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November 22, 2024

Mr. David Conroy
Zoning Officer & Planning Coordinator
Upper Gwynedd Township
1 Parkside Place
North Wales, Pennsylvania 19454

Re: MCPC #24-0233-001
Plan Name: 1500 Pennbrook Parkway
(1 lot/60 du consisting of 5.65 acres)
Situate: Pennbrook Parkway (W); north of Church Road
Upper Gwynedd Township

Dear Mr. Conroy:

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 October 25, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

## BACKGROUND

The applicant, The Walters Group, proposes to consolidate two existing lots and construct six residential buildings with a total building footprint of 31,989 square feet and a total of 60 multifamily units, with associated drive aisles and 118 parking spaces. Additional improvements shown at this time include three stormwater management facilities, landscaping, a basketball court, and on-street parking and a sidewalk along a portion of the Pennbrook Parkway frontage of the site. Removals will include parking associated with the adjacent property which was an existing encroachment. The property is located in the township's Office Light Industrial District within the TOD-2 Transit-Oriented Overlay District -2.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The property is identified within a Business Area in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. Business Areas are concentrations of employment-oriented land uses, such as offices, research facilities, and industrial parks, including higher-density residential uses that are buffered from other uses. The site is also within a half-mile of the Pennbrook

Station, which serves SEPTA's Lansdale/Doylestown Regional Rail Line. The Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Plan identifies this perimeter as a Rail Station Walk Shed, which may be appropriate for redevelopment opportunities that include multifamily and townhouse development to encourage public transit use and access.

This property is shown as Office Light Industrial in the Future Land Use Plan of the *Upper Gwynedd Township 2040 Comprehensive Plan*. Office Light Industrial areas are detailed as a mix between office and warehouse, and include office parks, business centers, self-storage facilities in addition to artisan manufacturing, co-working, and craft breweries. Additionally, the property is shown within the Transit-Oriented Development overlay on the Future Land Use Plan which includes areas of land within ½ mile of a train station where a mix of land uses is desired and a greater intensity of development can be accommodated by focusing on enhancing the transit connections.

## RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) supports the applicant's proposal and encourages the additional diversity in housing types within a public transit walk shed that this development would add to the township; however, in the course of our review we have identified the following issues that the township may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

## REVIEW COMMENTS

### SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE COMMENTS

The proposed landscaping plan does not appear to adhere to the township's newly adopted Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development requirements regarding landscaping. Below are just a few examples where revisions appear to be needed for compliance with the current standards.

A. Tree Preservation & Replacement. According to the plan, it appears a large section of the site is currently wooded. The site plans do not provide information determining the existing amount and location of trees that are proposed to be removed and remain. We encourage the applicant to provide further information regarding the impact on the trees on site as required by §168-10.B., and §168-32.C Natural or Historic Feature Preservation, which also provides information regarding credits for preserved trees.

B. Stormwater Management. It appears that the three stormwater facilities on the property are proposed to be planted with an Ernst seed mix. As detailed in §168-33.F., there are various landscaping requirements for around and inside of stormwater facilities:

> *1. Trees and shrubs shall be planted in and around stormwater basins, provided that they do not have a negative effect on the hydrological function of the basin and no trees are planted within 30 feet of an outlet/ drain structure, emergency spillway, or dam. A minimum of two (2) trees and 10 shrubs per 100 linear feet of basin perimeter shall be planted in and around the basin. Plantings can be uniformly applied with two to three inches of shredded mulch or leaf compost. No wood chips are permitted.*

*2. Naturalized ground cover plant species, such as wildflowers, meadows, and nonaggressive grasses specifically designed for the permanently wet, intermittently wet, and usually dry areas of stormwater basins, shall be seeded in the floors and slopes of the basin and meet the following requirements:*

*a) The plantings provide a satisfactory continuous cover for all areas of the basin.*

*b) The plantings do not interfere with the safe and efficient function of the basin as determined by the Township Engineer.*

We encourage the applicant to consider incorporating these additional plantings into the stormwater basin landscape design.

C. Species Diversity. The plant schedule on Sheet 19, Landscaping Details, details that the applicant proposes to plant 33 shade trees, 102 evergreen trees, 25 flowering trees, and 80 shrubs. §168-33. C.1.d. , Minimum Plant Material Diversity Requirement, requires a minimum number of species per plant type, and a maximum percentage of any one species per plant type. We encourage the applicant to refer to the schedule to ensure diversity in plant material. For example, a minimum of six different species are required for the number of shrubs and evergreen trees to be planted, with a maximum percentage of 20% per type. The current plan details only two species for evergreens (with one species accounting for nearly 80%, and three species for shrubs, each over the 20% requirement.

D. Softening Buffer. According to §168-33.E(2), the softening buffer requirement is 4 large canopy trees and 12 evergreens, whereas the proposed is 25 flowering trees and existing wooded areas. While there is a credit for trees preserved, a waiver may be needed to substitute for other plant types.

