MONTGOMERY COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Jamila H. Winder, Chair
Neil K. Makhija, Vice Chair
Thomas DiBello, Commissioner

www.montgomerycountypa.gov

Montgomery County
Planning Commission

Montgomery County • PO Box 311
Norristown, PA 19404-0311

610-278-3722
planning@montgomerycountypa.gov

Scott France, AICP
Executive Director

September 24, 2026

Mr. Robert Habgood, Assistant Director of Planning and Zoning
Cheltenham Township
8230 Old York Road
Elkins Park, Pennsylvania 19027

Re: MCPC #25-0039-004
Plan Name: The Enclave at Melrose Phase 1 Final Plan
(2 lots comprising 115 acres)
Parcel ID: 31-00-01258-00-7 and 31-00-01255-23-5
Situate: 7600 Tookany Creek Parkway, Ashmead Road, and Front Street
Cheltenham Township

Dear Mr. Habgood:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development proposal in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on September 8, 2026. We forward this letter as a report of our review. We reviewed a preliminary version of the Phase 1 plan set on October 10, 2025. We reviewed phases two and three on March 20, 2025 and August 20, 2026. We also reviewed revisions to the township's zoning ordinance that apply to this site on July 19, 2024 and October 22, 2025.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Melrose Development, LLC, has submitted a Final Land Development Plan for Phase 1 of the redevelopment of a former golf course, the Melrose Country Club. The 115-acre site (parcels 31-00-01258-00-7 and 31-00-01255-23-5) is proposed to be transformed into a mix of residential, institutional, commercial, and community uses.

This development is located in the MU-3 Mixed-Use Zoning District. The MU-3 district has base zoning along with three classes of special exception uses. This development is a Class 3 use, with special exception approval received from the township's Zoning Hearing Board on October 30, 2024, and a revised approval received on March 18, 2026.

When all phases are complete, the site is proposed to have 368 single-family dwelling units (twins and town-homes) consisting of 198 (un-restricted) townhomes, 162 age-restricted townhomes, and 8 age-restricted twins. The institutional uses consist of 80 assisted living apartments and 30 traumatic brain injury (TBI) care living units. The applicant also proposes a medical office building, 35,000 square feet of commercial retail in 2 buildings, and 3 outdoor swimming pools with an accessory building. Several public plazas are included, totaling 1.58 acres.

Phase 1 of the plan includes all of the age-restricted twins and townhomes, 45 of the un-restricted townhomes, most of the roadway network, most of the public plazas, trails, and sidewalks, and most of the stormwater infrastructure. Extensive landscaping and reforestation areas are also included.

RECOMMENDATION

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

REVIEW COMMENTS

TRAILS

A. Circuit Trail. We are pleased to see that the applicant revised the plan to show several sections of 10-foot-wide multi-use trail where the Tookany Creek Trail is proposed. This future trail will not only be important to the residents of this development, the nearby neighbors, Cheltenham Township, and Montgomery County; it is also an essential part of the entire Philadelphia Region's future transportation system. (See https://circuittrails.org/what-is-the-circuit/ for more information on the Circuit Trails.)

1. Bridges. The proposed Tookany Creek Trail on this property will cross Tookany Creek twice. The crossings are proposed to be retained as they are today; however, the southwestern crossing is not adequate to support trail use. The concrete crossing has no railings and floods during rain events. We strongly recommend that this be replaced with a bridge to improve both safety and useability.



Aerial images of the concrete bridge with no railings on June 13, 2026 (left) and February 22, 2025 (right). Note that the bridge appears to be covered in water or ice in the second photograph. Images from Nearmap.

2. Reuse of Golf Cart Paths. While some of the existing golf cart paths may be adequate to support the Tookany Creek Trail, they will need to be monitored for potential maintenance needs sooner than the newly built trails.

USES

A. Plaza Use. Use F-1 is written on the largest plaza on the plan set but does not seem to be the appropriate choice. Use F-1 in Cheltenham Township's code is an Amusement Arcade. It is not a permitted use in this district and does not include outdoor public plazas. It appears that Use F-7: Public Grounds would be more appropriate. The applicant should consult with the township and revise the plan set appropriately.

