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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 2, 2024

Mr. Christopher Leswing, Director of Building & Planning
Building & Planning Department
Township of Lower Merion
75 East Lancaster Avenue
Ardmore, PA 19003

Re: MCPC #24-0256-001
Plan Name: 55 Ardmore Avenue
(48 du/1 lot on approximately 0.9 acres)
Situate: Ardmore Avenue (E); north of School Lane
Lower Merion Township

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on November 21, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, HumanGood, proposes to construct a four-story multifamily building containing 48 units on the site of an existing township parking lot. The proposed building will share vehicular access from Ardmore Avenue (which is a PennDOT road) with an existing multifamily building located between the proposed building and Ardmore Avenue. Additional improvements shown at this time include 42 surface parking spaces, internal pedestrian pathways, landscaping areas, site lighting, and an underground stormwater infiltration basin. The property is located in the township's MDR2 – Medium-Density Residential 2 zoning district.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

This property is identified primarily as Town Center in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. Town Centers are traditional downtown areas with a mix of retail, institutional, office, and residential uses. Primary uses include high-density residential development next to traditional downtown areas. The proposed development specifically advances the goal to "support housing choices and opportunities to meet the needs of all people."

The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies this property as Public Land in the Future Land Use Map. In addition, the Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan

identifies the Ardmore area as a Traditional Main Street commercial area typology. Traditional Main Streets are pedestrian-oriented, fine-grained, and include shared parking facilities, centralized municipal parking, and unique public gathering spaces. Apartments as stand-alone structures are considered appropriate when located on side streets.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal and we commend the township for working to advance ways to expand affordable housing in the township. In particular, the proposed development appears to be a logical expansion of the existing Ardmore House development. However, in the course of our review we have identified the following issues that the applicant and Lower Merion Township may wish to consider prior to moving forward. Our review comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

ZONING ORDINANCE COMMENTS

Based on the information provided, we have identified the following items related to the Lower Merion Township Zoning Ordinance that we feel should be addressed as part of any future land development submissions associated with this proposal:

A. Side Yard Setback. The Zoning Bulk and Area Requirements table on Sheet 1 lists the required minimum side yard setback as 10 feet and that the proposed side yard setback is 6 feet. Table 4.2.2. of the township's zoning ordinance states that the minimum side yard setback for low-income multifamily housing is 5 feet.

B. Tree Replacement. Section 155-7.5.C. contains standards for tree replacement when more than 25% of the existing viable trees having a caliper of six inches or greater are removed. Sheet 3 contains an inventory of existing trees to be removed; however, it is unclear if the landscape plan demonstrates compliance with the tree replacement requirements, if applicable.

C. Maximum Driveway Width. Section 155-8.5.C.(1)(a) states that driveways in the MDR2 zoning district are limited to 12 feet in width. The shared driveway from Ardmore Avenue is wider than 12 feet; however, this appears to be an existing condition.

D. Bicycle Parking. Table 8.7.1. lists the minimum bicycle parking requirements based on the proposed land use. Multifamily residential developments with more than 20 units require 0.5 short-term and 0.5 long-term bicycle parking spaces per unit. A bicycle rack area is identified on the proposed site plan; however, it is unclear how many bicycles could be accommodated in the bicycle rack area. In addition, a location for enclosed, long-term bicycle parking should be identified, if it is determined that this requirement applies to the current proposal.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE COMMENTS

Based on the information provided, we have identified the following items related to the township's subdivision and land development ordinance that we feel should be addressed as part of any future land development submissions associated with this proposal:

A. Sidewalk Across Driveways. Section 135-4.9.F.(2)(a) requires that "the grade and paving of the sidewalk shall be continuous across driveways." The sidewalk along Ardmore Avenue does not extend across the driveway; however, this appears to be an existing condition.

