

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

Project #/Name	ARB-2023-117: Flow Honda Preliminary
Review Type	Preliminary Review of Architecture
Parcel Identification	04500-00-00-068D4
Location	960-A Hilton Heights Road, on the west side of Routh 29 North, at the intersection of Hilton Heights Road and Route 29. (Fig. 1)
Zoned	Highway Commercial (HC), Entrance Corridor (EC)
Owner/Applicant	Flow 960 Hilton LLC / Design Develop LLC (Kevin Schafer)
Magisterial District	Rio
Proposal	The applicant proposes to renovate the Flow Honda showroom building by removing the existing entrance tower and canopy, adding a layered frame around new storefront windows, and adding Honda branding colors to existing brick, EIFS, and trim.
Context	The Flow Honda site is located in the heavily developed Rt. 29 commercial corridor. The Honda building is located just north of the Flow Subaru (previously Umansky) building. The showroom and service for Honda is part of a larger building that also houses the Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram showroom. A Walmart is located to the south across Hilton Heights Rd. Just beyond Walmart is the Price Chevrolet auto dealership, including the Hyundai showroom, which received ARB approval in 2011. To the west is Sam’s Club, and a Doubletree hotel is located to the north. A variety of commercial buildings stand on the opposite side of Rt. 29.
Visibility	Heading southbound along Rt. 29, the building is not visible from a distance due to trees and a steep berm located very close to the street on the adjacent parcel to the north. Within the site, there is established landscaping along the Rt. 29 EC that filters views of the southern half of the east elevation. However, directly in front of the Honda showroom there is a large gap in landscaping that allows direct views of the site and building, and increased visibility is expected during the fall and winter seasons when there is less foliage on the trees.
ARB Meeting Date	February 5, 2024
Staff Contact	Khris Taggart

PROJECT HISTORY

- Two Special Use Permits were approved for this site in 2003. SP-2002-64 was approved for outdoor display of vehicles and SP-2002-65 was approved for structured parking. A condition of SP2002-65 is: “The design of the Phase II building shall be compatible with the Phase I building, as determined by the ARB.” The Phase I building is the larger, northern building originally called the Brown Auto Park building, with structured parking. The showroom for Subaru, the smaller, southern building, was completed as Phase II of the development. To maintain compliance with the conditions of the approved Special Use Permits, the proposed design for the renovation of the Subaru building must be compatible with the Phase I building.
- ARB-2003-116 received a Certificate of Appropriateness on December 18, 2003, and approved the original design of the Brown Auto Park building (the Phase I building at the north).
- ARB-2005-71 received a Certificate of Appropriateness on December 20, 2005, and approved the original design of the Brown Subaru building (the Phase II building at the south).

- Several sign applications have been approved for this development since 2005.
- In 2013, ARB-2013-139 was received as a proposal to renovate the Subaru building. The proposal included the removal of the stone entrance surround, the addition of a slate icon tower, and the addition of ACM panels over the stucco fascia at the south end of the building. The ARB did not approve this proposal. A Certificate of Appropriateness was issued for a revised design on November 19, 2013, allowing only the replacement of the fieldstone at the entry portal with slate veneer, and a narrow ACM panel and metal cap molding added at the top of the portal.
- In 2022, a Certificate of Appropriateness was issued for ARB-2021-96, a renovation to the Umansky (now Flow) Subaru showroom building which included applying ACM panels on portions of the Rt. 29 elevation and the majority of the Hilton Heights Road elevation and adding elements to the south and east elevations including towers and canopy. The renovation also included additions to the rear (west) elevation.
- In 2023, a Certificate of Appropriateness was issued for ARB-2023-64, a renovation to the Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram showroom building which included applying ACM panels on the existing entrance tower element, painting the existing brick and EIFS gray, and refinishing the existing blue storefront framing to silver.



Figure 1: Aerial view highlighting the subject building.