B. Land Use Mix Requirements. Land Use Group 2 includes commercial, retail, restaurant, recreation and related uses. The ordinance requires a "minimum percent of building floor area" of 5% for Land Use Group 2 (§295-1505.C.(1).). Cheltenham's zoning ordinance defines "building floor area" as "The gross floor area of a building, including the occupiable ground floor and stories above, excluding basements, garages, attics, cornices, eaves, gutters, or chimneys projecting not more than 36 inches, bay windows not extending more than one story and not projecting more than five feet, stoops, steps and balconies." (§295-301) In Land Use Group 2, the applicant has included the "building floor area" of trails and plazas. These are valuable amenities, but they cannot meet the definition of "building floor area." We recommend removing trails and plazas from the table demonstrating compliance with the land use groupings and redoing the calculations to demonstrate compliance with the ordinance requirements of §295-1505.C.(1).

C. Commercial Uses. Retail commercial uses make up just 3.13% of the total building floor area on the site. While this may comply with the ordinance, we find this a disappointing outcome for a site that the township had hoped would have significant commercial area.

PLAZAS AND LANDSCAPING

A. Ordinance Requirements for Plazas. Several zoning ordinance requirements govern plaza design. Plazas "shall include a defining central element, such as a large fountain, sculpture, gazebo, pond, or similar feature. They shall also be improved with a variety of other amenities, such as small fountains, public art, shade trees, trash containers, benches, decorative pedestrian lights, trellises, and/or other similar features." (§295-1505.E.(5).f).) The applicant has submitted designs for nine plazas on the site.

1. Plaza Amounts and Sizes. The zoning regulations for this site have a few requirements that apply to the sites and amounts of plaza area. We suggest the applicant includes a table demonstrating compliance with the following requirements:

    a. One square foot of plaza area is required for every 40 square feet of gross building floor area. (§295-1505.E.(5).(a).)

    b. Individual plazas shall be a minimum of 1, 250 square feet and a maximum of 20,000 square feet. (§295-1505.E.(5).(b).)

    c. At least 25%, but no more than 80%, of the plaza shall be landscaped. (§295-1505.E.(5).(c).)

2. Plaza Designs.

    a. Defining Element. All plazas that are being used to meet the minimum requirement from the ordinance must contain a "defining central element" as explained in the ordinance. It is not clear which of these plazas are intended to meet this requirement. We suggest that the applicant list those plazas which have a central defining element and demonstrate that these, together, meet the minimum square footage requirements for plazas.

b. Other Elements. While all plazas have extensive landscaping and most have benches, we suggest that some of the other, smaller elements recommended by the ordinance be included as well, such as trash and recycling containers, decorative pedestrian lights, small fountains, or similar items.

3. Central Gathering Space for the Enclave. The largest plaza, labeled Plaza 2 on the designs submitted, contains a central gazebo with benches, pavers, walkways, and landscaping around it. The robust landscaping and numerous benches are likely to make this a beautiful place to spend time. We wonder if it might be beneficial to the community to adjust the design to allow the possibility of public gathering, such as farmers markets, community ice cream socials, or other events for residents. No community building or playground for residents is proposed, and this plaza may have the potential to serve the function of a central gathering space for the community.

B. Reforestation Areas. We are pleased to see so many areas proposed for reforestation on the site.

1. Tree Tubes. We suggest the applicant add to the plan set that the required tree tubes must be at least 48 inches in height. We believe that deer will be a hinderance to the reforestation efforts if tree tubes are too short.

2. Long-Term Management. The reforestation areas are proposed to be planted with "whips," very small unbranched seedlings. This is appropriate for reforestation areas, but these trees will require regular maintenance and pruning as they grow. Replacement of trees that do not succeed will also be needed.

VIEWS FOR RESIDENTS

A. Retaining Walls Near Homes. There appear to be two locations where townhomes will have a significant retaining wall fairly close to their homes (Unit A 102 on Road F and Units F 66-79 on Road H). The applicant may wish to take special care with the appearance of these walls, considering attractive materials or even potential artwork on them.

