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Scott France, AICP
Executive Director

September 24, 2026

Mr. Charles L. Guttenplan, AICP, Director of Planning & Zoning
Whitmarsh Township
616 Germantown Pike
Lafayette Hill, Pennsylvania 19444

Re: MCPC #26-0222-001
Plan Name: 431-461 Bethlehem Pike
(10 lots comprising 5.2 acres)
Situate: Bethlehem Pike (east)/between Station Avenue (north) and Fort Hill Drive (south)
Whitemarsh Township

Dear Mr. Guttenplan:

We have reviewed the above-referenced zoning text amendment in accordance with Section 609 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on September 2, 2026. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The Hankin Group has submitted a proposed package of zoning ordinance text amendments, as well as a tentative sketch plan demonstrating how the site could be developed under the proposed regulations. The proposed zoning ordinance amendment would establish a new overlay district, the TDO-3 Transit-Friendly Design Overlay 3.

The purpose of the TDO-3, as described in the ordinance, includes environmental restoration of environmentally distressed areas of the township, encouraging sustainable construction practices, enhancing multimodal transportation options, and providing public amenities to improve health, safety, and welfare.

In order to qualify for the proposed TDO-3, the subject property must meet all of the following criteria: it is located within the VC-1 Village Commercial District; contains at least 3 acres; provides for the "environmental restoration" of the greater of 0.5 acre or 10% of the lot area; is served by public water and sewer service; is located within 1,000 feet of a SEPTA rail station or bus stop; and includes buildings designed to LEED Silver standards.

Permitted uses in the proposed TDO-3 include those permitted in the VC-1, and the proposed ordinance specifically promotes mixed-use development that provide for more than 15 dwelling units per building. The maximum permissible residential is proposed at 32 dwelling units per acre. The maximum building height is

5 stories or 65 feet; however, the maximum height is reduced to 4 stories and 56 feet within 100 feet of the ultimate right-of-way.

The proposed regulations also establish architectural design, bulk, dimensional, and off-street parking standards; require submission of a design manual; describe permitted methods of "environmental restoration"; and require connections to existing and proposed public trails, sidewalks, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle infrastructure.

The applicant has also submitted a tentative sketch plan and an associated design manual illustrating potential development under the proposed regulations. The plan provides for the demolition of several existing structures and the construction of a mixed-use building along Bethlehem Pike and a multifamily residential building internal to the site. The mixed-use building is proposed at 56 feet and would contain 62 dwelling units and 6,000 square feet of ground-floor retail space. The multifamily building is proposed at 65 feet and would contain 100 dwelling units and 43 internal vehicle parking spaces. Surface parking spaces of 169 are proposed throughout interconnection surface parking areas.

A significant portion of the site would undergo "environmental restoration," including floodplain and wetland restoration along Sandy Run and woodland and meadow plantings across much of the southern portion of the site. The plan also proposes trails connecting to the Cross County Trail.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP SELECTIVE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE (2020)

The *Whitemarsh Township Selective Comprehensive Plan Update* identifies most of the subject property as a Parks and Open Space Character Area on the Future Land Use Plan, with a portion also located within a Mixed-Use Node Character Area. Consistency with the Future Land Use Plan will ultimately depend on how the proposed zoning regulations guide site-specific design and development in a manner that advances the objectives of these character areas.

The tentative sketch plan generally aligns with the Parks and Open Space designation by preserving much of the southern portion of the property as open space and accommodating the Cross County Trail. In addition, the Mixed-Use Node surrounding Fort Washington Station is intended to support development that benefits from regional rail access. The Action Plan reinforces this approach through the recommendation to "Focus high density development in areas of the Township that already have adequate infrastructure to support growth and discourage the extension of public utilities into areas identified as conservation areas, consistent with the Future Land Use Plan," and to "Update Zoning Ordinance and Map as appropriate" (p. 74).

Accordingly, the proposed zoning ordinance text amendments and the associated tentative sketch plan appears generally consistent with the Future Land Use Plan as set forth in the *Whitemarsh Township Selective Comprehensive Plan Update*.

