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PLANNING COMMISSION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO BOX 311
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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 6, 2024

TO: Mr. Christopher Leswing, Director of Building & Planning
Building & Planning Department
Township of Lower Merion
75 East Lancaster Avenue
Ardmore, PA 19003

FROM: Marley Bice, AICP, Community Planning Assistant Manager
marley.bice@montgomerycountypa.gov | 610-278-3740

SUBJECT: MCPC #24-0082-004
727-731 Montgomery Avenue SOPI Submission

We have received and reviewed a "SOPI" submission for the above-referenced subdivision and land development application as you requested on August 26, 2024. The comments in this memo are based on the most recent submission. We have attached our most recent full review letter (for submission MCPC #24-0082-003) for reference; however, some comments in our previous review letter(s) may have been addressed.

UPDATED BACKGROUND

We have reviewed the most recent "SOPI" submission for changes and noted that the proposed land use and the amount of building area proposed remains the same, with 868 square feet of lower level office/retail space and a total of 6,374 square feet of office space. The streetscape design has been modified to include two seating walls and a generator pad to the rear of the parking lot is now shown.

ADDITIONAL REVIEW COMMENTS

We have reviewed the most recent "SOPI" submission and feel that several comments from our July 18, 2024 review letter may still be worthy of discussion. Specifically, we wish to reiterate our previous comments related to the minimum species diversity based on the number of each plant type proposed and the minimum plant size and spacing at time of planting. In addition, we wish to offer the following additional comments:

TREE PROTECTION ZONE

The landscape plan (Sheet L-100) has been modified to indicate additional information about the existing vegetation to remain; however, the erosion and sedimentation control plan (Sheet 7), which includes the

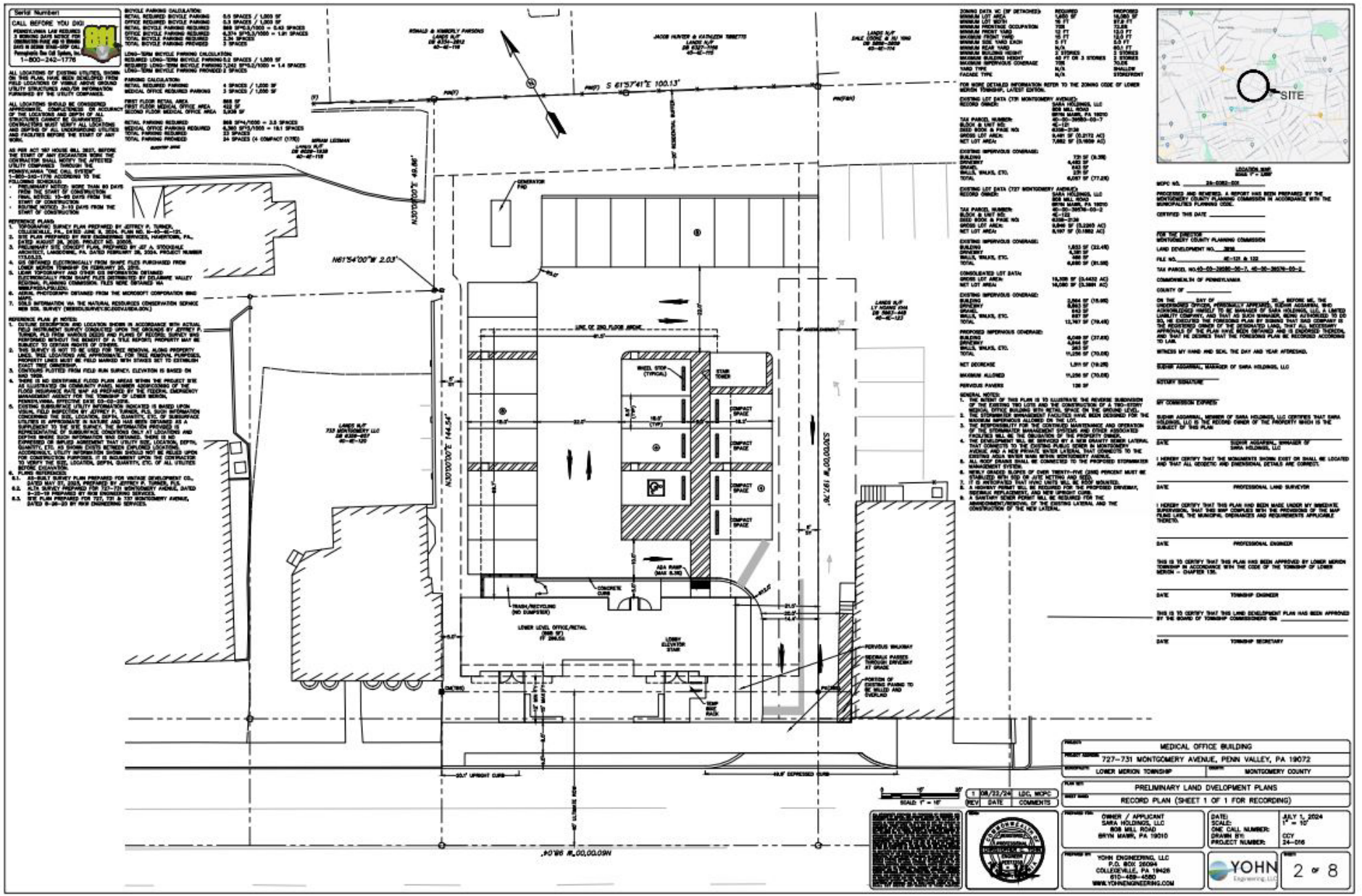
proposed tree protection zone, does not appear to show all of the existing trees that are proposed to remain and therefore it does not appear that the proposed tree protection zone meets the minimum standards in Chapter 101. Specifically, we feel that a more substantial tree protection zone should be provided around the existing 8" maple tree between the emergency generator and the western side property line, and around the 15" and 18" honey locust trees in the rear buffer area.

