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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 3, 2024

Mr. Geoffrey Grace, Director of Planning and Zoning
Upper Providence Township
P.O. Box 406
Oaks, Pennsylvania 19456

RE: MCPC #22-0149-002
Plan Name: Parkhouse Residential Development
One (1) lot comprising 185.69 acres; Parcel: 61-00-01252-12-7
Situate: Black Rock Rd (SR0113), bounded by 2nd Ave (SR4015), Old State Rd & Yeager Rd
Upper Providence Township

Dear Mr. Grace:

We have reviewed the above-referenced sketch plan as you requested on August 1, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Royersford Holdings, LLC proposes to build 49 single-family homes, 389 townhomes, and 147 active adult carriage homes for a total of 585 residences, with public water and sewer on a 185.69-acre property located in the Open Space Conservation District with an Institutional (IN) overlay between Old State and Black Rock Roads. This lot is bounded by Black Rock Road, Dreibelbis Road, 2nd Avenue, Old State Road, Yeager Road and South Trappe Road. During the course of discussions and hearings concerning the adoption of the Open Space Residential Community – 2 (OSR-2) Ordinance, Royersford Holdings, LLC indicated that despite the fact that the Ordinance would allow for the construction of more dwelling units, only 585 units would be built. The attached plan shows 868 units. The rose colored units will not be built but will be dedicated by Royersford Holdings, LLC to the Township of Upper Providence.

The Parkhouse Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and adjoining property, which includes the current Schuylkill Valley Park, was a Montgomery County-owned facility for the care of the poor and indigent from 1808 until March 2014. On March 6, 2014, Mid-Atlantic Healthcare purchased 306.962 acres, which included the land the Schuylkill Valley Park sits on (which was condemned for buyback immediately after the sale), and the 185.69 acres proposed for this development.

RECOMMENDATION/COMMENTS

While this property has previously served as preserved open space, its current zoning allows for institutional development. As such, the Montgomery County Planning Commission generally supports the applicant's proposal, but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Upper Providence Township's planning objectives for residential development. As part of our review, MCPC considered the overall design, interior and exterior traffic and pedestrian circulation patterns, and the environmental impact of the development on the site. We make the following recommendations that we strongly suggest the applicant and township consider prior to approval of this proposal.

DESIGN

We feel the applicant's site plan as proposed can be improved to create a more ordered and accessible community. We would strongly encourage a redesign that includes consideration of the following points:

A. It does not appear that the sketch includes usable, centralized open spaces in which residents and their families can publicly gather, particularly in the townhome and single family detached lot areas. The amenity areas are not centrally located for access by all homeowners, and one amenity area for 420 homes does not seem adequate.
B. We recommend that the parallel parking shown on this sketch plan should be protected by bump outs on the next plan submission. The visitor parking areas should be more equitably dispersed throughout the communities.
C. We recommend that future plan submissions show the future roundabout to be built at the intersections of Black Rock Road, 2nd Avenue and Dreibelbis Road and the new bridge widening as it has received transportation grant funding from PennDOT's Multimodal Transportation Fund.
D. We recommend that the next submission only show those improvements being built and to clearly delineate the dedicated open space area.
E. We recognize that this sketch plan is at a scale that would be hard to show what trees and other vegetation would be proposed. However, as preliminary plans are prepared we hope that the applicant will ensure that street trees will be added that create a consistent and regular streetscape. We have observed that often townhouse development are designed so that underground utilities make it impossible to plant any street trees in front of a townhouse grouping, leading to long stretches of roadway without any shade for pedestrians, kids at play, or parked cars. We recommend that the applicant refer to our published guidebook, "Building Better Townhouse Communities", page 25.

TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION

Beyond the general overall design, there are more detailed circulation issues we believe should be addressed:

A. We believe this plan would benefit from making sidewalk and trail connections within and outside of this community. The project, as designed, is segregated into three distinctly separate sub-communities. According to the Upper Providence Township Park, Open Space, and Trail Master Plan, trails are planned along Black Rock Road (high priority), 2nd Avenue and Old State Road (med priority), and Yeager Road (low priority). The following additions would go far to implement the township's goal of connectivity.
    a. We recommend that the applicant and the Township work with Montgomery County Parks, Trails & Historic Sites' Administrator, Mr. David Clifford, to develop a cohesive, localized trail network, including the creation of a connection to Montgomery County's Upper Schuylkill Valley Park and the Schuylkill East Trail located at the south/east end of the park. Currently, the development shows a proposed internal trail that meets Black Rock Road on the west side of an existing stream. In this vicinity, we recommend exploring the provision of: 1) A stream crossing on the north (development) side of Black Rock Road to transport trail users to the east side of the stream, and 2) A pedestrian crossing of Black Rock Road immediately east of the stream to provide access to the primary/core portion of Upper Schuylkill Valley Park.
    b. Along Yeager Road, approximately 450' of trail is needed to complete the existing sidewalk/trail connection along this property.
    c. From the intersection of 2nd Avenue and Black Rock Road, approximately 300' of additional trail is needed to close the gap with an existing trail further to the southwest on Dreibelbis Road. This trail would run along the southwestern border of this property and could provide a connection to the western portion of Upper Schuylkill Valley Park via a pedestrian crossing of Dreibelbis Road.
    d. Between South Trappe Road and Yeager Road, approximately 450' of trail is needed to complete the connection along Yeager Road. This connection could also be investigated as a potential roadway connection.
    e. Finally the existing and future residents of Old State Road would benefit from sidewalks or trail along its length.
B. For reasons of mobility, people will want to walk between communities and should be able to do so without having to drive. The internal sidewalk and trail network should be expanded to accommodate and promote connectivity and mobility; pedestrian crosswalks should be designed to cross Old State Road and Black Rock Road.
C. The applicant's site is located on either side of a large stream and associated floodplain and wetlands with no crossings designated. Although we recommend protection of these environmentally sensitive areas, the community could benefit from one well-designed

crossing for both vehicles and pedestrians that connects the overall development (in addition to the stream crossing discussed above).

D. A Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA) will need to be performed (§182-83 Plan Submission Requirements) to assess the impact that this development will have on surrounding traffic congestion and safety. If the TIA warrants widening and improving Old State Road, we recommend a minimum of a 24' wide cartway and a 10' wide side trail to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
E. Because SR 0113 (Black Rock Road) and 2nd Avenue are state-owned roads, the applicant will have to file for a Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) with PennDOT District 6-0. We urge the applicant to start that process by reaching out to Scott Burton of PennDOT's HOP unit as soon as possible at scburton@pa.gov or 610-205-6560.

STORMWATER FACILITIES/ENVIRONMENTAL

A. Stormwater management facilities promote infiltration, stream health, and we recommend they be included as an amenity. Some of the stormwater facilities in this project are located along the edge of the stream corridor, often in the few areas of open space most accessible to neighborhoods. Installing more, smaller management facilities closer to the generation points of stormwater would require less open area, and provide an opportunity for rain gardens and bioswales that could be an amenity. The use of rain gardens throughout the development could decrease the cost of stormwater conveyance systems on this site and would be aesthetically pleasing.
B. The tributary to the Schuylkill River that bisects the site has been the subject of a significant stream corridor restoration effort that extends from the small bridge (soon to be replaced and widened) to the river. We urge the applicant to manage the flow volume and rate of stormwater discharged from the proposed development to avoid degradation of this restored area. Similarly, a small, intermittent stream starts in the Active Adult Carriage Home community and crosses Black Rock Road. This intermittent stream runs through county property on the other side of the road, and feeds a pond that is part of the Upper Schuylkill Valley Park. We urge the applicant to manage stormwater flows from this community to avoid erosion of the intermittent stream and sedimentation of the pond.
C. To minimize stormwater impacts, land development should avoid affecting and encroaching upon areas with important natural stormwater function values (floodplains, wetlands, riparian areas, drainageways, etc.) and areas that are vulnerable to stormwater impacts (steep slopes, adjoining properties, others), wherever practicable. There are areas in the southwest quadrant of the townhome community plan that encroach on steep slopes that will require a variance, as this promotes erosion.
D. Given the large area devoted to the stream and associated floodplain and wetlands, and with the goal of encouraging infiltration, we recommend replacing impervious pavement with pervious pavement where logical and practicable.

E. The sanitary sewer easement shown in the plan that runs through the townhome community does not appear to be "respected" in that there are homes and a stormwater basin constructed directly on top of the easement.

