

March 1, 2019

**TO:** Planning Commission Members

**FROM:** Jillian Dierks, Planner, Building and Planning Department

**SUBJECT:** PRELIMINARY LAND DEVELOPMENT & CONDITIONAL USE PLAN – 9 & 11 Elliott Avenue & 762 W. Lancaster Avenue, Aqua Pennsylvania, LD# 3802, Ward 4

### **Proposal**

The applicant, Aqua Pennsylvania, Inc., is seeking Preliminary Land Development Plan approval for the following:

- Consolidate two lots at 9 & 11 Elliott Avenue into a 0.29-acre lot directly adjacent to the applicant's existing 5.59-acre property at 762 W. Lancaster Avenue;
- Perform a lot line change between the consolidated Elliott Avenue parcel and the W. Lancaster Avenue parcel so that the proposed building is entirely on the Elliott Avenue parcel;
- Construct a two-story building with a 7,484 square foot footprint fronting on Elliott Avenue;
- Reconfigure and expand the existing surface parking lot fronting on Elliott Avenue to create 40 parking spaces;
- Widen the existing four-foot wide sidewalk along Elliott Avenue to 9-11 feet wide;
- Install two, 24-inch-high landscape walls at the edge of the Elliott Avenue surface parking lot; and
- Reconfigure the existing surface parking lot on 762 W. Lancaster Avenue to create eight parking spaces.

The applicant also seeks Conditional Use approval to use architectural designs which differ from those set forth in the Bryn Mawr Village District as follows:

- Zoning Code Section 155- 215.E(2)(a)(l) - To provide 44.2% glazing at the ground floor of the primary front facade where between 65% to 70% clear windows and doors is required;
- Zoning Code Section 155- 215.E(2)(a)(3) - To provide a ratio of windows to solid façade of 1.18:1 at the ground floor of the primary front facade where a ratio of at least 3:1 between openings and solid surfaces is required.
- Zoning Code Section 155- 215.E(2)(a)(6)(a) - To provide a sill height of 3'4" above adjacent sidewalk level where the maximum sill height is two feet or lower;
- Zoning Code Section 155-215.E(2)(d)- To use an exterior insulation and finish system ("EIFS") or synthetic stucco system, which is prohibited unless authorized by the Board of Commissioners by conditional use.

The Conditional Use Hearing before the Township's Hearing Officer has been scheduled for **March 18, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.** in the Caucus Room of the Township Administration Building.

The proposal is illustrated on the accompanying set of plans that includes nineteen (19) sheets, prepared by Chester Valley Engineers dated June 29, 2018 and last revised February 15, 2019. The submission also included elevations prepared by Bernardon, dated February 15, 2019.

## Property Description

This application consists of three parcels under ownership of Aqua Pennsylvania: 762 W. Lancaster Avenue, 9 Elliott Avenue, and 11 Elliott Avenue. The three properties are a combined size of approximately 5.59 acres. The existing conditions of the three parcels are as follows:

- 762 W. Lancaster Avenue is a 5.1-acre parcel containing a two-story office building and 275 parking spaces. This parcel is located within multiple zoning districts including BMV-3, BMV-4 and R-4.
- 9 Elliott Avenue is a 0.1-acre parcel containing a two-story residential building zoned Bryn Mawr Village District 4. The building is currently vacant.
- 11 Elliott Avenue is a 0.1-acre parcel containing a two-story residential-style building zoned Bryn Mawr Village District 4. It is currently used as office space.

The subject properties are bordered by Lancaster Avenue, Old Lancaster Road and Elliott Avenue. The properties are surrounded by commercial uses along Lancaster Avenue, office and residential uses along Elliott Avenue and residential and institutional uses along Old Lancaster Road.

## Background

On April 18, 2018 the Board of Commissioners approved a Tentative Sketch Plan for this proposal. The Board of Commissioners also approved relief from Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Code Section 121-4A(19), 121-4C(5): To allow drainage from the roof area of the addition to cross from the Lower Merion Drainage Area into the Darby-Cobbs, subwatershed A, Drainage area.

## Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)

The EAC reviewed the plans at their February 25, 2019 meeting and recommended changes to the plant species, which have been included in the recommended conditions of approval.

