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Scott France, AICP
Executive Director

September 21, 2026

Ms. Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager
Lower Gwynedd Township
1130 North Bethlehem Pike, Box 625
Spring House, Pennsylvania 19477

Re: MCPC #26-0202-001 and #26-0202-002
Plan Name: Ambler Yards
(43 units comprising 1.55 acres)
Parcel IDs: 39-00-03931-00-0, 39-00-03928-00-0, 39-00-03925-00-0, 39-00-00922-00-0, 39-00-01423-00-5, 39-00-01476-00-7, and 39-00-01429-00-8
Situate: North Spring Garden Street (south)/North Francis Avenue (west)
Lower Gwynedd Township

Dear Ms. Worman:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on July 29, 2026. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

We have also reviewed the above-referenced conditional use application as you requested on August 20, 2026. Although this review is not conducted pursuant to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, we offer the following comments and recommendations for the Municipality's consideration during its review of the application.

BACKGROUND

Our office has received a set of plans for review proposing the development of Tract 2 within the Ambler Yards Site in Lower Gwynedd Township. The applicant, 300 Brookside Residential, L.P., seeks approval to consolidate 7 existing parcels into a single development tract and to construct a 3-story apartment building with 43 dwelling units. The property is located in the northeast portion of the Ambler Yards campus near North Spring Garden Street, West Francis Avenue, and Brookside Avenue. It includes tax parcels 39-00-03931-00-0, 39-00-03928-00-0, 39-00-03925-00-0, 39-00-00922-00-0, 39-00-01423-00-5, 39-00-01476-00-7, and 39-00-01429-00-8. The tract measures 1.55 acres. The site is located in the F Industrial Zoning District within the Ambler Yards mixed-use campus, where multi-family apartments

are permitted by conditional use. The proposed building has a maximum height of approximately 43 feet, 29.9 percent building coverage, and 61.2 percent total impervious coverage.

The proposal includes 69 off-street parking spaces. Additional site improvements include new sidewalks, landscaping, lighting, utility infrastructure, stormwater management facilities, and an underground infiltration basin. The development will be served by public water from the North Wales Water Authority and by public sanitary sewer service through Lower Gwynedd Township.

The applicant is requesting several subdivision, land development, and stormwater management waivers, including: (1) relief from requirements to widen and dedicate additional right-of-way and install curbing; (2) relief from required street trees along Spring Garden Street and Francis Avenue; (3) relief from parking lot interior landscaping requirements; (4) relief from the requirement to install sidewalks and pedestrian trails along portions of Spring Garden Street and Francis Avenue; (5) partial relief from monumentation requirements at all property corners; and (6) relief from storm sewer standards requiring a minimum 18-inch diameter reinforced concrete pipe.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The proposed plan primarily aligns with the objectives and themes of the comprehensive plan. The property is in a designated growth area, and according to the Future Land Use Plan, the subject tract is classified as a Community Mixed-Use Area. Our plan states that Community Mixed-Use Areas are "suburban-scale community centers located along major roadways that combine retail, office, institutional, and higher-density residential uses in a walkable, interconnected pattern serving surrounding neighborhoods."

Development within Community Areas should be designed as walkable, interconnected mixed-use centers with shared access, coordinated parking, pedestrian facilities, and appropriate buffering and building design to ensure compatibility with surrounding residential neighborhoods and with the community's character.

TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The plan is generally consistent with the Lower Gwynedd Township 2045 Comprehensive Plan. According to the Future Land Use Map, the subject tract is within a Mixed-Use area. The plan defines such an area as “pedestrian-friendly existing commercial sites, typically on busier roads, that allow for flexibility of uses to serve residents. Uses may include a mix of retail, service, office, and institutional uses, as well as residential.” The Comprehensive Plan also states that streetscape design is integral to mixed-use areas to facilitate pedestrian activity and “create attractive, walkable, and engaging places.” Accordingly, we recommend that municipal officials consider how the proposed development provides physical and visual linkage to the surrounding community.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) supports these proposals; however, during our review, we found the following issues that the applicant and officials in each municipality may want to consider before granting final plan approval.

REVIEW COMMENTS

DESIGN ISSUES

A. Community Connections and Neighborhood Integration. The proposed apartment building appears primarily oriented toward the internal parking area, with the principal entrance at the rear. Additionally, the stormwater swale and associated landscaping along the street frontage may limit direct pedestrian access and separate the building from the public realm. As proposed, residents may be encouraged to enter and exit the development primarily by automobile rather than via neighborhood walking routes. The building's orientation and frontage design may also reduce opportunities for interaction between residents and the surrounding community, resulting in a weaker relationship between the development and adjacent streets, sidewalks, and nearby destinations.

