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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

August 9, 2024

Ms. Donna Ziegler, Manager
Royersford Borough
300 Main Street
Royersford, Pennsylvania 19468

Re: MCPC #21-0227-002
Plan Name: Main Street Royersford – Conditional Use
(5 lots comprising 3.24 acres)
Situate: 600, 604, & 634 Main Street; 651 & 675 Walnut Street
Royersford Borough

Dear Ms. Ziegler:

We have reviewed the above-referenced conditional use application as you requested on July 23, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

## BACKGROUND

The applicants, 610 Main Street LLC, have submitted a conditional use application as part of their effort to redevelop the old Nelson's Ice Cream Factory site at 6th and Main Streets. Under the borough-wide ARU-Adaptive Reuse Overlay district zoning regulations, the applicants are proposing to demolish the existing commercial building set in the middle of the block surrounded by 6th, 7th, Main, and Walnut Streets, as well as the building closer to the corner of 7th and Walnut Streets. A new 81,832-square foot building would be constructed closer to Main Street than the original commercial factory. This building is proposed to have commercial and amenity space on the ground floor, and 78 apartments (18 efficiencies, 47 1-bedroom, and 13 2-bedroom) on the second, third, and fourth floors. There are 135 parking spaces proposed throughout the site with access driveways leading to 6th and 7th Streets. Open space is proposed throughout the site surrounding the building and parking lot, though not as concentrated as in previous iterations of this proposal. The existing building at 6th and Main Streets will be converted into 2,250 square feet of commercial space. Three underground stormwater management facilities are proposed under various areas in the parking lot, eventually draining to the borough's storm inlet system at 7th and Walnut Streets.

A previous letter dated September 7, 2021, discussed the preliminary land development application for this site; since that letter was sent, the former factory buildings have been demolished (during the spring and summer of 2024) and the plan for new development has been somewhat revised, with the proposed main building reduced in size, the mix of apartments bedrooms modified, and the proposed list of non-residential uses altered. The conditional use application has been submitted to the borough with the intention of adding allowable non-residential uses, including personal services/day care, takeout and sit-down restaurants, recreational, and single-family detached dwelling.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

*Comments are reprinted from our 2021 letter.*

The first full chapter of Royersford Borough's 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update covers its historic preservation plan, with a goal to "emphasize historic preservation, sensitive building rehabilitation, and suitable adaptive reuses of older buildings", and an objective of "use demolition controls for the most important buildings, incentives and public education to protect historic buildings and areas". Specific strategies to meet this goal and objective include "enact zoning provisions to require pre-approval of demolition of important historic buildings", "offer zoning incentives for rehabilitation of important older buildings", and promote interest and financing options for historic rehabilitation. The Future Land Use Plan map identifies the entire block as "medium low density residential", while the note for "high density residential" mentions developments up to 15 units per acre. It could be argued that the demolition of a historic building in a medium low density residential area for a residential development exceeding density figures for high density areas is not compatible with the Comprehensive Plan. However, given the plan's overall sentiments towards reuse and growth, this argument must be balanced out by larger-scale factors and trends.

Montgomery County's Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, identifies this area as "Town Residential", though the "Town Center" designation begins on the other side of 6th Street. The county continues to advocate for infill development and redevelopment of underutilized and vacant land, including brownfields, into walkable, mixed-use buildings to attract young workers and other key demographic groups, noting that new development should fit into the character of nearby residential neighborhoods. This proposal broadly meets the goals of Montco 2040.

## RECOMMENDATION

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

## REVIEW COMMENTS

### CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATION

As it pertains to the direct request made by the applicant to the borough to expand allowable uses as part of this development, the MCPC would support the proposals for all of the categories proposed except for single-family detached, as we are not clear on why this use would be considered if the standalone building at 6th and Main Streets is to be converted to commercial space. While sit-down restaurants have the highest parking requirements of any of the proposed uses, the applicant has shown in their conditional use application that the parking can be accommodated between the on-site spaces and the on-street spaces along Main Street. The hope would be that a restaurant in this area would also attract some non-motorized traffic, which would lessen the burden on the shared parking lot.

It is unclear whether this development plan will be resubmitted for full land development approval. Since there are significant changes to the proposal layout since our last review, the remainder of our comments are more focused on site design, which would be discussed during a full subdivision and land development submission process.

### WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT

1. Because the applicant is now proposing underground stormwater BMPs instead of infiltration beds, the Borough should ensure that the basins have an established maintenance schedule and are regularly inspected by a qualified inspector.

2. A sewer facilities planning module may be required for this development; the Borough should investigate the impacts on sewer usage between the previous factory usage and the proposed mixed uses.

