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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

August 30, 2024

Stephanie Cecco, Borough Manager
Borough of Conshohocken
400 Fayette Street, Suite 200
Conshohocken, Pennsylvania 19428

Re: MCPC # 24-0174-001
Plan Name: 127 E. Elm Street
Situate- East Elm Street (south)/Ash Street (West)
1 lot/ 3,017 sq. ft. /0.58 acres (25,061 sq. ft.)
Conshohocken Borough

Dear Ms. Cecco:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested and received electronically in this office on August 5, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Cooper Winery, LLC is seeking preliminary plan approval to construct a restaurant, outdoor wine garden, and various outdoor recreational amenities on a vacant lot at 127 East Elm Street. The development site is a 25,061 sq. ft. or 0.58 acre lot that is currently undeveloped open space. The site is Tax Parcel 05-00021-080-02 and is situated in the borough's Specially Planned District I (SP-1) Zoning District, as well as the Floodplain Conservation District. The applicant's property is adjacent to and immediately north of the Schuylkill River Trail. According to the applicant's Post-Construction Stormwater Management Report prepared by Schock Group LLC, dated August 4, 2024, the property has a history of past industrial activity which resulted in it being classified a brownfield site. Following a Phase I and II investigation conducted by Earth Engineering there was no evidence of Poly Chlorinated biphenyels (PCBs) identified in the soil.

The soil results show that two western samples exceed the PA Department of Environmental Protection Residential State Health Standards. The documentation states further, "If residential use is intended for the site, then remediation is warranted to reduce potential liability associated with a associated arsenic and benzo fluoranthene identified in the soil." "The soil characterized by this

assessment does not exceed the PADEP Non-Residential Statewide Health Standards. No additional liability is with the non-residential use of the property."

The applicant requested a number of relief measures to develop the site as a restaurant and wine tasting venue, outdoor amenities and stormwater management facilities. The applicant's site is not considered a brownfield, and is subject to the Floodplain Conservation District regulations.

Special Exception- *Off-Site Parking Special Exception*- §27-2006 and or Variance if more than 200 ft. The applicant development plan proposes no on-site parking. The submitted documentation states that 65 spaces will be leased from a neighboring property. In addition to this relief, the applicant seeks a variance for spaces they have leased that lie beyond 200 ft. from the applicant's property.

Other measures of relief requested include:

Variance- Dimensional - Front Yard Setback- Section 27-1505 (A)(2)
Variance- Obstruction of vision at Intersection - §27-810
Variance- Dimensional- Pickleball Court Fence Height- §27-908
Variance- Location of the Refuse Enclosure- §27-820(F)
Variances for Sections 27-1714(1)(A),(B),(D),(F),(H), (K0)- to allow the proposed use. "Any use or activity not authorized within Section § 27-1713 shall be prohibited in the Floodplain Conservation District.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

Consistency with *Montco 2040*- A Shared Vision

Plans for the redevelopment of this site are consistent with the future land use vision and stated goals of *Montco 2040: A Shared Vison*, the comprehensive plan and future land use vision for the county. The Future Land Use Map of the plan designates the land use vision for the site as part of a larger 'Regional Mixed-Use Center' (RMUC) that extends from the Schuylkill Riverfront to East Elm Street. The 'RMUC' designation supports intensely developed areas including 'high-density, multi-family and accompanying gathering spaces that establish a 'sense-of-place' for the community.' https://www.montcopa.org/1579/Montco-2040-Comprehensive-Plan).

Consistency with Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan Update, June, 2018

The redevelopment of this property appears compatible with the borough's future land use vision for this area as stated in the 2018 Comprehensive Plan and in Chapter Five's Future Conditions, Land Use Map #7. The future land use designation according to the map shown below is for a 'Mixed-Use' area. The goal for 'Mixed-Use' area according to the plan is "to provide for the development and redevelopment of properties which incorporate a variety of land uses which are a complementary mix including residential, retail, commercial, employment, civic and entertainment uses in close proximity - sometimes in the same building."