GENERAL

A. The MCPC feels that the Township has an opportunity here, with a development of this size, to incentivize the construction of affordable units by allowing for a density bonus as part of this proposal (and other large scale residential developments). While we understand that this amended proposal provides fewer units than were initially slated for this development, this is a potential opportunity to proactively provide homes for those who otherwise struggle to afford to live in Upper Providence Township. MCPC staff would be happy to meet with township staff to discuss these ideas in more detail.

CONCLUSION

Please note that the review recommendation contained in this report is advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any zoning changes 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. Please supply a paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval for our files.

Please print the assigned MCPC number #22-0149-002 on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

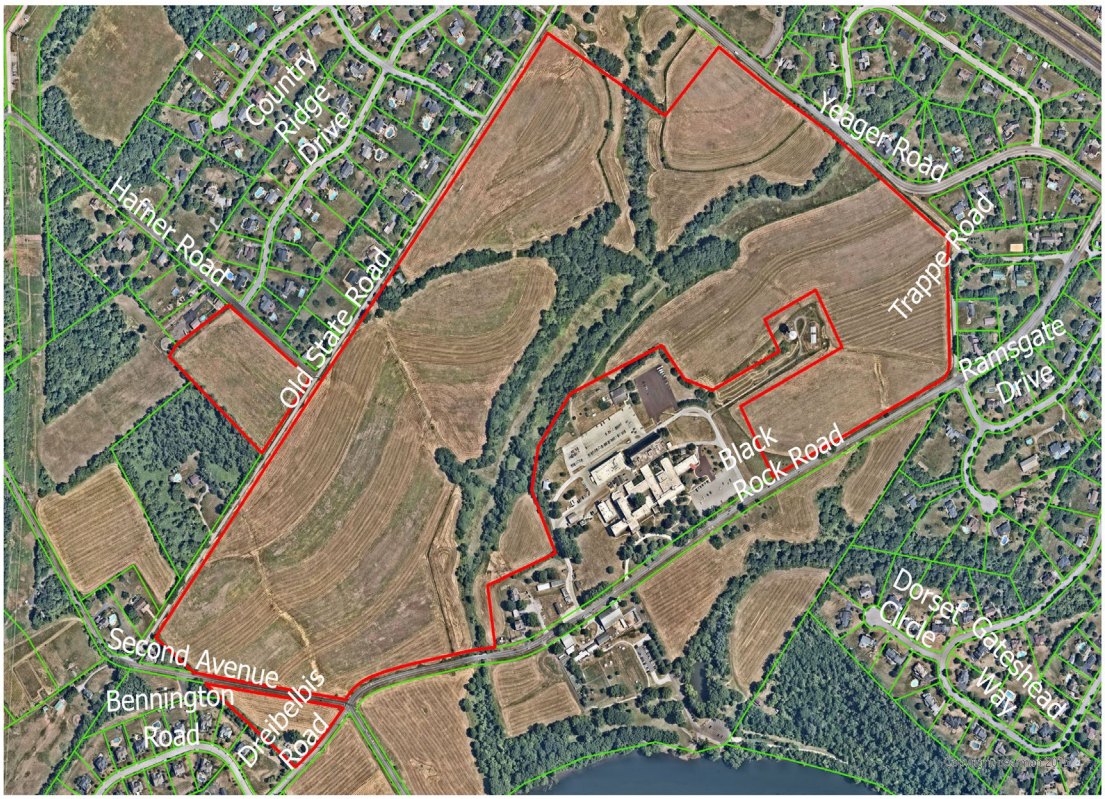


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cc: Hamburg, Rubin, Mullin, Maxwell & Lupin, Attn: emullin@hrmml.com
Howell Engineering, Attn: Dave Gibbons, dgibbons@knowhowell.com
Matt Hammond, mhammond@trafficpd.com
Thomas Wright, Chair, Upper Providence Planning Commission
Scott Burton, PennDOT D-6 Regional Traffic Services, scburton@pa.gov

Attachments: 1) Aerial View; 2) Sketch Plan

1) Aerial View – Parkhouse Development, Upper Providence Township, Montgomery County, PA



Parkhouse Cluster Development
MCPC#220149002

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

0 300 600 1,200 Feet

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2) Sketch Plan – Parkhouse Development, Upper Providence Township, Montgomery County, PA

