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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

August 28, 2024

Jason Bobst, Township Manager
West Norriton Township
1630 Marshall Street
West Norriton, PA 19403

Re: MCPC # 24-0175-001
Plan Name: Southeast Psychiatric Treatment Center at Norristown
(1 lots comprising 65.77 acres)
Situate: Sterigere Street (NE), between Colonial Drive (NW) and Forest Avenue (SE)
West Norriton Township

Dear Mr. Bobst:

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 August 6, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

William Bogari, Jr., Chief Operating Officer of the Norristown State Hospital, has submitted a land development application for a 65.77 acre parcel of land within the R-A Rural Residence District and State Institutional Overlay District. The site is currently occupied by mental health treatment and forensic psychiatric uses operated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The application provides for demolition and substantial redevelopment to expand the square footage and capacity of the same uses currently operating on site. The expanded facility is anticipated to operate 24 hours per day, every day of the year. Admission hours will be between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. The proposal is split between two phases of construction:

- Phase 1 provides for the construction of a 458,000 square foot building containing 270 beds. 670 employees are anticipated.
- Phase 2 provides for the construction of a 193,000 building containing 150 beds. 368 additional employees are anticipated.

The highest point of any proposed building is 73.1 feet, which falls below the maximum of 80 feet permitted by the State Institutional Overlay District. The parking requirement for the uses is 475 parking spaces and the application provides a total of 506 parking spaces throughout numerous large surface parking lots. Several landscaping areas are provided for, as well as a handful of stormwater management features.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

Montco 2040, Montgomery County's Comprehensive Plan, designates this portion of the community as a 'Suburban Residential Area' in the future land use plan. Institutional use is a primary use that is appropriate for a Suburban Residential Area, provided the appropriate site design elements (e.g., landscaping and buffering) are provided. As proposed, the facility appears to be well screened from the surrounding neighborhood.

The township is in the process of preparing an update to the comprehensive plan with the assistance of MCPC through the Community Planning Assistance Contract Program. However, the *Comprehensive Plan Update 2010* remains in effect until the new plan is duly adopted by the Township Board of Supervisors pursuant to Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code." The proposed redevelopment of the State Hospital would generally support the following recommendations from the *Compressive Plan Update 2010:*

- Continue to increase and improve trails, paths, bikeways and sidewalks that connect destinations.
- Buffer homes from commerce… and manage traffic from passing through residential streets.
- Utilize non-structural stormwater best management practices where practicable.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal, however, in the course of our review we have identified the following issues that the applicant and township may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

ROADWAY DESIGN

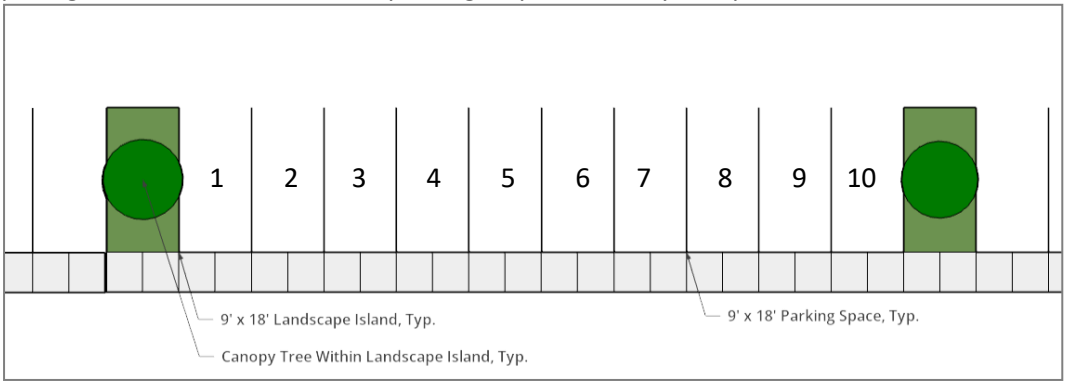
1) It is recommended that the municipality and applicant discuss an alternative roadway design at the eastbound and westbound approaches to the relocated main entrance, which is proposed to align with the intersection of West Sterigere Street and Montgomery Avenue. At present, eastbound vehicles turning left into the facility have a tendency to cause congestion. It is therefore recommended that the municipality and applicant discuss the need for an eastbound left turn lane at the main entrance.
2) It is recommended that the municipality and applicant discuss minor roadway improvements to address westbound left turns at the intersection of Forrest Avenue and West Sterigere Street. The striping that delineates a westbound left-turn lane (to Forrest Avenue) and the westbound through lane have degraded to the point that repainting is required.
3) It is recommended that internal roadways be designed to accommodate large vehicles, such as SEPTA buses. With the anticipated number of employees and the potential increase for visitors to the facility, future transit service should be considered.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

1) It is recommended that the multi-use path internal to the property be extended to connect to abutting streets/sidewalks at the intersections of West Sterigere Street and Pine Street, West Sterigere Street and Montgomery Avenue, and West Sterigere Street and Forrest Avenue. High-visibility crosswalks should also be marked at all intersections, and curb ramps meeting the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act must be provided where the crosswalk and sidewalk meet.
2) It is recommended that the multi-use path be connected to the parking areas internal to the site in convenient locations.
3) Although outside of West Norriton Township, it is recommended that the applicant consider extending the proposed trail to the east, across the property frontage under the applicant's control. Continuing this pedestrian connection would further integrate the facility with the surrounding communities and neighborhoods, both within West Norriton Township and Norristown Borough.

LANDSCAPING

1) Landscape islands with canopy trees are recommended to be provided no less than every 10 parking spaces. Landscape islands should take up the area of a parking space. Given that the applicant is proposing to exceed the minimum parking requirement by 31 spaces, there should be adequate space



available to provide landscaping islands internal to the rows of parking. Please see the graphic below for a demonstration of landscape island size and location.
2) We would like to commend the applicant for the diverse mix of species selected and the high priority given to native species. Furthermore, we commend the proposed use of no-mow seed mixes and no-mow meadow mixes. With this in mind, however, we recommend that the applicant review if the no-mow species will compete with and potentially crowd out the woody shrubs along the edge of the proposed stormwater management features. Ensuring compatibility may help to avoid failure and reduce future maintenance/replacement needs.

STORMATER MANAGEMENT

1) The municipal engineer is encouraged to study the planned stormwater discharge directed into the tributary of Stony Creek (via Basin #3) and ensure that the rate of discharge will not degrade water quality or create streambank erosion. These waterways are a critical natural and scenic resource for the Norristown Farm Park, a regional attraction.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the township's planning objectives for this important institutional property. 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 (*#24-0175-001*) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Timothy Konetchy

Timothy Konetchy, Senior Community Planner
Timothy.Konetchy@montgomerycountypa.gov - 610.292.4917

c: William Bogari, Jr., Chief Operating Officer, Norristown State Hospital
Michael Valyo, Director of Public Works & Planning
Kim Flanders, Planning Commission Chair
Sean Kilkenny, Esq., Township Solicitor

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

ATTACHMENT A: AERIAL IMAGE OF SITE



Southeast Psychiatric Treatment Center at Norristown
MCPC#240175001

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

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ATTACHMENT B: REDUCED COPY OF APPLICANT'S PROPOSED SITE PLAN

