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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 14, 2017

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

Re: MCPC #17-0266-001  
Plan Name: 9 Presidential Boulevard  
(1 lot/173 du and 5,000 sq. ft. commercial on approximately 2.74 acres)  
Situate: Presidential Boulevard (east)/City Avenue (north)  
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on November 16, 2017. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

**BACKGROUND**

The applicant, Commerce Pursuit Capital, LP, proposes to demolish all existing structures on the 2.74-acre site and construct a 4-story, 173-unit apartment building. Two tentative sketch plans have been submitted: Scenario 1 (Attachment A) shows a 173-unit apartment building with 5,000 square feet of commercial space facing City Avenue and two vehicular access points off of Presidential Boulevard; Scenario 2 (Attachment C) shows a 173-unit apartment building with one vehicular access point off of Presidential Boulevard on the western side of the building. Additional improvements shown at this time show a combination of surface and underground parking (280 spaces in Scenario 1 and 293 spaces in Scenario 2) and underground stormwater management facilities. The property is located in the Township's CAD-RCA – City Avenue District – Regional Center Area zoning district.



## RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal. However, in the course of our review we identified the following issues that we feel should be addressed prior to moving forward with the land development. Our review comments are as follows:

## REVIEW COMMENTS

### ZONING ORDINANCE COMMENTS

- A. FAR Bonus Calculations. The maximum base FAR permitted by the Township's zoning ordinance for this parcel is 0.6 for a single-use development (Scenario 2) and 0.7 for a mixed-use development (Scenario 1). The applicant's plans show an FAR of 1.28. Future versions of the plans should include a detailed calculation of how the applicant proposes to reach the proposed FAR using the bonus provisions provided by the Township's zoning ordinance. Future versions of the plans should also include information about how all applicable bonus criteria and requirements in §155-217.E. will be met.
- B. Number of Driveways. Section 155-217.D.(1)(d) of the Township's zoning ordinance states that "Only one curb cut/driveway is permitted on each street frontage of each lot." Scenario 1 as shown on Sheet TSP-01 shows two driveways on the Presidential Boulevard street frontage of the site.
- C. Greening Standards. Future versions of the plans should demonstrate how the applicant proposes to comply with the greening standards, as required by §155-217.C.(7) of the Township's zoning ordinance.
- D. Development Design Standards. Future versions of the plans should demonstrate how the applicant proposes to comply with the development design standards, as required by §155-217.F. of the Township's zoning ordinance.

### PUBLIC GATHERING SPACE

Both scenarios shown on the submitted plans identify a "linear public gathering space per exception #19" along the northern and western edges of the property. Based on the information provided, the location and configuration of the public gathering space does not appear to contribute to the beautification or livability of the City Avenue District as a whole. It is unclear at this time what design, landscaping, or pedestrian circulation amenities are proposed to be provided within the "linear public gathering space."

The building's current size and placement on the site requires a corner of the building to encroach into the steep slope on the northern side of the property, which also effectively disconnects the areas of the site labeled as "linear public gathering space." We strongly encourage the applicant to continue to work with the Township to consider alternative building placements and configurations that would allow for a more site-sensitive and pedestrian-accessible design for the linear public gathering space.

### VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

- A. Both Scenarios. Future versions of the plans should include a truck circulation template demonstrating how large vehicles such as trash trucks and emergency vehicles will safely access the site. In addition, future plans should clearly identify appropriately-screened loading and trash storage areas to serve the proposed use of the site.

- B. Scenario 1. Sheet TSP-01 shows two driveways with access to Presidential Boulevard. The proposed driveway on the eastern side of the proposed building appears to be very close to the westernmost existing driveway on the adjacent property. We encourage the applicant to coordinate with the adjacent property owner regarding potential benefits that could result from sharing parking lot access between the two sites and removing one of the closely-spaced driveways.

Several parking spaces are shown just inside of the proposed driveway entrance off of Presidential Boulevard on the eastern side of the proposed building. The applicant should work with the Township to ensure that there is sufficient space for vehicles entering and exiting the site to maneuver safely in this area. One option would be to remove the parking spaces on either side of the driveway, for a reasonable depth to provide for sufficient queuing space between the parking spaces and the busy driveway entrance. The additional space created could be used for increased vegetation.

- C. Scenario 2. Sheet TSP-02 shows one driveway with access to Presidential Boulevard on the eastern side of the proposed building. Several parking spaces are shown just inside of this driveway entrance with one parking space shown to be approximately 15 feet from the Presidential Boulevard curbline. The applicant should work with the Township to ensure that there is sufficient space for vehicles entering and exiting the site to maneuver safely in this area. The Parking Summary of Sheet TSP-02 shows that 293 parking space are proposed where 260 are required. Therefore, we strongly encourage the applicant to remove several parking spaces on the northern side of the driveway to provide for sufficient queuing space between the parking spaces and the busy driveway entrance. The additional space created could be used for increased vegetation.