B. Fences on Retaining Walls. Note that there are many more locations on the site where fences on the top of retaining walls are very close to residents' homes. It appears from the plan details that these will be split rail fencing with some sort of mesh. We hope these fences will be attractive, since they are used extensively throughout the site.

C. Stormwater Basins. Bioretention basis and dry extended detention basins are proposed throughout the site to manage stormwater. These are proposed to be planted with trees, shrubs, and grasses. We hope these will be planted and maintained to become attractive amenities on the site.

CIRCULATION

A. Exterior Crosswalks. While the applicant is proposing some valuable improvements to the intersections of Tookany Creek Parkway and Ashmead Road and to Front/Ashmead/Ashbourne/Arbor, we suggest that the applicant upgrade the crosswalks at both of these intersections to highly visible crosswalk styles. This improves safety for pedestrians.

B. Pathways. It appears that some of the sidewalks along Road C connect into the TBI facility, but a fence is shown across these pathways. We suggest the applicant clarify whether pedestrians will be able to enter and exit at these locations. If gates are proposed, they should be shown on the plan set.

C. Stamped Asphalt. While the use of stamped asphalt is common for decorative crosswalks, in our experience it tends to fade quickly and need frequent maintenance.

1. We suggest the township confirm with the applicant that they are willing to undertake the frequent maintenance that these interior crosswalks will require.
2. On Road A, at the entrance to the medical office building, there is a curb bumpout with stamped asphalt crosswalks going through it. We suggest the applicant confirm that they will have the equipment available to stamp and maintain those crosswalks that are within the concrete bumpout area.

PREVIOUS COMMENTS

A. A few comments from our previous letters may still apply, while not needed extensive explanation. These include:

1. SEPTA Rail Connection. We urge the applicant to work with SEPTA now to make a connection to the existing platform for residents of this development. Although the connection is likely temporary, since SEPTA has future plans for improvements, it would allow residents of this development to use the SEPTA station from the beginning. We are also concerned that a lack of a safe connection to the platform now will encourage able-bodied residents to climb the hill and over the fence to reach the platform from the designed drop-off area.
2. Housing Choices. Montgomery County supports providing a variety of housing options for communities, rather than 360 townhomes.
3. Raised Intersection. We commend the applicant on the inclusion of several raised intersections.
4. Stormwater Basins Adjacent to Parking. Two stormwater basins (identified as numbers 9 and 10 on the plan set) are proposed along Front Street with very steep sides. There appear to be parallel parking spaces right up to the edge of the basins. For safety, a retaining wall or fence may need to be added between the parking spaces and the basins.
5. Parking. Note that for Use G-8: Twin Houses, single-car garages shall not be utilized as required parking spaces. The applicant may need to show calculations for the eight twin homes on the site separately.
6. Fence Surrounding Traumatic Brain Injury Care Area. We suggest the applicant choose an attractive but safe fence style here instead of a chain-link fence.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal but we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve Cheltenham Township'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 (*#25-0039-004*) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

Chloe M. Mohr, AICP, Principal Planner II
Chloe.Mohr@MontgomeryCountyPA.gov – (610) 278-3739

c: Anthony Caponigro, Applicant's Representative
Jonathan Altshul, Township Manager
Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager
Thomas Cross, Chair, Municipal Planning Commission
Roger A. Phillips, P.E., Township Engineer
Edward Diasio, Township Solicitor
Adam Schantz, Senior Planner, Montgomery County Planning Commission