MONTCO 2040: A SHARED VISION (2015; REVISED 2021)

Montgomery County's comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*, identifies the subject property as both a Village Center and a Rail Station Walkshed on the Future Land Use Plan. Village Centers are traditional mixed-use areas characterized by a combination of retail, institutional, office, and residential uses, generally arranged in multiple buildings rather than large standalone structures. Mixed-use, office,

residential, and institutional development are all appropriate within Village Centers, and historic buildings should be preserved and rehabilitated where feasible.

The property's location within ½-mile of a rail station also places it within a Rail Station Walkshed. These areas are intended to accommodate higher-intensity development, including mixed-use, office, high-density multifamily residential, and neighborhood-scale retail, service, and institutional uses, in order to support pedestrian activity and promote transit use. Development within Rail Station Walksheds should be pedestrian-oriented, with multi-story buildings located close to sidewalks and streets designed to prioritize walking. Off-street parking should be de-emphasized through rear parking, structured parking integrated with active ground-floor uses, or screening techniques. Streetscape improvements, street trees, and traffic-calming measures should be incorporated to create a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment.

The proposed land use as presented on the tentative sketch plan is supported by the proposed zoning ordinance text amendments and are therefore generally consistent with the future land use plan contained in *Montco 2050: A Shared Vision*.

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 concerns that the applicant and township may wish to consider prior to zoning amendment adoption. Our comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

PROPOSED ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS

1) Section 116-11. Definitions:

    1) Environmentally Distressed Area. The proposed definition of “environmentally distressed area” is somewhat vague. The township and applicant may wish to discuss how the definition could be improved, potentially through additional detail or by offering examples to clarify what is meant by “degradation and destabilization.”

    2) Environmental Restoration. The proposed definition of “environmental restoration” is also fairly vague and relies on the term “restoration” without further elaboration. Additional specificity regarding the activities and sought outcomes of “environmental restoration” would help clarify the intent of the provision and strengthen its application.

    3) LEED and LEED Design. The definitions of “LEED” and “LEED Design” should reference the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), consistent with the proposed definition of “LEED Certification.”

2) Section 116-331.B. The proposed language under Section 116-331.B.(3) does not appear to require that a building ultimately achieve LEED certification. Instead, it requires that the building be designed to meet LEED Silver standards and that the applicant apply for certification. The township is encouraged to consider requiring LEED precertification, participation in the USGBC split review process, or requiring the submission other documentation early in the review process that provides assurances that the building will ultimately be LEED certified by USGBC.

REVIEW OF THE TENTATIVE SKETCH PLAN

A. Connection to Fort Washington Station. The sketch plan does not provide sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with proposed Section 116-331.E.(3), which requires a direct connection to Fort Washington Station. While a trail connection is shown along the property boundary, the plan does not indicate how or where the trail would connect to SEPTA property or provide access to the station. The applicant should provide additional details regarding the proposed connection, which may require coordination with SEPTA.

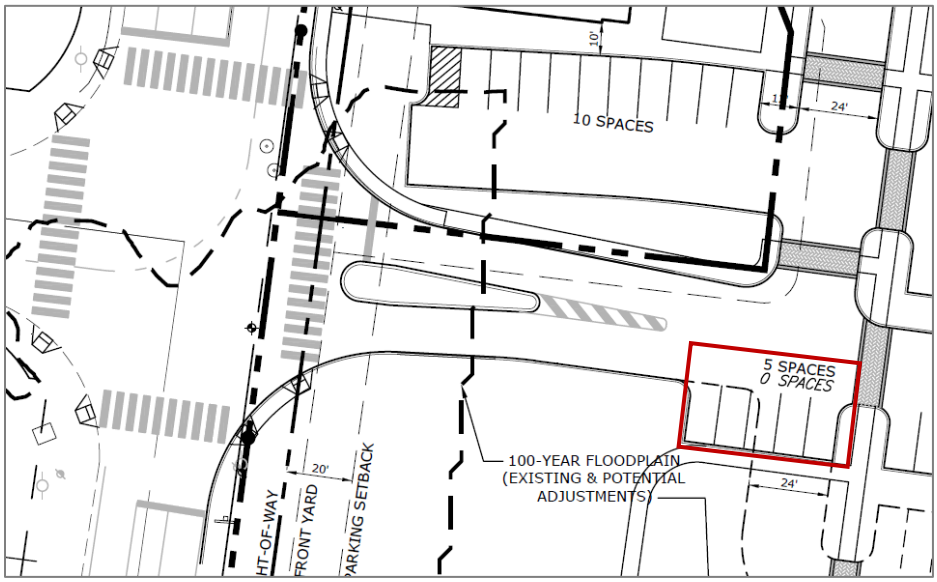
B. Proposed Trail. The proposed trail and trail connections should be designed to meet Circuit Trail Standards and, accordingly, be a minimum of 10 feet wide.

