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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 11, 2024

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

Re: MCPC # 23-0073-002
Plan Name: Willow Grove Shopping Center Redevelopment
(1 lot comprising 13.03 acres)
Situate: 10 Park Avenue (cross streets: Moreland Road (W) and Easton Road (N, E))
Upper Moreland Township

Dear Mr. Purtell:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on March 15, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Federal Realty OP, LP, is proposing a mixed-use redevelopment of the Willow Grove Shopping Center. The redevelopment of the shopping center is a phased project, some portions of which are currently under construction. The property is located between Park Avenue, Easton Road, and Moreland Road.

The current phase of the proposed development would demolish the existing shopping center and parking lot and construct a six-story mixed-use building with 261 residential units, including townhouse residences fronting onto Park Avenue as well as multifamily units in the upper stories. Two additional commercial buildings are proposed, as well as associated parking and public space. There would be 34,650 square feet of commercial space between three proposed buildings and 9,875 square feet of residential amenity space. Another retail building and surface parking lot would be located at the corner of Easton and York Roads.

The proposed mixed use building would be oriented towards the interior of the site onto two proposed internal roads, Willow Grove Lane and Salix Drive. The applicant is proposing a total of 503 structured parking spaces in addition to 508 surface parking spaces for the other nonresidential uses. The parking garage would be located between the mixed use building and an existing building on Easton Road.

The property is located in the TC-1 Zoning District and received conditional use approval for a mid-high rise apartment building as well as bonus height provisions (§ 350-260.B., § 350-265.B(3)). We reviewed associated

zoning text amendments to the TC-1 Zoning District and to Article XXXIII Additional Design Standards for the Town Center District in a letter dated January 13, 2023. In addition, we reviewed a proposal for other development phases of this property in a review letter dated December 9, 2021, and May 15, 2023.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

A. *MONTCO 2040* – The proposed text amendments are generally consistent with *MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision*, which designates the area as "Regional Mixed Use Center" future land use category. Regional Mixed Use centers typically generate an abundance of traffic, jobs, and overall activity. These centers are intensely developed suburban cores with significant retail, office, and residential land uses. Land uses should be mixed, and developments and public improvements should make it easier to walk to public transportation and other parts of the center.

B. *Upper Moreland 2040* Comprehensive Plan – The property is located in an area identified as the Town Center future land use category. Development in the Town Center should be a dense, intense, and transit- and pedestrian-oriented area, exhibiting high-quality design. Additionally, the Upper Moreland Revitalization Plan envisioned improved pedestrian environment and connections in the Willow Grove Shopping Center to Easton Road. Revitalization goals include efficient and attractive design and layout of properties, a wider mix of land uses, and intensified development on underutilized parcels.

RECOMMENDATION

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

REVIEW COMMENTS

PREVIOUS COMMENTS

We have reviewed previous submissions for the proposed development and have provided detailed comments on the building design and other planning issues. The below comments and recommendations reiterate pertinent comments from previous reviews of the zoning text amendment and conditional use submissions.

A. Surrounding Context. The proposed site plan appears to focus most of the commercial and pedestrian activity internally. Overall, we feel that this is a well-planned proposal and provides improved pedestrian connectivity and is a good use for the site. We reiterate the recommendation for the township and applicant to consider if there is potential for buildings to be developed along Moreland Road, and how potential future buildings could be integrated into the site and surrounding area.

B. Stormwater Management. Although the proposed development would not increase impervious coverage on the site, we suggest new development provides an opportunity to consider green stormwater management and how green infrastructure could be integrated into the development. Green stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens, captures and filters stormwater, helping to improve water quality. Rain gardens are

most effective when integrated with a subsurface detention basin as part of the overall stormwater management system.

1. Parking Lot Landscaping. We encourage the applicant to reference the MCPC Sustainable Green Parking Guidebook for strategies to add greenery and shade to the greatest extent possible and to improve the infiltration of parking areas.

C. Transportation. There are bus stops for SEPTA Bus Routes 22 and 55 located around the property. SEPTA is currently undergoing a comprehensive redesign of the bus system, the SEPTA Bus Revolution Project. The applicant should coordinate with SEPTA to determine if and how the bus stops and redesigned bus routes will be affected by the development.

NEW COMMENTS

A. Public Art. As stated in our previous review letter, we support the wrapping of the proposed parking garage to help mitigate the visual impact of the structure and to add color and interest. The elevation renderings submitted state that the garage façade design is in progress. This is a good opportunity for the applicant and township to coordinate on a design that is significant to the township.

B. Inclusionary Zoning. New market-driven development presents an opportunity to discuss affordable housing as part of the development plan for the future. Montgomery County recently adopted the Homes for All report, which advocates for equal opportunity to live in an affordable home. The county encourages all municipalities to consider housing affordability, particularly in areas that are near public transit, to increase access to job opportunities. As stated in the report, one of the impediments to finding an affordable home is that "there is an inadequate supply of affordable housing throughout the county, resulting in a need to increase opportunities for all county residents to have access to safe, decent, and permanent affordable owner-occupied and rental housing." As the Commissioners' thinking on this issue evolves, it may be prudent for the township to find creative solutions to housing residents equitably when development opportunities arise.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the Upper Moreland's planning objectives for mixed use development in the Town Center District.

