

November 2, 2018

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Christopher Leswing, Director, Building & Planning Department

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN, 211 Belmont Avenue, Bala Cynwyd, LD# 3791, Ward 3

Proposal

The applicant, LCB Senior Living, LLC, is seeking Preliminary Land Development Plan approval for the following:

- Demolition of all existing buildings, including the Lee's Shoddy Mill, a Class II historic resource;
- Construction of a six-story home for the aged/modern senior living apartment building that includes independent, assisted living and memory care with 84 units, 96 beds and 68 parking spaces;
- Reconfiguration of the existing curb cut off Rock Hill Road and elimination of the curb cut off Belmont Avenue; and
- Construction a 10-foot wide sidewalk and 10-foot wide verge along Rock Hill Road and Belmont Avenue, as required by the Rock Hill Road (ROHO) design standards.

The proposal is illustrated on the attached set of plans that includes twenty-eight (28) sheets prepared by Bohler Engineering, dated August 10, 2018, last revised October 18, 2018. Architectural Elevations prepared by The Architectural Team, dated October 18, 2018, were also submitted.

Approval Process

The development of the site into a home for the aged/assisted living facility requires a complex approval process with multiple layers. The list below outlines the approvals needed for this application and their status.

Approvals Needed	Status
Conditional Use approval to develop the property to the requirements of the underlying C2 zoning provisions, rather than the Rock Hill Overlay (ROHO) District provisions	Obtained- Nov. 29, 2017
Special Exception to construct a home for the aged/assisted living facility from the Zoning Hearing Board	Obtained- Feb. 22, 2018
Tentative Sketch Plan	Obtained- July 18, 2018
Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) from FEMA to re-delineate the FEMA floodplain line.	Obtained- July 20, 2018
Demolition Permit from the Historical Commission & Board of Commissioners to demolish the existing Class 2 resources	Pending
Preliminary Land Development Plan	Pending

Property Description

The property contains 4.8 acres and is bound by Rock Hill Road to the south, Belmont Avenue to the east, the residential neighborhood of Belmont Hills to the north and commercial uses to the west that front along Rock Hill Road. The property is split zoned between the R-5 and the C-2 zoning districts and is also subject to the Rock Hill Overlay Zoning District (ROHO). A portion of Gulley Run traverses the front of the property and is partially enclosed in a concrete flume. The property contains the former Lee's Shoddy Mill, a Class 2 resource on the Township's Historic Resource Inventory.

Environmental Advisory Council

The EAC reviewed the plans at their October 23, 2018 meeting. They recommended the applicant add a constructed riffle to the stream towards Belmont Avenue to add oxygen to the lower segments of the stream. The EAC also recommended the applicant minimize impacts to the 60" sycamore tree as much as possible including holding some of the proposed parking

spaces in reserve and air spading the soil around the tree. They also recommended that the applicant provide a detailed tree protection plan for the sycamore to be reviewed by the Township Arborist.

Historical Commission

Because the property is designated as a Class II historic resource, the applicant is required to obtain a recommendation from the Historical Commission for the demolition of the historic buildings. The applicant appeared before the Historical Commission on September 24, 2018 for a recommendation on the demolition permit and provided plans for the proposed new construction, as per Building Construction Code Section 62-2.D.2.b.viii. The Historical Commission recommended approval of the demolition of the existing mill buildings and construction of the proposed new structure with site improvements, with the applicant agreeing to mitigation measures. The mitigation measures have either been complied with or included in staff's recommended conditions of approval which are attached.

Montgomery County Planning Commission Review

The County review letter is attached. The County recommendations have been either addressed on the attached plan or have been incorporated into the issues below as well as the recommended conditions of approval.

Setback & Dimensional Requirements		
The proposal is compliant to the C2 District bulk and setback requirements.		
	C-2 - REQUIRED	PROPOSED
Minimum Lot Area	5,000 sq. ft.	199,097 sq. ft. (5.5 acres)
Minimum Lot Width	60'	609'
Maximum Impervious Surface	34.7%*	30%
Maximum Building Area	24.7%*	9.1%
Maximum Building Height	65'	65'
Minimum Front Yard Setback	45'*	66.5'
Minimum Side Yard Setback	35' each side*	73' & 224'
Minimum Rear Yard Setback	40'*	180'
Parking**	68 spaces	68 spaces

*Subject to the penalties of Section 155-137.B and C for building heights over 35 feet. The front yard setback is increased from 30' to 45', the side yard setbacks are increased from 15' to 35' on each side, the rear yard setback is increased from 25' to 40', the maximum building area is decreased from 30% to 24.7% and the maximum impervious surface is decreased from 40% to 34.7%.