C. Proposed Intersection at Bethlehem Pike, Lafayette Street Connector, and the Development Entrance. The proposed intersection provides curb ramps oriented in a manner inconsistent with Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) standards, which requires that the curb ramp run perpendicular to the direction of travel. The curb ramp orientation should be revised in future submissions to provide appropriate alignment. In addition, no sidewalk connection is proposed between the southeast corner of the intersection and the parking area internal to the site. A sidewalk should be provided to ensure a continuous and safe pedestrian connection for future residents.

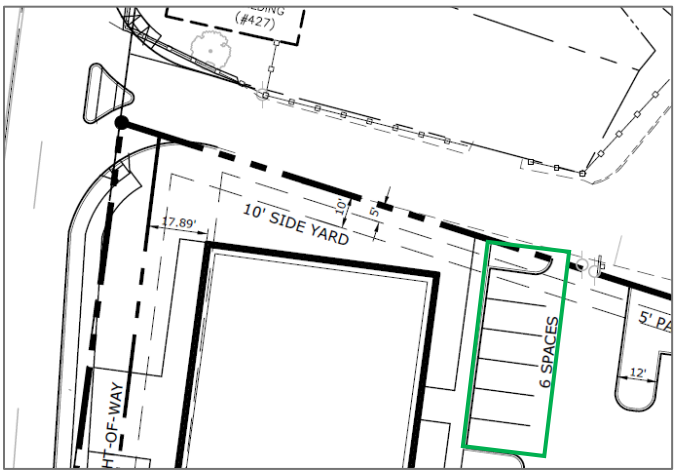
D. Proposed Parking Lot Layout:

1. We recommend that all crosswalks internal to the parking area also be provided with curb ramps and detectable warning surfaces, which are not depicted on the tentative sketch plan.

2. We recommend that the five parking spaces proposed closest to Bethlehem Pike, as outlined in red in the sketch plan excerpt below, be removed or relocated. Their location immediately adjacent to the site entrance may create potential safety and operational concerns, as vehicles entering the site could encounter vehicles maneuvering into or out of these spaces with little advance notice.



3. Similar concerns exist at the other proposed entrance at the northern end of the site, as outlined in green in the sketch plan excerpt below, where parking spaces are located immediately abutting a proposed entrance/egress.



CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposed zoning ordinance amendments, but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Whitemarsh Township's planning objectives for transit-oriented development. Additionally, we believe that our suggested revisions to the tentative sketch plan will make for a better preliminary plan in future submissions.

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 adopt this proposed zoning ordinance amendment, Section 609 of the Municipalities Planning Code requires that we be sent an official copy within 30 days.

Sincerely,

Timothy Konetchy

Timothy Konetchy, AICP, Principal Community Planner I
timothy.konetchy@montgomerycountypa.gov – 610-292-4917

c: Craig McAnally, Township Manager
Aaron Kostyk, Chair, Township Planning Commission
Krista Heinrich, PE, Township Engineer
Sean Kilkenny, Esq., Township Solicitor
Jessica Buck, District Manager, MCCD

Attachments: A. Aerial Image of Site
B. Applicant's Provided Sketch Plan



431 - 461 Bethlehem Pike
MCPC#260222001

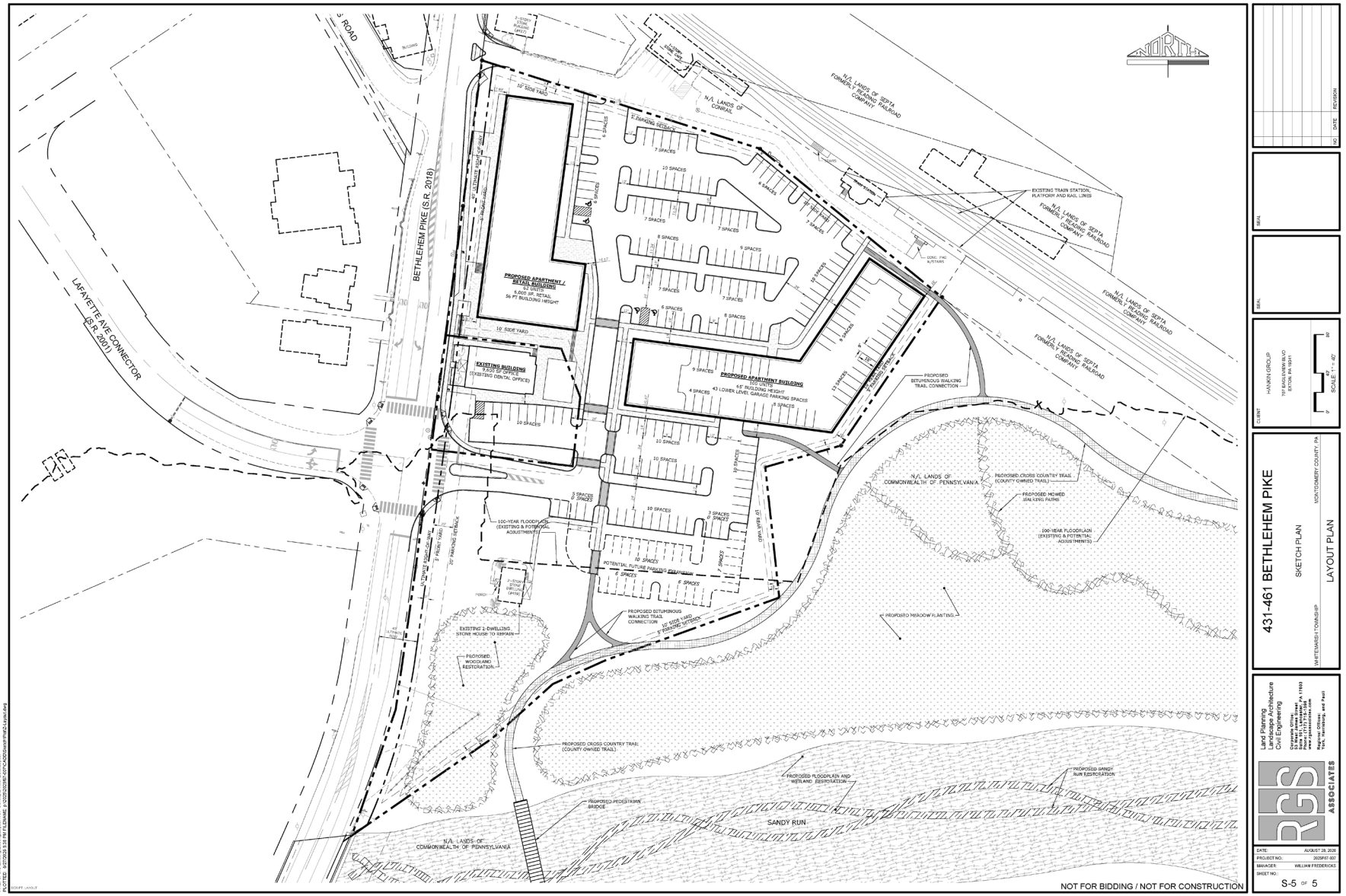
Montgomery County Planning Commission

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Aerial photography provided by Nearmap



NO. | DATE | REVISION

SEAL

SEAL

CLIENT: HANKIN GROUP
707 EAGLEVIEW BLVD
EXTON PA 19341

SCALE: 1" = 40'

431-461 BETHLEHEM PIKE

SKETCH PLAN

LAYOUT PLAN

WHITEMARSH TOWNSHIP | MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA.

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DATE: AUGUST 29, 2026
PROJECT NO.: 2025P-007
MANAGER: WILLIAM FREDERICKS
SHEET NO.:
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