## WETLANDS

According to §168-33. H.2. of the township's subdivision and land development ordinance, a 25-foot setback shall be maintained around the perimeter of all wetlands, known as the "wetland buffer" where no removal of vegetation, except selective removal of dead trees and/or noxious or invasive vegetation in the wetland area or buffer, shall take place without the specific permission of the township. It appears the parking area and retaining wall are proposed directly on the edge of the wetland. We encourage the applicant to clarify or adjust this in future plans to adhere to the requirements. Additionally, if action is to be taken within the wetlands, additional landscaping requirements per §168-33.G. should be followed.

## PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

As detailed in §195.21.1.(10) of the township's zoning ordinance, Pedestrian- and transit-oriented design elements, the township requires pedestrian connections to be provided from all building entrances to parking areas, open space, and recreational areas, and to the transit station intended to be served by the TOD-2. Additionally sidewalks or walkways shall connect to existing sidewalks on abutting tracts.

The proposed plan appears to remove a section of the sidewalk along the Pennbrook Parkway frontage. This is essential for pedestrian connections and adherence to the intent of the TOD-2 district, and we hope for clarification and maintenance of the sidewalk in future plans. Also, internally the plan displays a sidewalk

connection in front of Building 2 which connects to the parking lot and Pennbrook Parkway, but lacks a connection along the frontage of Building 1, connecting to Pennbrook Parkway. To facilitate continuous sidewalk construction, we recommend that sidewalk be extended to the northern property line allowing accessible connection along Pennbrook Parkway.

### PARKING

It appears that on the western side of the site an existing parking encroachment will be removed, but that a portion of the existing driveway associated with 1600 Pennbrook Parkway may still be on the proposed property. If so, it appears an access easement may be needed.

### TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR

According to the Title Plan sheet, Buildings 1, 2,3,5,6, and 7 are marked. It appears Building 4 is missing, and should be clarified in future submissions of this plan.

## CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC supports the applicant's proposal; however, we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Upper Gwynedd Township's planning objectives for residential 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.

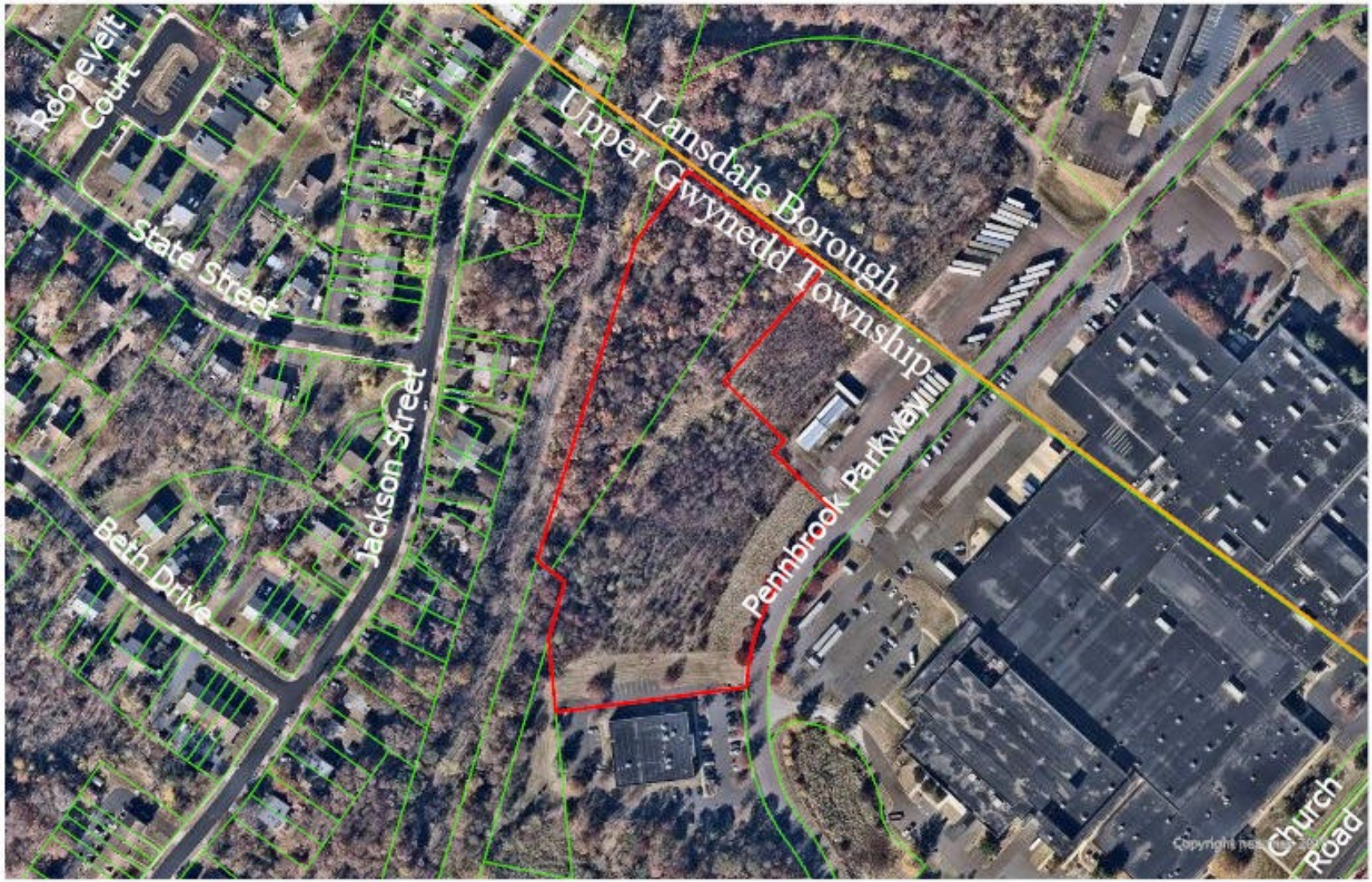
Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files. Please print the assigned MCPC number (#24-0233-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

