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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

May 5, 2025

Deborah Roesener
West Pottsgrove Township
980 Grosstown Road
Stowe, PA 19464

Re: MCPC # 24-0093-002
Plan Name: Metropolitan Multifamily Development
(3 lots comprising 18.37 acres)
Situate: Upland Square Drive
West Pottsgrove Township

Dear Ms. Roesener:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development in accordance with Section 609 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on April 4, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

Metropolitan 13, LLC is proposing to consolidate three parcels and construct ten 3-story apartment buildings with nine garages and a 5,260 square-foot club house with a playground, sport court, dog park, and swimming pool. There are 252 apartments and 446 parking spaces (380 off-street, and 66 garage) proposed. Two existing dwellings and a garage are proposed to be removed. The site is in the R-1 Residential and the R-R Resource Recovery Districts, and the RCO Route 100 Overlay District. The applicant is requesting a variance to provide 1.75 parking spaces per dwelling unit, rather than two. Several waivers from the subdivision and land development ordinance are requested, including to not provide 400 replacement trees, to not provide bike lanes, a waiver from the riparian corridor management requirements, and two waivers regarding buffer plantings. The property is served by public water and sewer. The plan is dated February 28, 2025.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The proposal is generally consistent with Montgomery County's Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision.* The proposed development is located at the southern end of the Suburban Residential future land use area, where it meets the Business area and the Community Mixed Use and Services area. Primary uses in Suburban Residential areas include less dense multifamily and single-family attached uses, and primary uses in Community Mixed Use and Services areas include higher density residential uses that act as a transition from

non-residential areas to residential areas. Residential development should be designed to match the character and type of housing found in the immediate neighborhood and be designed for walking. Trees, steep slopes, and wetlands should be preserved, and appropriate landscaping, buffers, and central open space should be provided.

The proposed development is located in a conservation area in the future land use plan of the 2015 Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Comprehensive Plan, but the Regional Planning Committee recently determined that the RCO overlay zoning expansion is a logical expansion of a primary growth area. However, the Regional Comprehensive Plan states that new high-density housing should be built to facilitate connectivity with surrounding properties and should be built to retain existing natural features on site and limit the clearing of vegetation. The proposed development does not include vehicular or pedestrian connectivity to neighboring properties, and will result in significant clearing of vegetation. The proposal therefore would be more compatible with the region's vision for this area if these elements were included. The development is regionally significant, and is required to undergo review and comment by the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal, however, in the course of our review we have identified a number of key issues that we believe should be resolved prior to preliminary plan approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

CONNECTIVITY

A. Sidewalks.
    a. Section 415 of the subdivision and land development ordinance states that sidewalks shall be installed along all existing and proposed public and private streets, common driveways, and common parking areas. While the proposed plan does show sidewalks along the buildings and parking areas, there are many areas throughout the development lacking sidewalk connections. We recommend that these sidewalk gaps be completed. In particular, we recommend that sidewalks be installed to connect to the clubhouse from buildings 6, 8 and 5.
    b. We recommend that the applicant include pedestrian connections to the neighboring developments:
        i. Although there is a significant grade difference, we recommend that the applicant consider installing a staircase to connect the neighborhood to the north.
        ii. We recommend that sidewalks be installed along the main access drive to facilitate pedestrian connections to the shopping center across Upland Square Drive, and to the proposed commercial development to the east.

B. Crosswalks. Section 416 of the subdivision and land development ordinance requires crosswalks at all intersections. We recommend that crosswalks be installed at all intersections within the development, and across Upland Square Drive to facilitate safe pedestrian movement.

C. PART Bus. The Pottstown Area Rapid Transit's green line and orange line travel along Upland Square Drive. We recommend that the applicant coordinate with PART to provide a bus stop on site.

D. Bike Lanes. The applicant is requesting a waiver of section 418.1 to not provide bike lanes. Although bike lanes are not provided along adjacent properties, the intent of this requirement is for the bicycle network to get built out piece by piece over time. We recommend that the township require the installation of bike lanes to foster non-vehicular transportation in this area.
E. Traffic Impact Study. Section 440 of the subdivision and land development ordinance requires a traffic impact study for residential developments of 20 or more dwelling units. The applicant shall demonstrate that the granting of the proposed use shall not materially increase traffic congestion on adjacent roads and highways.

