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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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JOHN S. COVER, AICP  
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 21, 2020

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

Re: MCPC #19-0162-002  
Plan Name: French International School  
(1 lot/5,694 sq. ft. institutional on approximately 1.47 acres)  
Situate: City Avenue (north)/west of Bala Avenue  
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced subdivision and land development plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on January 7, 2020. We forward this letter as a report of our review and recommendations.

## BACKGROUND

The applicant, the French International School, proposes to consolidate their existing parcel on City Avenue with a parcel to the rear, known as 6 Bala Avenue, to create an approximately 1.47-acre lot. A new, one-story 4,484-square foot detached building is proposed to the rear of the existing building fronting on City Avenue. An existing Class II historic building on the 6 Bala Avenue property is proposed to remain with a 1,100-square foot, two-story rear addition. The combined properties will be accessed by driveways on City Avenue and Bala Avenue; however the driveway off of City Avenue will be restricted to ingress only. Additional improvements shown at this time include: 25 surface parking spaces; 9 reserve parking spaces; 2 underground stormwater management facilities; plaza and play area spaces; improved sidewalks along the City Avenue and Bala Avenue frontages; and internal pedestrian pathways.

The City Avenue property is located in the township's CAD-BV City Avenue District – Bala Village Zoning District and the Bala Avenue property is located partially in the township's R6A and R4 – Residence Zoning Districts. This proposal was previously reviewed in a review letter dated July 24, 2019. Revised plans were received on February 18, 2020. We noted that painted crosswalks have been added in the rear parking lot to improve pedestrian circulation.



## 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:

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Bala Village area of the City Avenue District 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 preservation and reuse of the historic building at 6 Bala 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 this portion of the City Avenue District area as a Neighborhood Main Street which is areas that are typically located within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. The preservation and enhancement of the property at 6 Bala Avenue has the potential to help advance "the goal of making these districts more attractive, pedestrian-friendly, and better connected to the neighborhoods they serve."

## REVIEW COMMENTS

### GREENING STANDARDS

We commend the applicant for providing a detailed landscape plan (Sheet 14 of 18) that includes attractive interior planting areas, a substantial landscaped buffer, and street trees. However, it is unclear from the information provided how the applicant proposes to comply with the greening standards in §135-41.4 of the township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, as required by §155-219.C.(6) of the township's Zoning Ordinance.

### VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

A sheet labeled "Conceptual Design Exhibit" from McMahon Transportation Engineers & Planners illustrates a proposed restriping plan along Bala Avenue, which is a State Road, to create space for a left turn lane into the proposed Bala Avenue driveway for the development. We encourage the applicant to proactively coordinate with PennDOT on the proposed restriping and the configuration of the proposed left turn lane to ensure it complies with PennDOT's standards.

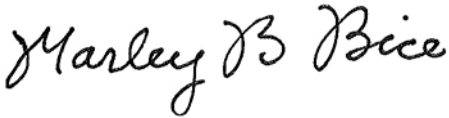
## CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal to construct a new institutional building; however we believe that our suggested revisions will help the development better achieve the township's planning objectives for the City Avenue District – Bala Village district.

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 (#19-0162-002) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

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

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

c: French International School, Applicant  
Ross Weiss – Cozen O'Connor, Applicant's Representative  
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