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Planning Commission

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Scott France, AICP
Executive Director

June 26, 2026

Ms. Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Development
Municipality of Norristown
235 East Airy Street
Norristown, Pennsylvania 19401-5048

Re: MCPC #25-0197-002
Plan Name: 240 West Johnson Highway Land Development
(50 units comprising 1.52 acres)
Parcel ID: 13-00-17812-00-4
Situate: Third Street (east)/West Johnson Highway (south)
Municipality of Norristown

Dear Ms. Musonye:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on May 22, 2026. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, 240 W. Johnson, LLC, proposes to redevelop a 1.5-acre site located in the Municipality's Commercial Retail (CR) District adjacent to the Norristown Center tract. The applicant proposes to construct a four-story building containing 50 garden apartment units, a full basement and roof access. Sixty-eight parking spaces are proposed. Stormwater runoff will be handled by an underground infiltration bed beneath the parking lot. In March 2026, Norristown's Zoning Hearing Board granted a variance for the CR District's use regulations identified in Section 320-86 of the zoning code.

The site's existing conditions include: a 1½-story single-family detached dwelling, a shed, and a paved driveway, all of which will be demolished. The site contains a wooded area consisting of many tall trees; according to the plans submitted, it appears that a significant amount of the trees would be removed.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The County's comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision,* identifies the future use for this site as Community Mixed Use. Should it be willing to accommodate a residential use at this location, the

Municipality may want to consider requiring the applicant incorporate ground floor retail, commercial, or office space to be compatible with the intent of the district and existing adjacent uses.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant‘s proposal for this site to transition between the commercial-retail district into the adjacent residential neighborhood to the east. However, in the course of our review we have identified the following issues that the applicant and Municipality of Norristown should consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

A. PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit. The application states that the curb cut permitting driveway access to West Johnson Highway, a state-owned road, will be updated and reused. Due to the change in volume to and from this site, from a single-family unit to 50 units, we recommend that the applicant coordinate with PennDOT to update the existing Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) for this site.

B. Emergency Access. The plan identifies one access way that connects this site to West Johnson Highway. We encourage the Municipality to require an additional emergency access lane to/from this site to accommodate vehicular access by residents and first responders during an emergency or if Johnson Highway would not be accessible. Such access could connect the site through the rear of the property to the adjacent parking lot on the Norristown Center property.

C. Pedestrian Access. A sidewalk is proposed along the frontage of the apartment building but it does not extend to the existing sidewalk along West Johnson Highway. To accommodate residents’ ability to safely walk to the bus stop and adjacent commercial businesses, we recommend that the sidewalk be extended to West Johnson Highway. We note that the sidewalk along West Johnson Highway is in PennDOT’s right-of-way and not part of the subject parcel.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

In addition to plan sheets ES-3 through ES-5, the applicant has submitted a stormwater management report and application for a Chapter 102 Permit to address Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control and post-construction stormwater management with respect to the municipal stormwater management ordinance.

The coverage table shown on the plan sheets indicates a change of 25,786.95 square feet of impervious surface between pre- and post-development conditions. However, to construct this project, it appears that the entire 1.52-acre site will be subject to earth disturbance activity during construction. NPDES permits are required for any earth disturbance activity greater than one acre. in addition to complying with the municipal stormwater management ordinance, we strongly recommend that the applicant coordinate with the Montgomery County Conservation District to confirm whether such a permit is required prior to starting any earth disturbance activity.

LANDSCAPING

The landscaping plan submitted as part of the plan set identifies the three species of vegetation (1 tree species and 2 types of shrubs) that will be planted on site and the locations of the plantings. There are a number of mature trees growing on the site that create a wooded area.

There is no information provided on the landscape plan to identify the number of mature trees being removed or the number of each plantings. Section 282-433 of Norristown's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) identifies the requirements for landscaping and plantings for all land developments.

To provide shaded areas for residents to sit outdoors and to reduce the urban heat island effect, we strongly encourage that the Municipality require the applicant to address all requirements of Section 282-433, with specific reference to its provisions for tree preservation and tree replacement planting requirements (Section 282-433.1.C), buffers and screening (subsection 2), street trees (subsection 3), pathway landscaping (subsection 4), and parking lot vegetation (subsection 5), as well as the additional tree requirements (subsection 6) and landscape design criteria identified in subsection 8. The applicant should request a waiver for any exceptions to the requirements of Section 282-433.

FUTURE ZONING AMENDMENTS

A. Zoning Map Amendment. Understanding that the applicant received zoning relief from Section 320-86, Use Regulations for the Commercial Retail District, we encourage the Municipality to amend its zoning map to reflect the change in use for this site. The Municipality may also want to consider other areas in the municipality where larger parcels would be suitable for redevelopment as a multifamily use and include those as part of the zoning map amendment. Doing so would facilitate the land development process by potentially eliminating the need for variances.

B. Low-Rise Apartment Definition. The applicant proposes to develop garden apartments, which are a permitted use in the MR District. The dimensional criteria identified for the maximum height for garden apartments cited in Section 320-67.A.9 is 48 feet or 4 stories, whichever is less. The height proposed for the four-story building is 42.5 feet.

