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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 5, 2025

Ms. Jayne Musonye, Director of Planning and Development
Municipality of Norristown
235 East Airy Street
Norristown, Pennsylvania 19401-5048

Re: MCPC #25-0165-001
Plan Name: 333 West Lafayette Street Billboard
Situate: West Lafayette Street (north)/Water Street (east)
Municipality of Norristown

Dear Ms. Musonye:

We have reviewed the above-referenced conditional use application as you requested on August 11, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, 333 West Lafayette Street, LLC, has requested a conditional use review to affix a 672-square foot billboard, referred to as an off-premises advertising sign in the Municipal Zoning Code, on the wall of an existing warehouse building in the Municipality's Limited Industrial-Mixed Use (LI-MU) Zoning District. The sign will be illuminated and feature advertising messages that change over regular intervals of unknown duration.

The proposed sign faces State Route 202, a heavily trafficked multi-lane arterial leading into Norristown as it approaches a major intersection with Main Street that includes multiple turning movements and a SEPTA train crossing.

The applicant was granted 10 variances by the Norristown Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) on March 26, 2025 to accommodate the proposed sign. The variances included exemptions from: the sign's size dimensions; required lot dimensional criteria; proximity to an existing billboard; a prohibition of internal illumination and computer-controlled electronic displays. Additional conditions attached by the ZHB include: tasteful advertising, without any adult themed content; no advertising any references to alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana; and the applicant must comply with any applicable Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) regulations.

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 we believe should be resolved prior to conditional use approval. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

CONDITIONAL USE CRITERIA

The Municipal Zoning Code's Section 320-326.D(1), General standards for permitting a conditional use related to signs, states, "The conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare." In our opinion, the sign, as approved with conditions by the ZHB, may still pose safety concerns at a busy intersection, and the Municipality should ensure any needed mitigation measures are taken to maximize the safety of motorists and pedestrians. See attached exhibits that show the proposed location within the broader context of the intersection (Attachment B) and the size of the proposed sign (Attachment C).

We concur with the ZHB's condition that the Applicant must comply with any applicable PennDOT regulations. We strongly recommend that, as a condition of approval, the Municipality requires the applicant to produce documentation of an approved PennDOT Off-Premise Outdoor Advertising Device Permit, if one is required, prior to beginning installation of the sign. Per PennDOT's Highway Beautification Management System interactive map, such a permit was required by PennDOT for the large lighted billboard on the southeast corner of Main Street and Route 202 (also shown in Attachment B).

As a condition of approval, we also ask that Municipal Council consider identifying the maximum number of messages that would be permitted within one cycle of the changing advertising, as well as determine as an appropriate number of cycles per minute that are in line with industry standards. This condition would be superseded by any PennDOT-related permit requirements, as applicable.

SIGN DEFINITIONS

Section 320-317 of Norristown's Zoning Code defines terms pertaining to signs, including sign types, that are referenced in Article XXVII, Signs. The terms defined include "on-premises advertising sign". The term "off-premises advertising sign" is defined in Section 320-327.B(1) of the same article in the Code, but it is not included with the sign types defined in in Section 320-317, despite it being a type of regulated sign. Having this term in a different section of the ordinance creates confusion, as evidenced by the Findings of Fact recited in the ZHB's decision. To help clarify how these signs are regulated by the Municipal Code, we recommend that the Municipality amend Section 320-317 of the zoning ordinance to incorporate the term "off-premises advertising sign" and its definition.

Additionally, Item 16 in the Findings of Fact section of the ZHB's decision states, "After consultation with the Municipal Zoning Department, it was decided that the Applicant's relief should be referred to as a billboard and be subject to the related ordinances." However, the only reference to the term "billboard" in

the Municipal Code is found in Chapter 31-4, which is a standalone ordinance for the Historical Architectural Review Board. The term is not used in Chapter 320, Zoning.

The definition of "off-premises sign" as defined by MCPC's model sign ordinance recognizes that the terms "off-premise sign" and "billboard" can be used interchangeably:

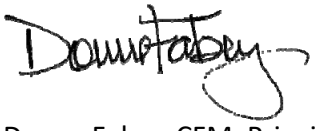
> Off-premises Signs are signs with a message that directs attention to a specific business, product, service, event, activity, or other commercial or non-commercial activity, or contain a message about something that is not sold, produced, manufactured, furnished, or conducted on the premises where the sign is located. **These types of signs are also commonly referred to as billboards or outdoor advertising signs**.

To avoid confusion by future applicants, we recommend incorporating a reference to the term "billboard" into the existing definition of "off-premises advertising sign". Alternatively, the term "billboard" should be added as a standalone definition in 320-317, with reference to them being regulated as an off-premises sign and subject to the requirements under Section 320-327.B(1).

