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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 24, 2024

Mr. Justin Keller, Borough Manager
Pottstown Borough
100 East High Street
Pottstown, PA 19464

Re: MCPC #: 24-0257-001
Plan Name: 276-284 N Hanover Street
(85 units and 576 square feet of retail space on 1 lot comprising 2 acres)
Situate: North Hanover Street at East 4th Street
Pottstown Borough

Dear Mr. Keller:

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 on November 21, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The Applicant, 274 North Hanover, LLC, proposes the adaptive reuse conversion of the warehouse property located at 276-284 North Hanover Street to 85 residential apartments, one 576 square foot retail space, and a ground level parking garage with 23 parking spaces. A 1,620 square foot lobby addition, 108 space surface parking lot, underground stormwater management facility, and a pocket park would be constructed on the property as well. The combined site is currently 85 percent impervious and would be 83 percent impervious post-development. The four parcels being combined consist of commercial and industrial buildings that were built between 1890 and 1920. The applicant proposes demolition of the two-story brick/frame building along North Hanover Street and renovating the other buildings on the site.

The applicant was granted a conditional use to convert an existing warehouse building to multifamily use, and a variance to reduce the amount of parking required. This property is located in the TTN Traditional Town Neighborhood zoning district, which is considered a conservation district. Vehicular access is to be provided from Penn Street and East Third Street. Pedestrian access will be provided to existing sidewalks along North Hanover Street. Pottstown Area Rapid Transit runs the Green Line bus on North Hanover Street and the Purple Line bus on both Hanover Street and Charlotte Street, respectively, with two bus stops within a couple blocks of this property. This site is served by on-lot sewer and water. The applicant has submitted a minor plan dated September 30, 2024.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision – We find the proposed development to be generally consistent with the county comprehensive plan. The property is located in a Designated Growth Area of Developed Land. The Plan encourages underutilized industrial and commercial sites to be redeveloped and intensified. The future land use of this property is identified as Town Residential in the Plan. Multifamily is considered a primary use, with the goal of preserving and reusing existing older buildings.

Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan (2015) – This plan identifies the future land use of this property as part of the area's Regional Core, and encourages historic, urban, and mixed-use revitalization there. "New and infill high-density housing should be located within or adjacent to established communities that are within reasonable walking distance of commercial centers, schools, and parks." The proposed development is within walking distance of amenities such as churches, schools, and commercial areas. The proposal is consistent with this plan.

Pottstown Borough Comprehensive Plan (2014) – In this plan, the Town Residential future land use category applies to the development site. This should be preserved as predominantly residential (including multifamily) with a small number of stores and offices mixed in. The proposal is consistent with this plan.

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 Pottstown Borough may wish to consider prior to final plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

OPEN SPACE

A. Dedication of Open Space. New residential land developments creating additional dwelling units shall provide for open space [SALDO §501]. Appendix A504.3 requires that a minimum of 0.0124 acres of land shall be offered for dedication for each dwelling unit created. For the proposed 85 apartments, this equates to 1.054 acres of open space that must be dedicated. In addition, .00576 acres must be offered for the proposed 576 square feet of nonresidential development. The total amount of open space that must be offered is 1.060 acres (791 square feet).

B. Open Space Trees. In areas of any developed lot where there are no buildings, one shade tree shall be provided for every 8,000 square feet of total lot area. This shall be in addition to trees required for street frontage and parking lots [SALDO §504].

C. Pocket Park

    1. The plan indicates that the proposed pocket park contains amenities. Other than the paved walking loop, it is not clear on the plan what those amenities would be. We recommend identifying the amenities on the plan and noting the proposed function of the pocket park, if the applicant has a specific purpose in mind.

