

Parham Circle Storage

Special Exception Application Narrative: Stepbacks

SE-2025-00031

In connection with the zoning map amendment application ZMA-2025-00012 (the “ZMA Application”), submitted by Live Oak Capital Partners (the “Applicant”), on September 23, 2025 this Application for a Special Exception requests a waiver of the setback requirements of Section 4.20 of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance that would otherwise apply to the four-story building proposed by the Application.

If approved, the Application would permit the parcel subject to the Application (the “Property”), to be developed as a self-storage facility known as “Parham Circle Storage” (the “Project”). The Application Plan submitted with the ZMA Application shows the arrangement of the building envelope and parking within the Project.

The self-storage building within the Project is contemplated as four-story structure, however the number of stories will be determined at site plan stage as the building design is finalized. Accordingly, the proposed building is subject to the County’s front setback requirement, which provides that for each story beginning above 40 feet in height, or for each story above the third story, whichever is less, the minimum setback shall be 15 feet unless reduced by special exception. Zoning Ordinance § 4.20.

The primary purpose of the setback regulation is to avoid a “canyon” effect along public roads, which impairs the pedestrian experience and can defeat the Neighborhood Model principle of ensuring that buildings are constructed to “human scale.”¹ The proposed building will not result in this undesired “canyon” effect along public roads because the proposed building is located along a private street, Parham Circle, and is set back a distance away from the public roads, Avon Street and Mill Creek Drive. There is an existing bank, gas station, and car wash along with large mature trees that will provide a buffer between the self-storage building and the entrance corridor along Avon Street. The proposed self-storage building will also be In addition, the architecture of the self-storage building will be subject to approval from the Architectural Review Board during site plan.

¹ The purpose of the setback rules was discussed during the public hearing at which the Board of Supervisors added Section 4.19 to the Zoning Ordinance. County Staff noted that Section 4.19 “avoids a ‘canyon’ effect.” Statement of Ron Higgins, Deputy Zoning Administrator, Minutes of the Board of Supervisors Hearing, June 3, 2015, at page 99.



Image: Looking south on Mill Creek Drive towards the Property. In approximately the center of the image would be the self-storage facility.



Image: Looking southeast at the intersection of Avon Street and Mill Creek Drive towards the Property.



Given the siting of the self-storage building and its distance from the existing roads and buildings, the “canyon effect” is not applicable in this situation. The location of the property and the building allows sufficient space and light between existing buildings and the proposed self-storage building to avoid the “canyon” effect.

Taken as a whole, the Project’s design implements the Neighborhood Model Principle that recommends Buildings and Spaces of Human Scale. The building design will incorporate different materials, textures, and features to prevent massing that is inconsistent with that goal.

The Proposed Special Exceptions Supports the Goals of the Comprehensive Plan

The Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan designates the Property as Community Mixed Use, recommending “a mixture of residential and retail uses and services that serve the community.” A self-storage facility aligns with this designation by providing a needed service to nearby residential communities, including Mill Creek, Avinity, Lakeside Apartments, Lake Reynovia, and Foxcroft.

The Master Plan also recommends commercial building footprints under 60,000 square feet and heights of one to four stories. The proposed building will comply with these recommendations. For these reasons, the Applicant requests a special exception from Section 4.20. Granting the requested special exception will further the goals of the Comprehensive Plan without creating any adverse impacts.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

ZMA-2025-00012 Parham Circle Rezoning Conceptual Massing Rendering



December 23, 2025