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 township.

A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files. Please print the assigned MCPC number (23-0073-002) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

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

c: Federal Realty OP, LP c/o Mark Brennan, Applicant
Lindsey Breylinger, Bohler Engineering, Applicant's Engineer
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

ATTACHMENTS A & B

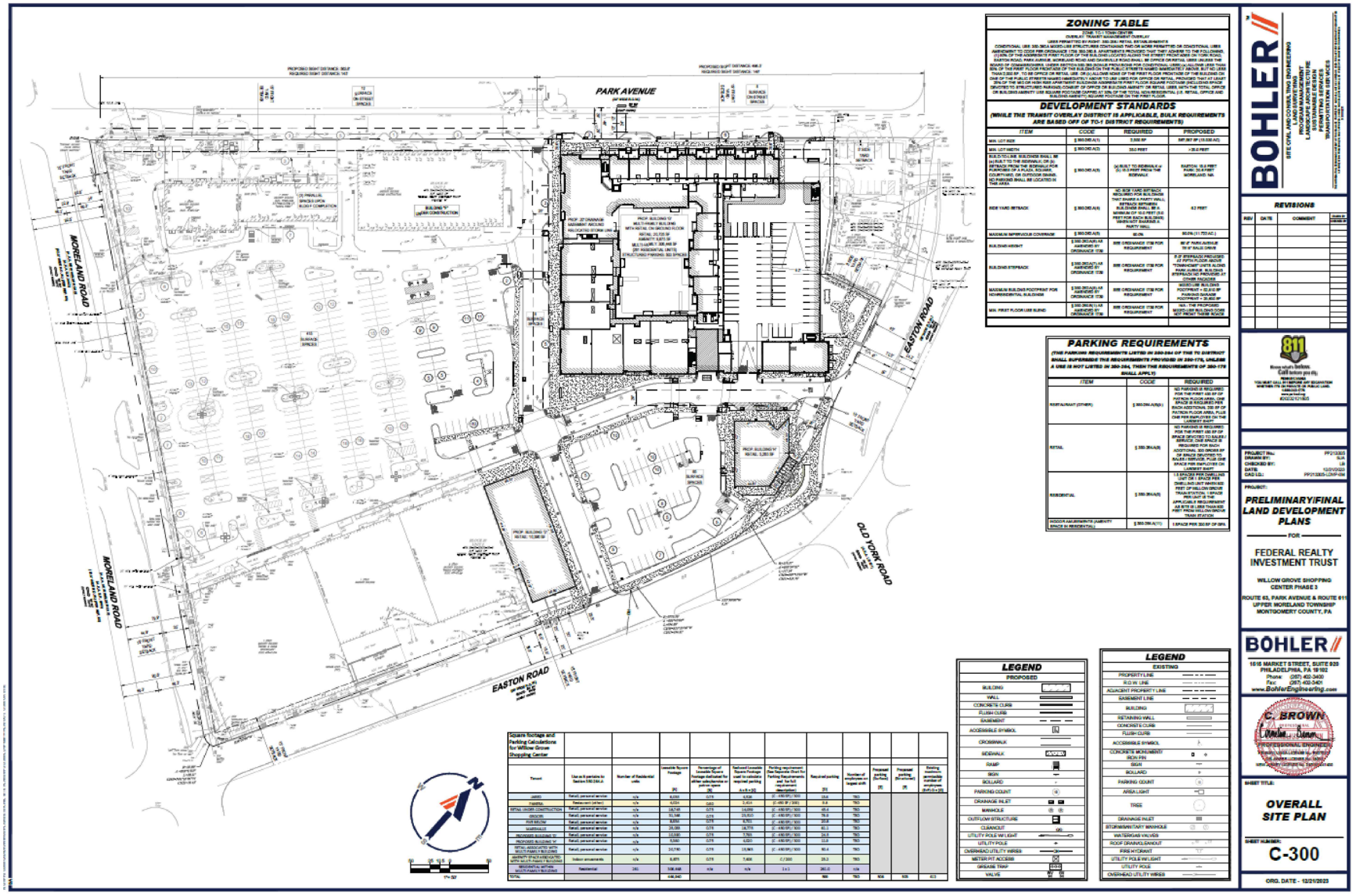


Willow Grove Shopping Center Redevelopment
MCPC#230073002

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

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PARK AVENUE
MORELAND ROAD
EASTON ROAD
OLD YORK ROAD
ZONING TABLE
DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS
PARKING REQUIREMENTS
LEGEND
PROPOSED
LEGEND
EXISTING
BOHLER
REVISIONS
PRELIMINARY/FINAL LAND DEVELOPMENT PLANS
FEDERAL REALTY INVESTMENT TRUST
WILLOW GROVE SHOPPING CENTER PHASE 3
ROUTE 63, PARK AVENUE & ROUTE 611
UPPER MORELAND TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA
OVERALL SITE PLAN
C-300