## Changes to the Plan

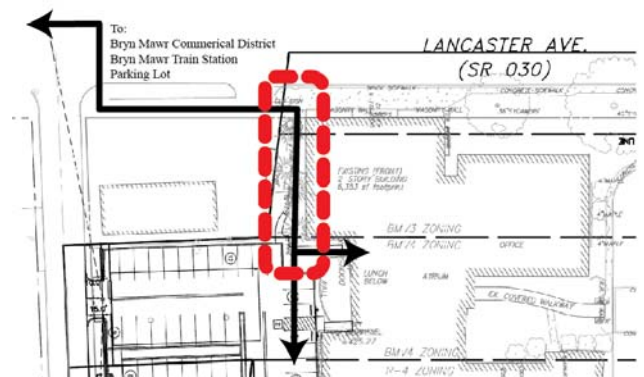
Since the Planning Commission reviewed the Tentative Sketch Plan the following changes have been made:

- The striping of the existing surface parking areas was reconfigured which result in the creation of two additional parking spaces to meet the parking requirement for the proposed development.
- An urban garden, complying with the regulations of the Subdivision and Land Development Code Section 135-41.4.D, has been provided along Elliot Avenue where the face of the building steps back from the build to line.
- The design of the previously identified ‘possible rain garden’ has been changed so that this area will function as a biofiltration area.

## Issues

### 1. Streetscape & Pedestrian Path

A condition of the Tentative Sketch Plan required the applicant to submit a Pedestrian Circulation Plan. While a plan was submitted it did not consider an existing pedestrian walkway that extends from Lancaster Avenue into the interior of the applicant’s property. This walkway provides a shortened and more pleasant pedestrian experience from the applicant’s building to the municipal parking lot from which the applicant is borrowing parking, the Bryn Mawr train



station, and the Bryn Mawr commercial area. Staff would like to encourage increased pedestrian access to all of these destinations to reduce vehicle trips within Bryn Mawr.



Examples of Landscaped Pedestrian Walkways

The pathway, which ranges in width from 16 to 20 feet, currently contains large shrubs and inappropriate fencing. The space could benefit from improved hardscaping and a landscape plan that allows for filtered light and colorful, seasonal plantings. Staff previously pointed out that several lunch tables were placed within the required buffer in the rear of the property and must be removed. If the aforementioned pathway area is improved, it could be further enhanced with seating and bistro tables to serve those existing needs on site. Staff has included a condition requiring the applicant to create a dynamic landscape plan that includes improved hardscape and plant material, as well as seating, pedestrian scaled lighting, shade, and plantings of seasonal interest. The applicant shall reach out to the adjacent property owner, where Starbucks is located, to coordinate plantings and fencing.

In his review the Township Engineer requested that a post-development traffic study of the intersection of Lancaster and Elliott Avenues be provided and that it include signal timing adjustments to optimize traffic flow if/as approved by the Township. Additionally, since the development may result in increased pedestrian activity at this intersection, the Township Engineer has requested that the ADA ramps and other pedestrian signals be upgraded.

## 2. Greening Standards

The project is subject to the Greening Standards as required by §155-213.E. of the Zoning Code. A condition of Tentative Sketch required the applicant to comply with the following:

- Natural Features Code Section 101-9: Minimum Planting Standards;
- Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 135-30: Shade Trees; and
- Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 135-41.4: Greening Standards.

The Landscape Plan submitted erroneously assumes that the requirements of Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 135-41.4 supersede the requirements of Natural Features Code Section 101.9 and Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 135-30. Staff notes that all of these Code requirements are cumulative and must all be met on-site or relief is required. In staff's preliminary review the application is deficient in the following ways:

- The proposal is classified as a new building under the Greening Standards, not a building addition.
- The linear feet of frontage under the Greening Standards must include the entire project area.

Staff recommends that the applicant provide as much additional landscape material on-site and seek relief to provide any additional material off-site or to increase the size of the plant material provided.

### 3. Conditional Use Requests

The applicant seeks the following Conditional Uses:

- Zoning Code Section 155-215.E(2)(a)(1) - To provide 44.2% glazing on the ground floor of the primary front facade where between 65% to 70% clear windows and doors is required.