   The township should consider whether additional pedestrian connections, a more prominent street-facing entrance, enhanced frontage treatments, or other streetscape improvements could better connect the development to the surrounding neighborhood. Such enhancements may also further the objectives of the Township Comprehensive Plan, particularly if the plan encourages mixed-use development patterns that support walkability, strengthen connections between housing and nearby commercial or civic destinations, and create an active, pedestrian-oriented public realm.

B. Trash and Refuse Storage. The plans do not appear to identify a designated trash or refuse storage area. Although the zoning ordinance may not explicitly require one, multifamily residential developments typically benefit from a dedicated, appropriately screened refuse and recycling enclosure. The applicant should clarify the proposed waste storage and collection method and consider incorporating a permanent refuse area to ensure efficient operations, reduce potential nuisance conditions, and maintain the development's quality and appearance.

C. Vehicle Encroachment/Concrete Walk. Within the proposed parking area, parking spaces adjacent to the 5-foot-wide sidewalk do not appear to include concrete wheel stops or other measures to prevent vehicle overhang. Without such measures, parked vehicles may extend onto the sidewalk, partially obstructing it, reducing the available pedestrian clear width, and potentially affecting ADA-compliant access. The applicant should demonstrate how the required sidewalk width will be maintained free of vehicle encroachment.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION ISSUES

A. Loading/Unloading/Delivery Functions. The plan appears to lack a designated loading/unloading area for deliveries, service vehicles, or short-term drop-offs. It is recommended that adequate on-site facilities be provided to avoid blocking access drives, parking, or pedestrian routes. Without dedicated spaces, routine activities such as package and food deliveries may occur in parking areas or along drives, causing conflicts with vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The applicant should revise the plans to include clearly marked off-street loading areas that allow safe vehicle access without obstructing parking or pedestrian routes.

B. Dead-End Parking Aisles. The proposed parking layout includes dead-end parking aisles. Dead-end parking aisles should provide adequate turnaround and backup space at their terminus to ensure

that vehicles can safely maneuver, reverse direction, and exit the parking area without excessive backing movements or conflicts with other vehicles, pedestrians, landscaping, or site features. We defer to the Township Engineer to determine whether the proposed driveway aisles provide sufficient maneuvering area and comply with any applicable ordinance requirements for minimum backup areas or turnaround dimensions. The applicant's engineer should demonstrate that the proposed design accommodates the turning movements of passenger vehicles and, where applicable, emergency and service vehicles to avoid potential operational and safety concerns.

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (SALDO) COMPLIANCE

A. Native Plant Standards (*§1230.43*). The plan should comply with all applicable native plant standards outlined in the SALDO. We note that, under municipal requirements, at least 75% of the trees, shrubs, and perennials selected for a new subdivision or land development must be native to the Lower Delaware Valley and Piedmont-Coastal Plain areas, as indicated by the Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources ("DCNR List").

ZONING ORDINANCE COMPLIANCE

A. Outdoor Land Use (*§1287.08.e*). F District special requirements require outdoor storage of materials and trash to be fully enclosed behind a landscape buffer, so they are not visible. These uses must also comply with all building setback requirements. It is unclear how the plan, as proposed, conforms to this standard, for no designated trash refuse area is shown on the plan. Revisions/amendments may be needed.

B. Required Off-Street Loading and Unloading Facilities (*§1294.04*). The Zoning Ordinance requires that, in addition to the required off-street parking spaces, every use permitted in this Zoning Code shall be provided with off-street loading and unloading space, which space, except for single-family detached, single-family semidetached, and townhouse dwellings, shall be completely separate and distinct from the required off-street parking spaces.

OTHER ISSUES

A. Underground Stormwater Facilities. The proposed underground stormwater detention system located beneath the parking area will require regular inspection and maintenance to ensure its continued functionality. The applicant should demonstrate that sufficient access is available for maintenance equipment and that the ownership, inspection obligations, maintenance requirements, and long-term repair or replacement responsibilities are clearly defined in a recorded operation and maintenance agreement acceptable to the municipality.

WAIVER REQUESTS

A. Parking Lot Landscaping, Interior Landscaping, and Site Design. The applicant is requesting waivers from the parking lot landscaping and interior landscaping requirements. While the proposed underground stormwater management system beneath the parking area may limit opportunities for traditional landscaping and tree planting, parking lot and interior landscaping serve important site design, environmental, and aesthetic functions. Landscaping helps reduce the visual impact of large expanses of pavement, provide shade, mitigate heat island effects, improve environmental quality, and enhance a development's overall appearance and pedestrian experience. Interior planting areas also help break up larger parking fields, define circulation patterns, and create a more comfortable and attractive environment for residents and visitors. Parking lot landscaping

standards aim to provide shade, reduce glare and visual impacts, improve site aesthetics, and lessen the environmental effects associated with extensive impervious coverage.