   We note that the definition associated with garden apartments, which are defined in the definition for Low-Rise Apartments, grouped under the term "Dwelling" in the zoning code's Section 320-211, Definitions, is: *An apartment building not exceeding three stories and 36 feet in height, also known as a "garden apartment."* We recommend that the Municipality update the definition for Low-Rise Apartment to be consistent with the dimensional criteria identified for garden apartments in the Multifamily District as cited in 320-67.A.9 of the zoning code.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Norristown's planning objectives for redevelopment of this site.

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 *(25-0197-002)* on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Donna Fabry, CFM, Principal Open Space Planner
donna.fabry@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3445

c: Chris Smitelli, Applicant's Representative
Alvina Hamme, Chair, Municipal Planning Commission
Nidhi Mehra, HOP Manager, PennDOT

Attachments: A. Aerial of Site
B. Reduced Copy of Site plan
C. Parcel Location on Zoning Map



West Johnson Highway
MCPC#250197002

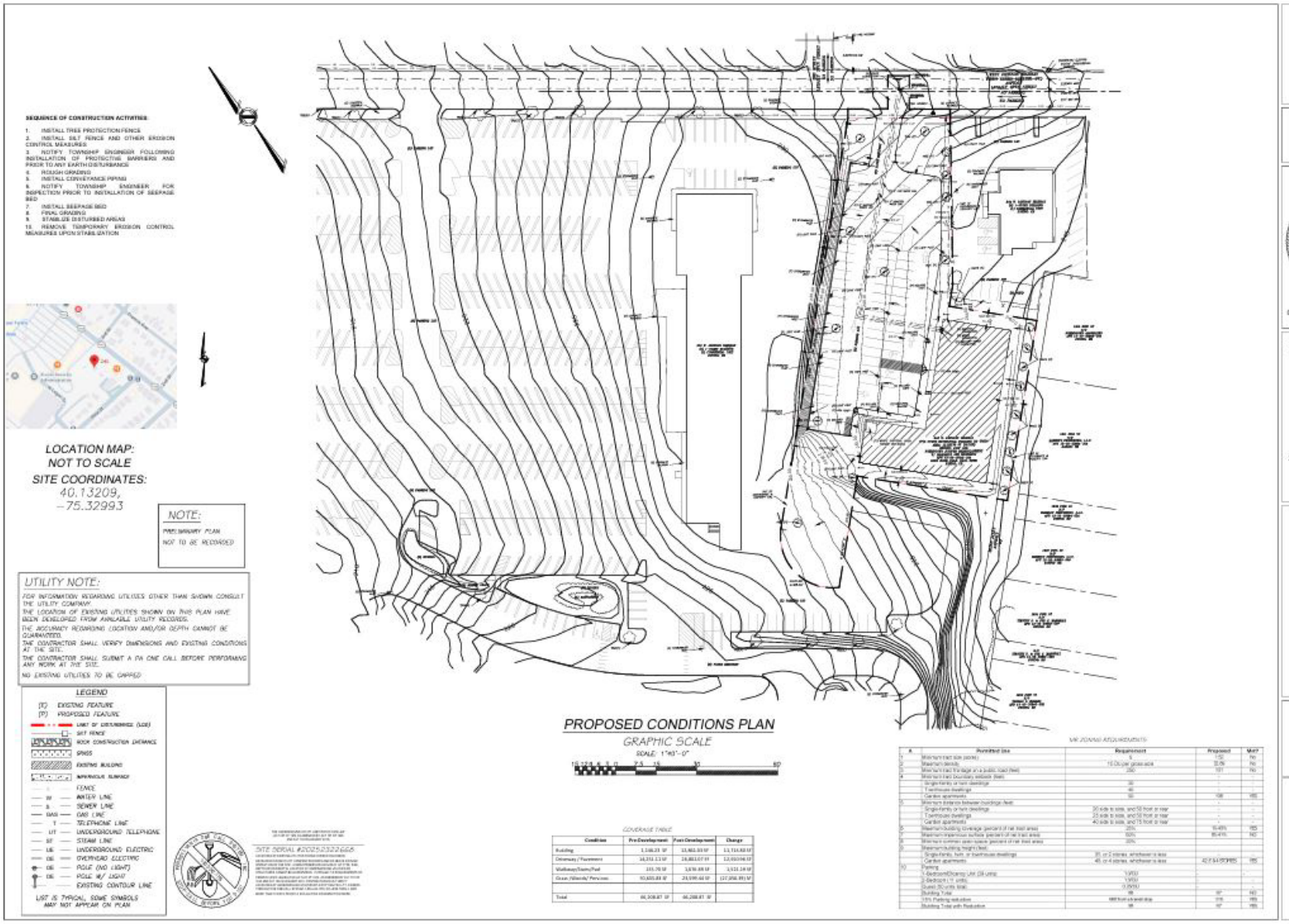
Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap



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STAMP

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
REGISTERED
CHRISTOPHER SMITELLI
ENGINEER
PENNSYLVANIA

04/20/2026
CHRISTOPHER SMITELLI, P.E.

