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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

November 26, 2024

Mr. Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP
Director of Planning & Zoning Officer
Whitemarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania 19444

Re: MCPC # 21-0192-002
Plan Name: 604/608 Germantown Twins
Situate: Germantown Pike at Westaway Drive
3 lots / 20 du's/ comprising +/- 1.63 acres
Whitemarsh Township

Dear Mr. Guttenplan:

We have reviewed the above-referenced sketch plan as you requested on October 22, 2024 in an electronic submission to this office. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, 604-608 Germantown Investors, LLC has submitted a sketch plan that proposes the construction of twenty (20) semi-detached dwelling units (twins) arranged along a street with access opposite the intersection of Germantown Pike and Westaway Drive. The development tract includes three lots and tax parcels: 604 Germantown Pike, (Tax Parcel #65-000458-50-03, ca. 1847); 606 Germantown Pike, (Tax Parcel #65-000458-20-06, ca. 1900) and 608 Germantown Pike, (Tax Parcel # 65-000457-90-09, ca. 1860). The majority of the 1.63 acre development tract lies within the township's VC-1 Village Commercial District (VC) and the rear portion of 608 Germantown lies in the B-Residential District. The sketch plan proposes consolidating the three lots.

The two lots of the development tract were the subject of a preliminary land development plan reviewed by the planning commission in a letter dated August 5, 2021. The plan proposed a seven unit apartment building addition to the circa 1860 3-story masonry building at 608 Germantown, and it preserved the circa 1900 3-story, wood-frame building at 606 Germantown.

CONSISTENCY WITH COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL PLANS

The proposal for the small twin residential community as shown by the sketch plan appears consistent with the *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, 2015. The county's plan recommends that the future land use for the applicant's site and surrounding neighborhood should support 'Suburban-Residential' land uses. The proposal is consistent with the 2028 Future Land Use Plan recommendations contained in the Whitemarsh Township Selective Comprehensive Plan Update, Nov. 2020. The future land use vision for this area recommended by the plan is for an area designated as a 'Mixed-Use Corridor' Character Area. The future land use envisioned for this character area includes a small scale mixed-use development, with an emphasis on connectivity and walkability.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's sketch plan, however in reviewing this proposal we identified several concerns that we believe merit the township's consideration. Several areas have been identified in the sketch plan where the site's redevelopment plan falls short in addressing the primary goals and design intentions of the VC-Village Commercial District. We recommend the township consider these concerns and ensure that the applicant's residential development is both compatible with its surroundings and is an improvement for the Lafayette Hill community.

COMMENTS

1. **VC-Village Commercial District Intent & Proposed Architecture**
   a. Section 116-228.F.- Legislative Intent
   The development plan proposes the demolition of three buildings which, according to the Board of Assessment website, are historic structures that date from 1847 to 1900. As referenced above, we reviewed a redevelopment proposal in 2021 in which two of these buildings– 606 & 608 Germantown Pike – were preserved, and one structure was re-purposed as part of an apartment development plan. The VC District- Legislative intent states, ". . . Encourage the retention, rehabilitation, and reuse of existing historic structures or buildings built prior to 1940." The 608 Germantown Pike structure, a former dentist office, appears on the verge of being demolished, according to Google Street view. We recommend the township and applicant explore how one or more of the surviving structures could be repurposed into this plan and assist the township in maintaining some of the pre-1900 village character and appearance of Lafayette Hill. These two structures are part of diminishing number of buildings which contribute to character and unique identity of the Lafayette Hill corridor. We recommend the applicant explore how one or both of these buildings could be repurposed into the site plan, to avoid the diminishment of the remaining number of Lafayette Hill historic structures.

b. Proposed architecture and outdoor space-
   - The applicant should provide architectural renderings to the township so that an evaluation can be made regarding how the new twin structures address several requirements of Section 116-288.B & G. It requires that , ". . . new building(s) should have a scale and character commensurate with the existing pre-1940 architecture of the area." An appropriate treatment of the façade, roof design, and other architectural elements is essential to in evaluating the compatibility of the new construction with the district requirements.
   - The plan does indicate how the rear yards and spaces immediately behind the residences will be used or accessed. Are decks or patios being considered for residents to access and enjoy the outdoor environment? The township should inquire if either decks or patios are proposed and how they are arranged in relation to the setbacks are proposed for the houses. None are shown in the sketch plan.

