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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
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MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO BOX 311
NORRISTOWN, PA 19404-0311
610-278-3722
FAX: 610-278-3941 • TDD: 610-631-1211
WWW.MONTCOPA.ORG

JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 5, 2018

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

Re: MCPC #18-0103-001
Plan Name: 211 Belmont Avenue
(1 lot/84 du on approximately 4.76 acres)
Situate: Belmont Avenue (W); north of Rock Hill Road
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on April 26, 2018. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing structures on the site and construct a six-story, 89,594 square foot senior living apartment building consisting of 84 units and 98 beds. The current vehicular access point off of Belmont Avenue will be removed and the vehicular access point off of Rock Hill Road will be relocated closer to the western property line so that it generally aligns with the existing driveway to the CVS pharmacy on the opposite side of Rock Hill Road. An existing culverted stream known as Gulley Run crosses the site and separates the proposed structure from both street frontages. The rear portion of the site is currently steeply sloped and wooded.

Additional improvements shown at this time include 68 parking spaces, several retaining walls, a 10-foot wide sidewalk and an approximately 11-foot wide streetscape area along Rock Hill Road and Belmont Avenue, and a public plaza space.



The property is located partially in the C2-Commercial and the R5-Residence zoning districts, however, the Rock Hill Road Overlay zoning district also applies to this site. The existing mill building on the site is a Class 2 Historic Resource on the Township's Historic Resource Inventory.

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

PROPOSED ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

It is our understanding that significant improvements to Belmont Avenue, which is a State road, have been proposed. The applicant should coordinate with Lower Merion Township and PennDOT to ensure that their development plans and streetscape improvements are consistent with the preliminary designs for the anticipated roadway improvements.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

- A. Truck Turning Template. Future versions of the plans should include a truck turning template demonstrating that large vehicles, including ambulances and fire trucks, can safely access the site.
- B. Loading/Service Area. A loading/service area is shown inside the northern side of the building off of the driveway to the underground parking area. Future versions of the plans should demonstrate that trash and delivery vehicles can fit inside the interior loading space to minimize potential conflicts between trucks and other vehicles entering and exiting the underground parking area.
- C. Emergency Vehicle Access from Belmont Avenue. We strongly encourage the applicant to continue working with Township officials to explore the potential option of providing an emergency vehicle access to Belmont Avenue. Having an alternate emergency vehicle access in this location would improve access to the eastern side of the proposed building and provide a second means of egress from the site in the event of an emergency.
- D. Parking Lot Layout. The easternmost parking space in the parking area closest to the entrance from Rock Hill Road does not meet the minimum parking space depth requirement on the eastern side of the parking space. It appears likely that a standard-sized vehicle parked in this space could impede traffic flow out of the underground parking area.

In addition, supplemental pavement markings may be beneficial in the area of the parking lot where the entrance driveway splits between the drop-off loop and the driveway to the underground parking to clearly delineate the direction of traffic flow within this large paved area.

PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

- A. Handicapped Parking. A proposed handicapped parking space is shown across the driveway from the entrance to the building in the vicinity of the drop-off loop. A marked crosswalk should be shown connecting the handicapped parking space to the primary pedestrian entrance to the proposed building.
- B. ADA Curb Ramps at Driveway Crossing. Future versions of the plans should include a detail showing the design of ADA curb ramps on both sides of the driveway off of Rock Hill Road.
- C. Intersection Improvements. With the development of this prominent corner site and expansion of the sidewalk network on the site, we feel that the addition of a crosswalk across Belmont Avenue on the northern end of the intersection of Belmont Avenue and Rock Hill Road is warranted. In general, we strongly recommend that the crosswalks at this intersection be upgraded to high-visibility continental-style crosswalks to improve pedestrian access to other amenities such as the CVS pharmacy and Cynwyd Heritage Trail.

We also encourage the applicant to work with the Township and PennDOT to consider whether a marked crosswalk across Rock Hill Road from the proposed development to the CVS pharmacy would be beneficial. Independent senior residents of the proposed building, as well as employees and guests, may seek to make quick trips to the conveniently-located pharmacy; however, a clearly marked crosswalk and complimentary signage such as rapid-flashing beacons, would make this logical connection safer.

- D. Pedestrian Access from Belmont Avenue. The proposed grading of the eastern end of the site between the proposed building and Belmont Avenue appears to be such that a pedestrian connection to Belmont Avenue could be provided. This secondary pedestrian path could provide more direct access to amenities such as the nearby Wawa convenience store and commercial area and transit stops in Manayunk. A pedestrian connection in this area could also be coordinated with the design of an emergency vehicle access route.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

According to the Grading Plan (Sheet 4 of 5) a low-point is shown in the center of the primary driveway. Runoff could collect in this low-point during rain events causing dangerous conditions for vehicles and pedestrians entering and exiting the site. Future plans should show how stormwater management controls and grading will be used to prevent excessive ponding of stormwater runoff at this point.

We encourage the applicant to explore opportunities to include stormwater best management practices for improving water quality and how they could be attractively incorporated into the proposed streetscape area. For example, rain gardens and tree trenches can help to infiltrate stormwater runoff from the adjacent sidewalk and roadway while adding to the natural beauty of the site.

GRADING

It appears based on the information provided on the Grading Plan (Sheet 4 of 5) that the retaining wall on the northern side of the curved entry driveway is approximately 20 feet tall at points. We recommend that the applicant consider creating a series of tiered retaining walls that could allow for a more gradual

transition into the steeply sloped portion of the site and improve the visual impact of the retaining wall on this primary entrance to the site.

The proposed grading shown on Sheet 4 appears to create several low spots up against the northeastern corner of the rear of the proposed building, as well as inside the angled retaining wall next to the pathway between the building and the easternmost parking area. In general, grading should be designed to slope away from building walls and structures to reduce the potential for runoff to collect in these low spots during rain events. Future plans should show how stormwater management controls and grading will be used to prevent excessive ponding in these areas.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal to redevelop this site for elderly housing; however, we feel that additional thought should be given to vehicular and pedestrian circulation and stormwater management due to the unique physical conditions on the site.

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,



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

c: LCB Berkshire Senior Living Holdings LLC, 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
Fran Hanney, PennDOT

Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Site Plan
Attachment B: MCPC Comments on Applicant's Site Plan
Attachment C: Aerial Image of Site







211 Belmont Avenue
180103001

Montgomery
County
Planning
Commission

Montgomery County Courthouse - Planning Commission
PO Box 311 • Norristown PA 19384-0311
(p) 610.278.3722 • (f) 610.278.3941
www.montcopa.org/planno

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

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31