Given the constraints associated with the underground stormwater basin, the municipality may wish to explore whether alternative landscaping approaches, modified planting areas, structural soil systems, or strategic reductions in parking supply could create opportunities to incorporate additional landscaping on the site while still accommodating stormwater infrastructure. In some cases, eliminating a limited number of parking spaces may provide sufficient space to establish meaningful planting islands or landscaped areas that better advance the intent of the ordinance.

Additionally, the proposed building entrance appears to be oriented toward the rear parking area rather than the public street frontage. This design emphasizes vehicle access and arrival from the parking lot while reducing the building's visual and functional relationship to the street. The municipality may wish to consider whether additional pedestrian connections, entrance enhancements, landscaping, or architectural treatments could strengthen the building's presence along the street frontage and improve the development's contribution to the public realm and pedestrian environment. Similar planning guidance often encourages buildings to orient toward and engage the public street rather than turn inward toward parking areas.

The applicant is also requesting a waiver from the replacement tree requirements. While site-specific constraints, including the proposed building footprint, parking layout, and underground stormwater management facilities, may limit opportunities for replacement tree planting within the immediate development area, the municipality may wish to consider whether replacement trees could be accommodated elsewhere within the larger master-planned development. Because the subject parcel is part of a broader coordinated development, opportunities may exist to satisfy some or all replacement tree obligations in other areas of the overall site where adequate soil volume, growing conditions, and long-term protection can be provided. Such an approach may better achieve the intent of the ordinance by preserving the overall tree canopy, environmental benefits, and visual character of the larger development, even where physical constraints limit planting opportunities on the individual lot.

CONDITIONAL USE PLAN

A. Master Plan Structure/Proposed New Development. As part of a larger master-planned project, the proposed apartment development should contribute to an integrated and interconnected development pattern that encourages walking between destinations. We note that the building's primary entrance faces the interior parking area, while the rear of the building fronts the public street. Although this arrangement may function adequately for site circulation, it appears to provide limited pedestrian connections between the building, the street frontage, adjacent access roads, and other portions of the master-planned development. As a result, pedestrians approaching from nearby buildings, open spaces, future development phases, or the public realm may be required to navigate parking areas and drive aisles to reach the primary entrance. Our office encourages municipal officials to evaluate opportunities to strengthen pedestrian connectivity through additional sidewalks, pathways, and building access points that better link the site to surrounding development areas and shared amenities. Enhanced pedestrian connections would create a more cohesive, walkable environment, reduce reliance on vehicular travel for short internal trips, and advance the master plan's vision of a unified development rather than a collection of independent building sites.

B. Master Plan/Excess Parking. The proposed master plan includes approximately 100 parking spaces above the minimum parking requirement. To mitigate the impacts of land development from excessive parking and impervious surfaces, MCPC recommends aligning parking capacity with local zoning minimums. This surplus parking may present an opportunity to implement "green parking" strategies by reducing paved parking areas and replacing unnecessary impervious surfaces with landscaped areas, trees, bioretention facilities, open space, or other pervious treatments. Reducing excess parking can decrease stormwater runoff, improve groundwater infiltration, lessen heat island impacts, enhance site aesthetics, and reduce long-term maintenance costs while still accommodating anticipated parking demand. Township officials and the applicant should consider whether various portions of the parking lots can be eliminated to maximize pervious coverage and advance the development's environmental and design objectives. Reducing impervious parking areas and adding green infrastructure align with our sustainable parking and site design guidelines.

CONCLUSION

We reiterate that MCPC generally supports these applications; however, we recommend that municipal officials consider the issues raised in this letter.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations in this report are advisory to the municipality, and final disposition on 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 before 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 (*26-0202-001*) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Kevin Chavous

Kevin Chavous, ASLA, SITES AP, LEED AP, WELL AP, CNU-A, AICP CUD
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c: 300 Brookside Residential, L.P., Applicant
Timothy Woodrow, Woodrow & Associates, Inc., Applicant's Engineer
Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Craig Melograno, Chairman, Township Planning Commission
Neil Stein, Esq., Township Solicitor

