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MONTGOMERY COUNTY • PO BOX 311
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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 13, 2024

Mr. Paul Purtell, Director, Planning, Zoning & Inspections
Upper Moreland Township
117 Park Avenue
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania 19090-3215

Re: MCPC # 24-0041-001
Plan Name: 2405 - 2425 Maryland Road Conditional Use
(55 dwelling units on 1 parcels comprising approximately 1.65 acres)
Situate: Maryland Road (cross street: Computer Avenue)
Upper Moreland Township

Dear Mr. Purtell:

We have reviewed the above-referenced conditional use plan as you requested on February 20, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, 2405-2425 Maryland Road Property Owner, LLC, is proposing a conditional use plan to consolidate two lots in order to construct a multifamily building as an extension to the Willow Pointe development. The property is located in the I-Limited Industrial Zoning District, within which apartments are permitted by conditional use (§ 350-102(V)(3)). The applicant is requesting approval in order to permit an Apartment Complex.

The proposal would consolidate parcel no. 590012313003, located at 2425 Maryland Road with the adjacent parcel no. 590012322003, located at 2405 Maryland Road. The lot consolidation would allow for the expansion of the Willow Pointe development, which is located on the abutting property at 2405 Maryland Road.

The property currently contains an existing one-story industrial building, which would be demolished. The proposal would develop one multifamily residential building. The proposed apartment building would have a footprint of 16,120 square feet and contain 55 dwelling units. The development would provide 86 parking spaces (47 surface parking spaces and 39 parking spaces on the ground floor of the building).

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

A. *MONTCO* 2040 – The proposal is generally consistent with the county's comprehensive plan*, MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision,* which shows the proposed area as "Business Area" future land use category. Business Areas are concentrations of employment-oriented land uses. Residential uses in Business Areas should not be placed next to industrial uses that will create nuisances for the residents.

B. *Upper Moreland 2040* Comprehensive Plan – The proposal is located in the "Employment Center" future land use category of the township comprehensive plan. The future land use plan states that appropriate uses include industrial, office, research and development, and multifamily residential. Pedestrian connections are important for this area and should support the future expansion of the Power Line and Cross County Trails.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal, however, in the course of our review we have identified a number of key issues that we believe the applicant and township should consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

CONDITIONAL USE

We generally support multifamily use for this property location, but have some concerns about how the site plan submitted with the conditional use application would meet the standards outlined for the apartment use in the I-Limited Industrial district.

The conditional use approval is predicated on a plan that meets the township's goals stated in the conditional use criteria (§ 350-102.V(1)). Our interpretation of the apartment use criteria is that it is intended to create an attractive and walkable development. Based on our review of the submitted site plan and elevation renderings, we suggest that the site could be designed in a way that better meets the intent of the conditions and goals for the township.

SITE DESIGN

Our comments below address the relationship of the proposed buildings with the existing Willow Pointe development.

A. <u>Building Design</u>

1. <u>Orientation</u>. The proposed building is sited in the middle of the lot and is not oriented towards the existing development or the street, but rather is inward facing. We believe that a more attractive development would be better connected to the surroundings (e.g. sidewalk, street, other buildings)

and would invite people to walk between the buildings and the shared amenities the development offers. To achieve a more cohesive development as a whole, we recommend that the applicant consider orienting the buildings more towards the street and cul du sal to interact with the rest of the development.

2. Blank Walls. The ground floor of the apartment building is proposed to be used for structured parking and storage. Based on the façade elevations provided, the exterior of the ground floor appears to primarily blank wall space, which detracts from the building's appearance. In order to create a more visually interesting and more human-scaled building, we suggest integrating openings or green wall features along the ground floor that could help to break up the façade and increase transparency and visual interest. Additional space between the walkway and the building to plant foundation landscaping would also help to break up the monotony of the large blank wall.

B. Streetscape. The existing Willow Pointe development has a sidewalk, building frontage along the sidewalk, and street trees, which work together to create an inviting streetscape. The proposed building does not appear to have any elements that would contribute to an inviting streetscape, and it is separated from the street by the garage access driveway. To create an inviting and walkable entrance into the development, we recommend adding a sidewalk along the existing access driveway into the Willow Pointe development, with street trees, which would also reflect the other side of the street.