EXISTING VEGETATION TO REMAIN

The landscape plan (Sheet L-100) indicates that a "tree of heaven" and several "mulberry" trees are proposed to remain within the rear buffer area. Although it appears that these trees are not being used as part of the credits towards the buffer planting requirement, we wish to note that "tree of heaven," "paper mulberry," and "white mulberry" are all considered invasive by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR Invasive Plant Fact Sheets: https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/InvasivePlants/InvasivePlantFactSheets/Pages/default.aspx). Therefore, the applicant may wish to consider removing these trees and replacing them with more beneficial, native species.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
Attachment B: MCPC #24-0082-003 Review Letter Dated July 18, 2024


MEDICAL OFFICE BUILDING
727-731 MONTGOMERY AVENUE, PENN VALLEY, PA 19072
LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PRELIMINARY LAND DVELOPMENT PLANS
RECORD PLAN (SHEET 1 OF 1 FOR RECORDING)
OWNER / APPLICANT
SARA HOLDINGS, LLC
808 MILL ROAD
BRYN MAWR, PA 19010
YOHN ENGINEERING, LLC
P.O. BOX 26094
COLLEGEVILLE, PA 19426
610-489-4580
WWW.YOHNENGINEERING.COM
JULY 1, 2024
1" = 10'
CCY
24-016
2 of 8
SITE
SCALE: 1" = 10'

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 18, 2024

Mr. Christopher Leswing, Director of Building & Planning
Building & Planning Department
Township of Lower Merion
75 East Lancaster Avenue
Ardmore, PA 19003

Re: MCPC #24-0082-003
Plan Name: 727-731 Montgomery Avenue
(7,500 sq. ft. commercial on approximately 0.44 acres)
Situate: Montgomery Avenue (N); east of Woodbine Avenue
Lower Merion Township

Dear Mr. Leswing:

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

BACKGROUND

The applicant, SARA Holdings, LLC, proposes to consolidate two existing lots at 727 and 731 Montgomery Avenue and construct a two-story, mixed-use commercial building. The proposed building will have approximately 1,500 square feet of retail space on the ground floor and 6,000 square feet of medical office space on the second floor, mostly cantilevered over a surface parking lot containing 24 parking spaces. All existing structures on the combined properties are proposed to be removed. Additional improvements shown at this time include sidewalks, street trees, and an underground stormwater management facility. The property is located in the township's VC Village Center zoning district. This proposal was previously reviewed in review letters dated May 10, 2024 and May 30, 2024.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies this property as Commercial. Furthermore, the Commercial Land Use Element of the Township Comprehensive Plan identifies

the Narberth-Penn Valley commercial area as a Neighborhood Main Street. The proposed development appears to be consistent with the desired form of Neighborhood Main Street commercial areas because it is a low-rise building with a ground floor commercial use and a landscaped front yard.

In addition, this area of the township is identified as a Town Center in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. Town Center areas are traditional downtown areas with a mix of retail, institutional, office, and residential uses. The proposed building placement appears to be consistent with the criteria that buildings in Town Center areas be pedestrian-oriented with buildings built close to the sidewalk and parking located to the rear of buildings.

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 Lower Merion Township may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our review comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

ZONING ORDINANCE COMMENTS

Section 155-3.6.B.(3) of the township's zoning ordinance contains standards for permitted projections. It appears that the proposed canopy that projects into the required minimum front yard may exceed the maximum dimensions for such projections. Specifically, "the length along the supporting wall of a projecting canopy over an entrance may not exceed eight feet, or a maximum of two feet beyond the door opening, whichever is less."

SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE COMMENTS

Based on the information provided, we have identified the following items related to the township's subdivision and land development ordinance that we feel should be addressed as part of any future land development submissions associated with this property:

A. Street Trees. Section 135-5.1.C.(7) states that street trees shall be planted at a rate of at least one tree per 30 feet of street frontage, or portion thereof. Based on the site's frontage length of 98 feet, four street trees should be provided; however, only three street trees are shown.

B. Minimum Species Diversity. Section 135-5.8.A.(6) and Table 5.8.1. establish the minimum species diversity requirements. Based on the information provided in the plant schedule on Sheet L-100, it does not appear that the minimum species diversity requirement for each plant type is being met.

C. Minimum Plant Size and Spacing. Section 135-5.8.B.(4) and Table 5.8.2. establish the minimum plant size and spacing at time of planting requirements. Based on the information provided in the plant schedule on Sheet L-100, it appears that the thornless honey locust does not meet the minimum height at time of planting for medium canopy trees and the eastern red cedar does not meet the minimum height at time

of planting for evergreen trees. In addition, the two shadblow serviceberry trees in the rear yard appear to not meet the minimum spacing at time of planting for small canopy trees.

D. Minimum Soil Volume. Section 135-5.8.C. establishes the minimum soil volume for canopy trees that are proposed to be planted within planting areas of 1,000 square feet or less in area. Future submissions should include information demonstrating compliance with this requirement.

E. Greening Standards. Section 135-5.5.F. and Table 5.5.2. establish the streetscape and greening element requirements. With regards to street planters, Table 5.5.2 states that they shall be a "minimum size of 24 inches in diameter, planted with shrubs, groundcovers, and/or flowers." It may be helpful if future versions of the landscape plan specified what will be planted in the proposed planters.

TREE PROTECTION ZONE

Section 101-6.A. of the Natural Features Conservation code requires that tree protection fencing shall be placed at the dripline around trees to be retained within 25 feet of a building site, parking area or other proposed improvement. The tree protection fencing shown on Sheet 7 of 8 appears to be located in close proximity to existing trees to remain. Specifically, it appears that the proposed temporary stormwater BMP and grading could impact an 8" tree that appears to be shown to remain along the western property line.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

According to Sheet 5 of 8, an underground stormwater management facility is proposed under the rear portion of the parking lot. From the information provided, it is unclear where any overflow from the stormwater management facility would be piped or discharged to, if applicable.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

On the landscape plan on Sheet L-100, the areas of the site shown in a green color appear to be labeled as "lawn." However, it is unclear what ground cover material the areas of the site in the verge and in front of the building along Montgomery Avenue, which are shown as a light gray color, are proposed to be.

We recommend that any proposed underground utilities and underground stormwater management facilities be shown on the landscape plan to ensure there are no conflicts between the proposed landscaping and underground infrastructure. For example, it appears that several plantings including an eastern red cedar and several shrubs may be proposed to be planted over a portion of the underground stormwater management facility in the rear portion of the parking lot. In addition, the proposed sanitary sewer connection appears to be proposed in the vicinity of where the westernmost street tree is proposed to be planted.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STATIONS

Although not required by the township's subdivision and land development ordinance for parking lots with less than 25 parking spaces, we encourage the applicant to consider incorporating an electric vehicle charging station into the parking lot.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the proposed subdivision and land development; however, we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Lower Merion Township's planning objectives for commercial development.

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 (#24-0082-003) on any plans submitted for final recording.