CONCLUSION

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained within are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Sincerely,



Donna Fabry, CFM, Principal Open Space Planner
dfabry@montcopa.org – 610-278-3445

c: M. Joseph Clement, Esq., Applicant's Representative
Adam Lang, Chair, Municipal Planning Commission
Khaled Hassan, PE, Municipal Engineer

Attachment A: Aerial Image of Site
Attachment B: Street View Image of Sign Location
Attachment C: Image of Proposed Sign Located on Building Wall



333 West Lafayette Street Sign
MCPC#250165001

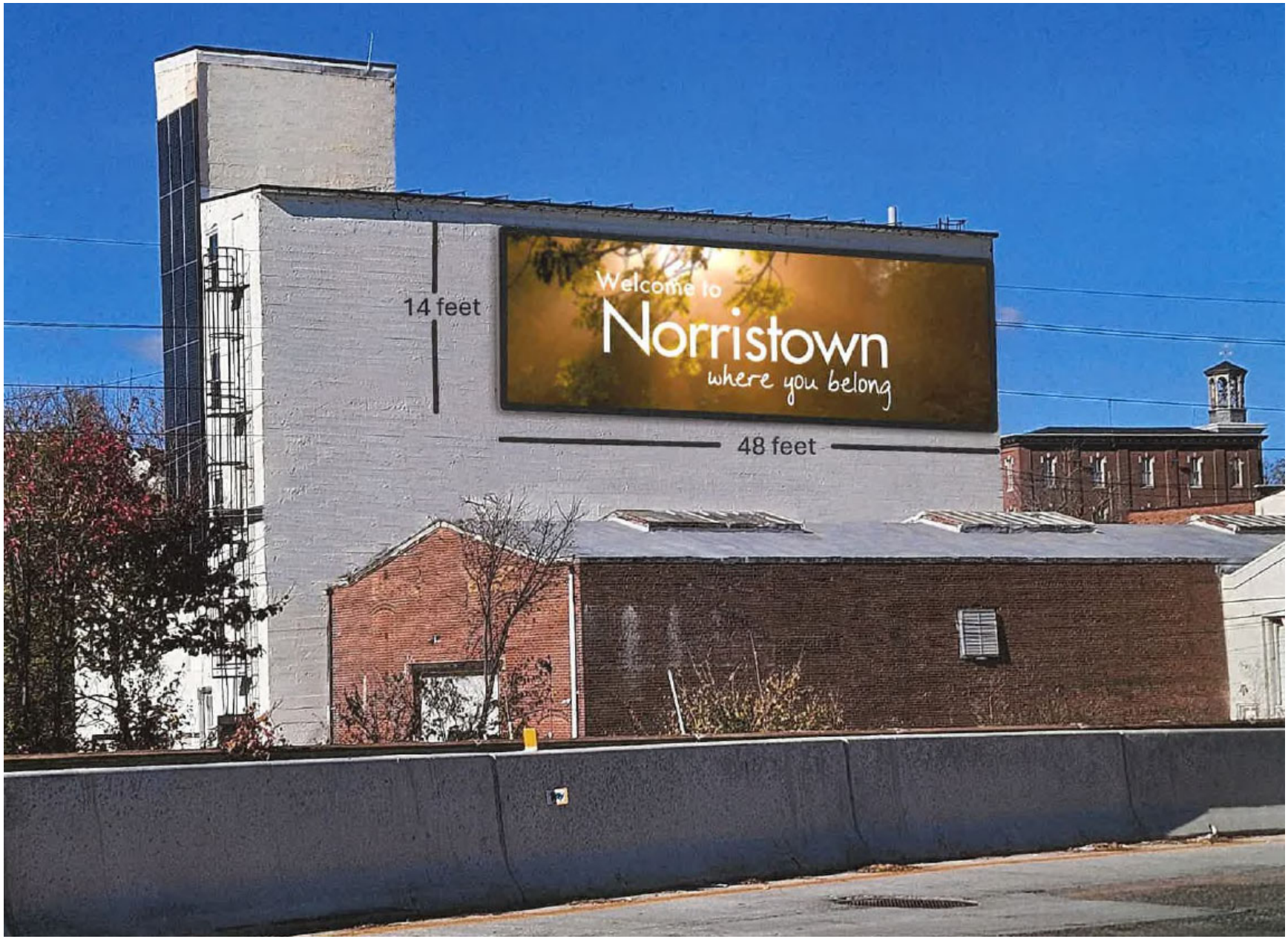
Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap


Existing sign
Proposed sign location
Exceptional Cancer Care
Exceptionally Close to You
Jefferson
Health
Main St


14 feet
Welcome to
Norristown
where you belong
48 feet