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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 7, 2024

Ms. Kathryn Vlahos, Assistant to the Borough Manager
Hatfield Borough
37 North Market Street
Hatfield, Pennsylvania 19440

Re: MCPC # 24-0003-001
Proposal Name: Arbor Grove Development
Zoning Text Amendment
Situate: North Main Street (north), East Broad Street (west)
Hatfield Borough

Dear Ms. Vlahos:

We have reviewed the above-referenced zoning text amendment in accordance with Section 609 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on January 5, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

We have received for review a proposed ordinance to amend the Zoning Code of Hatfield Borough to permit townhomes by right in the CC Core Commercial District. Additionally, the text shall add a new subsection- 27-2108.6, Dimensional Regulations for Townhomes in the Core Commercial District, to the Zoning Ordinance, which features new regulations and requirements governing townhome developments.

Also included with this submission is a conceptual site plan that depicts planned improvements of a 1.60-acre, CC Core Commercial District zoned tract of land on North Main Street, west of East Broad Street. The applicant, Arbor Grove Development Company, LLC, would combine two properties (County Parcel ID 09 00 01009 00 8, 09 00 01012 00 5) and construct nine single-family attached dwellings on the site, along with parking for 40 vehicles (18 residents/12 visitors) and a community area.

Our office previously reviewed a sketch plan proposal for the subject tract, offering comments to the Borough in a letter dated August 7, 2023. Although the County Planning Commission mentioned that the proposed plan was generally consistent with county land use policies, we expressed concerns about the proposed vehicular layout, open space, landscape buffering, and parking on the site.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

This zoning text amendment is generally consistent with the goals and objectives outlined in the County

Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040*: A Shared Vision.

The submission is also generally consistent with *Montco 2040*'s objectives to support growth and development in appropriate areas where infrastructure already exists.

As mentioned in our prior review, the applicant's property lies within a "designated growth area" per the Growth and Preservation component of the county comprehensive plan. Moreover, our Future Land Use Map categorizes the subject tract as a "Town Residential Area." We define a town residential area as a traditional area oriented more toward pedestrians than automobiles. These areas have a variety of housing types mingled within blocks or small neighborhoods. Development in this area can include multi-family residential, townhouses, twins, small lot single-family detached homes, and institutional. Secondary uses could consist of limited supporting retail and office uses.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) supports this proposal; however, in our review, we have identified the following issues that borough officials may wish to consider before adopting this ordinance.

REVIEW COMMENTS

A. Zoning Concept/Amendment to CC District Use Regulations

The applicant has proposed an ordinance that will amend the use regulations of the Core Commercial District, permitting townhomes as a by-right use. This amendment, however, applies to a development plan. It is specific to certain properties; we caution that any modifications to the CC District list of permitted uses are global, affecting other Borough zoned Core Commercial properties.

Although townhomes may be appropriate on the subject tract, the MCPC questions whether such development is consistent with the intent of the zoning district, outlined in §27-2101. Accordingly, we recommend that municipal officials examine if an alternative strategy may be more appropriate in concert with Borough objectives.

B. Alternative Measures/Extension of R-3 Residential/Commercial District

The Montgomery County Planning Commission supports the idea of townhouse development on the subject tract; however, we suggest that R-3 Residential/Commercial District zoning be more suitable. As stated in §27-1401 of the Zoning Ordinance, an intent of the R-3 District is to “Encourage a compatible mix of residential, office and limited commercial uses in areas of the Borough that are already characterized by a mix of such uses.” Furthermore, the R-3 District permits a single-family attached dwelling under §27-1402.1.C.(1).

We ask municipal officials to consider a zoning map amendment that would encompass a possible rezoning of an area comprised of 13 parcels that include the subject tract bounded by the current R-3 District boundary to the south, East Broad Street to the east, the I Industrial District boundary to the north and Hatfield Post Office (45 North Main Street) to the west from CC Core Commercial to R-3 Residential Commercial.

C. Proposed Ordinance Language/Applicability (*§27-2108.6.A.(7)*)

The ordinance features language stipulating that “in the event a townhome is constructed within both the Core

Commercial and any other zoning district, the location of the front door of the home shall control which zoning regulations are applicable," appears unclear. The intent of this requirement seems uncertain to us. We defer to the Borough Solicitor to determine if this provision is necessary. Municipal officials may require the applicant to provide further explanation.

D. Proposed Ordinance Language/Parking Standards

The Borough may wish to examine whether the ordinance should include amendments to Borough off-street parking requirements that create standards for visitor parking within townhouse developments. In our sketch plan review of the applicant's proposal, our office expressed concern about the number of visitor spaces proposed. In our letter, we mentioned that according to APA (American Planning Association) recommended parking standards, a parking ratio of .5 spaces per unit is sufficient for visitor parking.

The plan submitted with this ordinance proposes 12 visitor parking spaces for a 9-unit townhouse development. In addition, we observe that no visitor parking spaces appear to be handicapped accessible. Accordingly, we suggest that this issue warrants additional examination.

E. Plan Submission/Plan Information and Delineation

Our office observes that a callout placed on the submitted plan identifies a "20' X 40' townhouse unit"; however, an individual townhouse unit has a dimension of 20 feet. Also, additional callouts on the drawing identify a proposed "two-car driveway" and "two-car garage." Yet, an elevation on the same plan shows a one-car garage with an accompanying driveway.

The MCPC advises that accurate plan delineation is important so municipal officials can appropriately assess the proposal. Accordingly, we recommend that the applicant's engineer elucidate what the applicant proposes on the site.

F. Plan Submission/Dead-End Street

As discussed in our prior review, the proposed access driveway shown on the plan is a dead-end street. It is uncertain how cars will adequately maneuver within the area, especially if residents park their vehicles in driveways along this portion of the street. Municipality should consider if this street needs a turnaround area.

Thus, we recommend that the applicant's engineer consider alternative turnaround options, which may include a T-shaped hammerhead if space exists, and may be more appropriate. Regardless, the MCPC will defer to the Borough Engineer to determine what, if any, revisions to the plan are necessary, consistent with requirements established in the SALDO.

G. Plan Submission/Proposed Community Area

A "community area" is delineated on the plan in the rear portion of the development parcel. It is unclear how this open space area will function. We suggest that this open space could be furnished with various amenities, including enhanced landscaping, and, possibly, an area for sitting or passive recreation.

H. MCPC Design Guidelines Publication, Building Better Townhouse Communities

The Montgomery County Planning Commission has published a report titled Building Better Townhouse Communities, which offers suggestions, recommendations, and best practices related to townhouse

developments. We invite municipal officials and the applicant to download this document from our website (https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/1459/Publications) to gain insight into County land development policies regarding this development type.

Of particular importance are the sections related to Townhouse Design Elements and Best Practices and open space (pg. 11), garage design standards (pg. 29), parking standards (pg. 30), and garage design options (pg. 33).

CONCLUSION

We reiterate that the Montgomery County Planning Commission generally supports the concept of townhomes on the subject tract; however, we recommend that municipal officials consider modifications to the Borough Zoning Map, introducing R-3 Residential/Commercial District zoning on the applicant's property and the immediate surrounding area.

In addition, the MCPC recommends revisions to the plan that accompanied this ordinance submission to address issues surrounding vehicular circulation and open space.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations in this report are advisory to the municipality, and the municipality will make the final disposition to approve any proposal.

Should the governing body adopt this proposed text amendment, Section 609 of the Municipalities Planning Code requires that we be sent an official copy within 30 days.

Sincerely,



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c: Michael J. Meginniss, Esq., Applicant's Representative
Catherine M. Harper, Timoney Knox, Borough Solicitor