B. Parking Layout. We have identified the following comments related to parking layout:

- Section 135-4.9.Q.(2)(b) requires that "parking spaces designed for the exclusive use by disabled persons shall be installed in all parking lots as close and convenient to building entrances as is reasonable." Two handicapped parking spaces are shown across the driveway from the building entrance. The applicant may wish to explore if these handicapped parking spaces could be relocated next to the handicapped parking spaces proposed closer to the building entrance.
- Section 135-4.9.Q.(3)(a) requires that "parking shall not be permitted along driveways which serve as the entrance(s) or exit(s) to parking areas with a capacity of 50 vehicles or more. A minimum driveway length of 50 feet shall be provided between the road ultimate right-of-way line and the first parking space or internal driveway intersection in parking lots with 50 vehicles or more." The shared driveway serves as the entrance/exit to a parking area with a total of 77 parking spaces and parking along the driveway appears to be located closer than 50 feet from the right-of-way of Ardmore Avenue.
- Section 135-4.9.Q.(3)(c) requires that "up to 30 parking spaces may only be located in a dead-ended parking area, only if a suitable turnaround area is provided at the closed end." It appears 27 parking spaces are proposed within a new dead-end parking area.
- Section 135-5.3.F.(3)(b) requires that "all parking rows must be terminated by a planting island." The section of four proposed parking spaces on the north frontage of the proposed building is not terminated by a planting island.

C. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. Section 135-4.9.R. contains requirements related to electric vehicle charging stations. Future submissions should demonstrate compliance with this section.

D. Landscape Plan. In general, future submissions should include a landscape plan demonstrating compliance with all applicable landscaping requirements in the township's subdivision and land development ordinance, including the street tree requirements (§135-5.1), buffer planting requirements (§135-5.2), parking lot greening standards (§135-5.3), and additional planting requirements (§135-5.4).

In particular, we wish to point out several landscaping requirements that do not appear to be taken into account in the current site plan layout:

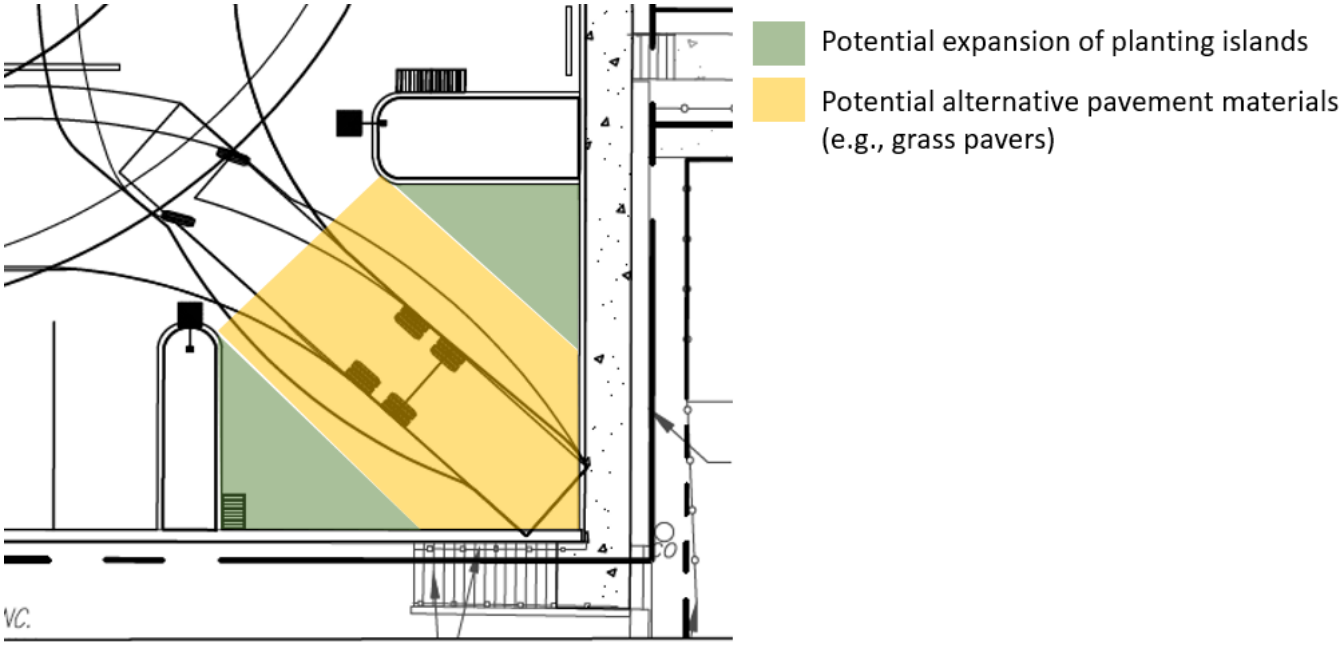
- A softening buffer is required where residential use is proposed adjacent to multifamily. The space between the proposed building and the existing adjacent multifamily site is shown to be planted with Big Blue Lilyturf perennials which does not appear to meet the planting requirements for a softening buffer.