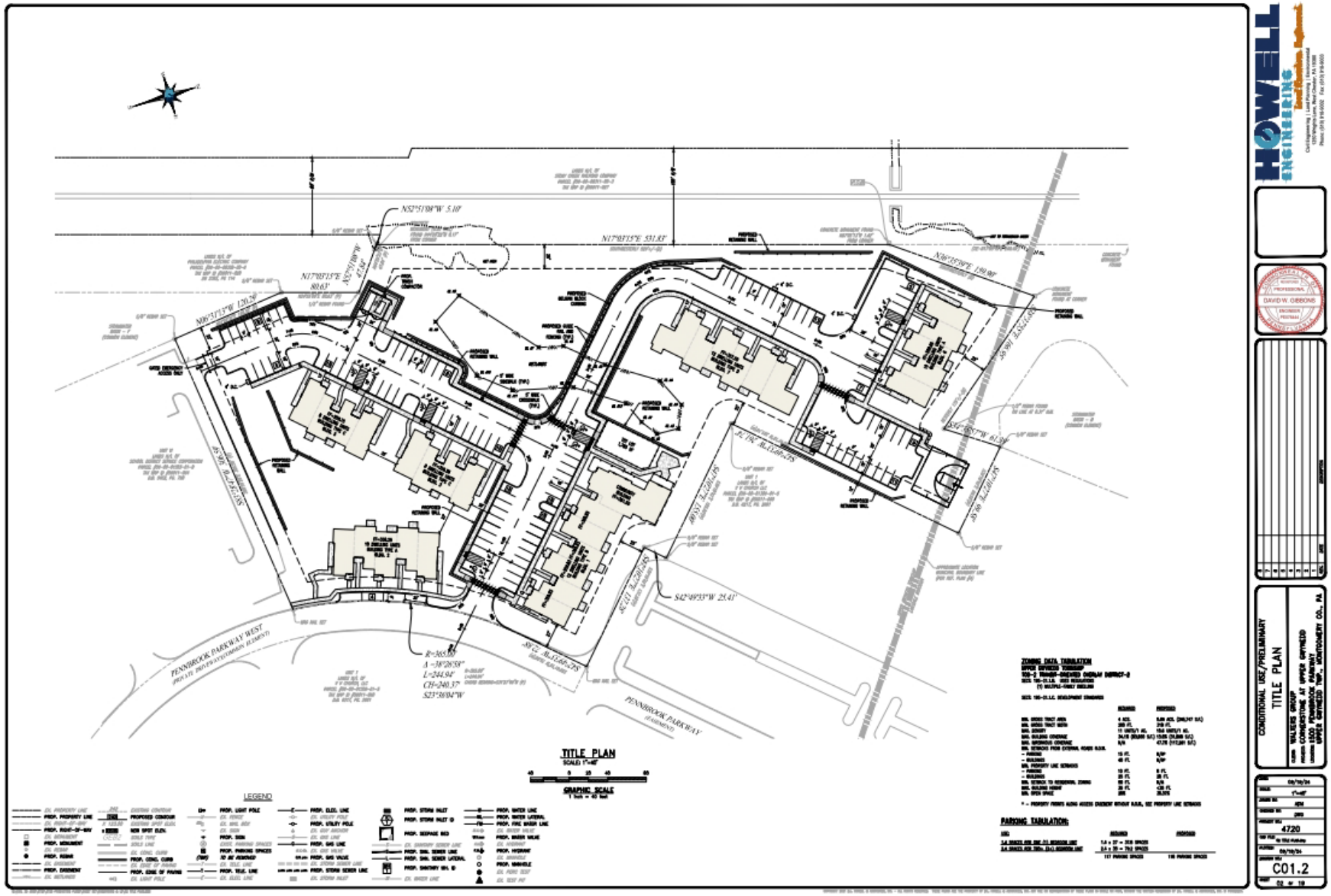
Margaux Petruska

c: The Walters Group, Applicant
Sandra Brookley Zadell, Township Manager
Megan Weaver, Assistant Township Manager

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




1500 Pennbrook Parkway
MCPC#240233001


TITLE PLAN
SCALE 1"=40'
GRAPHIC SCALE
LEGEND
PARKING TABULATION:
CONDITIONAL USE/PRELIMINARY
TITLE PLAN
C01.2