

July 2, 2020

**TO:** Planning Commission Members

**FROM:** Colleen Hall, Planner/GIS Technician, Department of Building & Planning

**SUBJECT:** Tentative Sketch and Open Space Preservation Subdivision Plan – 1064 & 1080 Mt. Pleasant Road, Bryn Mawr, SD# 3859, Ward 6

**This application was submitted under the zoning in place prior to February 27<sup>th</sup> and is not subject to the new zoning code requirements.**

### Proposal

The applicant and equitable owner, Arnold Galman, Esq. is seeking Tentative Sketch approval for the following:

- Consolidation of the two lots on 1064 and 1080 Mt. Pleasant Road;
- Creation of six new lots improved with single-family detached residential homes including:
- Demolition of the existing residential home on 1064 Mt. Pleasant Rd;
- Construction of a cul-de-sac to be accessed from Mt. Pleasant Road;
- Creation of 3.7-acres of preservation area; and
- Creation of several stormwater management areas.



1064 & 1080 Mt. Pleasant Road shown in outline

The proposal is illustrated on the attached six sheet plan set dated December 2, 2019, last revised May 15, 2020, prepared by Momenee, Inc. A Landscape Plan dated March 6, 2020, prepared by Glackin Thomas Panzak was also submitted.

### Property Description & History

The two properties are located along Mt. Pleasant Road in Bryn Mawr. The properties are zoned RA and cumulatively comprise 7.3-acres and are therefore also subject to the Open Space Preservation District overlay. The properties are surrounded by other similar single-family detached homes to the north, west and south of the property. The Hermitage Development, a 90-acre development of cluster-style townhomes, is located to the east of the subject properties and across Mt. Pleasant Road.

- 1080 Mt. Pleasant Road is a 5.3-acre property that is currently an unimproved and wooded property. The property also has unimproved frontage on Foxwood Circle, which terminates in a cul-de-sac, to the north.

- 1064 Mt. Pleasant Road is a 2.1-acre property that is currently improved with a house, garage and a pool. The property is accessed via a driveway from Mt. Pleasant Road.

### Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) Review

The County review letter is attached. The County generally supports the proposed subdivision and recommended incorporating additional above ground, naturalized stormwater management techniques such as rain gardens and vegetated swales. The County also recommended that the applicant consider installing a sidewalk along the proposed internal roadway or a walking path through the proposed open space areas. These recommendations have been incorporated into the issues below as well as the recommended conditions of approval.

### Bulk, Area and Setback Requirements

The following table details the bulk, area and setback requirements of the proposal. Staff notes that the Open Space Preservation District (OSPD) does not regulate minimum lot areas or lot width. Setbacks are established via a perimeter setback rather than required minimum front, side and rear yard setbacks for individual units.

	RA Zoning Standards	Existing 1064 Mt. Pleasant Rd	Existing 1080 Mt. Pleasant Rd	Average Size of Proposed OSPD Lots
Minimum Net Lot Area	45,000 sq. ft.	90,000 sq. ft. (2.1 acres)	229,944 sq. ft. (5.3 acres)	18,095 sq. ft. – 18,962 sq. ft. (min-max)
Minimum Lot Width	150'	300'	340'	N/A
Perimeter Setback	50'	N/A	N/A	50' to 154' (min-max)
Maximum Building Height	35'	<35'	N/A	N/A
Maximum Building Area	15%	9.0 % (8,112 sq. ft.)	0%	16.4%-17.2% (min-max)*
Maximum Impervious Surface	20%	24.6% (22,173 sq. ft.)	0%	34.2%-40.8% (min-max)**
Preservation Area	50%	N/A	N/A	3.7 acres (50%)

\*Building Area is not a requirement in an OSPD development and is higher due to the smaller cluster lots with open space surrounding the lots.

\*\* Impervious Surface is allocated between the six lots based upon the Yield Plan. The allocation for each lot is approximately 9,673 sq. ft. This is recorded with the subdivision for the maximum permitted on each lot. The proposed development on the individual lots is currently under the maximum allocation.