LANDSCAPING & DESIGN

A. Waiver Requests
    a. The applicant is requesting a waiver of section 408.1.F. to not install 400 replacement trees. We do not recommend that this waiver be granted. The site is currently vacant and wooded, so the spatial constraints are created by the current design. We recommend that a design be created to accommodate the tree replacement requirement. If the applicant truly cannot accommodate any more trees on the site, we recommend that a fee in lieu be provided, or that the replacement trees be planted elsewhere within the township.
    b. The applicant is requesting a waiver of section 428.9.B to provide a 10% driveway grade. We do not recommend that this request be granted. The applicant should consider an alternative design which takes into account the existing topography and the township's subdivision and land development requirements.
    c. The applicant is requesting a waiver of section 424.2.D and Figure 4.19 to allow some buffer plantings to be planted in the interior of the site, and to allow for less than the required buffer planting material along Upland Square Drive due to spatial constraints. The applicant is also requesting a waiver of section 434.6.D to provide a screening buffer instead of a filtering buffer. We do not recommend that these requests be granted. Spatial constraints are created by the current design. We recommend that a design be created to accommodate the buffer requirements to ensure the buffer size and type can be achieved.
    d. The applicant is requesting a waiver to permit the proposed shrubs to be 24 inches to maintain uniform planting at installation. The proposed shrubs will grow at different rates and be different sizes at maturity so the need for uniformity at planting is unclear. We ask the applicant to clarify the reason for this waiver request.
B. Parking Lot Landscaping. Section 434.5 states that parking lots shall be effectively landscaped with trees and shrubs to reduce the visual impact of glare, headlights, and parking lot lights, to delineate driving lanes, and to define rows of parking. We recommend that additional landscaping be added to the parking areas and to the clubhouse to increase shade and mitigate the heat island effect.
C. Species Selection
    a. Ten 'Ivory Silk' Japanese Tree Lilacs are proposed. This species is listed as a tree of concern due to its potential for spreading. We recommend that a different species of shade tree be used.
    b. Six Chinese Dogwood are proposed. This is non-native and considered to be invasive. We recommend that a different native flowering ornamental tree be used.

c. Evergreen trees are proposed for the swale to the north of the site. We recommend that a different species be selected for this area, as evergreens generally do not do well where there will be periods of inundation or moist soil.

D. Topography
   a. We recommend that the applicant provide a note on the plan with details regarding planting trees and shrubs on steep slopes, to ensure that there is no erosion of the plantings on the slope to the east of the site bordering the proposed commercial development.
   b. A retaining wall with a maximum 16-foot height is proposed along the northern property boundary facing the new apartments. We recommend that the applicant consider an alternative site design that considers the existing topography to minimize the need for such a large wall and extensive earth movement.

E. Street Trees. Upland Square Drive currently has street trees along its frontage, which are not depicted on the plan. Are these trees proposed to remain? We recommend that the applicant provide information about these trees on the plan (§434.3).

F. Recreation Facilities. Figure 4.1 of the subdivision and land development ordinance outlines requirements for recreation facilities. For development of 150 dwelling units or more, 4 tot lots, 2 playfields, and 2 tennis/basketball courts are required. We recommend that the applicant demonstrate how they are complying with this requirement, or request a waiver from this provision.

G. There appears to be an outfall encroaching on the northeastern corner of the riparian buffer area and the roadway to the north. We recommend that the applicant confirm with the township engineer this is acceptable, and if not, that proper mitigation is installed.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve West Pottsgrove 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 (24-0093-002) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Naomi Crimm

Naomi Crimm, Senior Community Planner
naomi.crimm@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-278-3748

c: Metropolitan 13, LLC, Applicant
Steve McBrearty, PE, Applicant's Representative

Kourtney High, Pottstown Area Rapid Transit, Inc.
Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan

ATTACHMENTS A & B

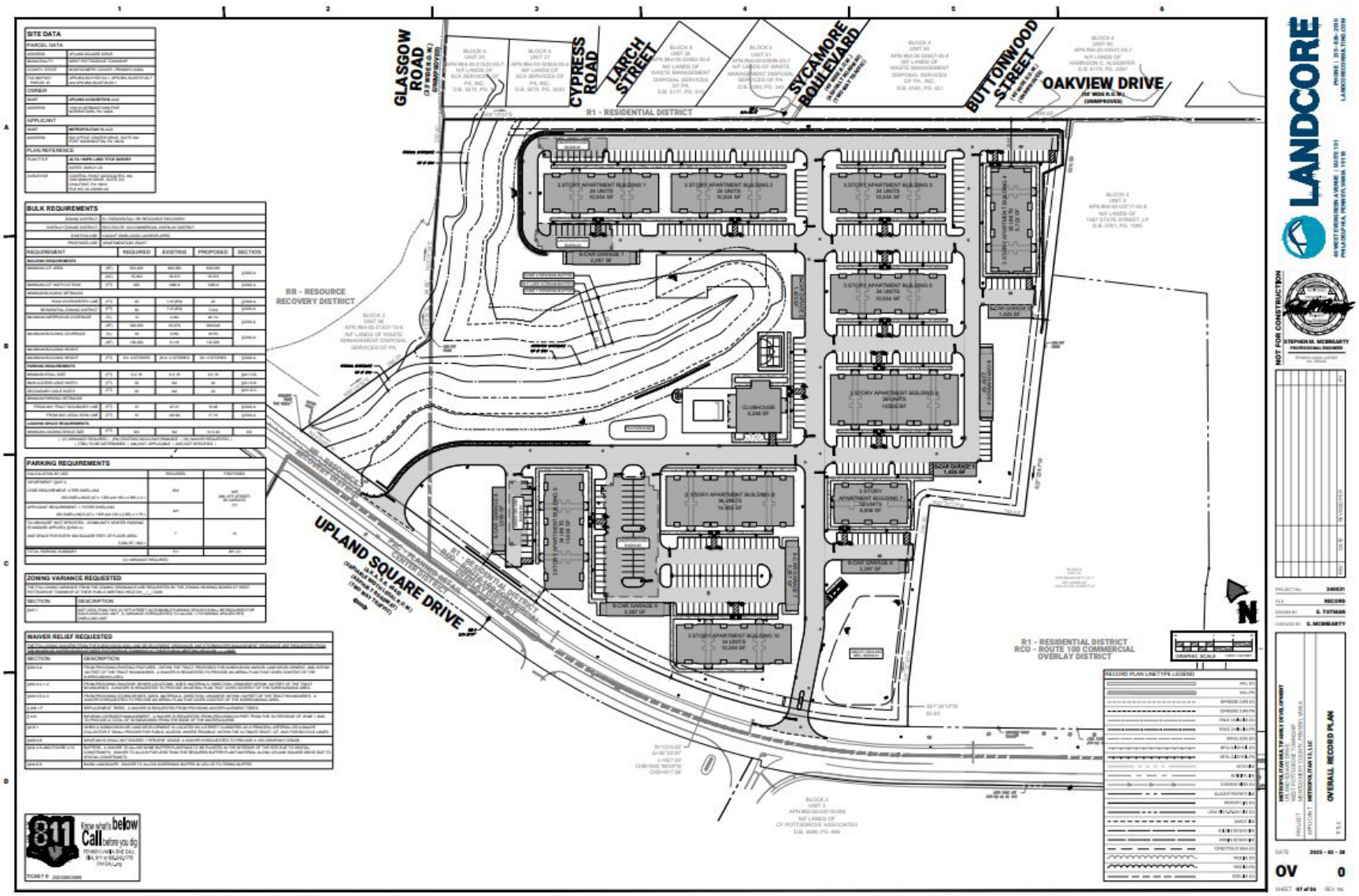


Metropolitan Multifamily Development
MCPC#240093002

Montgomery County Planning Commission

0 100 200 400 Feet

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GLASGOW ROAD
CYPRESS ROAD
LARCH STREET
SYCAMORE BOULEVARD
BUTTONWOOD STREET
OAKVIEW DRIVE
UPLAND SQUARE DRIVE
R1 - RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
RR - RESOURCE RECOVERY DISTRICT
R1 - RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT
RCO - ROUTE 100 COMMERCIAL OVERLAY DISTRICT
CLUBHOUSE
LANDCORE
OVERALL RECORD PLAN
NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION