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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

October 1, 2019

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

Re: MCPC #19-0194-001
Plan Name: 38 W. Lancaster Ave – The Ardmore Theater
(1 lot/18 du on approximately 0.5 acres)
Situate: Lancaster Avenue (S); east of Ardmore Avenue
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on July 30, 2019. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Freedom Ardmore, proposes to demolish the rear portion of the property at 38 W. Lancaster Avenue, known as “The Ardmore Theater,” to construct a seven-story building containing 18 dwelling units. The proposed building will include two levels of parking containing a total of 34 parking spaces with vehicular access from the rear of the property. The applicant proposes to maintain the portion of the theater structure fronting on Lancaster Avenue for retail space. Additional improvements shown at this time include a modified marquee structure and an underground stormwater management facility. The property is located in the township’s ASDD-1 Ardmore Special Development District 1 and the MUST Mixed Use Special Transportation overlay district. In addition, the property is listed as a Class 1 historic building on the township’s Historic Resource Inventory.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Ardmore area of Lower Merion Township is identified as a Town Center in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco2040: A Shared Vision*. Town Centers are traditional



downtown areas with a mix of retail, institutional, office, and residential uses. The proposed development of a multi-family residential building, while preserving the historic façade of the structure along Lancaster Avenue, is generally consistent with the statement that “historic buildings should be preserved, rehabilitated, and reused.”

The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies Ardmore as one of the township’s Traditional Main Streets. The proposed development of a multi-story residential building is generally consistent with the vision of Traditional Main Streets which are described as “compact, transit-oriented and include residential development as part of the mix of uses.”

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

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

Two levels of parking are proposed within the new structure with separate, two-way driveway entrances along the rear façade of the structure. In addition, a loading dock entrance is shown directly adjacent to the two, two-way driveways. These three separate driveways front on an area that is currently used for shared access to public parking and to connect Haws Terrace and West Athens Avenue. We encourage the applicant to work with the township to evaluate how the proposed driveway configuration could impact traffic flow patterns and sight distances in this area, particularly for vehicles exiting the proposed parking levels within the structure. In addition, future versions of the plans should include a truck turning template demonstrating how trucks will access the proposed loading dock area.

BUILDING DESIGN

We commend the applicant for proposing to restore and repurpose the front portion of the historic theater property along Lancaster Avenue. The historic theater frontage as viewed from Lancaster Avenue is symmetrical in design. Based on the building elevations and architectural drawings provided, it appears that the seventh building level and mechanical penthouse space of the proposed structure will be offset creating a noticeably asymmetrical building profile when viewed from Lancaster Avenue. We encourage the applicant to work with the township and the Historical Architectural Review Board to ensure the design of the proposed multi-story structure does not negatively impact the appearance and visual context of the existing historic resource to remain.

In addition, as the applicant continues to refine their architectural design and building materials, we suggest that the applicant consider utilizing building materials and colors that resemble those present in the surrounding historic district. The *Ardmore Storefront Design Guidelines* states that “Colors used in renovations and new construction in the District should be appropriate to the historical and existing palette of materials and colors. Historical colors should be reproduced where evidence of the original color exists.”

The applicant is proposing to demolish the rear portion of the existing theater structure which is a prominent brick structure along Haws Avenue with a distinctive color and pattern that could potentially be reproduced as part of the proposed development.

POTENTIAL AMENITIES

As part of their building design, we encourage the applicant to consider whether a green roof or other usable roof space could be incorporated into the building design for the enjoyment of future residents of the building. For example, the roof of the retail portion of the building could potentially be used as additional amenity space, assuming it would not negatively impact the historic resource.

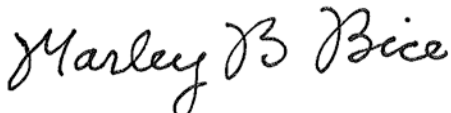
CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal to construct a new multi-family residential building on the rear portion of The Ardmore Theater site; however we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the 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 (#19-0194-001) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,



Marley Bice, AICP, Principal Planner
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c: Kyle Stoltz, Applicant
Site Engineering Concepts, LLC, 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 Proposed Site Plan
Attachment B: Aerial Image of Site