C. Gathering Space. Based on the site plan provided, there do not appear to be any gathering spaces around the proposed building, as is required as part of the conditional use approval (§ 350-102.V(1)(m)). We recommend the applicant consider creating a common gathering space with seating and a central focal point, such as an entrance plaza or courtyard. Please refer to the attachment at the end of this letter for illustrations of these concepts.

TRANSPORTATION

A. Driveway Location. As the proposal is currently designed, there would be two breaks in Maryland Road for vehicular access. Having multiple curb-cuts along a short stretch of road is dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians, and is detrimental to a walkable environment. We suggest the applicant consider an alternate design for vehicular access to the site. We recommend retaining the emergency access, using the existing driveway as primary vehicular access to the site, and integrating the driveway for the proposed building off of the existing cul-du-sac. In addition to reducing the number of curb cuts and interruptions along Maryland Road, this design would have the added benefit of creating a more integrated and well-connected development overall.

   If vehicular access was shared with the existing driveway, one of the curb cuts on Maryland Road could be removed and there would be an opportunity to create a gathering space (entrance plaza or courtyard) between the building and the road. Please refer to the attachment at the end of this letter for illustrations of these concepts.

B. Pedestrian Connectivity. A multi-use trail was constructed as part of the Willow Pointe development. The trail does not currently connect to a larger trail network. To extend the trail and connect future

residents to the trail and dog park amenities on the Willow Point complex, we recommend that the applicant extend the trail from the proposed sidewalks/paths of the new building to the existing trail.

C. Bus Stop. SEPTA Route 311 bus stop is currently located on the property at 2425 Maryland Road, which is a limited route serving the Willow Grove and Horsham area. SEPTA is proposing to eliminate Maryland Road as part of the Bus Revolution Route 310/311 consolidation; however, SEPTA is delaying the implementation of the Bus Revolution effort, which may impact the proposed development. We recommend coordinating with Dan Nemiroff, the project manager at SEPTA for Bus Revolution, for more information about Bus Revolution and the future of this bus stop.

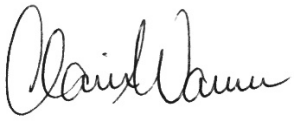
CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Upper Moreland's planning objectives for multifamily residential development.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files. Please print the assigned MCPC number (24-0041-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,



Claire Warner, Senior Community Planner
Claire.Warner@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3755

c: Andrew R. Freimuth, Applicant's Representative
Matt Candland, Manager, Upper Moreland Township
Jennifer Mullen, APA Vice Chair, Upper Moreland Township
Dan Nemiroff, SEPTA

Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
Attachment C: Recommended Site Plan Concepts