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal for the redevelopment of the site as a restaurant, wine garden, and accompanying outdoor recreational amenities. In the course of our review we have identified several issues that we recommend the borough consider in its assessment of this proposal. Our comments are as follow:

REVIEW COMMENTS

1. **Landscape Plan**
   a. *Street Tree Plantings*-
   The landscape plan shows the required street tree plantings along East Elm and Ash Street in only a generalized manner as a 'street tree', without specifying the species. The type of proposed species of each tree is required and necessary for assessment, and should be listed in a compliance chart showing the caliper and condition (B&B or container) of the proposed trees. We recommend the applicant include this information for the borough to ensure that proven urban-tolerant tree species are selected for the location. The tree species include: Princeton American elm (*Ulmus americana* 'Princeton'), Shademaster honeylocust (Gleditsia tricanthos var. inermis- 'Shademaster'), and the Princeton Sentry Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba* 'Princeton Sentry').

   b. *Required Landscape Screening*-
   The landscape plan doesn't provide adequate information regarding the plant species, planting arrangement and other details which are required to address the borough's Screen Planting Requirements- Section 22-421.65. The rear buffer area along the trail corridor that requires the screening improvement is +/- 165 ft. in length by 10ft. wide and should be well-designed. The applicant should provide the borough with a landscape plan detailing the type of tree and shrub species and its arrangement so that it can be properly evaluated.

2. **Lighting Plan**
   The submitted plan does not address the borough's requirements for pedestrian-scale lighting for the site's development. Section 22-421.6. Pedestrian Lighting requires that pedestrian lighting be provided for both the interior and exterior of the development site, as stipulated in the requirement's installation guidelines.

3. **Universal Accessibility & the Outdoor Surface Treatment of the Outdoor Area**-
   a. *Outdoor Area Surface*
   The type of surface treatment of the large outdoor area between the restaurant, pickleball courts and areas surrounding the planter boxes and firepits is not specified on the plan. The type of surface is an important factor that provides universal accessibility for the restaurant patrons. The applicant should provide details about the surface treatment and whether it is an impervious or pervious area. The surface material should be a firm, stable surface

designed to ensure that the outdoor spaces -- including the pickleball courts and fire pits -- are accessible to the widest range of abilities.

b. Outdoor Amenity Area & Accessibility

We recommend the applicant ensure that the site improvements include an accessible circulation route from the restaurant patio to the outdoor firepit area. It appears the only ramp is at the front of the restaurant. The patio overlooking the garden area has a number of steps and does not appear to include a ramp for accessibility. The applicant should ensure that an accessible route to the fire pit area is included in their development plan.

4. **Schuylkill River Trail Access-**

The site plan shows an improved connection between the applicant's property and the Montgomery County Schuylkill River Trail. The county's Assets and Infrastructure- Parks, Trails and Historic Sites is unaware of the proposed access shown on the applicant's land development plan. Proposed access will require review and approval by the Montgomery County Assets and Infrastructure Department prior to the improvement's construction.

We recommend the applicant contact Dave Clifford, Parks Administratorto coordinate the review and approval process. David.Clifford@montgomerycountypa.gov

5. **Ensuring Pedestrian Safety at East Elm and Ash Streets**-

A pedestrian crosswalk is needed for safe pedestrian crossing from the applicant's site to cross East Elm Street to the north-west corner of the intersection and for the street crossing at Ash Street from the applicant's property. We recommend the applicant provide crosswalk pavement markings from their property across East Elm Street and the crossing at Ash Street. This busy intersection is a four way stop and a primary connector to cross the SEPTA Regional Rail corridor to Washington Street. We recommend the borough consider to make the provision of crosswalks a condition of approval.

6. **Accessible Parking or Drop-off**

According to submitted documentation, the applicant has leased 65 off-street parking spaces at the adjacent SORA office building and garage at 124 East Elm Street. The building lies over 350 ft. from the restaurant's entrance, with a continuous sidewalk along each property's frontage. We have concerns regarding the distance in parking for those with limited mobility. The applicant should provide information to the borough regarding how its patrons with access issues and limited mobility will be accommodated at the restaurant. Ash Street and East Elm Streets along the parcel's frontage are busy roadways and have no off-street parking spaces. It may require some creativity, but accessible parking space(s) is needed. One possibility would be to designate the existing parking spaces immediately east of the intersection as ADA-handicap spaces. We suggest the borough work with the applicant to accommodate people with mobility issues with accessible parking space.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the borough's planning and design objectives for land developments along East Hector Street.

Please note that any review comment and recommendation contained in this report are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Please be aware that the MCPC # 24-0174-001 has been set aside for the applicant' plan. If any subsequent plans are submitted for final recording, this MCPC number should appear on the applicant sheets within the plans in the box reserved for the seal of this agency.

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.

