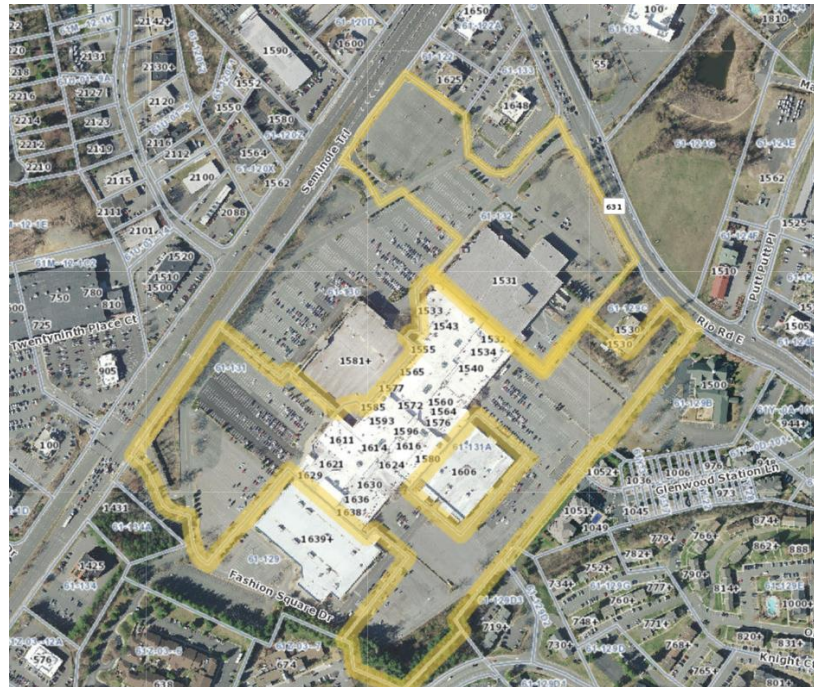


Figure 1: Project location

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	<i>Purpose; Compatibility with significant historic sites; Structure design</i>		
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.	The new mall elevation is a long, featureless wall with a single emergency/staff entrance/exit at the west end. The design of this wall does not reflect the traditional architecture of the area. However, an overt traditional design for the new wall would be inconsistent with the immediate context. Greater compatibility and an orderly appearance could be established by incorporating additional features found in the existing building, such as landscaping along the new wall, and additional architectural detailing, into the design.	Revise the design of the new mall wall to relieve blankness using architectural features, articulation, and/or landscaping compatible with that found in the existing building. Revise the architectural drawing to identify a paint color and corresponding Pantone number for the new wall or note that the color will match the color of the adjacent mall wall.
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	<p>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</p>	<p>The existing mall building includes extensive wall areas without relief. Blankness is relieved in the existing building by the texture of the brick walls, a brick soldier course across the upper part of the elevations, entrances marked by greater transparency and decorative brickwork or other architectural features, and planting beds with trees and shrubs along most of the building. None of these features are proposed with the new wall.</p> <p>The proposed EIFS does not match the material of the existing building, which is brick. While the difference may not be readily distinguishable from the street, additional articulation would be.</p> <p>The new wall is illustrated as an off-white color like that of the existing mall building. However, the specific color name/number and coordination with the existing building color are not noted on the plans.</p>	
5	<p>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.</p>	<p>The character of the proposed wall has some similarities to the existing mall building, but the existing building was constructed prior to the establishment of the Entrance Corridors. A planting bed with trees and shrubs along the wall, and additional architectural articulation would be consistent with the immediate context.</p>	
10	<p>Buildings should relate to their site and the surrounding context of buildings.</p>		

