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MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION

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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 10, 2025

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

Re: MCPC #: 24-0271-001
Plan Name: Beacon of Hope
(13,874 square feet of institutional development on 1 lot comprising 2.39 acres)
Situate: 601 West High Street at Glasgow 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 December 11, 2024. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The Applicant, Pottstown Beacon of Hope 274 North Hanover, LLC, proposes the consolidation of two lots. One of the existing lots lies in Pottstown Borough (Block 54 Unit 10) and one lies in both Pottstown Borough and West Pottsgrove Township (Block 54 Unit 6 and Block 20 Unit 4). The applicant would combine the properties into one, and then dedicate the 1,497 square foot portion of the land that lies in West Pottsgrove Township (Block 20 Unit 4) to West Pottsgrove Township. The applicant proposes constructing a one-story, 13,874 square foot homeless shelter. The applicant was granted a use variance by the Zoning Hearing Board, provided that it complies with the 26 conditions listed in the decision.

This property is located in the GW--Gateway West zoning district. Pottstown Area Rapid Transit operates the Green Line bus on High Street, which stops at the Bright Hope Community, located approximately 2,000 feet to the east of the site. This site is served by public water and sewer. The applicant has submitted a plan dated October 1, 2020.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision – We find the proposed development to be generally consistent with the county comprehensive plan. However, the plan notes that “health is impacted by the built environment,” and

one of the plan's goals includes providing more opportunities for residents to have healthy lifestyles. See our comments below for more on this topic. The property is located on the future land use map where the Town Residential Area meets the Business Area. Institutional uses are considered a primary use in the Town Residential Area and a secondary use to be located on the periphery of the Business Area. These sites should be designed to make it easy to walk to transit, However, the proposal would be more consistent with site configuration recommendations of the future land use map if parking was located to the rear of the building.

Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan (2015) – This plan identifies the future land use of this site as being part of the area's Regional Core and encourages urban, mixed-use revitalization there; institutional uses are appropriate land uses in this area. The proposal will need to undergo review by the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee.

Pottstown Borough Comprehensive Plan (2014) – This plan's future land use map shows the site located where the Neighborhood Commercial and Neighborhood Residential future land use areas meet. The Neighborhood Commercial area includes direct service providers; importance should be placed on development that improves the appearance of these areas through appropriate design, building orientation, and materials that are consistent with the character of the area. The proposed building would include facades with a cultured stone foundation, standing seam roof, portico, paneling, and windows. The borough intends to encourage infill development in the Neighborhood Residential area. 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

SETBACKS

The required setback in the Gateway West zoning district (from the front lot line) is 0 to 20 feet; the applicant's proposed setbacks from High Street and Glasgow Street are each approximately 80 feet [§27-334]. The Zoning requirements table on the applicant's plans should be changed so that the proposed front yard is not "20 feet."

ARCHITECTURE

A. Windows
    1. New buildings should have a wall-to-window openings ratio between 2:1 to 1:1 [§27-329]. The proposed building would not come close to complying; in fact, two walls would have no windows at all.

2. The applicant should confirm that dark tinted or reflective glass in windows will not be used [§27-330].
3. We feel that adding windows to the building, including but not limited to the sleeping rooms along the west side of the building (while providing for room darkening when sleeping), is important to support the health and well-being of the building's occupants.

   For more resources on trauma-informed design for homeless shelters, see https://www.hok.com/ideas/publications/trauma-informed-design-for-homeless-populations/. As noted on the website[1], designing buildings that support health and well-being *"…is especially important when designing shelters…that serve people dealing with the trauma and stress of homelessness and housing insecurity."*

B. Compatibility with Traditional Neighborhoods

1. New buildings in the Gateway Overlay zoning district[2] should be compatible with the architectural styles pictured in Sections 27-307 through 27-316 (photos on file at Borough Office)[§27-327], as determined by the Zoning Officer [§27-324].
2. The exterior materials of new buildings should be similar in appearance to those of existing buildings in adjacent traditional neighborhoods, such as wood and brick [§27-330.2].
3. New materials not found on existing buildings in adjacent traditional neighborhoods may be judged acceptable if, in the judgment of the Borough, the new building conforms in other ways, such as height, form, and proportion of walls to openings [§27-330.2].

C. Gathering Areas. The applicant should note any common areas or gathering space on the plans in addition to the marked dining area; these areas are also important to health and well-being. See also our comments under "OPEN SPACE," below.