ANALYSIS

REF	GUIDELINE	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
	GENERAL GUIDELINES		
	<i>Purpose, Compatibility with the character of the Entrance Corridor, Compatibility with significant historic sites</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.	<p>This portion of the Rt. 29 Entrance Corridor includes a mixture of small- and large-scale commercial buildings of varying styles and forms. The existing Honda building, much like the immediate surrounding area, achieves a level of compatibility through the use of brick as the primary material.</p> <p>The existing entrance tower, canopy, and two bays of the elevation which include storefront windows, brick piers, and a sign band are to be removed. The new construction maintains the contemporary style. It includes 3 bays of double-height storefront windows framed at the top and sides by blue ACM panels. A series of white ACM panels extends outward from the top of the blue frame. Removal of the existing blue entrance element eliminates a top-heavy, exaggerated version of a traditional form from the building. However, the scale and amount of glass in the new design do not coordinate with what was approved for the northern portion of the building (Fig. 2), the design approved for the Subaru building, or the immediate surrounding context. The use of ACM panels, while not reflective of historic building materials, is a material that can be found in the approved designs for CDJR and Subaru. However, samples have not been provided to confirm that the finish of the panels is compatible with those approved for the Subaru and CDJR buildings.</p>	<p>Revise the building design to maintain the red brick on the service portion of the Honda building.</p> <p>Provide material samples in the colors that are proposed with the next submittal.</p>
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 characteristics 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.		<p>Clarify if the blue band at the top of the parapet wall will be retained or removed.</p>
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.		<p>Provide details on how the white ACM panels are constructed, arranged, and attached to the blue frame.</p>
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.		
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.	<p>The renovation proposal also calls for painting the existing brick and EIFS white. Painting the red brick white will reduce the connection between the southern and northern portions of the Phase I building and to the historic architecture of the County. In both the Subaru and CDJR proposals the original renovation designs called for painting or covering all the existing brick; however, the ARB ultimately required that portions of the existing brick remain unchanged. Revising the Honda design to maintain the red brick on the service portion of the building would increase the level of coordination through the Phase I building, be consistent with what was approved</p>	
10	Buildings should relate to their site and the surrounding context of buildings.		
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.	for the Subaru and CDJR building renovations, and maintain a level of connection to the historic architecture of the County.	
12	Architecture proposed within the Entrance Corridor should use forms, shapes, scale, and materials to create a cohesive whole.	Two items in the proposal are unclear. There is a blue band at the top of the existing parapet wall. The drawings do not show whether this band will be removed or painted as part of the renovation. Also, the white canopy extending from the blue frame appears layered but it isn't clear how the panels are arranged or attached to the building.	
15	Trademark buildings and related features should be modified to meet the requirements of the Guidelines.	The proposed design, as outlined in the previous section, adapts Honda's national branding scheme to the existing building. The blue and white ACM panels, the framing element, the storefront arrangement, and the hanging signs are primary components of the brand (Fig. 3). As such, the design is about emphasizing a level of corporate identity/trademarking. The blue (Pantone 285C) shown in the architectural drawings falls just outside of the range of standard approvable colors for the EC. A material sample will be needed to confirm the appropriateness of the proposed color.	See architectural recommendations, above.
	Structure design		
11	The overall design of buildings should have human scale. Scale should be integral to the building and site design.	The elements of human scale found in the existing building design (regularly spaced brick piers and two bays of traditional storefront windows) are replaced with the expansive use of glass. This design element, while typical of current-day automobile dealerships, reduces the existing human scale of the Honda building. It is also inconsistent with the glass in the rest of the building. Revising the design to maintain or introduce brickwork to break up the scale of the glass and retain the rhythm of regularly spaced bays of storefront windows would be appropriate.	Revise the storefront design to increase human scale.
13	Any appearance of "blankness" resulting from building design should be relieved using design detail or vegetation, or both.	There is no blankness in the design of the east elevation that requires relieving.	None.
14	Arcades, colonnades, or other architectural connecting devices should be used to unify groups of buildings within a development.	No connecting devices are proposed.	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 window glass criteria are noted in the applicant's narrative, but not on the architectural drawings.	Revise the architectural drawings to include the standard window glass note.
	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 proposed.	None.
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.	The existing roof-mounted mechanical equipment is screened by a parapet wall, and the renovation will not alter this condition.	None.
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.	No screening devices are proposed.	None.
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.	No new stormwater facilities are proposed.	None.
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.”	No new mechanical equipment is proposed.	None.
22-31	Lighting	No lighting information has been provided with this submittal.	Indicate where building-mounted exterior lighting is proposed and provide a lighting plan with the next submittal.
7-8, 32-38	Landscaping	No changes are proposed to the existing landscaping, but some of the approved landscaping along Rt. 29 is missing (Fig. 4). The approved landscaping successfully mitigated the parking and integrated the development into the Entrance Corridor. Maintaining the approved landscaping is important to maintaining orderly, harmonious, and attractive development along the corridor.	On-site landscaping must comply with the approved site plan.
	Site Development and layout		
	Development pattern		
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 <i>Albemarle</i>	No changes are being made to the existing access to the site. The existing building is to remain parallel to the EC and no alterations to the existing on-site circulation patterns are proposed. The site has been previously developed. Views around the site are not expected to be negatively impacted. No changes to the site have been provided with this submittal. The applicant’s narrative notes that information on landscaping and exterior site lighting will be provided with subsequent submissions.	See the recommendations provided with the lighting and landscaping Guidelines above.

	<p><i>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		
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; ensuring 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.	The site has been previously developed. No new grading has been shown with this submittal.	None.
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 landforms 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.		
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.		
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.		
44	Natural drainage patterns (or to the extent required, new drainage patterns) should be incorporated into the finished site to the extent possible.		
	Signs	Signage is reviewed and approved by separate submission.	Sign applications are required for all proposed signs.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the following as the primary points of discussion:

1. The compatibility of the southern half of the building (Honda) with the design approved for the northern half (CDJR).
2. The compatibility of the Honda building with the Subaru (Phase II) building.
3. The design of the Honda renovation: the addition of trademark elements.