ATTACHMENTS A, B, & C



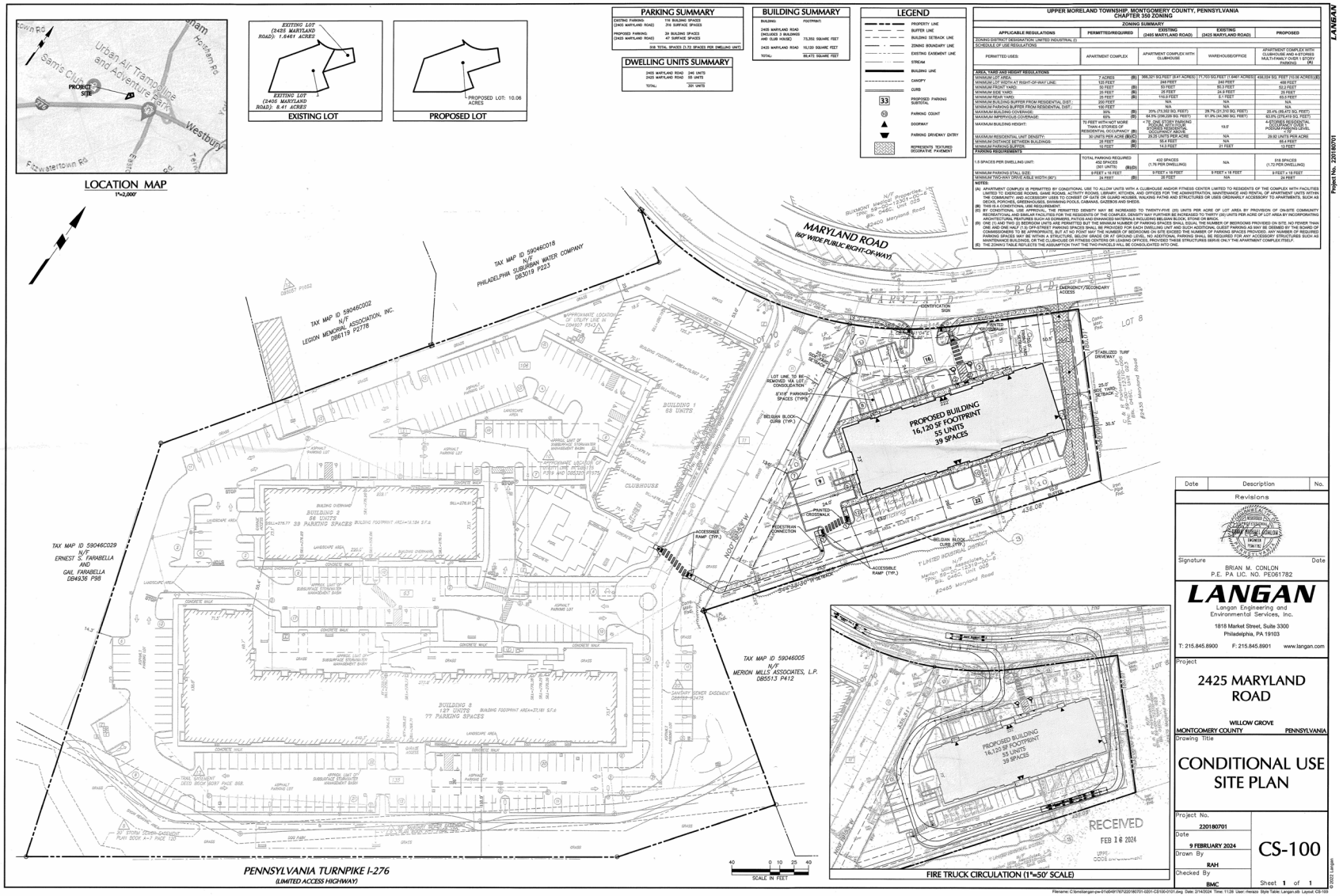
2405 - 2425 Maryland Road
Conditional Use
MCPC#240041001

Montgomery County Planning Commission

0 100 200 400 Feet

N

Montgomery County Courthouse - Planning Commission
PO Box 311 Norristown PA 19404-0311
(p) 610 278-3722 (f) 610 278-3941
www.montcopa.org/plancom
Aerial photography provided by Nearmap



Date	Description	No.
	Revisions	

Signature Date

BRIAN M. CONLON
P.E. PA LIC. NO. PE061782

LANGAN
Langan Engineering and Environmental Services, Inc.
1818 Market Street, Suite 3300
Philadelphia, PA 19103
T: 215.845.8900 F: 215.845.8901 www.langan.com