- A screening buffer planting is required to screen certain site elements such as electrical transformers and generators from off-site. There does not appear to be any buffer plantings between the proposed electrical transformer and generator and the adjacent property to the east.
- Planting islands within the parking lot are required to be at least 340 square feet. Several of the proposed planting islands do not appear to meet this minimum size. In particular, the proposed tree species shown in the parking lot planting islands (*Quercus alba*) requires significant root space.
- Additional information may be needed to demonstrate minimum soil volume per tree for any planting areas 1,000 square feet or less in area.

E. Transportation Impact Study. Section 135-8.2.C.(1)(a) requires a transportation impact study for residential developments of 20 or more dwelling units.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

The proposed site plans show a large paved area in the northeast corner of the proposed parking lot to serve as a truck turning area for trash trucks and fire trucks. As shown, this configuration will create a large area of impervious surface. We suggest that, based on the truck turning template provided, the adjacent planting islands could be expanded slightly without impacting the truck turning needs. In addition, the applicant may wish to explore whether this area could be paved with an alternative material such as grass pavers, depending on how frequently it will need to be used.



EXISTING RETAINING WALLS

We noted that there appear to be existing retaining walls on three sides of the property. It is unclear from the information provided if the proposed development will impact any of the existing retaining walls.

ADDITIONAL SITE AMENITIES

We encourage the applicant to explore whether additional site amenities and/or landscaping for the enjoyment of future residents of the development could be provided in the large green space in the southeast corner of the site.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the proposed development; however, we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the township's planning objectives for 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 (#24-0256-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