**Parking is regulated by Zoning Code Section 155-95Y, which requires at least .7 parking space for each bed.

Density & Parking Requirements			
The proposal is compliant with the density & parking requirements.			
	Code Section	Requirement	PROPOSED
Density	155-47.D.1	A lot area of not less than 1,200 sq. ft. per bed	1,200 sq. ft. per bed x 96 beds = 115,200 sq. ft. (2.65 acres) needed 199,097 sq. ft. (5.5 acres) provided
Parking	155-95Y	.7 parking space for each bed	.07 spaces per bed x 96 beds = 68 parking spaces

Plan Revisions:

Since the Tentative Sketch Plan approval, the plans have been revised in the following ways:

- A pedestrian bridge has been added to connect the Belmont Avenue sidewalk over the flume and into the site and the proposed plaza area walkways have been adjusted to connect the bridge to the proposed sidewalk.
- A crosswalk has been provided across Rock Hill Road.
- The surface parking area along Rock Hill Road has been adjusted to increase the number of parking spaces from 15 to 19, to convert angled parking stalls to perpendicular stalls, and to relocate the spaces from the rear of the site to adjacent to the flume.

- A trash enclosure has been added to the surface parking area located along the Rock Hill Road frontage.
- The surface parking area located along the Belmont Avenue frontage has been shifted closer to the building and a few feet further from the existing 60" sycamore tree and reduced from 13 parking spaces to 10 parking spaces.
- Retaining walls proposed adjacent to the surface parking area on Rock Hill Road have been shifted back and expanded.
- The location of the transformer and generator have been shown in front of the building along the Belmont Avenue frontage.

Issues

1. Surface Parking

During the review of the Tentative Sketch plan, the Planning Commission questioned the proposed parking layout and recommended that the applicant consider reconfiguring the surface parking areas and/or hold some of the parking spaces in reserve. As noted above, the parking layouts have been adjusted slightly but the applicant is not proposing to hold any spaces in reserve. The applicant stated at the last Planning Commission meeting that the maximum number of staff on site per shift would be 25. Staff has included a condition requiring the applicant to investigate pursuing conditional use to hold a portion of the surface parking closest to Belmont Avenue in reserve pursuant to Zoning Code Section 155-95.1.

In addition to addressing some of the Planning Commission's concerns about the parking layout, seeking conditional use approval to hold parking in reserve would have the added benefits of reducing the amount of impervious surface on the site, decreasing disturbance to the existing 60" Sycamore tree and allowing additional space to comply with the Conditional Use condition of approval which required the screening of all parking and exterior loading areas.

2. Landscaping & Gateway Elements

During the Planning Commission's review of the Conditional Use plans it was agreed that the combination of the pedestrian friendly goals of the ROHO District and the location of this site at the head of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail presented a great opportunity for the applicant to include public space, gateway landscaping and bicycle amenities in the design. The following conditions were included in the Conditional Use approval:

- *The frontage of the property along Rock Hill Road and Belmont Avenue shall be landscaped to screen all parking and exterior loading areas, to protect and enhance Gulley Run, and shall incorporate elements such as shade trees, native shrubs, seating walls, boulders and other decorative elements consistent with the industrial heritage of the Rock Hill Road Corridor.*
- *The plan shall include pedestrian oriented gateway landscaping, interpretive signage and bicycle amenities in the design of the site, which links the proposed development to the streetscape.*
- *The flume shall be incorporated into the design of the proposed project.*
- *The applicant shall provide a plan to maximize access to and use of the pocket park and facilitate pedestrian connections and visual access to Gulley Run given the existing features.*
- *A cross-section across Rock Hill Road and through the site shall be provided with the land development application to help evaluate topographic changes.*

To demonstrate compliance with the conditional use conditions the applicant provided a Landscape Plan and site cross-sections. Upon review of the submitted materials staff has the following comments, which have been included as conditions of approval:

- The landscape material proposed adjacent to the surface parking along Rock Hill Road is located approximately 10' below the grade of the parking and will not effectively screen vehicles. Staff recommends landscape material be provided at the same grade level as the surface parking spaces.

- Insufficient landscape material has been provided along Belmont Avenue to effectively screen the parking. A landscape treatment similar to the one proposed between the plaza area and the flume along the frontage of the site shall be provided adjacent to the northern edge of the flume to ensure an effective screen of the parking spaces on Belmont Avenue.
- The fencing along the flume and the proposed pedestrian bridge shall reflect the industrial heritage of Rock Hill Road. Staff will provide an image of the recommended style at the Planning Commission meeting.
- The existing slopes shall be terraced adjacent to the plaza with boulders while incorporating the use of plant species that promote biodiversity.
- The required bike racks, interpretive signage and seating shall be located with input from staff. The Township will provide the content for the signage to relay the history of the site. The bike racks shall be consistent with those located at the CVS site.
- The landscape verge located along Belmont Avenue in the area of the existing bridge shall be refurbished and maintained by the property owner.

Regarding the requirement to incorporate the flume into the design of the proposed project and maximize and encourage pedestrian access to Gulley Run, the applicant stated that they have complied by preserving the flume in its current configuration and by providing meaningful views of the flume from plaza.