12	Architecture proposed within the Entrance Corridor should use forms, shapes, scale, and materials to create a cohesive whole.		
11	The overall design of buildings should have human scale. Scale should be integral to the building and site design.	The new mall wall is nearly completely blank. The elevation includes an entrance with a utilitarian appearance at the west end of the elevation. Vertical joints are provided in the EIFS surface at intervals varying from approximately 18' to 25' in width. The entrance and joints are not sufficient to relieve the blankness of the wall.	
13	Any appearance of "blankness" resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.		
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.	The proposal separates the Home Depot store from the remaining mall structure and places a travelway in between. Given the mass and scale of the structures, the separation can be considered a positive feature of the proposal.	None.
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.	The new mall wall does not exhibit a trademark design.	None.
16	Window glass in the Entrance Corridors should not be highly tinted or highly reflective. Window glass in the Entrance Corridors should meet the following criteria: <i>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.</i>	The new mall wall includes no windows.	None.
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.	There are no accessory structures or equipment associated with the demolition of the Sears building or the construction of the new mall wall.	None at this time.
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.		
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.		
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.	Stormwater features are not expected to have a visual impact on the EC streets.	None.
22-31	Lighting	One parking lot pole light would be demolished with this proposal. No new lighting associated with the new mall wall is shown on the plan.	Indicate if new lighting is proposed with the new mall wall. If it is, show it on the plan and provide details for review.
	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.	No new landscaping is shown on the plan. The demolition plan identifies several trees for removal near the existing Sears building.	None at this time.
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.		
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		

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>		
33	<p>Landscaping along interior roads:</p> <p>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.</p>		
34	<p>Landscaping along interior pedestrian ways:</p> <p>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 ground) and should be of a species common to the area. Such trees should be located at least every 25 feet on center.</p>		
35	<p>Landscaping of parking areas:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>		
37	<p>Plant species: a. Plant species required should be as approved by the Staff based upon but not limited to the <i>Generic Landscape Plan Recommended Species List</i> and <i>Native Plants for Virginia Landscapes (Appendix D)</i>.</p>		
38	<p>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</p>		

	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.”		
36	<p>Landscaping of buildings and other structures:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	The new wall proposed for the north end of the mall is a long, blank one that could benefit from relief. No landscaping is proposed along the wall and no planting area is proposed to be added.	Revise the design of the new mall wall to relieve blankness using architectural features and/or landscaping compatible with that found in the existing building.
	<i>Site Development and layout</i>		
	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.	An organized pattern of circulation will be maintained with this amendment, but the site will not have a clean, finished appearance.	None at this time.
39	<p>The relationship of buildings and other structures to the Entrance Corridor street and to other development within the corridor should be as follows:</p> <p>a. An organized pattern of roads, service lanes, bike paths, and pedestrian walks should guide the layout of the site.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c. Provisions should be made for connections to adjacent pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems.</p> <p>d. Open spaces should be tied into surrounding areas to provide continuity within the Entrance Corridor.</p>		

	<p>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 <i>Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance</i> 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.</p> <p>f. The placement of structures on the site should respect existing views and vistas on and around the site.</p>		
	Site Grading		
40	<p>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.</p>	<p>Minimal grading is shown in the vicinity of the Sears building footprint as part of the erosion and sediment control work. It is not shown within the driplines of trees to remain. Some tree protection fencing is shown along the northern edge of the parking lot at Rio Road. Safety fencing is shown in portions of the parking lot, but tree protection fencing is not shown at individual trees to remain.</p>	<p>Show tree protection fencing at individual trees to remain.</p>
41	<p>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.</p>		
42	<p>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.</p>		
43	<p>Preservation areas should be protected from storage or movement of heavy equipment within this area.</p>		
44	<p>Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.</p>		

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. The blankness of the proposed mall wall

Staff recommends the following revisions to the proposal:

1. Revise the design of the new mall wall to relieve blankness using architectural features, articulation, and/or landscaping compatible with that found in the existing building.
2. Revise the architectural drawing to identify a paint color and corresponding Pantone number for the new wall or note that the color will match the color of the adjacent mall wall.
3. Indicate if new lighting is proposed with the new mall wall. If it is, show it on the plan and provide details for review.
4. Show tree protection fencing at individual trees to remain.