LANDSCAPING

A. Parking Lots

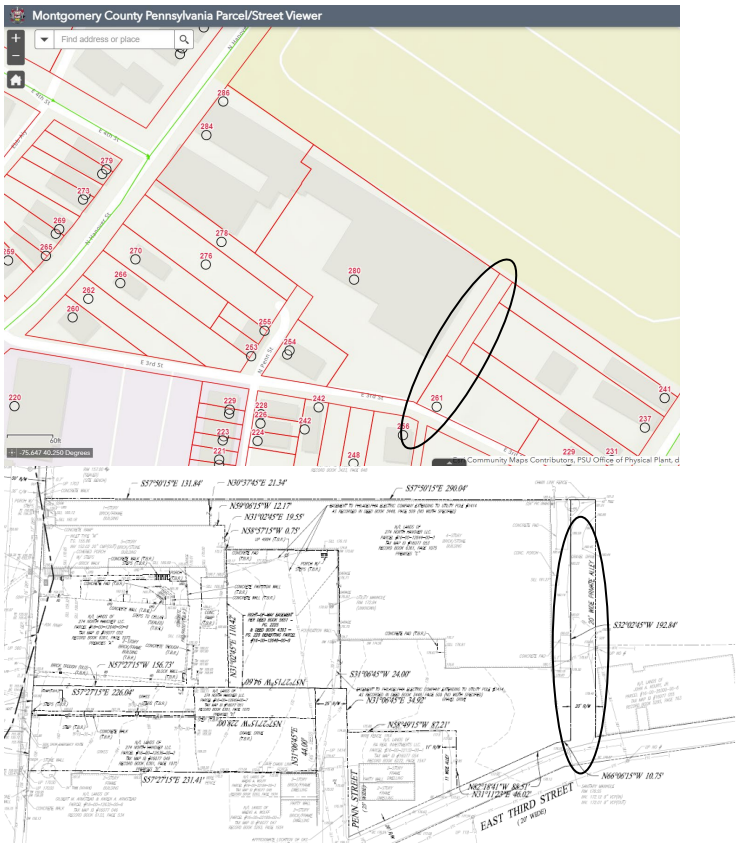
1. The planting island on the left side of the parking lot is located above the underground stormwater retention basin. As a result, only shrubs with shallow roots could be planted there. Off-street parking areas with spaces for three or more vehicles shall be provided with shade trees, according to §507 of the SALDO. Additionally, the trees should be uniformly distributed within the interior of parking areas [§508.1]. We recommend moving this proposed planting island to the right on the plan so that it is no longer above the stormwater management facility, and trees could be planted there. This would provide shade for the parking lot, which reduces the temperature for pedestrians and cars parked there during the hot summer months.
2. Alternately, in cases where it can be demonstrated that planting strips or islands are not feasible, planting diamonds, measuring five feet by five feet and placed in the center of four intersecting parking spaces, may be used as shown (see illustration on file at the Borough office) [§508.2]. These might be used in conjunction with a suspended pavement system that allow for additional tree root growth area.
3. In parking lots, bollards of concrete-filled steel pipes (or equally sturdy material), wooden frames, or wheel stops are preferred to curbing for protecting trees [SALDO §509].

B. Planting List

1. Both Hamlin Grass and Big Blue Liriope are classified as shrubs in the Plant List table (plan sheet 12). However, they are perennials and should be identified as such.

TRANSPORTATION

A. Alley Access. The applicant's plan shows a private alley adjacent to the parking area on the project site; however, on the Montgomery County Board of Assessment's tax map, part of what the applicant shows as an alley is shown as part of the parcel 16-00-29300-00-6, extending from East Third Street to a point. The applicant should ensure that the plan accurately reflects parcel boundaries. Are there access easements guaranteeing access from the subject property to the private alley?



B. Curbing. Curbing shall be required for the purposes of drainage, safety, and delineation and protection of pavement edge, per §A523 of the SALDO. The applicant does not propose curbing along East 3rd Street, which has no curbing separating it from the applicant's parking area.