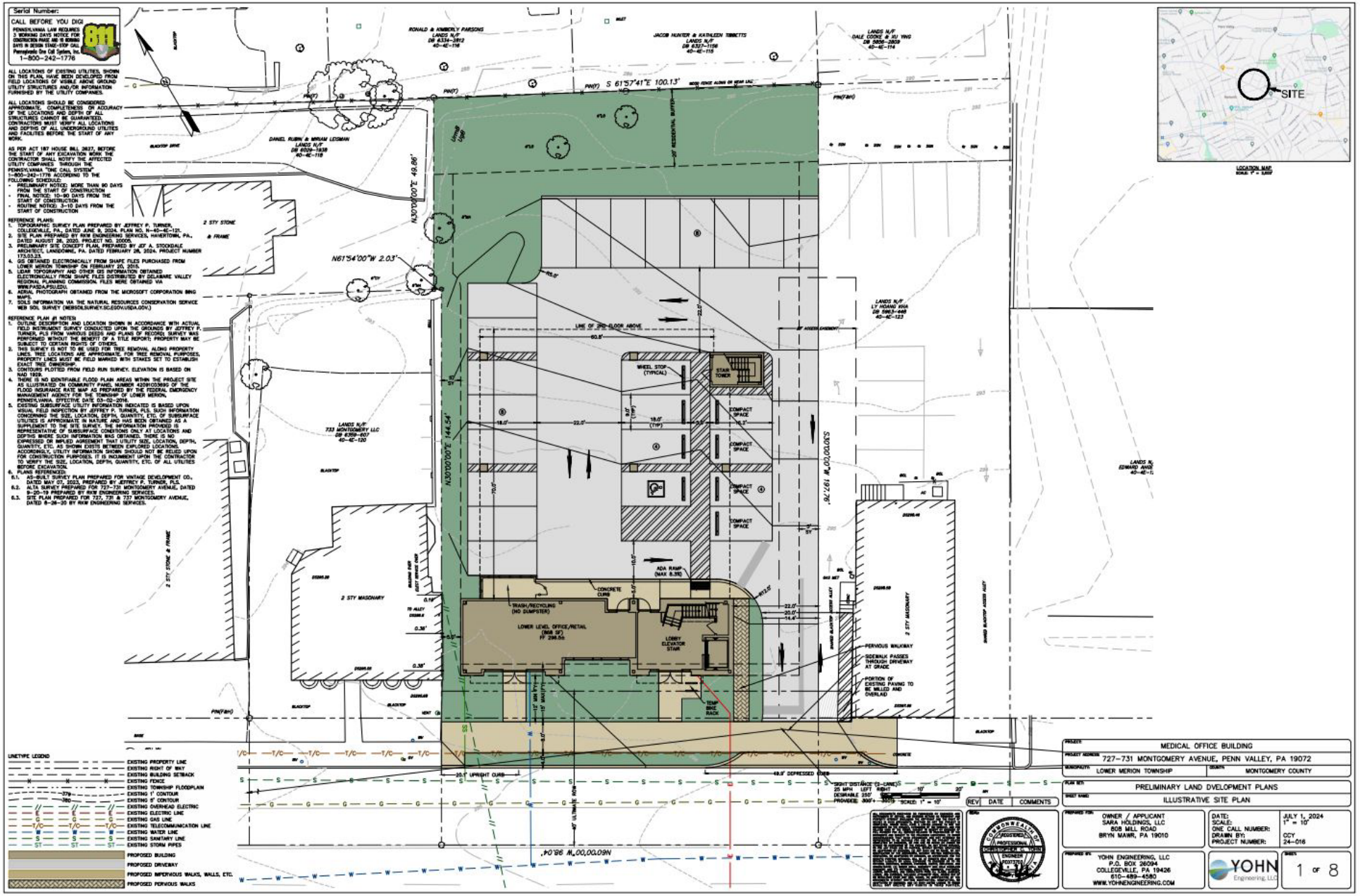
Sincerely,

Marley B Bice

Marley Bice, AICP, Community Planning Assistant Manager
610-278-3740 – marley.bice@montgomerycountypa.gov

c: SARA Holdings, LLC, Applicant
Yohn Engineering, LLC, Applicant's Engineer
Gilbert P. High, Jr., Esq., Twp. Solicitor
Ernie B. McNeely, Twp. Manager
Jody Kelley, Twp. Secretary
Joseph Mastronardo, P.E., Twp. Engineer
Charlie Doyle, Twp. Asst. Dir. of Planning
Colleen Hall, Twp. Senior Planner
Jillian Puleo-Dierks, Twp. Senior Planner
Greg Prichard, Twp. Historic Preservation Planner
Holly Colello, Twp. Planner
Sarah Carley, Twp. Planner

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


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727-731 MONTGOMERY AVENUE, PENN VALLEY, PA 19072
LOWER MERION TOWNSHIP
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PRELIMINARY LAND DVELOPMENT PLANS
ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN
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JULY 1, 2024
1" = 10'
CCY
24-016
1 OF 8
SITE
LOCATION MAP
SCALE: 1" = 1,000'
CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!
1-800-242-1776
REFERENCE PLANS:
REFERENCE PLAN #1 NOTES:
LINETYPE LEGEND
EXISTING PROPERTY LINE
EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY
EXISTING BUILDING SETBACK
EXISTING FENCE
EXISTING TOWNSHIP FLOODPLAIN
EXISTING 1' CONTOUR
EXISTING 5' CONTOUR
EXISTING OVERHEAD ELECTRIC
EXISTING ELECTRIC LINE
EXISTING GAS LINE
EXISTING TELECOMMUNICATION LINE
EXISTING WATER LINE
EXISTING SANITARY LINE
EXISTING STORM PIPES
PROPOSED BUILDING
PROPOSED DRIVEWAY
PROPOSED IMPERVIOUS WALKS, WALLS, ETC.
PROPOSED PERVIOUS WALKS



727-731 Montgomery Avenue
MCPC#240082003

Montgomery County Planning Commission

0 50 100 200 Feet

N

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