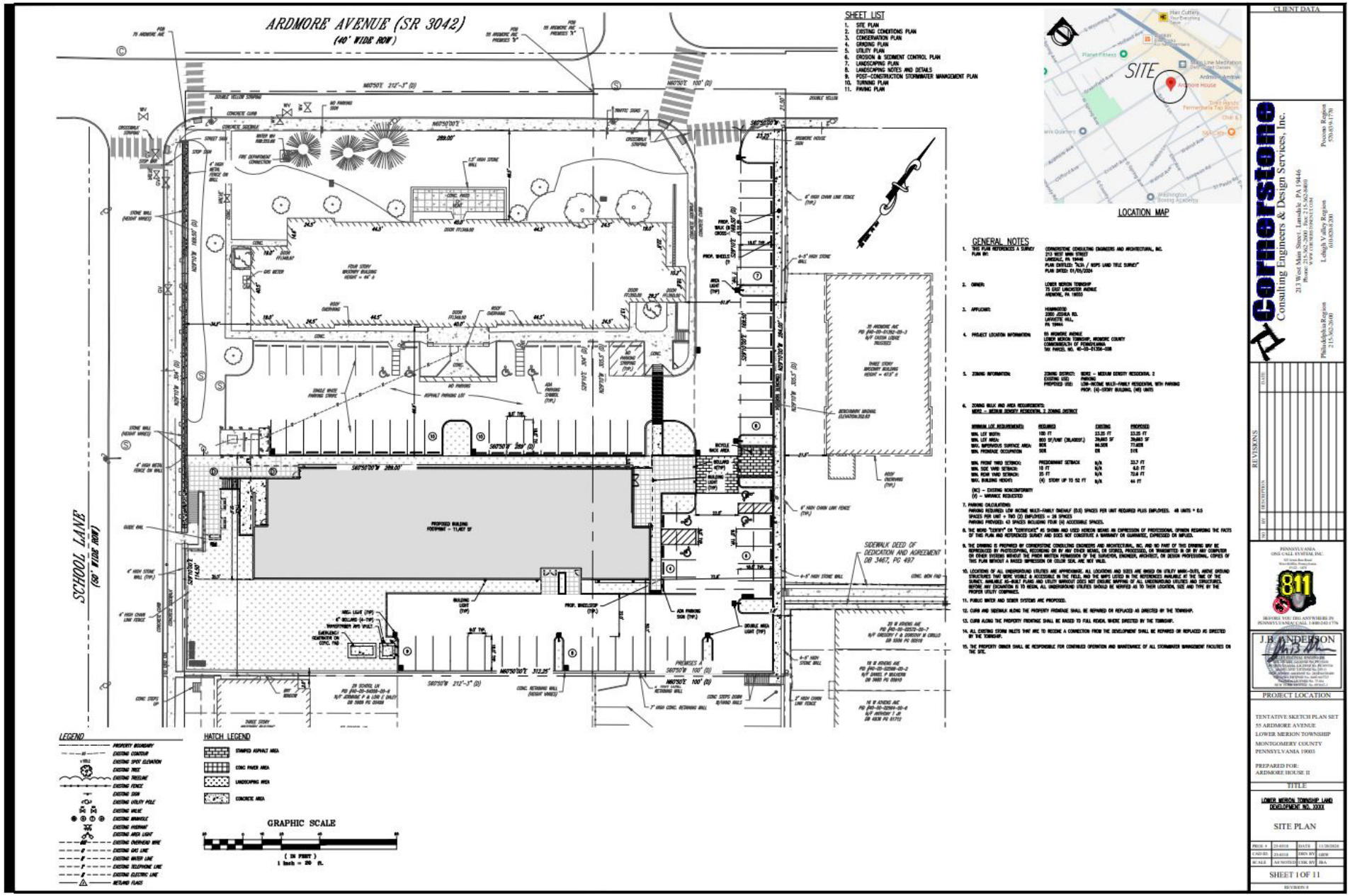
Sincerely,

Marley B Bice

Marley Bice, AICP, Community Planning Assistant Manager
610-278-3740 – marley.bice@montgomerycountypa.gov

c: Vidhi Anderson, Applicant's Representative
Cornerstone Consulting, Applicant's Engineer
Gilbert P. High, Jr., Esq., Twp. Solicitor
Ernie B. McNeely, Twp. Manager
Jody Kelley, Twp. Secretary
Joseph Mastronardo, P.E., Twp. Engineer
Charlie Doyle, Twp. Asst. Dir. of Planning
Colleen Hall, Twp. Senior Planner
Greg Prichard, Twp. Hist. Preserv. Planner
Holly Colello, Twp. Planner
Sarah Carley, Twp. Planner
Hope Viviani, Twp. Planning Technician
Scott Burton; Paul Lutz; Fran Hanney, PennDOT

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


ARDMORE AVENUE (SR 3042)
(40' WIDE ROW)
SCHOOL LANE
(50' WIDE ROW)
SHEET LIST
1. SITE PLAN
2. EXISTING CONDITIONS PLAN
3. CONSERVATION PLAN
4. GRADING PLAN
5. UTILITY PLAN
6. EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL PLAN
7. LANDSCAPING PLAN
8. LANDSCAPING NOTES AND DETAILS
9. POST-CONSTRUCTION STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN
10. TURNING PLAN
11. PAVING PLAN
SITE
LOCATION MAP
GENERAL NOTES
PROPOSED BUILDING FOOTPRINT = 11,467 SF
SIDEWALK DEED OF DEDICATION AND AGREEMENT DB 3467, PG 497
LEGEND
HATCH LEGEND
STRIPED ASPHALT AREA
CONC PAVER AREA
LANDSCAPING AREA
CONCRETE AREA
GRAPHIC SCALE
(IN FEET)
1 inch = 20 ft.
CLIENT DATA
Cornerstone
Consulting Engineers & Design Services, Inc.
213 West Main Street · Lansdale, PA 19446
Phone: 215-362-2900 · Fax: 215-362-0440
www.cornerstonecds.com
Philadelphia Region
215-362-2900
Process Region
570-854-1770
Lehigh Valley Region
610-820-0300
REVISIONS
NO. BY DESCRIPTION DATE
PENNSYLVANIA ONE CALL SYSTEM, INC.
811
BEFORE YOU DIG ANYWHERE IN PENNSYLVANIA CALL 1-800-242-1776
J.B. ANDERSON
PROJECT LOCATION
TENTATIVE SKETCH PLAN SET
55 ARDMORE AVENUE
LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA 19003
PREPARED FOR:
ARDMORE HOUSE II
TITLE
LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP LAND DEVELOPMENT NO. XXXX
SITE PLAN
PROJ. # 23-0018 DATE 11/20/2024
CAD ID: 23-0018 DWN BY: MDR
SCALE: AS NOTED CHK BY: JBA
SHEET 1 OF 11
REVISION #



55 Ardmore Avenue
MCPC#240256001

Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

0 50 100 200 Feet

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