### Open Space Preservation District Requirements (OSPD)

The OSPD is an overlay district on all properties within the Township that are five-acres or greater which are both residentially zoned and are proposed to be developed with residential uses. The OSPD was enacted in the 1990's to provide protection of environmental and historic resources on large estates undergoing conversion to residential subdivisions. The OSPD embodies the principles of conservation subdivision design, which:

- Promotes creative site planning to identify natural, historic and scenic features, including floodplains, wetlands, woodlands and historic resources as core site features for the design of new residential subdivisions;
- Ideally preserves natural, scenic and historic resources in large contiguous blocks, rather than scattered throughout a site;
- Provides new units in renovated historic resources and/or in new construction; and
- Clusters new construction to maximize common open space and provide sufficient 'breathing room' for historic resources to be properly integrated with new homes.

OSPD subdivisions are typically of equal density to subdivisions conventionally developed to underlying zoning. However, OSPD subdivisions set aside a minimum of 50% of the tract area as open space while also integrating natural, scenic and historic resources into site design.

### **Tentative Sketch Plan**

Staff notes that the Legislative Intent of the Subdivision Code governing Tentative Sketch Plans is to promote orderly, efficient, integrated and harmonious development in the Township. Tentative Sketch Plans provide the Township with the opportunity to refine site layouts prior to the development of fully engineered Preliminary Plans. Tentative Sketch Plans identify specific circulation, stormwater, landscaping and architectural design issues to be refined at the Preliminary Plan phase.

## **Issues**

### **1. Roadway System Connectivity**

The proposal includes the construction of a cul-de-sac extending from Mt. Pleasant Road to access the proposed new construction. As stated above, the property also has frontage on Foxwood Circle. Staff prefers a through street connecting Mt. Pleasant Road to Foxwood Circle to a cul-de-sac, which creates a dead-end. A cul-de-sac or dead-end street is an inefficient design that reduces neighborhood connectivity and increases driving distances. Greater connectivity and decreased driving distances not only benefit residents, but also lifesaving emergency service providers and public services such as trash collection and delivery. To this end [Subdivision and Land Development Code Section 135-27.D.3.a.](#) requires:

*D. Termination of streets; turning area.*

*(3) Culs-de-sac.*

*(a) A cul-de-sac permanently terminated will not be approved when a through street is practicable. The developer shall have the burden of showing the impracticability of the through street in order to justify a cul-de-sac.*

The applicant has provided an analysis for the connection to the Foxwood Circle cul-de-sac bulb. Due to the steep vegetated embankment leading up from Foxwood Circle into the site, the roadway grades would exceed the required 3% grade within 50 feet of an intersection. The connection would result in extensive cuts through the site regardless where placement of the roadway occurs, in order to achieve the desired grade for a newly constructed roadway. The applicant's engineer has provided their professional opinion that providing a connecting roadway from Mt. Pleasant Road to Foxwood Circle is impractical based upon the current site topography.

As stated in the applicant's analysis, neighborhood connectivity does not have to focus solely on connecting roads and vehicles, and staff concurs with this analysis. The proposed plan with its surrounding open space is able to accommodate a private trail to provide pedestrian connections to the adjacent neighborhood. This would preserve the character of the Foxwood Circle neighborhood and facilitate safe connections with the added benefit of the experience of a naturalized landscape. Staff will incorporate a condition for this design for the pedestrian connections be provided with the Preliminary Plan submission.