TRANSPORTATION

A. Pottstown Area Rapid Transit (PART) Bus. PART's westbound green line service passes the site and stops on an as-needed or "flag" system. Additionally, there is a regular stop located approximately 2,000 feet to the east, at the Brighthope Community. We recommend that the applicant communicate with PART about adding a potential ADA-accessible, regular bus stop in front of the proposed homeless shelter.
B. Highway Occupancy Permit. The applicant should consult PennDOT regarding a highway occupancy permit on High Street/Ben Franklin Highway.
C. Ultimate Right-of-Way. The location and width are required to be shown [§22-A404].
D. Street Classification. Streets shall be classified using one of the four categories in A517 (that does not include "public"). Glasgow Street needs to be classified [§22-A517].

[1] By HOK; webpage accessed January 10, 2025.

[2] The Gateway Overlay District includes the Gateway West zoning district.

E. Sidewalks. Proposed sidewalks are not clearly marked. We suggest that the width be provided. They are required to be four feet, six inches wide, although a wider width (5' to 20') may be required near pedestrian generators [§A525].
F. Crosswalks. We recommend that the sidewalks continue across the driveway aprons, or that continental crosswalks be painted in those locations.

OPEN SPACE

A. Outside Concrete Area. The plan includes a proposed "outside concrete area" that would be located to the rear of the building, mostly contained by the building and a fence. We recommend that the applicant note the purpose of this space on the plans. We suggest that this space be activated with amenities, whether for socializing, leisure, or activity. For example, this might include outdoor furniture with an awning, or host a community garden.

B. Dedication of Open Space. New residential land developments creating additional dwelling units shall provide for open space [§22-501]. Appendix A504.4 requires that a minimum of 0.01 acres of land be offered for dedication for each 1,000 square feet of improvements. The building, parking area, and other paved areas proposed consist of 58.2% impervious coverage X 91,348 square feet = 53,165 square feet. 53,165 X 0.01 = 0.532 acres of land required for dedication.

C. Fee in Lieu Option. Subject to the discretion of Borough Council, the applicant may elect to contribute a fee in lieu of dedication [§22-A505].

REFUSE FACILITY

A. Dumpsters. These shall be screened on all sides by a solid fence or wall constructed of vinyl designed to look like wood, composite designed to look like wood, brick, stone, or stucco over concrete block (capped with brick, slate or stone). The applicant proposes screening the dumpster with an ornamental fence (mostly-transparent) with a fabric screen used on the sliding gate [§27-507.5].

PARKING LOT

A. Location. Where it is physically possible, parking lots shall be located behind buildings, such that buildings separate parking areas from the street. In no case shall parking be located in front of a building [§27-609].
B. Compact Parking Spaces. Parking lots with a minimum of 12 parking spaces may designate up to 10% of those spaces as compact spaces with a parking space dimension of eight feet by 15 feet. We encourage the applicant to utilize this provision to reduce the proposed paved area.
C. Preservation of Steep Slopes. The parking area would protrude into an area with steep slopes; we recommend redesigning the parking area, possibly in part by utilizing compact parking spaces (see Comment B, above) to avoid cutting into the slopes.
D. Parking Lot Trees. The applicant's plan states that one tree is required for every eight parking spaces, but the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires one tree for every four parking spaces [§22-508]. We recommend that the five proposed parking lot peninsulas, one projecting "Landscape area" and the corner projecting into the parking lot's northeastern corner be planted with trees. Trees could also be planted to flank the proposed two parking spaces in the southwestern-most portion of the lot. *See annotated site plan, attached, for illustration.*

E. Stormwater Management. The areas referenced in Comment C, above, like the requirement for islands, strips, and diamonds [§22-508], should preferably be concave to absorb runoff from the parking surface. As the ordinance notes, wheel stops, bollards or wooden frames are preferred to curbing for the protection of trees from cars. Bollards of concrete-filled steel pipes (or equally sturdy material), wooden frames, or wheel stops are preferred to curbing for protecting trees.

OTHER PLAN INFORMATION

The following additional information shall be shown:

A. Symbology. Symbols are difficult to differentiate (numerous features are symbolized with a solid black line of the same width); proposed sidewalks are difficult to discern.

B. Lighting. The plan shall demonstrate compliance with illumination limits in footcandles (maximum lighting for parking lots is 4 footcandles; the applicant's plan states that the maximum footcandles would be 6.3, but the location is not specified) [§22-A514]. Streetlighting is required [§22-A516].

C. Dimensional Lines. Dimensional lines shall be shown from the proposed building to the front, side, and rear property lines; and from the proposed building to existing buildings on adjacent properties [§22-400.4, §22-A404].

D. Key Map. The key map shall show the name and approximate distance of all other municipalities and counties within a 1,500 feet perimeter.

