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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 10, 2018

Mr. Christopher Leswing, Director of Building & Planning
Building & Planning Department
Township of Lower Merion
75 East Lancaster Avenue
Ardmore, PA 19003

Re: MCPC #09-0194-005
Plan Name: Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center Residential
(87 du/1 lot on approximately 19.9 acres)
Situates: Belmont Avenue (S); St. Asaphs Road (E)
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on December 5, 2017. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Federal Realty Investment Trust, proposes to construct a four- to six-story residential building with 87 dwelling units on an existing surface parking lot located to the rear of the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center. The proposed residential building would face St. Asaphs Road. The current plans show a total of 46 parking spaces on the ground-level of the proposed residential building. Parking is proposed to be shared across the large, multi-use site. The property is located in the Township's City Avenue District – Bala Cynwyd Retail (CAD-BCR) zoning district which encourages multi-use development. Additional site improvements proposed at this time include stormwater management facilities, a realignment of the internal circulation through



the rear parking area, and a multi-use pedestrian trail along Saint Asaphs Road. This proposal was previously reviewed in a review letter dated October 6, 2016.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal to construct a residential building on the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center site. However, in the course of our review we have identified a number of key issues that we feel should be addressed. We offer the following comments and recommendations that we feel could help to improve the design of the proposed residential development.

REVIEW COMMENTS

SITE LAYOUT & BUILDING DESIGN

The proposed site layout shows the construction of a four- to six-story residential building on an existing surface parking lot to the rear of the existing shopping center. We wish to reiterate our comments regarding the building's proposed location from our October 6, 2016 review letter. The building is shown set back more than 100 feet from St. Asaphs Road causing the building to feel disconnected from the closest public street. In addition, the proposed residential units are located close to potentially disruptive and unpleasant uses such as the active service and loading areas of the shopping center, transformers, and trash enclosures and compactors. We wish to reiterate that we encourage the applicant to consider creating a master plan for the full site to better evaluate the best location and configuration for new residential infill development within the context of the established building layout and internal circulation patterns of the existing shopping center.

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIONS

We commend the applicant for addressing some of the concerns raised in our October 6, 2016 review letter related to providing safe and direct pedestrian connections between the proposed residential building and the amenities existing on the site. However, we feel that additional amenities and pedestrian circulation spaces could be added to make the proposed building more accessible, safe, and attractive.

1. Perimeter Sidewalk. A pedestrian sidewalk should be added around the entire perimeter of the proposed residential building to provide safe pedestrian connections to all entrances to the building. Currently there are no pedestrian walkways shown on the southern and western sides of the building.
2. Connection to Proposed Multi-Use Path. The Landscape Plan on Sheet L.01 shows a pathway connecting an entrance to the building on the northern side of the building (facing

St. Asaphs Road) to the proposed multi-use path; however, the Site Plan on Sheet 4 of 22 does not show a pedestrian connection between these two amenities.

3. Connection to Existing Site Amenities. The proposed pathway is somewhat circuitous between the primary building access on the eastern side of the building and the crosswalk connecting the residential units to the other amenities on the site. An additional set of stairs closer to the southeast corner of the building would allow pedestrians an alternate, more direct connection to the other uses on the site, including the grocery store.

LANDSCAPING

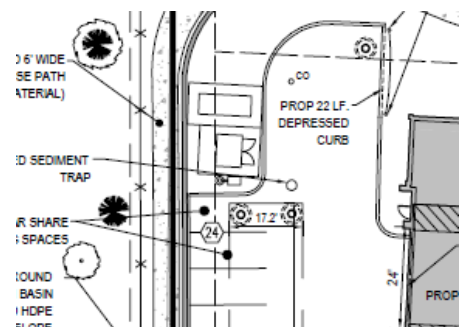
We commend the applicant for adding additional landscaping in a proposed courtyard area and within the buffer area between St. Asaphs Road and the proposed residential building. However, it appears that there is still significant space around the residential building that does not incorporate landscaping. Additional foundation plantings and landscape beds around the southern and northwestern edges of the proposed building could help to soften the appearance of the large building and beautify this area of the site.

TRUCK CIRCULATION

The area of the parking garage labeled as “trash/recycling compactor to be located inside building” does not appear to be connected to the outside. It is unclear based on the information provided how a trash truck would access the interior trash loading area. Future versions of the plans should demonstrate how a trash truck would enter and exit the garage and specifically access the trash and recycling storage area.

SCREENING OF UNLABELED STRUCTURES

Several unlabeled structures are shown near the parking garage ingress/egress on the western side of the building (see inset image to the right). These structures should be clearly labeled and appropriately screened through a combination of attractive, durable fencing and evergreen landscaping, based on their proposed size and use.



CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the proposed land development; however, we feel that additional attractive landscaping and convenient pedestrian connections will improve the design of the proposed 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.

Sincerely,

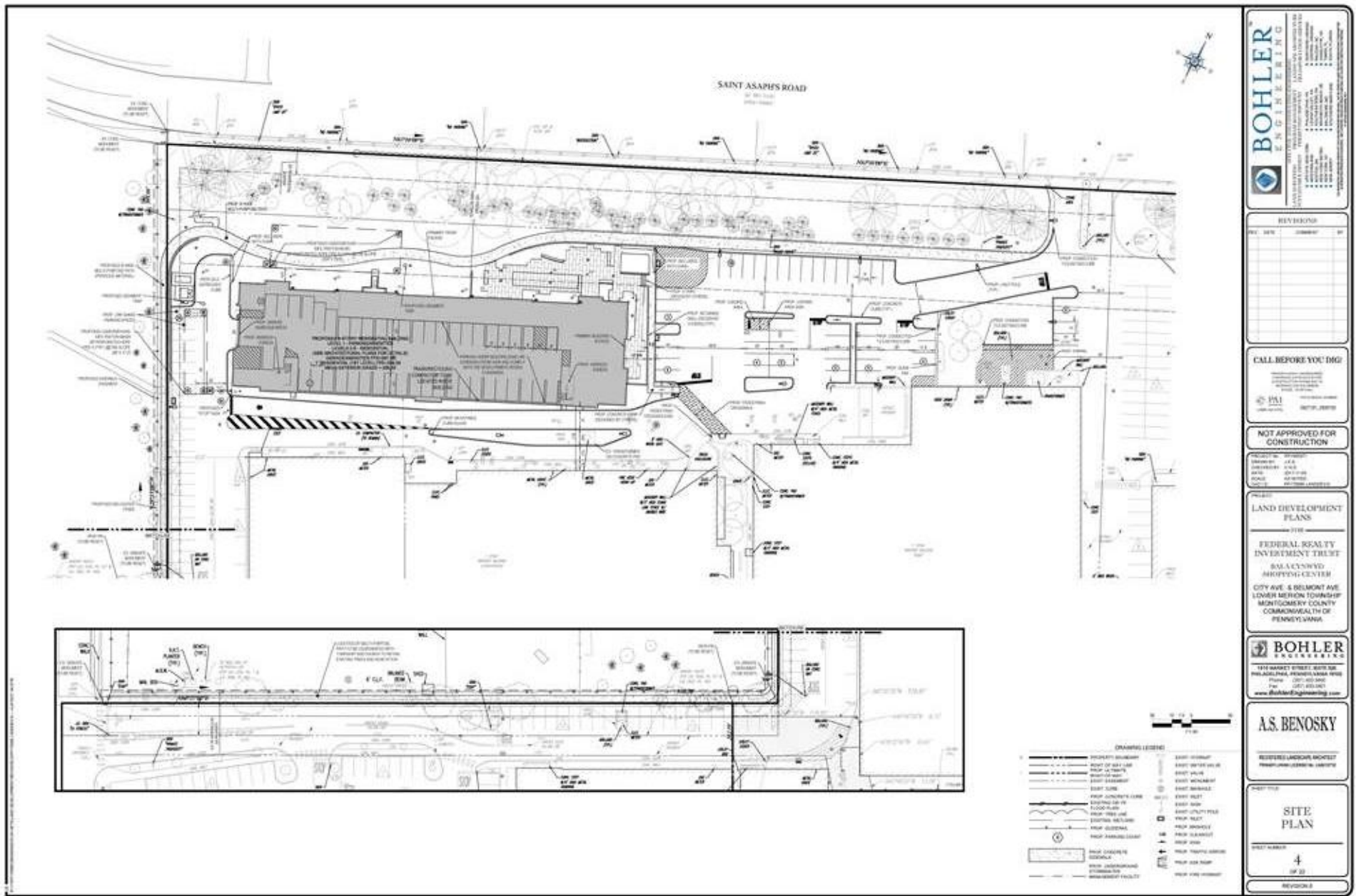
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marley B Bice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marley Bice, AICP, Senior Planner
610-278-3740 – mbice@montcopa.org

c: Federal Realty Investment Trust, Applicant
Bohler Engineering, Applicant's Engineer
Gilbert P. High, Jr., Esq., Twp. Solicitor
Ernie B. McNeely, Twp. Manager
Edward P. Pluciennik, P.E., Twp. Engineer

Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Site Plan

Attachment B: Aerial Image of Site





Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center Residential
090194005

Montgomery
County
Planning
Commission

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Year 2015 aerial photography provided by the
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