2. Transportation Issues

a. Misalignment of the Access Driveway with Westaway Drive

The proposed access street from Germantown Pike is misaligned with the opposing Westway Drive. This should be treated as a 'full-intersection' and the opposite street directly aligned to the greatest extent feasible with the development's access street. It appears that a better alignment could be achieved by shifting both the proposed street access/curb cut's centerline +/- 8-9 ft. southeastward and the two twins closest to the lot with the former bank building. This could be done without compromising the required 5 ft. side-yard setback with the commercial property.

b. Turn-Around Area

The site development has a single means of ingress/egress from Germantown Pike along a 24 ft. wide street (+/- 345 ft. in length), which ends in a short 7' stub which is an inadequate configuration for a vehicular turn-around. The short stub is also placed at the ends of both driveways behind the twins that front Germantown Pike. The plan should provide a designated space for a vehicular turn-around in these locations that is an acceptable configuration to the township.

3. **Village-Commercial Design Goals -** *Connectivity and Walkability*

The applicant's site lies in the heart of Lafayette Hill village and the VC- Village Commercial District. One of the VC-District's Legislative Intent goals according to Section 116-228.H., states that ". . . (it should). . . Encourage bicycle and pedestrian accessible developments, reflecting a village center rather than (an) auto-oriented commercial site development."

We recommend the township consider this district goal in its assessment of the applicant's redevelopment proposal in the following elements of the sketch plan.

a. *Connection and Walkability*
The sketch plan does not provide the needed sidewalks along the street to ensure that pedestrians have a safe, accessible route to Germantown Pike from the interior of the development. Walkability and connectivity in the redevelopment of this area are important considerations and are identified as goals in the township's *Selective Comprehensive Plan Update, Nov. 2020* and in the *VC- District*'s Legislative Intent(Section 116-288.H.).

b. *Sidewalks- Interior*
The proposed street is 24 ft. wide and will not provide adequate space for a pedestrian and two cars in the street. One of the goals of VC-District's legislative goals according to Section 116-228.H, " (is to) . . . Encourage bicycle and pedestrian accessible development, reflecting a village center rather than (an) auto-oriented commercial site development ". We recommend the applicant provide safe accessible space for pedestrians to walk in the development. If an increase in impervious coverage is a concern, we recommend that Flexi-Pave pervious paving be considered as a sidewalk material.

c. *Pedestrian Amenities- Lighting*
The redevelopment of the site should include other pedestrian amenities such as benches, interior pedestrian scale lighting and street lighting along Germantown Pike that addresses the requirements of Section 116-291. D.- Conditions of Approval for all Uses.

d. *Crosswalks - Additional Design Standards for VC-1 District. – Section 105-56.1*
The applicant's plan does not show the required crosswalk improvements on both the north and south side of the intersection at Germantown Pike and Westway Drive. We believe that cross-walks should be provided at this location. The need for crosswalks in the VC-1 District is further demonstrated by the township's Selective Comprehensive Plan Update, 2020 which advocates for the township to "develop and implement a 'Complete Streets" policy" for the township. (Policy #2).

4. **Open Space- Dimensional & Coverage Standards**
The sketch plan does not illustrate where on the site the minimum vegetated open space area is provided and how the required *Minimum Vegetated Open Space* is addressed. (§ 116-294.9). We recommend the township evaluate the sketch plan's green area and encourage the applicant to include a designated area for outdoor enjoyment and potential passive recreation for the residents.

5. **Stormwater Management**
   The submitted sketch plan does not indicate where the stormwater management facilities will be located within the development tract. The township should ensure that this area is shown and discussed, and ensure this is an effective solution for stormwater management.

6. **Germantown Pike- A PennDOT Roadway**
   The applicant's site development proposes an expansion of a narrow driveway to a 25 ft. wide access driveway/curb cut at Germantown Pike, which is a PennDOT roadway. A Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) will be needed for the new driveway and the township should ensure the applicant has begun or will begin its coordination with the PENNDOT District 6 offices to address the requirements for the HOP.
   https://www.penndot.gov/Doing-Business/Permits/HighwayOccupancyPermits/Pages/default.aspx

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal, however we recommend the township assess to its satisfaction, our concerns and comments regarding how this site's redevelopment can assist in accomplishing the goals of the Village Commercial District.

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 # 21-0192-002.

Sincerely,

Barry W. Jeffries

Barry W. Jeffries, ASLA , Senior Design Planner

Barry.Jeffries@montgomerycountypa.gov , 610.278.3444

c: 604-608 Germantown Investors, LLC, Applicant
J. B. Reibstein, Applicant's Representative
Patrick Spellman, P.E., Site Engineering Concepts, LLC
Aaron Kostyk, Chair, Whitemarsh Township Municipal Planning Commission
District 6- PennDOT- HOP Coordinator