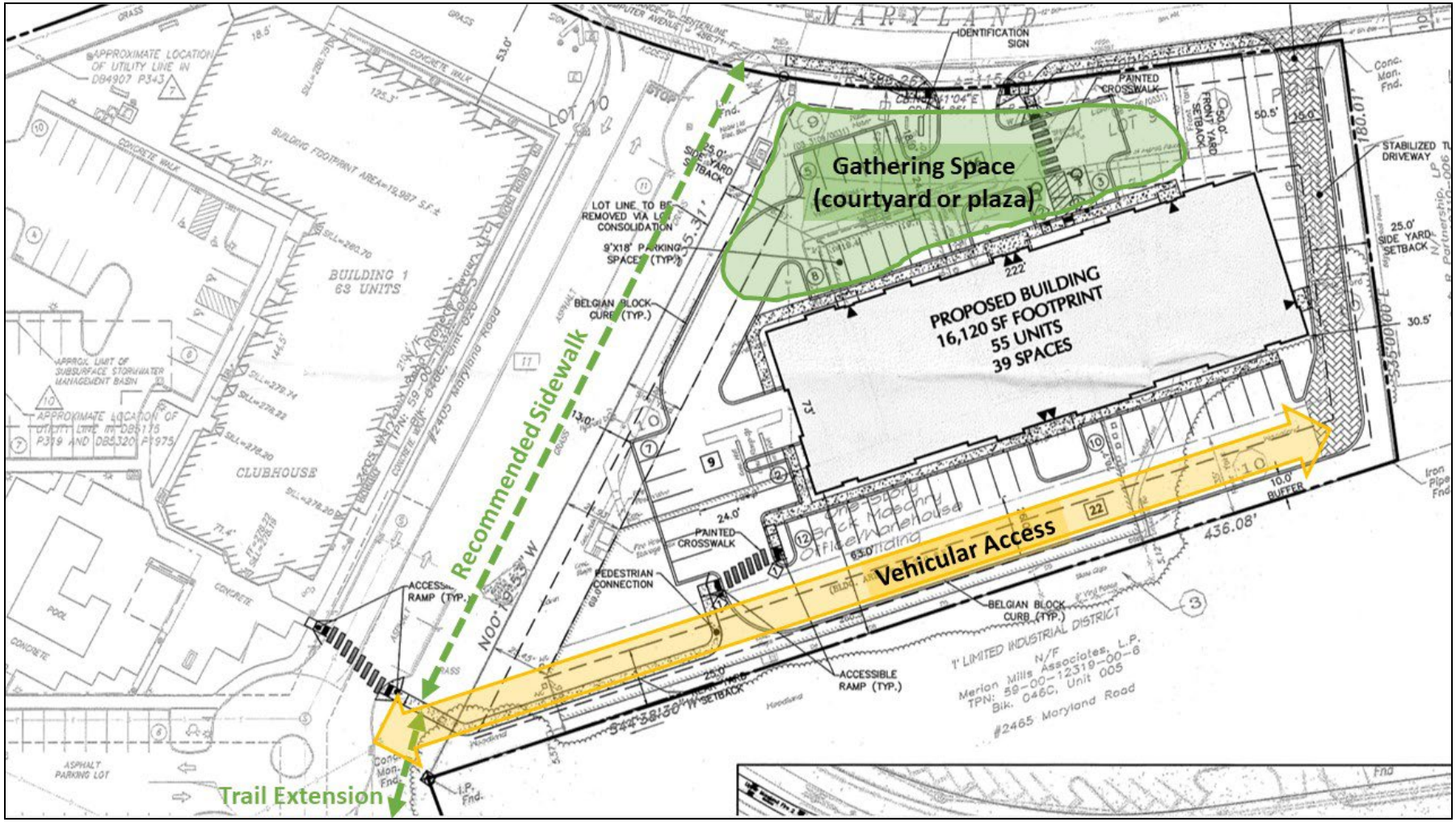
Project
2425 MARYLAND ROAD
WILLOW GROVE
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

Drawing Title
CONDITIONAL USE SITE PLAN

Project No. 220180701
Date 9 FEBRUARY 2024
Drawn By RAH
Checked By BMC

CS-100
Sheet 1 of 1

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Gathering Space
(courtyard or plaza)
PROPOSED BUILDING
16,120 SF FOOTPRINT
55 UNITS
39 SPACES
Recommended Sidewalk
Vehicular Access
Trail Extension
IDENTIFICATION SIGN
PAINTED CROSSWALK
BELGIAN BLOCK CURB (TYP.)
9'X18' PARKING SPACES (TYP.)
PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION
ACCESSIBLE RAMP (TYP.)
BUILDING 1
63 UNITS
CLUBHOUSE
POOL
ASPHALT PARKING LOT
MARYLAND
436.08'
10.0' BUFFER
25.0' SIDE YARD SETBACK
50.0' FRONT YARD SETBACK
STABILIZED TURF DRIVEWAY