Potential Motions:

- I move for approval of the proposal with the revisions listed in the staff report:
- I move for approval of the proposal with the revisions listed in the staff report, amended as follows: (identify changes)

ATTACHMENTS

Attach. 1: [ARB2023-118: Home Depot Minor Amendment Architectural Plan](#)

Attach. 2: [ARB2023-118: Home Depot Minor Amendment Site Plan](#)



Figure 2: View of the site from the Rt. 29 Entrance Corridor.



Figures 3a and 3b: Views of the site from the Rio Rd. Entrance Corridor.

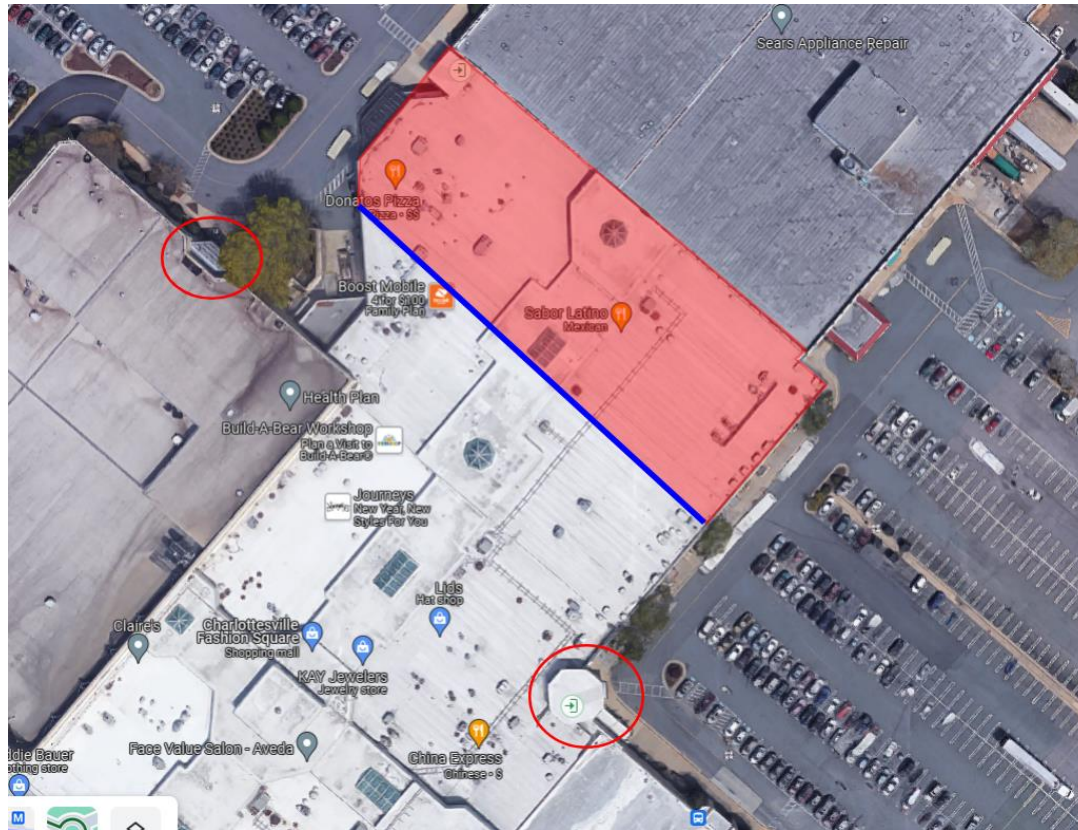


Figure 4: Aerial view of a portion of the Fashion Square Mall. The highlighted block shows the area of the mall to be demolished. The blue line identifies the location of the new mall wall.

