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PLANNING COMMISSION
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NORRISTOWN, PA 19404-0311

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 23, 2025

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

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

SUBJECT: MCPC #25-0116-002
Gratz College Addition

We have received and reviewed a "SOPI" submission for the above-referenced subdivision and land development application as you requested on July 11, 2025. The comments in this memo are based on the most recent submission. We have attached our most recent full review letter (for submission MCPC #25-0116-001) for reference; however, some comments in our previous review letter(s) may have been addressed.

UPDATED BACKGROUND

We have reviewed the most recent "SOPI" submission for changes and did not identify any significant changes with regards to the type of development and location of improvements proposed. However, additional information was received with this submission, including a landscape plan and a code relief request form. In addition, an updated code relief request form was received from township staff on July 22, 2025.

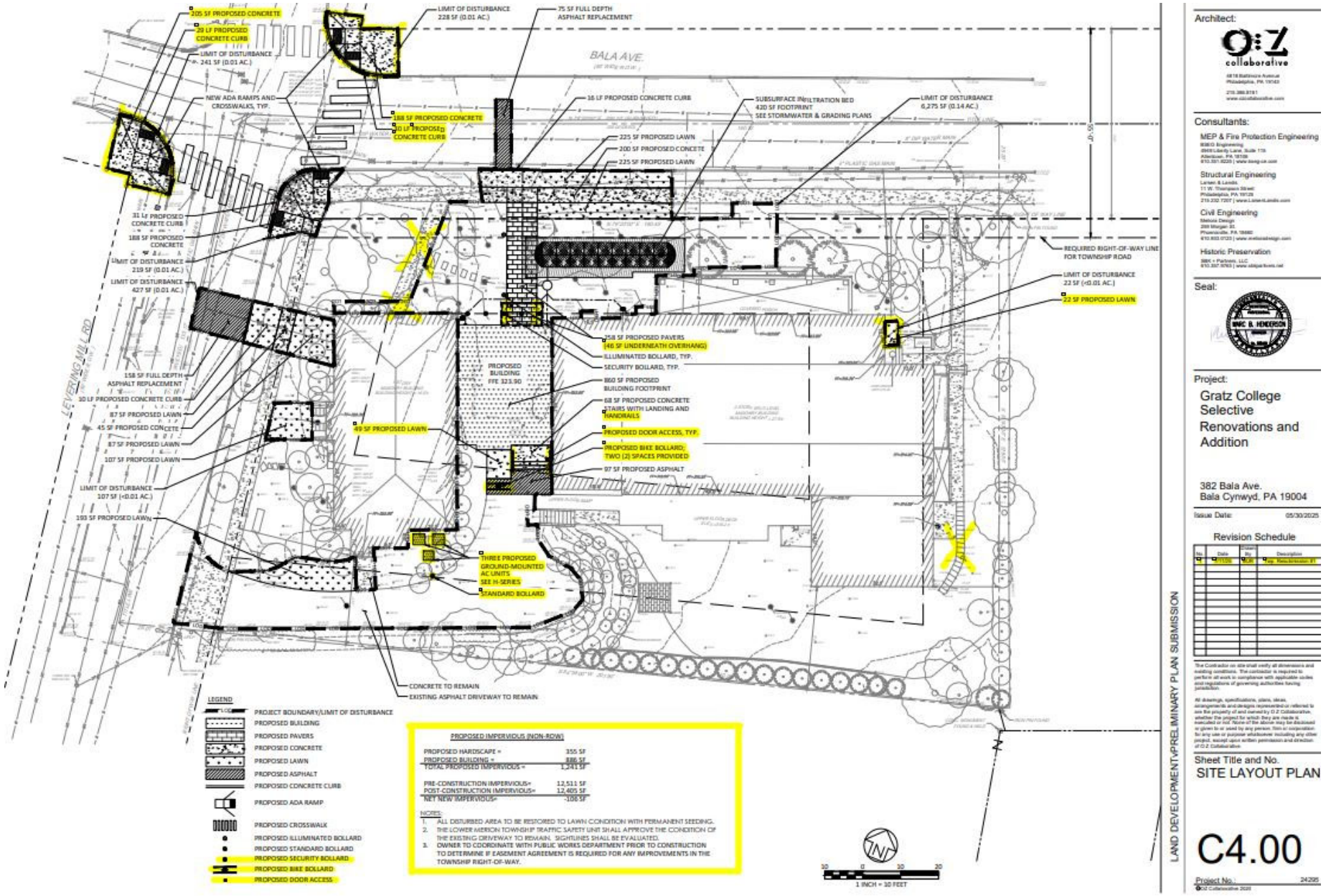
ADDITIONAL REVIEW COMMENTS

We have reviewed the most recent "SOPI" submission and feel that the comments from our July 7, 2025 review letter (please see Attachment B) have been addressed; however, we wish to offer the following additional comment based on the most recent plan submission:

- Shrub Species Diversity: The proposed plant list for new plantings does not appear to meet the minimum species diversity requirements in Table 5.8.1. of the township's subdivision and land development ordinance as eight shrubs of a single species are proposed where three species would be required.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
Attachment B: MCPC #25-0116-001 Review Letter Dated July 7, 2025



LAND DEVELOPMENT/PRELIMINARY PLAN SUBMISSION

Architect:
O:Z collaborative
4818 Baltimore Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19143
215.386.8181
www.ozcollaborative.com

Consultants:

MEP & Fire Protection Engineering
BSEG Engineering
494 Liberty Lane, Suite 115
Allentown, PA 18106
610.351.9220 | www.bseg-us.com

Structural Engineering
Larsen & Landis
11 W. Thompson Street
Philadelphia, PA 19125
215.232.7207 | www.LarsenLandis.com

Civil Engineering
Melvin Design
200 Morgan St.
Phoenixville, PA 19460
610.933.0123 | www.melvindesign.com

Historic Preservation
BBK + Partners, LLC
610.397.9763 | www.oldpartners.net

Seal:
MARC B. HENDERSON

Project:
Gratz College Selective Renovations and Addition

382 Bala Ave.
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Issue Date: 05/30/2025

Revision Schedule

No.	Date	Drawn By	Description
	7/1/25	MB	Reg. Resubmission #1

The Contractor on site shall verify all dimensions and existing conditions. The contractor is required to perform all work in compliance with applicable codes and regulations of governing authorities having jurisdiction.

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Sheet Title and No.
SITE LAYOUT PLAN

C4.00

Project No.: 24295

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 7, 2025

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

Re: MCPC #25-0116-001
Plan Name: Gratz College Addition
(860 sq. ft. institutional on approximately 0.53 acres)
Situate: Bala Avenue (south /east of Levering Mill Road
Lower Merion Township

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on June 5, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Gratz College, proposes to consolidate two parcels at the corner of Bala Avenue and Levering Mill Road and construct a building addition with an 860-square foot footprint to connect the two existing buildings on the combined site. Both of the existing buildings are listed as Class II historic resources on the township's historic resource inventory. The vehicular driveway to Bala Avenue will be removed while the vehicular driveway from Levering Mill Road will remain. Additional improvements shown at this time include sidewalk repairs, ADA curb ramps and crosswalks, stormwater management, and landscaping. The property is located in the township's IC3 Institutional Civic 3 zoning district.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies this property as Institutional in the Future Land Use Map. In addition, this property is identified 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. The project specifically advances the statement that "historic buildings should be preserved, rehabilitated, and reused."

REVIEW COMMENTS

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal; 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

We suggest that the location of the proposed bicycle rack be clarified and shown consistently across the plan submissions. It appears that the bicycle rack near the Bala Avenue pedestrian entrance is shown in different locations relative to the sidewalk on the civil site plan and the landscape plan. In addition, sufficient information should be provided to ensure compliance with the bicycle parking clearance and location requirements in Sections 155-8.8.B. & C. of the township's zoning ordinance.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE COMMENTS

We suggest that the landscape plan be revised to include a landscape compliance chart as required by Section 135-5.7.E. of the township's subdivision and land development ordinance ("A compliance chart shall also be included, which demonstrates compliance with all of the requirements of this article and any applicable chapters."). For example, additional calculations should be provided regarding street trees along both street frontages of the site and any required landscape buffer plantings.

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 institutional 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 (#25-0116-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

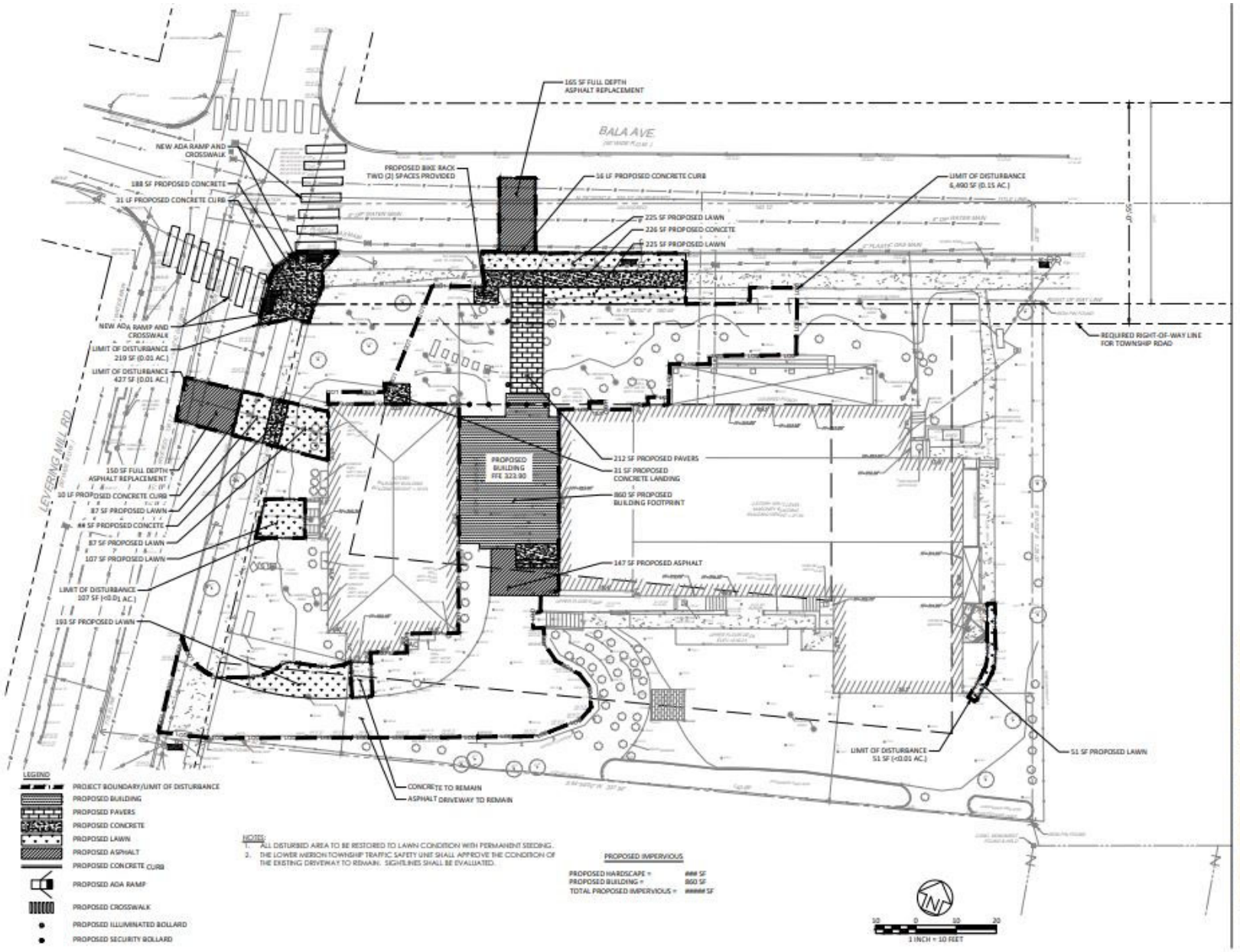
Sincerely,

Marley B Bice

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

c: Marc Henderson, P.E., 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

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



LAND DEVELOPMENT/PRELIMINARY PLAN SUBMISSION

Architect:
Q:Z collaborative
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Historic Preservation
IBBE + Partners, LLC
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Seal:

Project:
Gratz College Selective Renovations and Addition

382 Bala Ave.
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Issue Date: 05/30/2025

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Sheet Title and No.
SITE LAYOUT PLAN

C4.00

Project No. 24295

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Gratz College Addition
MCPC#250116001

Montgomery County Planning Commission

0 50 100 200 Feet

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