## **PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION**

Both scenarios shown on the submitted plans show a combination of a five-foot wide landscaped area for street trees, an eight-foot wide multipurpose path, a two-foot wide hardscaped verge, and an eight-foot wide public walkway between Presidential Boulevard and the proposed building. However, these pedestrian amenities do not appear to extend across the full street frontage of the site and do not appear to connect with existing narrower sidewalks on the adjacent parcels to the east and west. Future versions of the plans should show how the proposed public walkway will transition in width and align with existing sidewalks on adjacent properties. In addition, crosswalks should be clearly delineated across any proposed driveways.

## **STREETSCAPE DESIGN**

The proposed paved pedestrian pathways and hardscape verge in front of the building between Presidential Boulevard and the proposed building have a total width of 18 feet. In addition to the proposed five-foot wide landscaped area adjacent to the curbline, we encourage the applicant to consider creating greater variation in the front façade of the proposed building to create areas where additional planting areas could be accommodated. Additional planting areas adjacent to the building could allow for additional shade tree plantings to provide shade for the wide area of pavement in front of the building. Additional landscaping could also soften the appearance of the proposed building as viewed from Presidential Boulevard.

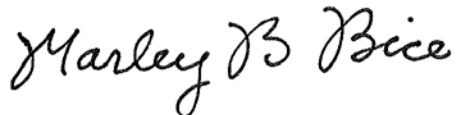
## **CONCLUSION**

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal to construct a mixed use building along Presidential Boulevard; however we feel that modifications to the public gathering space and vehicular and pedestrian circulation on the site could improve the walkability and livability of the site as-a-whole.

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 tour 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.