Staff recommends the following changes to the proposal to be reviewed by the ARB in a future meeting:

1. Revise the building design to maintain the red brick on the service portion of the Honda building.
2. Provide material samples in the colors that are proposed with the next submittal.
3. Clarify if the blue band at the top of the parapet wall will be retained or removed.
4. Provide details on how the white ACM panels are constructed, arranged, and attached to the blue frame.
5. Revise the storefront design to increase human scale.
6. Revise the architectural drawings to include the standard window glass note: Visible light transmittance (VLT) shall not drop below 40%. Visible light reflectance (VLR) shall not exceed 30%.
7. Indicate where building-mounted exterior lighting is proposed and provide a lighting plan with the next submittal.
8. On-site landscaping must comply with the approved site plan.
9. Sign applications are required for all proposed signs.

POSSIBLE MOTIONS:

- I move to approve the list of changes outlined in the staff report for ARB-2023-117 to be reviewed at a future ARB meeting.
- I move to approve the list of changes outlined in the staff report for ARB-2023-117 to be reviewed at a future ARB meeting, amended as follows (state amendments).

ATTACHMENTS

- **Attach. 1:** [ARB2023-117: Flow Honda Architectural Drawings](#)



Figure 2: Approved Design for Flow CDJR.



Figure 3: Honda national branding example (left). Proposed building design (right).

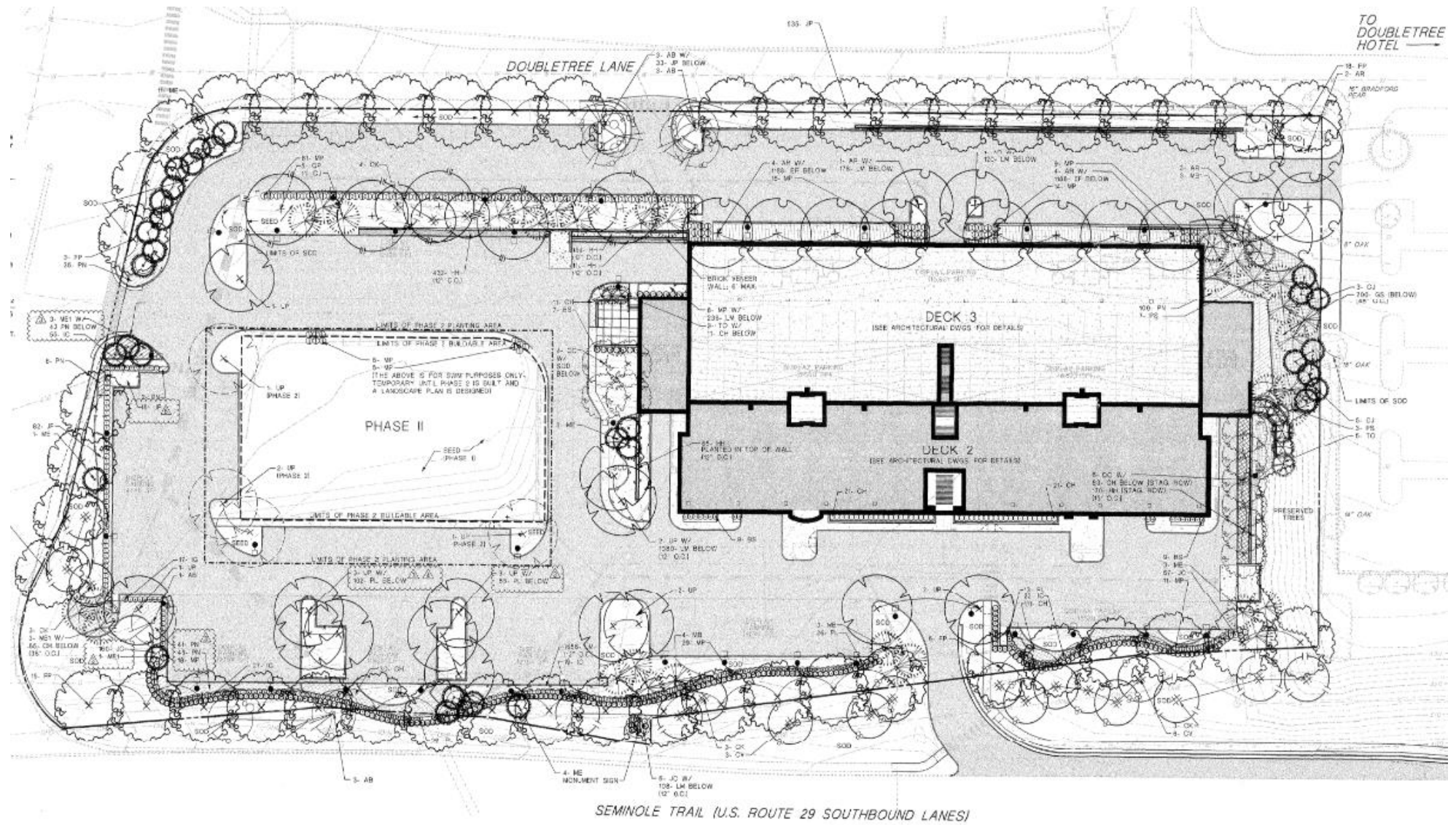


Figure 4: SDP2003-67 Approved Landscape Plan (Phase I)