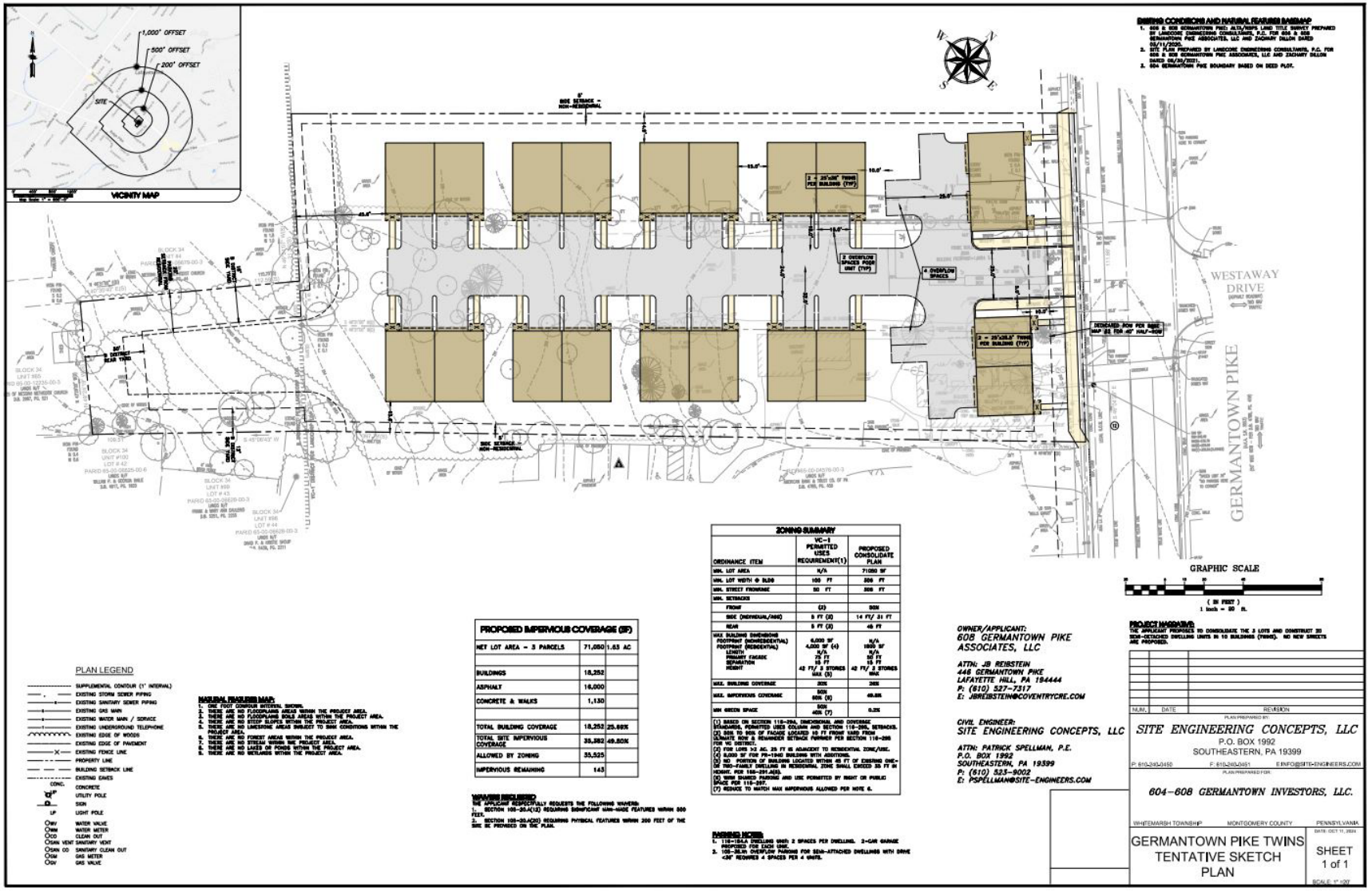
Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan

ATTACHMENT A& B



Germantown Pike Twins
MCPC#210192002

Montgomery County Planning Commission


VICINITY MAP
1,000' OFFSET
500' OFFSET
200' OFFSET
SITE
EXISTING CONDITIONS AND NATURAL FEATURES BASEMAP
WESTAWAY DRIVE
GERMANTOWN PIKE
GRAPHIC SCALE
PLAN LEGEND
PROPOSED IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE (SF)
ZONING SUMMARY
OWNER/APPLICANT:
608 GERMANTOWN PIKE ASSOCIATES, LLC
ATTN: JB REIBSTEIN
446 GERMANTOWN PIKE
LAFAYETTE HILL, PA 194444
P: (610) 527-7317
E: JBREIBSTEIN@COVENTRYCRE.COM
CIVIL ENGINEER:
SITE ENGINEERING CONCEPTS, LLC
ATTN: PATRICK SPELLMAN, P.E.
P.O. BOX 1992
SOUTHEASTERN, PA 19399
P: (610) 525-9002
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SOUTHEASTERN, PA 19399
604-608 GERMANTOWN INVESTORS, LLC.
WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PENNSYLVANIA
GERMANTOWN PIKE TWINS
TENTATIVE SKETCH PLAN
SHEET 1 of 1