There are also several visually prominent retaining walls located within the proposed design. Staff has included a condition requiring the applicant to work with staff on the selection of materials for those retaining walls. Staff recommends the applicant utilize an irregular stone pattern and incorporate rock salvaged from the site.

3. Architectural Elevations

During the review of the Conditional Use application the Planning Commission expressed concern over the proposed architecture and recommended that the massing be more sophisticated and unified from all directions. In their review, the Historical Commission also commented on the appropriateness of the proposed architecture.

Upon submission of the Preliminary Plan materials, staff requested that the applicant demonstrate that the architectural design of the proposed building represent a scale and massing that is appropriate and attractive, as well as reflective of traditional architectural forms. The applicant provided the following response:

The project has been designed as an attractive entranceway to the Township utilizing materials and massing that are consistent with the context of the existing site and the immediate surroundings. Specific emphasis has been given to stepping the massing of the building with the natural contours of the site. This has allowed for two separate pedestrian bridge access points that allow residents to access a private resident patio and the pedestrianway. This linear nature of the plan has also informed the horizontality of the building materials on the façade, helping to break up the massing into discrete elements, but also connect them into one coherent form indicative of the residential use.

Staff also recommends that the applicant consider reducing the number of proposed exterior wall materials to four, not including glass, to simplify the design. Staff has also recommended conditions to standardize the inset of windows and location of material changes.

Staff has also included a condition requiring the northern elevation adjacent to the garage elevation to be further articulated through the inclusion of windows, masonry banding, or a change of materials.

4. Viewshed

Revisions to the plans included the placement of a trash enclosure area within the surface parking area visible from Rock Hill Road. Staff recommends that the area devoted to loading and storage of trash be placed to the rear of the site and behind the building or preferably in the parking area beneath the building.

The plan also shows a generator and transformer in front of the building and adjacent to the flume and surface parking lot along Belmont Avenue. Staff questions the proposed location and recommends that the applicant either relocate both the transformer and generator to a portion of the site that is less visible from the public viewshed or provide a landscape screen to conceal the uses.

5. Roadway Improvements

Intersection Improvements

As discussed during the Conditional Use and Tentative Sketch Plan process, the Township has been coordinating with PennDOT for several years to both widen and realign the intersection of Rock Hill Road and Belmont Avenue in front of this property. In order to construct the improvements to the intersection, the Township must acquire additional right-of-way from this property. As part of the review of this application, the Township proposes to reduce the scale and impact of the intersection improvements. The applicant has provided a supplemental plan showing the original intersection improvements overlaid on their proposed site plan for reference.

In his review, the Township Engineer noted that the modified intersection design proposed by the Township and shown on the applicant's plan has not yet been approved by PennDOT and the proposed roadway improvements must be coordinated with the Township's final PennDOT improvement plans. This has been included as a condition of approval.

Left Turn Lane & Crosswalk

In his Tentative Sketch Plan review, the Township Engineer recommended that a left turn lane be provided for traffic entering the site from Rock Hill Road. The applicant indicated that they do not feel the left turn lane is warranted and instead proposed the idea of installing a crosswalk in the location of the requested left turn lane.

In his review the Township Engineer has again recommended that a left turn lane from Rock Hill Road into the site be provided. He has recommended that the left turn lane be shown as an alternate design that would be constructed if it is determined to be practical to install if requested by PennDOT.

The Township Engineer requested that the proposed crosswalk be moved away from the driveways and closer to Belmont Avenue so that it is on the section of Rock Hill Road with less curve and to reduce the potential for confusion at the CVS and site driveways. Staff has included a condition of approval requiring the applicant to relocate the crosswalk to the location recommended by the Township Engineer.

6. Stormwater Management

In his review the Township Engineer noted that no temporary stormwater controls have been provided for during construction as required by Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 135-16.B.15 and Stormwater Management & Erosion Control Code Section 121-4.A. Staff has included a condition requiring the applicant to provide the required temporary facility as directed by the Township Engineer.

Additionally, the Township Engineer pointed out that the percolation rates for the proposed permanent stormwater management basin do not empty in the required twenty-four (24) hours and the required recharge volume has not been provided. The conditions of approval reference the Township Engineer's review, which brings the design into compliance with Township standards and codes.

7. Relief – Disturbance to Steep Slopes

The applicant has requested the following relief:

- Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.b— to disturb slopes exceeding twenty-five (25%) percent.

The proposed driveway off Rock Hill Road disturbs steep slopes which are regulated in both the Zoning Code and the Natural Features Code. The Zoning Hearing Board previously determined that a variance is not needed to disturb man-

made steep slopes, but relief is required from the Natural Features Code. Documentation has been submitted and accepted by the Township Engineer, verifying that the slopes are manmade. Therefore, staff recommends that the following relief be granted:

8. Action

The Planning Commission is required to take the following actions on this application:

- A recommendation on the Preliminary Land Development Plan
- A recommendation on the requested relief:
 - Natural Features Code Section 101-5.C.2.b - to disturb slopes exceeding twenty-five (25%) percent.