Attachments: A) Aerial View of Site
B) Reduced Copy of Applicant's Plan

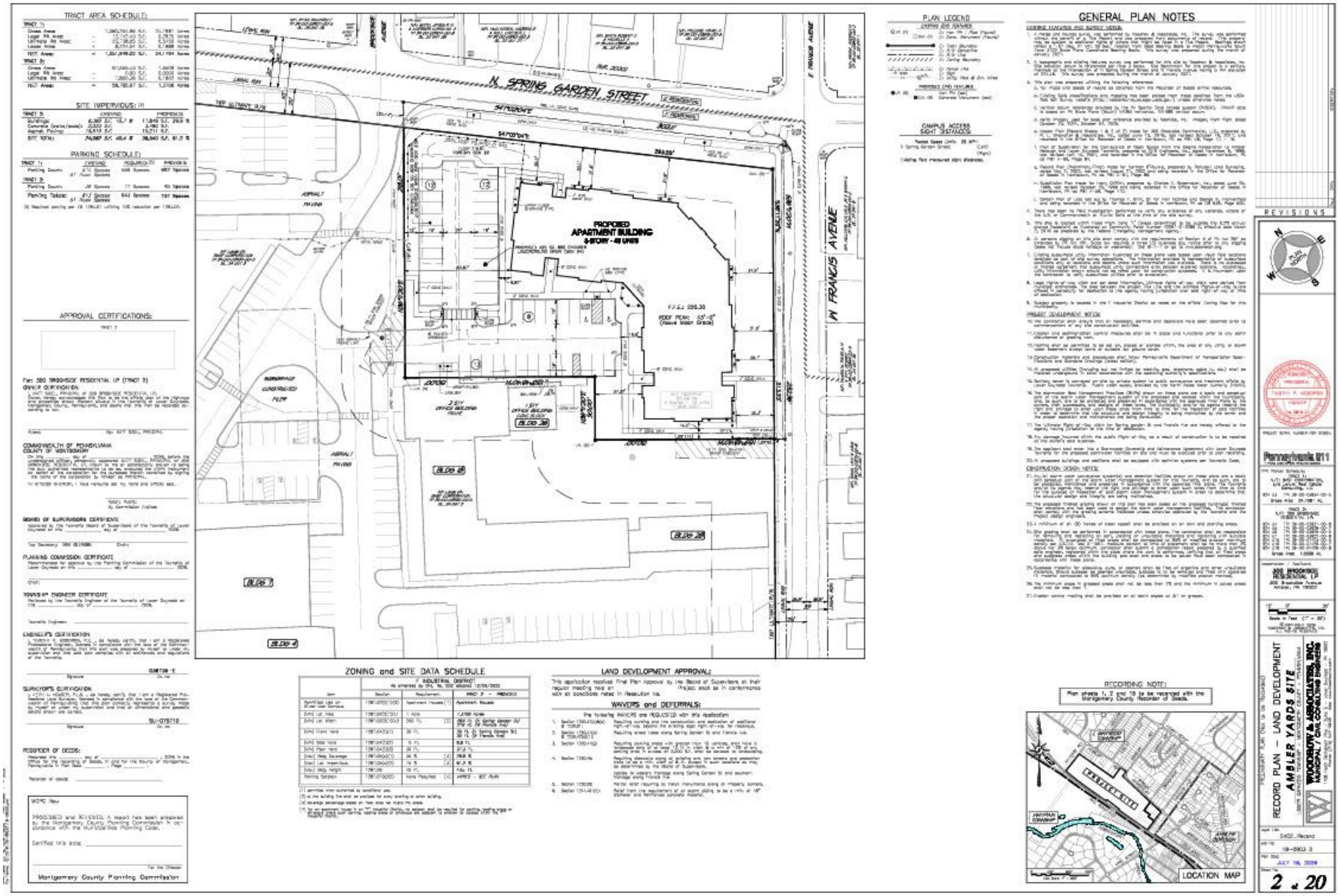


Ambler Yards
MCPC#260202001

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

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TRACT AREA SCHEDULE:
SITE IMPERVIOUS: (#)
PARKING SCHEDULE:
APPROVAL CERTIFICATIONS:
N. SPRING GARDEN STREET
N. FRANCIS AVENUE
PROPOSED APARTMENT BUILDING 5-STORY - 49 UNIT
ROOF PEAK: 335'-0" (Above Mean Grade)
F.F.E. 296.33
BLDG 28
BLDG 7
BLDG 4
PLAN LEGEND
GENERAL PLAN NOTES
PROJECT DEVELOPMENT NOTES:
CONSTRUCTION DESIGN NOTES:
ZONING and SITE DATA SCHEDULE
LAND DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL:
WAIVERS and DEFERRALS:
RECORDING NOTE:
LOCATION MAP
REVISIONS
RECORD PLAN – LAND DEVELOPMENT
AMBLER YARDS SITE
WOODMONT & ASSOCIATES, INC.
MUNICIPAL & CIVIL CONSULTING ENGINEERS
2 of 20