PROJECT ADDRESS

240 W. Johnson Hwy
Norristown, PA 19401

OWNER INFO

Tim Ajvazi
240 W. Johnson LLC
2547 Frankford Ave, Suite C
Philadelphia, PA 19125
(215) 696-0385
tajvazi@gmail.com

PROJECT NO:
P.017

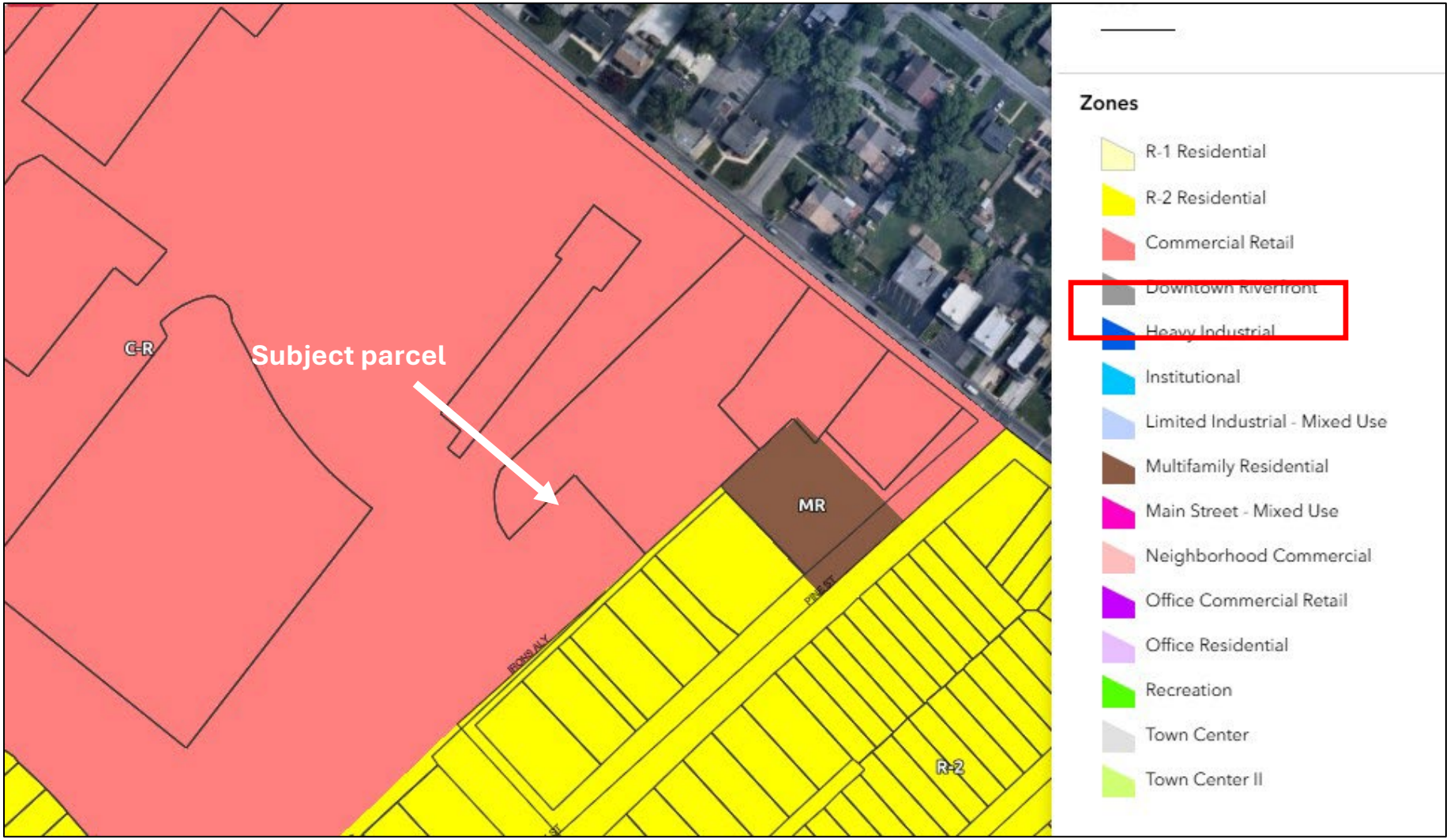
DRAWN BY
CE

ISSUE DATE
4/20/2026

Scale
1" = 40'

SHEET NUMBER

PROPOSED CONDITIONS PLAN
ES-2


C-R
Subject parcel
MR
R-2
Zones
R-1 Residential
R-2 Residential
Commercial Retail
Downtown Riverfront
Heavy Industrial
Institutional
Limited Industrial - Mixed Use
Multifamily Residential
Main Street - Mixed Use
Neighborhood Commercial
Office Commercial Retail
Office Residential
Recreation
Town Center
Town Center II