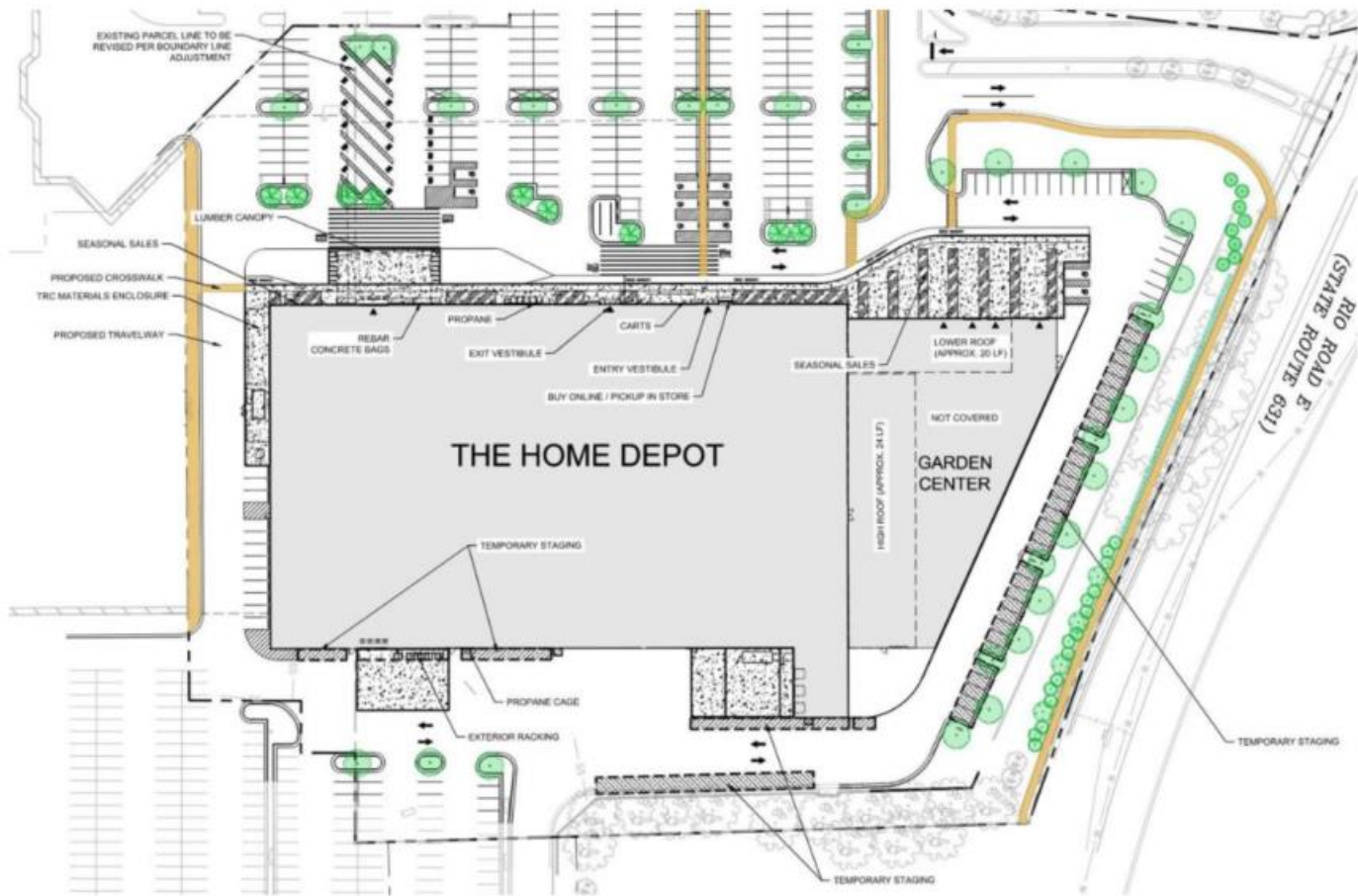


Figure 5: Concept plan revised to show the future travelway and new northern end of the mall, changes to be reviewed under the Final Site Development Plan.