### SITE DESIGN/LANDSCAPING PLAN

1. While the landscape screening buffer proposed around the property's edge is generally good, we would recommend further examination of placing additional trees within close proximity to the parking lot to provide shade. This could be accomplished by either planting in the already laid out islands, altering some of the connections from the parking lot to the sidewalk near the building, or removing a parking space or two.

2. We are disappointed that the public plaza areas provided in the 2021 iteration of the plan have been removed in lieu of non-podium parking spaces. The borough and applicant should consider ways to maximize the "open space" benefits of what is otherwise largely grassy landscaped buffers around the outside of the site.

3. Along the same vein, it is unclear whether the proposed dog park will be publicly accessible or solely for the use of the apartment residents; we would recommend that the borough and applicant reach an understanding before installation.

## CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC broadly supports the applicant's proposal, but we believe that our suggestions will better achieve the borough's planning objectives.

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 (#21-0227-002) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

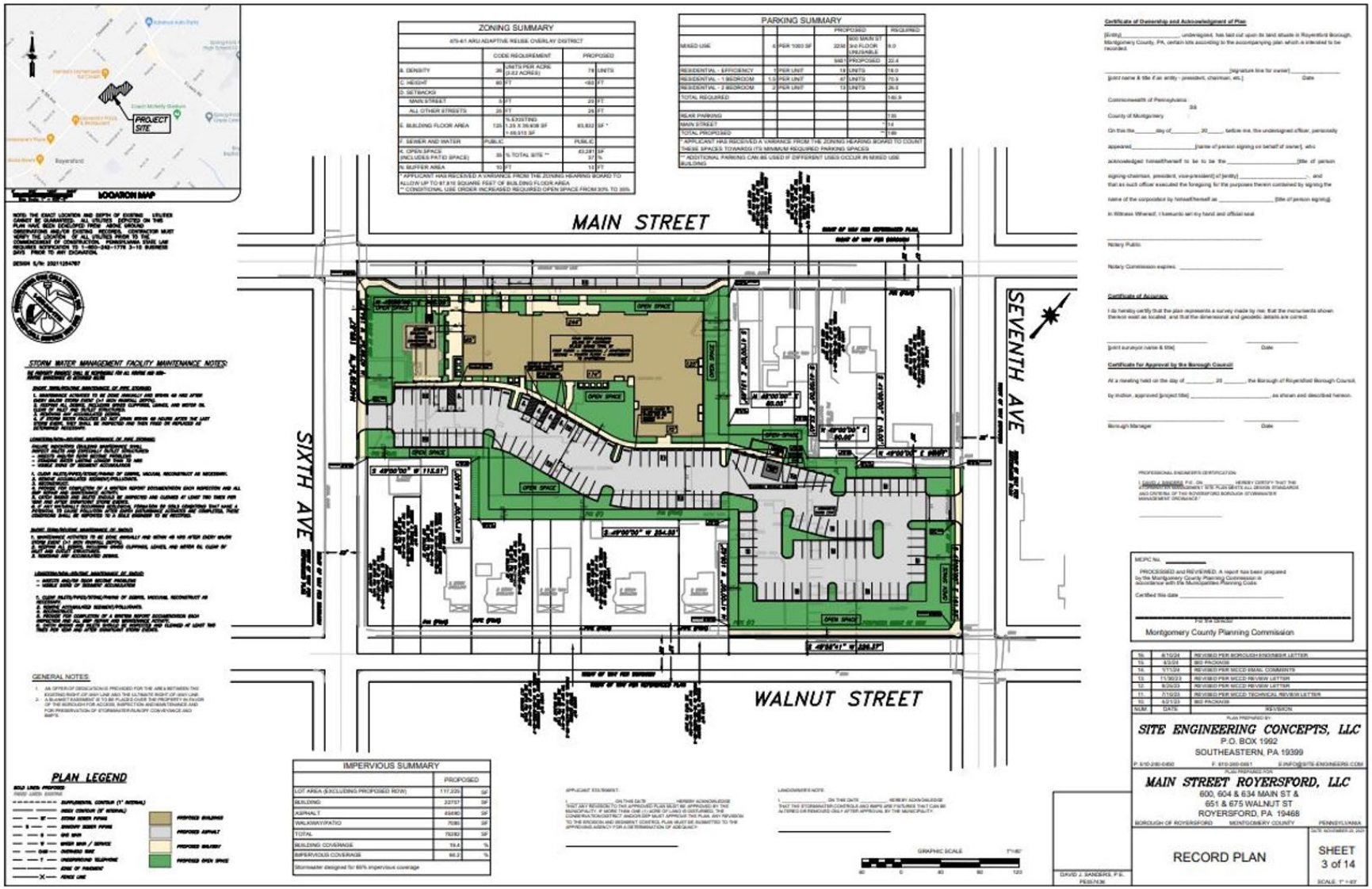
Matthew Popek

Matthew Popek, AICP
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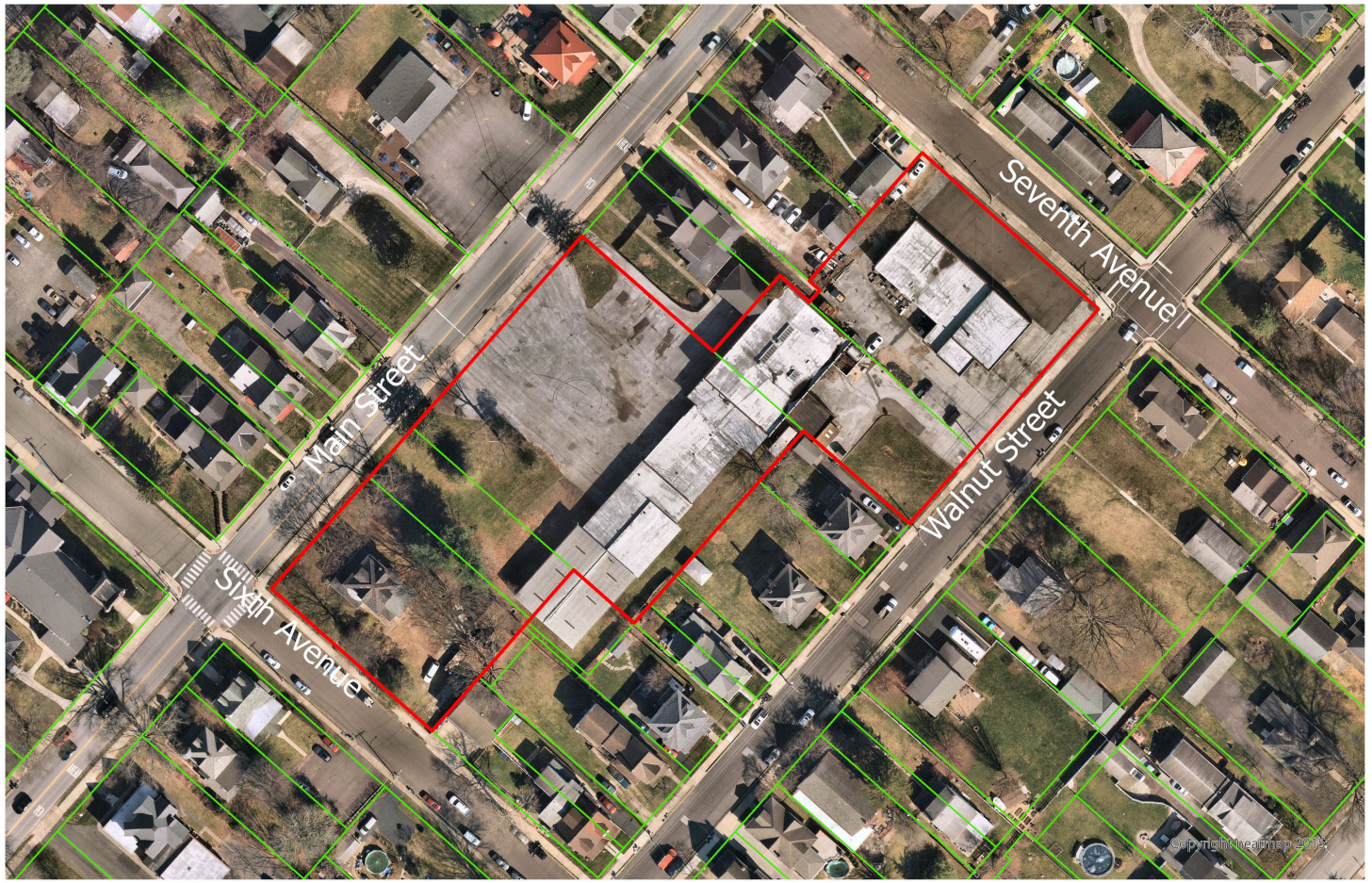
c: Brad Sinrod, Applicant's Representative
William Hanebury, Chrm., Borough Planning Commission

Attachments: (1) Site Plan
(2) Aerial

*Site Plan – 6th and Main Streets, Royersford Borough*



*Aerial – 6th and Main Streets, Royersford Borough*




Main Street Royersford LLC
MCPC#210227002

Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap