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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 28, 2025

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

Re: MCPC #25-0187-001
Plan Name: Natural Lands Oakwell
(1,200 sq. ft. institutional on approximately 53.3 acres)
Situate: Spring Mill Road (north)/east of County Line Road
Lower Merion Township

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on September 18, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Natural Lands Trust, Inc., proposes to demolish an existing pool and pool house and remove portions of existing asphalt and gravel driveways throughout the site. The applicant will then construct a 1,200-square foot welcome center and two new surface parking areas. The larger parking area will accommodate 50 new parking spaces along a winding, one-way driveway extending off the existing surface parking lot off County Line Road. The second parking area, located off Montgomery Avenue, will accommodate 29 new parking spaces and two bus parking spaces that are labeled to be “event/restricted parking.” Additional improvements include several materials and compost bays, the potential relocation of a tea house, and sidewalks along the Montgomery Avenue frontage of the site and a portion of the County Line Road frontage of the site.

The property is located partially in the LDR1 Low-Density Residential and IN Institutional Nature Preserve zoning districts; however, it is our understanding that the applicant has also submitted a request to consider rezoning the lands proposed to be consolidated as IN Institutional Nature Preserve.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies these properties as Low & Medium Density Residential (1835 County Line Road and 1800 West Montgomery Avenue) and Other Private Open Space (Stoneleigh) in the Future Land Use Map. The proposed expansion and improvements to Stoneleigh appear to

be in keeping with the comprehensive plan goals to maintain the low-density residential character of this portion of the township, while ensuring the maintenance of natural and historic features on the site.

In addition, this property is identified as Suburban Residential Area (1835 County Line Road and 1800 West Montgomery Avenue) and Open Space (Stoneleigh) in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. Institutional uses are considered primary uses in Suburban Residential Areas, which are also characterized by extensive landscaping on individual properties.

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 issues that the applicant and Lower Merion Township may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our review comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

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 property:

A. Sidewalks and Verges. Section 135-4.9.F.(1) states that "sidewalks shall be provided along all existing and proposed public and private streets." The expanded Stoneleigh property has significant frontage on three streets. Our understanding of the status of existing and proposed pedestrian facilities on each street frontage, in relation to requirements in the township's subdivision and land development ordinance, is noted below:

- *Spring Mill Road* – it is our understanding that the sidewalk requirement along Spring Mill Road was waived with the original Stoneleigh approval
- *County Line Road* – the Functional Classification Map from the township's comprehensive plan shows County Line Road as a minor street. Table 4.9.1. Road Design Standards requires a 5-foot-wide sidewalk and a 3-foot-wide verge for minor streets. A section of sidewalk appears to be proposed on the site plan between the existing driveway and the northern property line with a note that states "proposed sidewalk by others."
- *Montgomery Avenue* – the Functional Classification Map from the township's comprehensive plan shows County Line Road as a primary street. Table 4.9.1. Road Design Standards requires an 8-foot-wide sidewalk and a 4-foot-wide verge for primary streets. A sidewalk is shown along the full Montgomery Avenue frontage of the site with a note that states "future 4-foot-wide sidewalk constructed to township specifications." It is our understanding that the applicant is requesting a deferral of construction of sidewalk in this location. We suggest that future plans should be revised to show the full 8-foot-wide sidewalk required by Table 4.9.1. or that the applicant consider utilizing the off-road pedestrian pathway standards provided in §135-4.9.F.(3)(b).

B. Pedestrian Circulation within Parking Lots. Section 135-4.9.Q.(7) contains requirements for pedestrian pathways and crosswalks that apply to all surface parking lots where 10 or more new parking spaces are proposed. The applicant is proposing two surface parking lots with more than 10 parking spaces. Future versions of the site plan should show how pedestrian circulation will be accommodated from the far end of each parking lot to the main entry of a building(s).

C. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. Section 135-4.9.R. contains requirements for electric vehicle charging stations. We encourage the applicant to explore installing infrastructure to accommodate electric vehicle charging as part of their proposed development.

PARKING LOT CIRCULATION

The larger of the two surface parking lots proposed contains a total of 50 parking spaces along a one-way, serpentine driveway of varying width. We noted that the fire truck turning diagram for this parking area on Sheet 4 appears to show the fire truck deviating from the edge of the driveway in at least two locations. We defer to the township engineer to review the proposed parking lot circulation.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the proposed development; however, we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Lower Merion 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 (#25-0187-001) 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

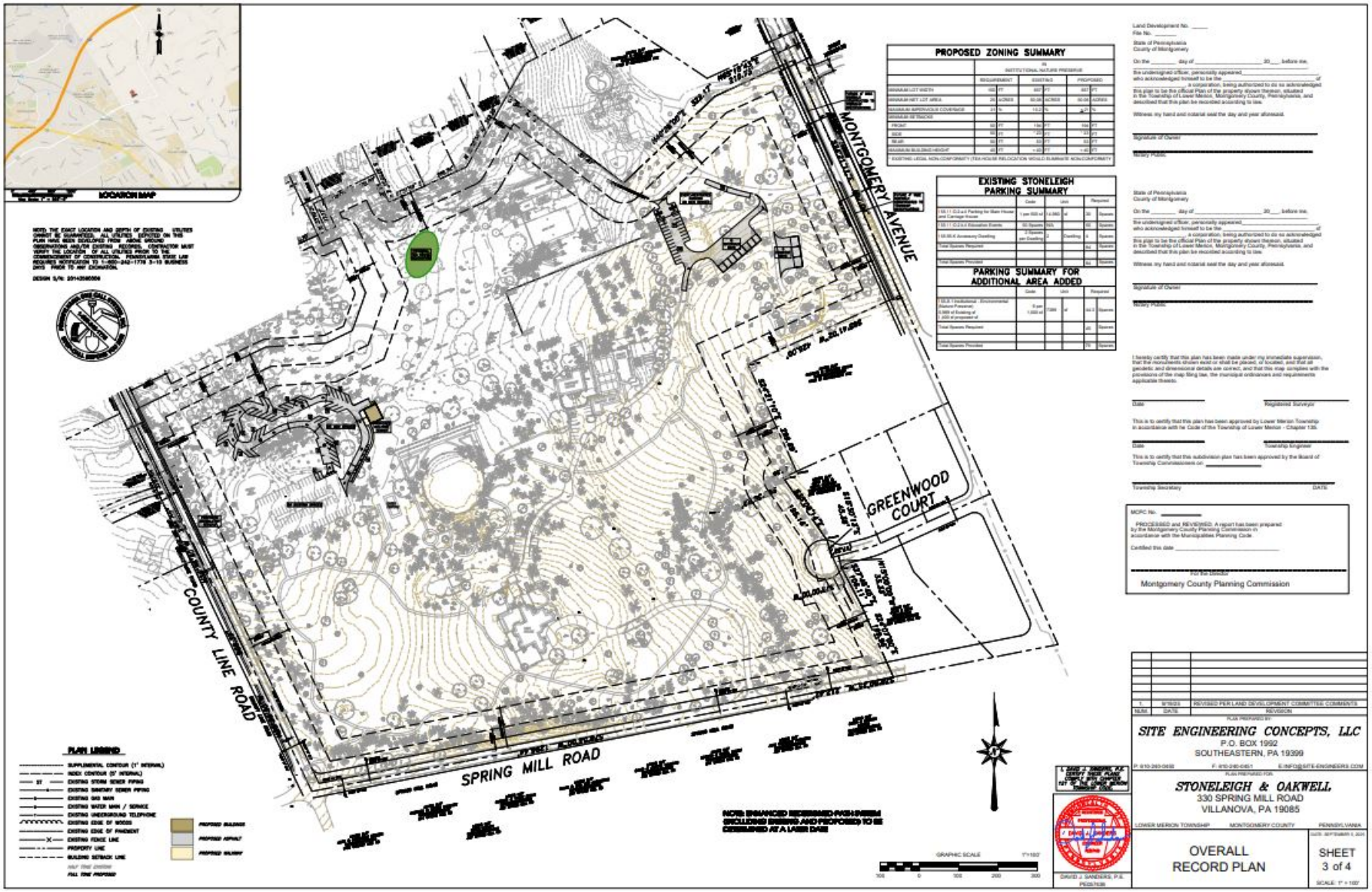
c: Denise Yarnoff, Esq., Applicant's Representative
Gilbert P. High, Jr., Esq., Twp. Solicitor
Ernie B. McNeely, Twp. Manager
Jody Kelley, Twp. Secretary
Joseph Mastronardo, P.E., Twp. Engineer
Charlie Doyle, Twp. Asst. Dir. of Planning
Colleen Hall, Twp. Senior Planner
Greg Prichard, Twp. Historic Preservation Planner
Holly Colello, Twp. Planner
Sarah Carley, Twp. Planner
Angela Forney, Twp. Planning Technician

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



Natural Lands Oakwell
MCPC#250187001

Montgomery County Planning Commission
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www.montcopa.org/plancom
Aerial photography provided by Nearmap


PROPOSED ZONING SUMMARY
EXISTING STONELEIGH PARKING SUMMARY
PARKING SUMMARY FOR ADDITIONAL AREA ADDED
MONTGOMERY AVENUE
GREENWOOD COURT
COUNTY LINE ROAD
SPRING MILL ROAD
PLAN LEGEND
GRAPHIC SCALE
SITE ENGINEERING CONCEPTS, LLC
P.O. BOX 1992
SOUTHEASTERN, PA 19399
STONELEIGH & OAKWELL
330 SPRING MILL ROAD
VILLANOVA, PA 19085
OVERALL RECORD PLAN
SHEET 3 of 4