C. Cartway Width and Right-of-Way.

1. Section 402.C.3.a.1 of the SALDO requires that the cartway widths of bordering streets be identified on the plan. Please include the cartway width for Penn Street, and the private alley.

2. The ultimate right-of-way shall be shown, if applicable [§402.C].

D. Access to Parking Lot/Buildings

1. MCPC defers to the Fire Marshal as to whether there is appropriate access to the property for emergency vehicles.

2. We recommend that vehicular circulation markings be added to the plan.

SCREENING

Dumpster Enclosure. Dumpsters must be screened from public view by a fence or wall per §510.1.G of the SALDO. The applicant proposes to screen the dumpster with a chain link fence; fencing is required to screen the dumpster, but chain link fence is not one of the allowable options. Requirements for height and materials can be found in §510.2.

LIGHTING

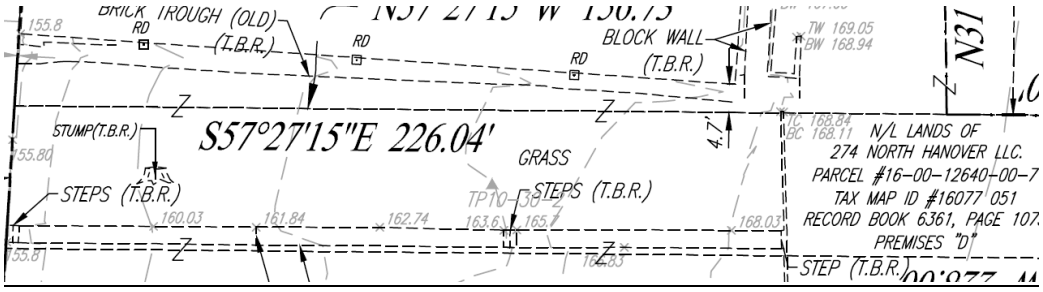
Lighting Requirements. §A512.1.E. of the SALDO sets parameters for maximum illumination in footcandles at property lines and within a parking lot. The proposed development's lighting exceeds the maximum 0.3 footcandle on the adjacent Armstead property and the lands of RA Real Investments LLC to the south of the parking areas. The maximum of 4.0 footcandles within the parking area is exceeded in various sections as well and should be reduced.

BUILDING DESIGN

Elevations. Section 400.4.E of the SALDO requires that elevations of any new building(s) be included in Minor Subdivision and Land Development plans.

OTHER REQUIRED PLAN INFORMATION

A. A legend sufficient to indicate clearly between existing and proposed conditions [§402.B.(9)].
B. Notes sufficient to describe what is being proposed [§402.B.(10)]. There are no labels indicating lot lines to be removed.
C. The linear symbols used on the plan are difficult to interpret; numerous symbols are very similar and some do not appear to match the appropriate symbol in the legend. Examples include "proposed property line," "existing property line," "proposed easement," "existing easement," "existing right-of-way," "proposed right-of-way," and "proposed storm sewer line." See image, below, for example.



CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal; however we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Pottstown Borough's planning objectives for mixed-use 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 (#24-0257-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,



Mike Narcowich, AICP, Community Planning Assistant Manager II
michael.narcowich@montgomerycountypa.gov - 610-278-5238

c: Joseph Russella, Representative for 274 North Hanover, LLC, Applicant
Winter Stokes, Borough Zoning Officer
Jim Derr, Chair, Borough Planning Commission
Keith Place, Borough Director of Licensing and Inspection
Charles D. Garner, Jr., Borough Solicitor