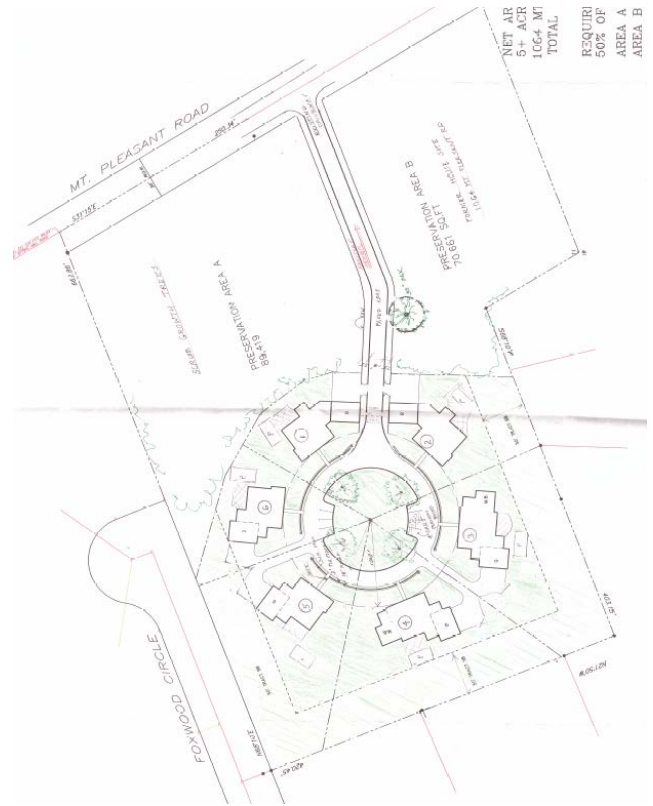
## 2. Siting and Quality of Open Space

### Siting of the Open Space:

Prior to the submission of the application, a design for a six-lot subdivision of the subject properties was circulated to staff for review by the Land Development Committee on November 21, 2019. Staff reviewed the proposal and requested minor changes. The siting of the plan submitted in November better represents the intentions of the OSPD, in that it:

- Clusters new construction to consolidate common open space in large contiguous blocks rather than scatter throughout the site; and
- Preserves a scenic viewshed as a core site feature.

Upon submission of the current layout staff requested the applicant reconsider the previous proposal to which the applicant stated that they desire to move forward with the layout provided in the current submission. Staff has included a condition that the applicant explore the alternative design configuration, as it more closely meets the intent of the OSPD guidelines. The current configuration of the Preservation Area around the edges of the property with shallow sections and several common open spaces for stormwater management breaks the continuity of the Preservation Area.



Previous Site Design Consolidating Open Space

### Quality of the Open Space:

The OSPD requires that the applicant identify how each portion of the proposed Preservation Area meets one or more of the following uses, as required by Zoning Code Section 155-147.B.5:

- Woodland, meadow, wetland, watercourse, wildlife sanctuary or similar conservation-oriented area.
- Park, pedestrian or equestrian trails or outdoor recreation area.
- Pastureland, open field or lawn.
- Class I and Class II Historic Resources, but not in excess of 20% of the required preservation area, and subject to such requirements as the Township shall determine necessary to preserve and maintain the historic resource, including the removal of the area occupied by the historic resource from the common access requirements of this article.

The applicant provided a statement dated May 14, 2020, prepared by Glackin Thomas Panzak, regarding the condition of the existing site, which states:

*“The site is woodland, comprised of over browsed degraded woodland dominated by Norway Maple and ailanthus trees, the understory includes invasive herbaceous plants and vines. There are no historic resources, cultural landscapes, or exceptional landscape elements on the site.”*

Staff has included conditions to address the degraded woodland and suggests that a mitigation plan for restoration of the woodland be included with the Preliminary Plan. This restoration plan should identify the larger canopy trees worthy of preservation, while including an intensive plan for reforestation within the Preservation Area.

## 3. Relief

The application requires relief from the following Code sections:

1. Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 135-28.A, to provide sidewalks along heavily traveled streets and at any location where the Board of Commissioners shall determine that sidewalks are necessary for public safety or convenience.

A waiver is required since sidewalks are not provided along the Mt. Pleasant Road on the properties. Staff is recommending the internal circulation be provided for the development and supports the waiver to not install the sidewalk along the property frontage. The code section also notes that sidewalks may be waived within open space preservation districts where it can be demonstrated that the objectives of the district will be furthered.

Additionally, the roadway does not have any sidewalks installed for a significant portion of Mt. Pleasant Road, and this area is not located within any of the priority areas for sidewalk installation.

#### **4. Action**

The Planning Commission must take the following action for this application:

1. Provide a recommendation on the Tentative Sketch Plan.
2. Provide a recommendation on the relief from Subdivision and Land Development Code Section 135-28.A, to not provide a sidewalk along Mt. Pleasant Road frontage for the properties.