Sincerely,

Barry W. Jeffries

Barry W Jeffries, ASLA, Senior Design Planner
bjeffrie@montcopa.org - 610-278-3444

c: Chrm., Borough Planning Commission
Karen MacNair, Borough Engineer
Michael Peters, Esq., Borough Engineer
Christina Pieri/Cooper Winery LLC, Applicant
Dave Clifford, Montgomery County Parks Administrator

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

ATTACHMENTS A & B

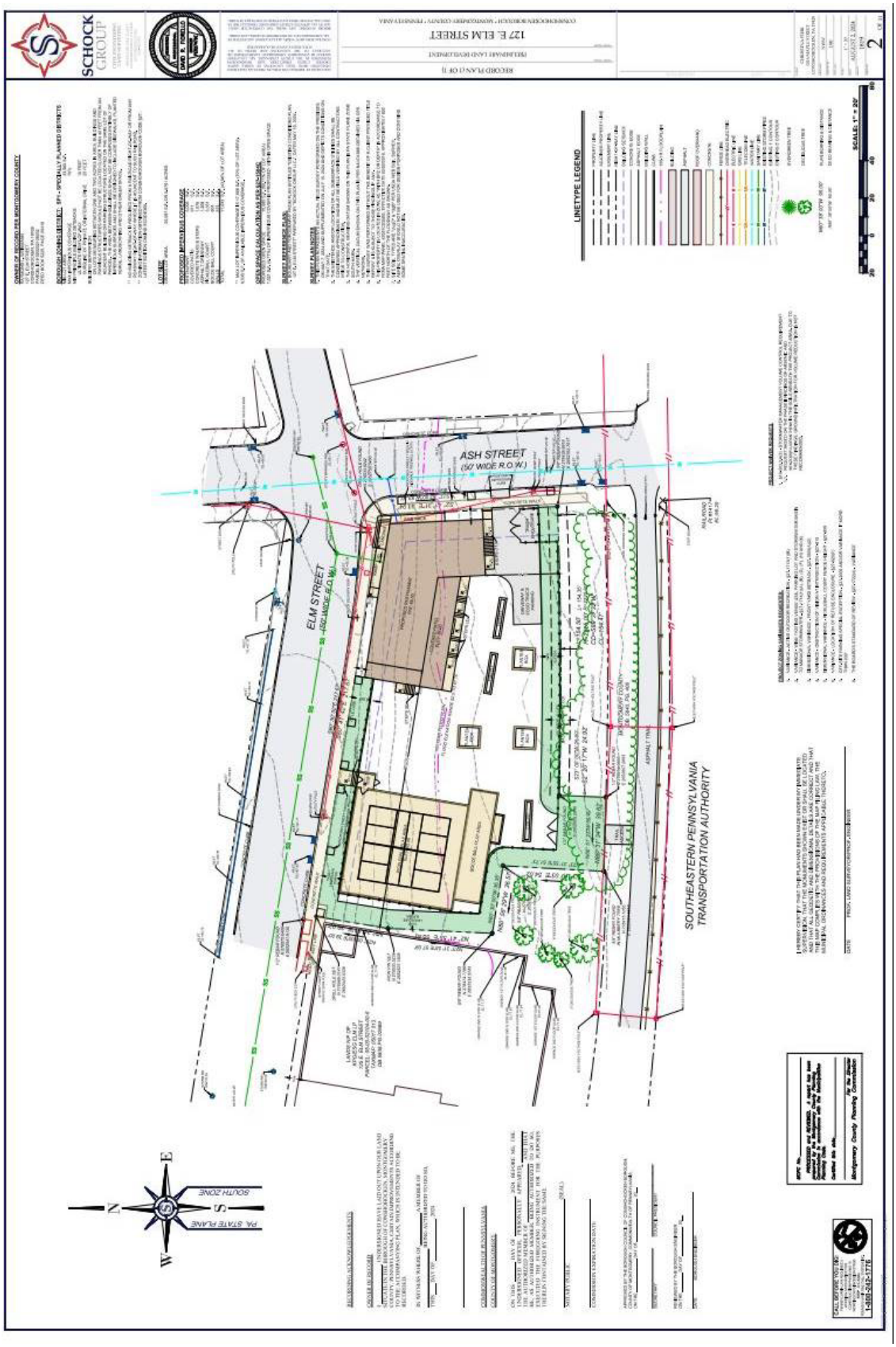


127 East Elm Street
MCPC#240174001

Montgomery County Planning Commission
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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

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127 E. ELM STREET
LINETYPE LEGEND
ASH STREET
(50' WIDE R.O.W.)
ELM STREET
(40' WIDE R.O.W.)
SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
PA STATE PLANE
SOUTH ZONE