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

ATTACHMENTS

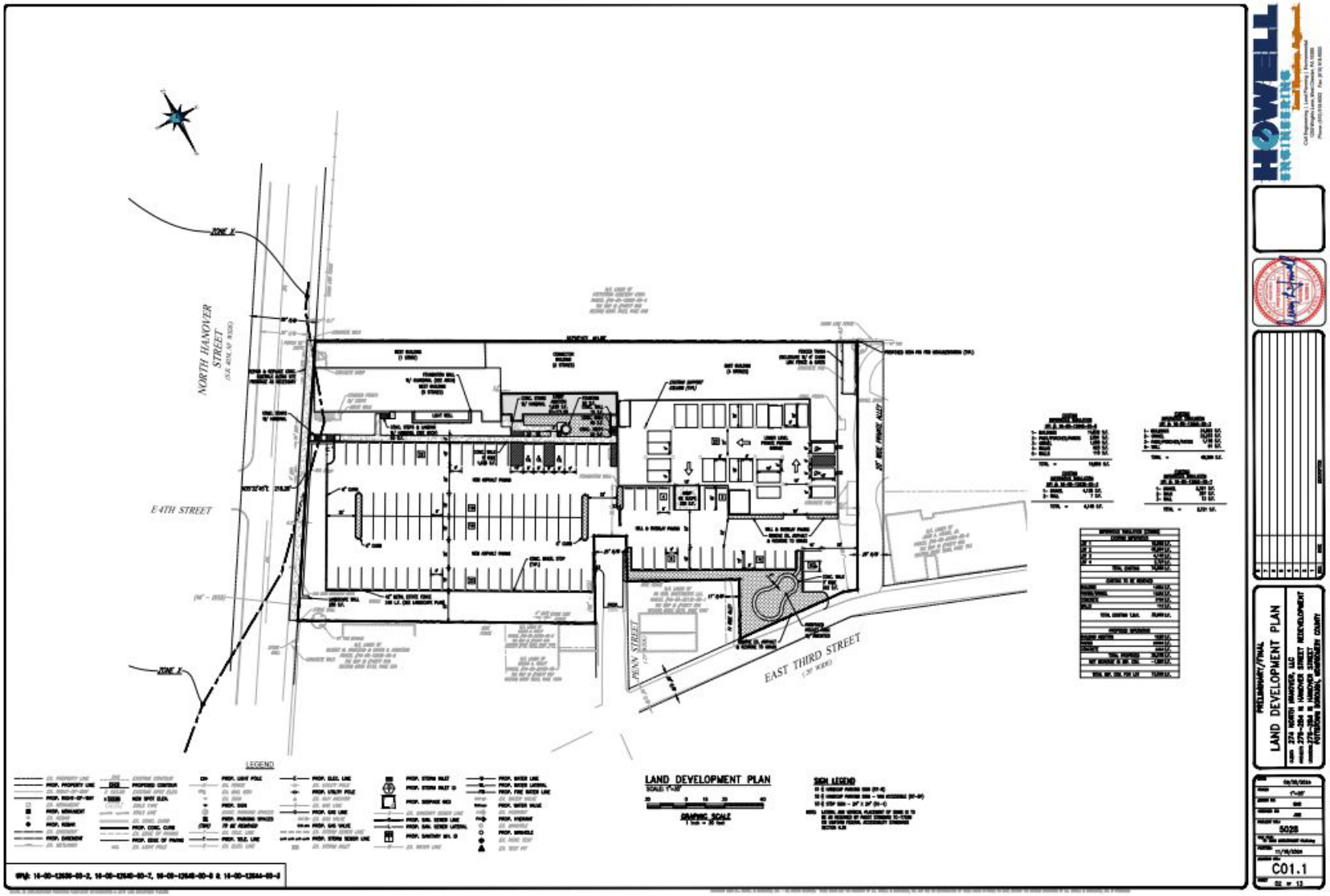


276-284 North Hanover Street
MCPC#240257001

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

0 50 100 200 Feet

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NORTH HANOVER STREET
E 4TH STREET
PENN STREET
EAST THIRD STREET
ZONE X
ZONE X
LEGEND
LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN
SCALE: 1"=20'
DRAWING SCALE
1 inch = 20 feet
SIGN LEGEND
PRELIMINARY/FINAL
LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN
5028
C01.1