Given that this is an office use and this provision is suited toward retail uses, staff does not have an issue with the request.

- Zoning Code Section 155-215.E(2)(a)(3) - To provide a ratio of 1.18:1 windows to solid façade at the ground floor of the primary front facade where a ratio of at least 3:1 between openings and solid surfaces is required.

Since the window scheme will be consistent with the placement and rhythm of the windows found on the existing building, staff does not have any issue with this request.

- Zoning Code Section 155-215.E(2)(a)(6)(a) - To provide a sill height of 3'4" above adjacent sidewalk level where the maximum sill height above the adjacent sidewalk elevation shall be two feet or lower.

Since the window scheme will be consistent with the placement and rhythm of the windows found on the existing building staff does not have any issue with this request.

- Zoning Code Section 155-215.E(2)(d)- To use an exterior insulation and finish system ("EIFS") or synthetic stucco system, which is prohibited unless authorized by the Board of Commissioners by conditional use.

While EIFS is not a preferred exterior material, the applicant has stated that the proposed synthetic material mimics the appearance of the existing natural materials on the site and will appear indistinguishable from otherwise permitted materials.

### **It is the applicant's burden to demonstrate compliance with the legislative intent below:**

#### ***Bryn Mawr Village District Legislative Intent (155-210)***

*The BMVD was adopted in 2008 with the following purposes: To provide for pedestrian-oriented outlets with multifaceted interconnected and interrelated uses in an established commercial area. Specific objectives of the district include the following:*

- 1. Encourage economic development while maintaining the traditional main street environment.*
- 2. Protect existing residential neighborhoods.*
- 3. Establish a walkable community by promoting pedestrian-oriented streets and pedestrian-scaled buildings.*
- 4. Encourage lively, human-scaled activities within a mix of residential, commercial, cultural and other uses separately or in the same building.*
- 5. Ensure a vibrant street life by encouraging active ground floor retail, and discouraging certain uses on Bryn Mawr and Lancaster Avenues.*

6. *Promote the reuse of existing structures in a manner that maintains the historic and visual character architecture and building scale of the neighborhood.*
7. *Reduce auto dependency by promoting transit ridership, bicycling and walking.*
8. *Accommodate parking in a convenient and unobtrusive manner and encourage shared parking, where possible.*
9. *Promote residential uses in upper stories.*
10. *Concentrate commercial uses on the ground level of mixed-use buildings.*

#### ***Bryn Mawr Village District Development Design Standards (155-215)***

*The stated purpose of the Development design standards is to establish consistent requirements that promote pedestrian-oriented design and traditional Bryn Mawr Village character. Adherences to these standards carry out the purposes of the district set forth above. The stated principles guiding the administration of these standards are as follows:*

1. *New buildings should complement the pattern of existing landmark structures and have a building fabric that relates to their site and surroundings.*
2. *Buildings should respond at street level to a pedestrian scale.*
3. *Emphasis should be provided at prominent locations to buildings:*
4. *With prominent facades that terminate view corridors; or*
5. *Whose corners are at gateway locations; or*
6. *That either surround or are surrounded by open space.*
7. *New and existing development should have a consistent character.*
8. *Active ground floor uses should have multiple entrances and distinctive entrance treatments.*
9. *Texture and variety should be provided through facade articulation and composition.*
10. *Architectural expression should be provided in windows, doors, walls, and roofs.*
11. *Pedestrian pathways should be provided that are safe and attractive.*
12. *Street trees and shade trees should be employed to enhance development.*

#### **4. Relief**

The current proposal requires relief from Subdivision and Land Development Code Section 135-35.A.2, which prohibits the creation of irregular lots. The lot lines created at the edge of the new building create a jog in the lot line, which does not meet the requirements of this code section.

Staff notes that the existing lot is irregular and supports relief from this code section.

#### **5. Action**

The Planning Commission must take the following actions on this application:

1. Make a recommendation on the Preliminary Land Development Plan.
2. Make a recommendation on the following relief:
  - A. Subdivision and Land Development Code Section 135-35A(2) to increase the existing irregularity of the lot lines.
3. Make a recommendation on the Conditional Use application.