E. Information within 100 Feet. The plan is required to show various information relating to streets, sidewalks, environmental features, topography, existing structures, easements and other information within 100 feet of the tract. This information is provided in most surrounding areas; however, on the north side this information is provided for approximately 50 feet, and in the westernmost portion of the tract information is provided for approximately 20 feet [§22-A403.]

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 institutional 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 (#24-0271-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,



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

c: Pottstown Beacon of Hope (Attention: Tom Niarhos), Applicant
All County and Assoc; Remy Sell, Applicant's Representative
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
Kourtney High, Grants Administrator, Pottstown Area Rapid Transit
Deborah Roesener, Manager, West Pottsgrove Township
Adam Schantz, Marley Bice, and Tim Konetchy, MCPC
Scott Burton, PennDOT
Paul Lutz, PennDOT
Fran Hanney, P.E., PennDOT

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

ATTACHMENTS

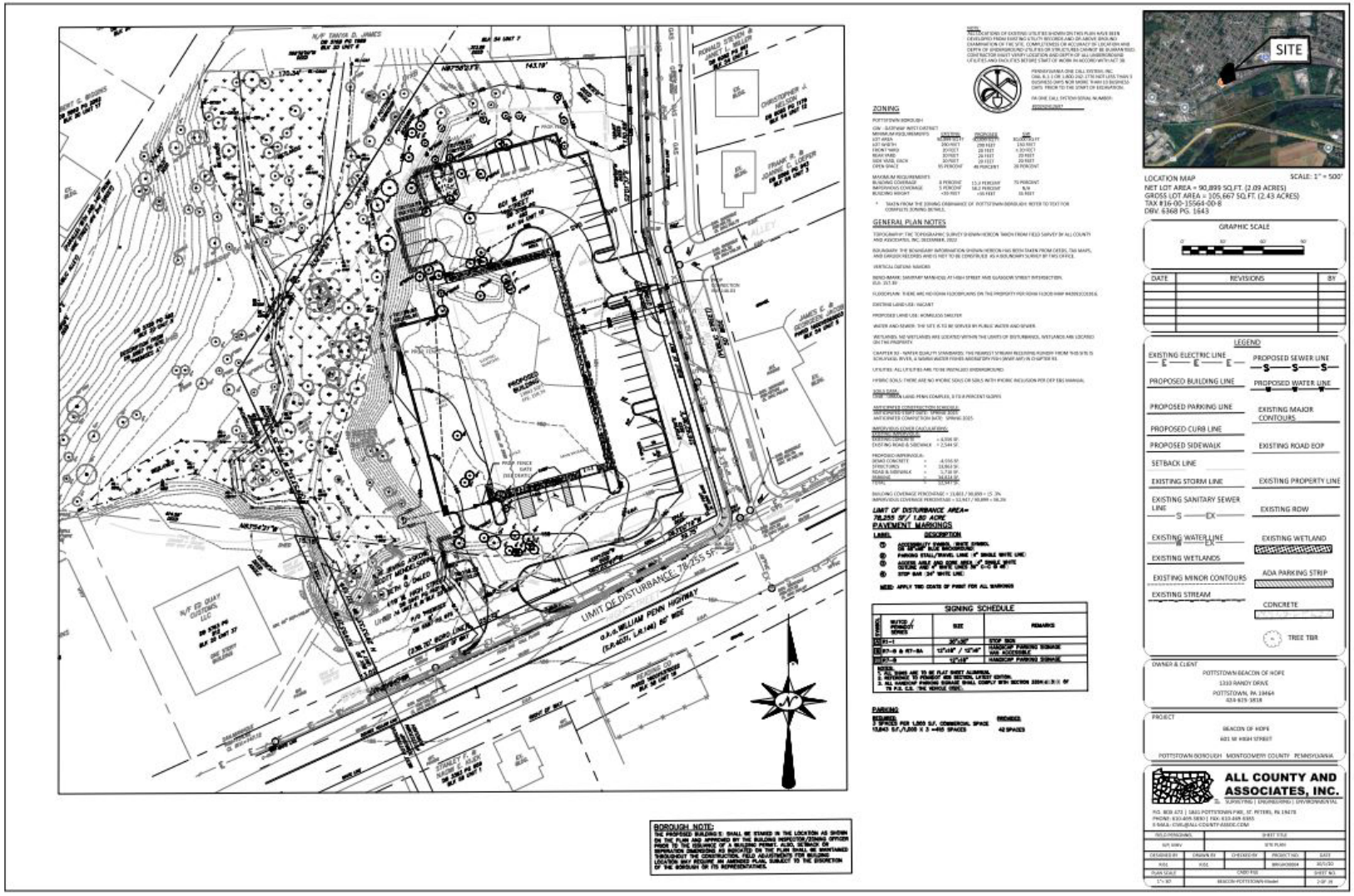


Pottstown Beacon of Hope
MCPC#240271001

Montgomery County Planning Commission
Montgomery County Courthouse - Planning Commission
PO Box 311 Norristown PA 19404-0311
(p) 610 278-3722 (f) 610 278-3941
www.montcopa.org/planning
Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