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

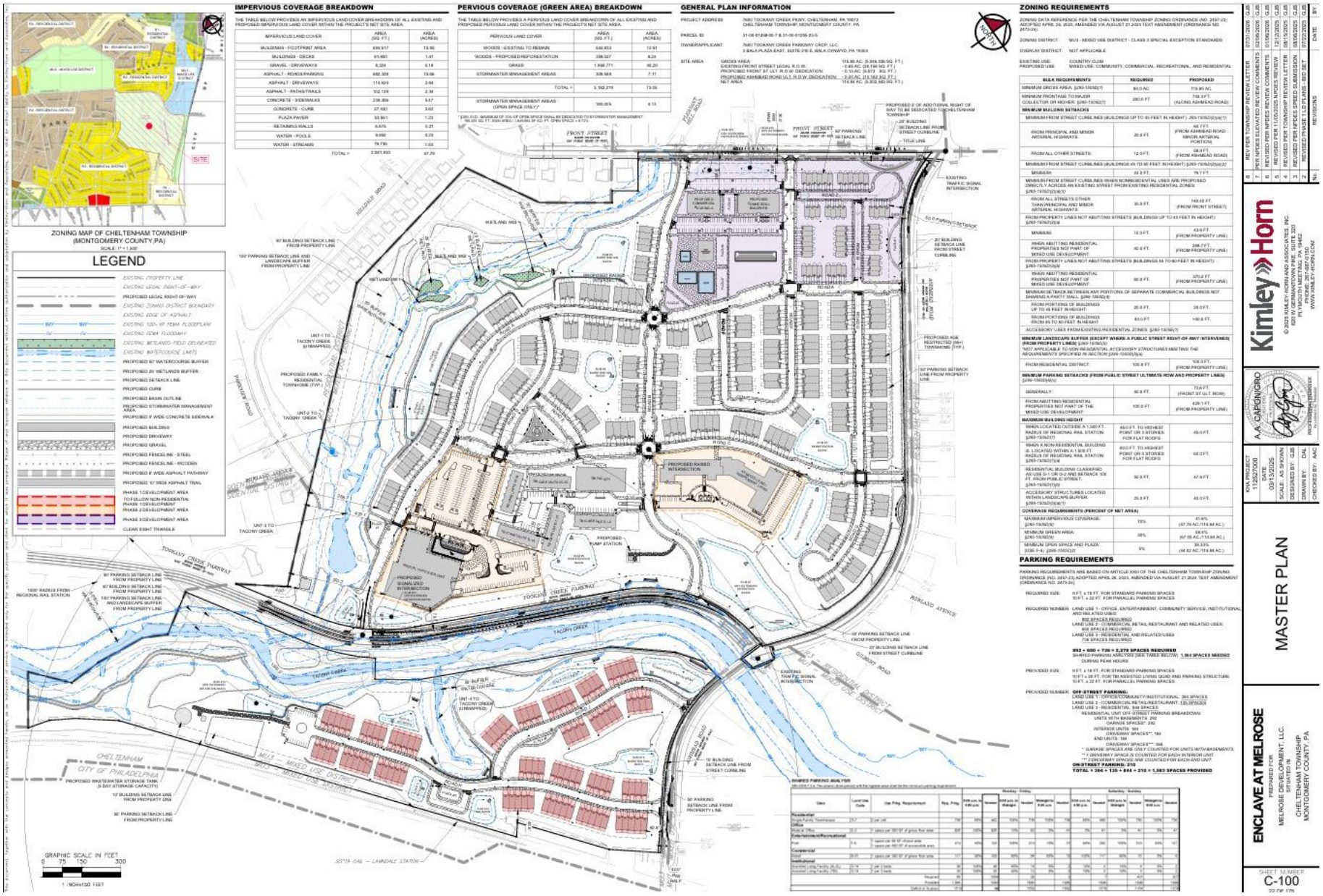


Enclave at Melrose Phase 1
MCPC#250039004

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/plancom
Aerial photography provided by Nearmap

0 350 700 1,400 Feet

N


ZONING MAP OF CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP
(MONTGOMERY COUNTY,PA)
LEGEND
IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE BREAKDOWN
PERVIOUS COVERAGE (GREEN AREA) BREAKDOWN
GENERAL PLAN INFORMATION
ZONING REQUIREMENTS
PARKING REQUIREMENTS
SHARED PARKING ANALYSIS
MASTER PLAN
ENCLAVE AT MELROSE
PREPARED FOR
MELROSE DEVELOPMENT, LLC.
SITUATED IN
CHELTENHAM TOWNSHIP
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PA
Kimley»Horn
A.A. CAPONIGRO
SHEET NUMBER
C-100