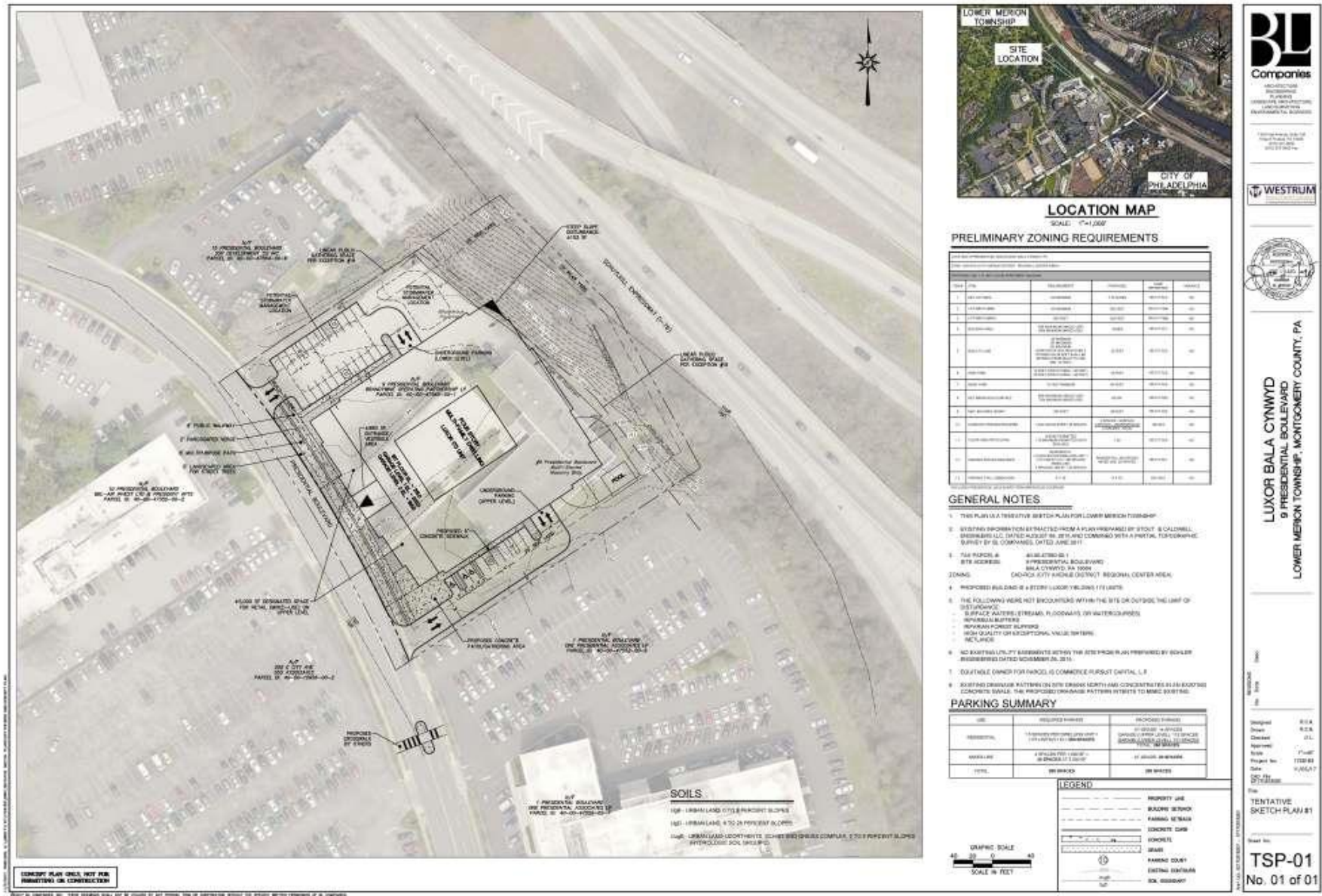
Sincerely,

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

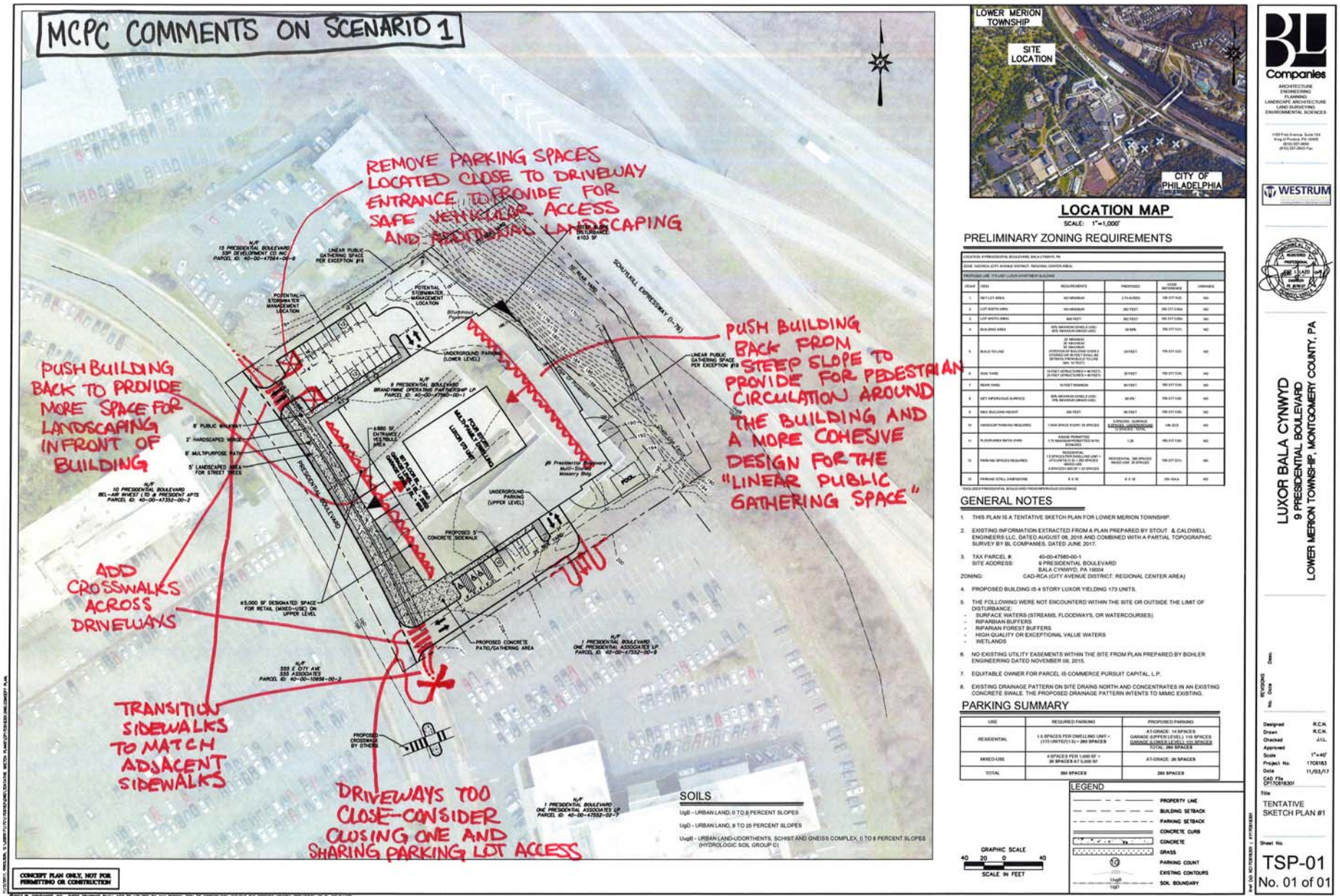
Marley Bice, AICP, Senior Planner  
610-278-3740 – [mbice@montcopa.org](mailto:mbice@montcopa.org)