0 50 100 200 Feet

N


SITE
LOCATION MAP
SCALE: 1" = 500'
NET LOT AREA = 90,899 SQ.FT. (2.09 ACRES)
GROSS LOT AREA = 105,667 SQ.FT. (2.43 ACRES)
TAX #16-00-15564-00-8
DBV. 6368 PG. 1643
GRAPHIC SCALE
DATE
REVISIONS
BY
LEGEND
EXISTING ELECTRIC LINE
PROPOSED SEWER LINE
PROPOSED BUILDING LINE
PROPOSED WATER LINE
PROPOSED PARKING LINE
EXISTING MAJOR CONTOURS
PROPOSED CURB LINE
PROPOSED SIDEWALK
EXISTING ROAD BOP
SETBACK LINE
EXISTING STORM LINE
EXISTING PROPERTY LINE
EXISTING SANITARY SEWER LINE
EXISTING ROW
EXISTING WATER LINE
EXISTING WETLAND
EXISTING WETLANDS
ADA PARKING STRIP
EXISTING MINOR CONTOURS
EXISTING STREAM
CONCRETE
TREE TBR
ZONING
GENERAL PLAN NOTES
LIMIT OF DISTURBANCE AREA=
78,255 SF/ 1.80 AC±
PAVEMENT MARKINGS
SIGNING SCHEDULE
PARKING
UNIT OF DISTURBANCE: 78,255 SF±
WILLIAM PENN HIGHWAY
BOROUGH NOTE:
OWNER & CLIENT
POTTSTOWN BEACON OF HOPE
1310 RANDY DRIVE
POTTSTOWN, PA 19464
610-819-1818
PROJECT
BEACON OF HOPE
601 W HIGH STREET
POTTSTOWN BOROUGH MONTGOMERY COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA
ALL COUNTY AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
SURVEYING | ENGINEERING | ENVIRONMENTAL



NOTE:
ALL LOCATIONS OF EXISTING UTILITIES SHOWN ON THIS PLAN HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED FROM EXISTING UTILITY RECORDS AND OR ABOVE GROUND EXAMINATION OF THE SITE. COMPLETENESS OR ACCURACY OF LOCATION AND DEPTH OF UNDERGROUND UTILITIES OR STRUCTURES CANNOT BE GUARANTEED. CONTRACTOR MUST VERIFY LOCATION AND DEPTH OF ALL UNDERGROUND UTILITIES AND FACILITIES BEFORE START OF WORK IN ACCORD WITH ACT 38.

PENNSYLVANIA ONE CALL SYSTEM, INC.
DIAL 8-1-1 OR 1-800-242-1776 NOT LESS THAN 3 BUSINESS DAYS NOR MORE THAN 10 BUSINESS DAYS PRIOR TO THE START OF EXCAVATION.

PA ONE CALL SYSTEM SERIAL NUMBER:
#20242412697

ZONING

POTTSTOWN BOROUGH

GW - GATEWAY WEST DISTRICT

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	EXISTING	PROPOSED	GW
LOT AREA	90,899 SQ FT	90,899 SQ FT	30,000 SQ FT
LOT WIDTH	290 FEET	290 FEET	150 FEET
FRONT YARD	20 FEET	20 FEET	≤ 20 FEET
REAR YARD	20 FEET	20 FEET	20 FEET
SIDE YARD, EACH	20 FEET	20 FEET	20 FEET
OPEN SPACE	95 PERCENT	48 PERCENT	20 PERCENT
MAXIMUM REQUIREMENTS			
BUILDING COVERAGE	0 PERCENT	15.3 PERCENT	75 PERCENT
IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE	5 PERCENT	58.2 PERCENT	N/A
BUILDING HEIGHT	<35 FEET	<35 FEET	35 FEET

* TAKEN FROM THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF POTTSTOWN BOROUGH: REFER TO TEXT FOR COMPLETE ZONING DETAILS.

GENERAL PLAN NOTES

TOPOGRAPHY: THE TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY SHOWN HEREON TAKEN FROM FIELD SURVEY BY ALL COUNTY AND ASSOCIATES, INC, DECEMBER, 2022

BOUNDARY: THE BOUNDARY INFORMATION SHOWN HEREON HAS BEEN TAKEN FROM DEEDS, TAX MAPS, AND EARLIER RECORDS AND IS NOT TO BE CONSTRUED AS A BOUNDARY SURVEY BY THIS OFFICE.

VERTICAL DATUM: NAVD83

BENCHMARK: SANITARY MANHOLE AT HIGH STREET AND GLASGOW STREET INTERSECTION.
ELV: 157.39

FLOODPLAIN: THERE ARE NO FEMA FLOODPLAINS ON THE PROPERTY PER FEMA FLOOD MAP #42091C0181G.

EXISTING LAND USE: VACANT

PROPOSED LAND USE: HOMELESS SHELTER

WATER AND SEWER: THE SITE IS TO BE SERVED BY PUBLIC WATER AND SEWER.

WETLANDS: NO WETLANDS ARE LOCATED WITHIN THE LIMITS OF DISTURBANCE, WETLANDS ARE LOCATED ON THE PROPERTY.

CHAPTER 93 - WATER QUALITY STANDARDS: THE NEAREST STREAM RECEIVING RUNOFF FROM THIS SITE IS SCHUYLKILL RIVER, A WARM WATER FISHES-MIGRATORY FISH (WWF-MF) IN CHAPTER 93.

UTILITIES: ALL UTILITIES ARE TO BE INSTALLED UNDERGROUND.

HYDRIC SOILS: THERE ARE NO HYDRIC SOILS OR SOILS WITH HYDRIC INCLUSION PER DEP E&S MANUAL

SOILS DATA:
UrsB - URBAN LAND-PENN COMPLEX, 0 TO 8 PERCENT SLOPES

ANTICIPATED CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE:
ANTICIPATED START DATE: SPRING 2025
ANTICIPATED COMPLETION DATE: SPRING 2025

IMPERVIOUS COVER CALCULATIONS:
EXISTING IMPERVIOUS:
EXISTING CONCRETE = 4,556 SF.
EXISTING ROAD & SIDEWALK = 2,544 SF.

PROPOSED IMPERVIOUS:
DEMO CONCRETE = -4,556 SF.
STRUCTURES = 13,863 SF.
ROAD & SIDEWALK = 1,716 SF.
PARKING = 34,824 SF.
TOTAL = 52,947 SF.

BUILDING COVERAGE PERCENTAGE = 13,863 / 90,899 = 15 .3%
IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE PERCENTAGE = 52,947 / 90,899 = 58.2%

LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENT SPREADSHEET

CHAPTER 22 REQUIRED TREES	UNIT	NO PER	REQUIRED
504 OPEN SPACE			
DEVELOPED PROPERTY POTTSTOWN BORO. (GW DISTRICT)	104,059 SF	1 PER 8000 SF	13
505 STREET TREES			
GLASGOW STREET	350 LF	1 PER 30 LF	12
HIGH STREET	291 LF	1 PER 30 LF	10
507 PARKING LOT TREES	42 SPACES	1 PER 8 SPACES	6
SITE DEVELOPMENT TREES			41

† CHAPTER 22, SECTION 503.1

CREDIT FOR EXISTING TREES *	QUANTITY		
6 INCH – 10 INCH IN DIAMETER	23		
12 INCH – 18 INCH IN DIAMETER	25		
24 INCH AND GREATER IN DIAMETER	1		
* TREE COUNTS TAKEN FROM GATEWAY WEST (GW) PROPERTY ONLY	TOTAL TREES FOR CREDIT	SITE DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENT	49 41

CHAPTER 22, SECTION 511.2.B
GATEWAY WEST DISTRICT BUFFERS

TANYA PROPERTY	184 LF	1 PER 12 FT	15 PLANTINGS
ED QUAY CUSTOMS LLC PROPERTY	167 LF ** SOUTH OF THE LEVEL SPREADER	1 PER 5 FT **	33 PLANTINGS
PROPOSED RETAINING WALL AREA	117 LF *** NORTH OF THE LEVEL SPREADER		EXISTING TREES & WETLAND

** PLANT SPACING MEASUREMENT REDUCED TO 5 FEET DUE TO INCREASED SLOPES AND LIMITED OPEN SPACE BETWEEN THE SITE DEVELOPMENT AND EXISTING WETLANDS TO REMAIN.

*** RETAINING WALL HEIGHT NORTH OF LEVEL SPREADER IS OVER 6 FEET IN HEIGHT AND DOES NOT INCLUDE PARKING. EXISTING WETLAND AND WOODED AREAS TO BE CREDITED AS BUFFER.