c: Commerce Pursuit Capital, LP c/o John Tallman, Applicant  
James S. Ettelson, Esq., Applicant's Representative  
BL Companies, 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 Tentative Sketch Plan 1 ("Scenario 1")  
Attachment B: MCPC Comments on Applicant's Tentative Sketch Plan 1 ("Scenario 1")  
Attachment C: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Tentative Sketch Plan 2 ("Scenario 2")  
Attachment D: MCPC Comments on Applicant's Tentative Sketch Plan 2 ("Scenario 2")  
Attachment E: Aerial Image of Site



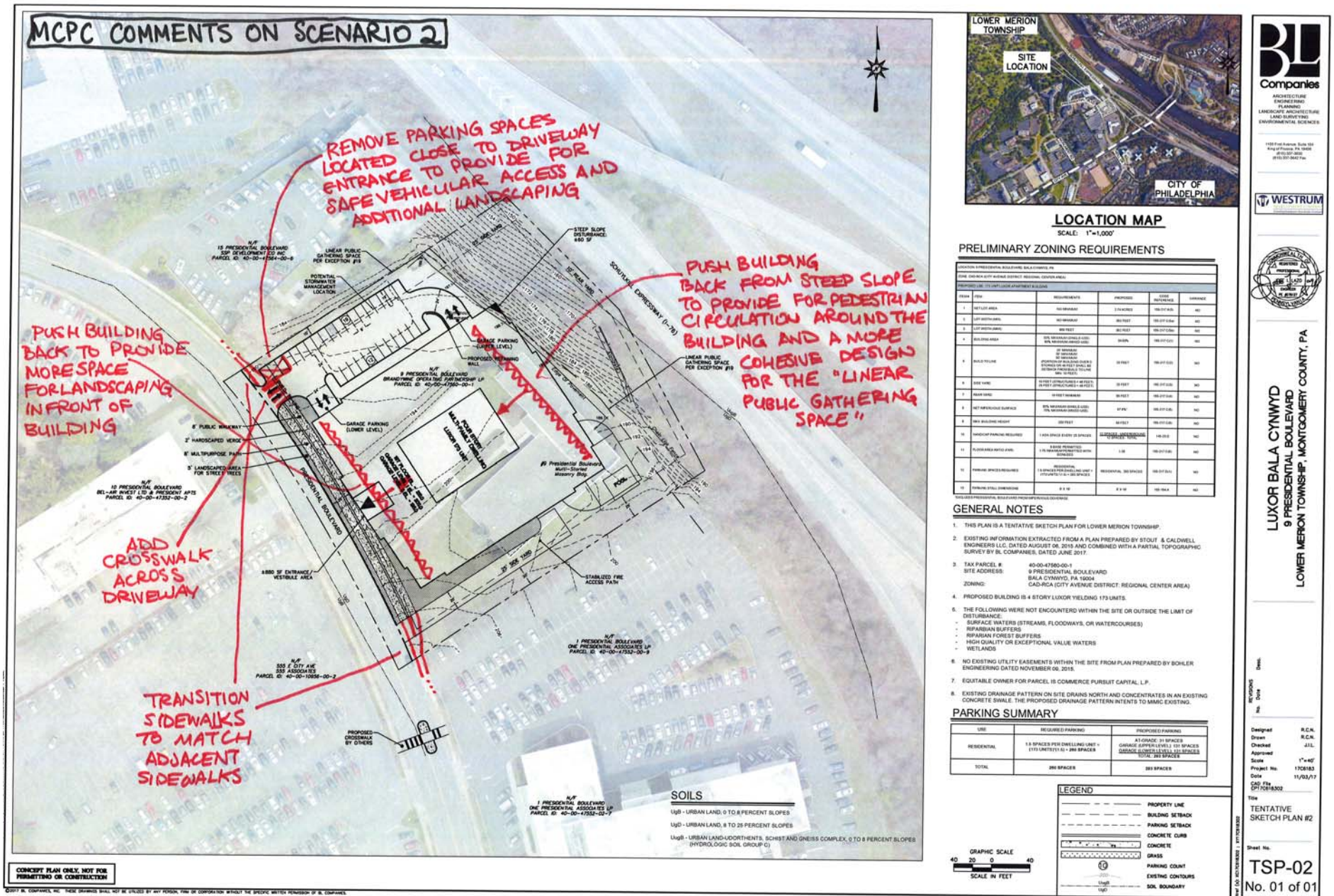
















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Year 2015 aerial photography provided by the  
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

