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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO Box 311  
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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 23, 2025

TO: Christopher Leswing, Director of Building & Planning  
Building & Planning Department  
Township of Lower Merion  
75 East Lancaster Avenue  
Ardmore, PA 19003

FROM: Marley Bice, AICP, Community Planning Assistant Manager  
[marley.bice@montgomerycountypa.gov](mailto:marley.bice@montgomerycountypa.gov) | 610-278-3740

SUBJECT: MCPC #25-0116-002  
Gratz College Addition

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We have received and reviewed a “SOPI” submission for the above-referenced subdivision and land development application as you requested on July 11, 2025. The comments in this memo are based on the most recent submission. We have attached our most recent full review letter (for submission MCPC #25-0116-001) for reference; however, some comments in our previous review letter(s) may have been addressed.

### UPDATED BACKGROUND

We have reviewed the most recent “SOPI” submission for changes and did not identify any significant changes with regards to the type of development and location of improvements proposed. However, additional information was received with this submission, including a landscape plan and a code relief request form. In addition, an updated code relief request form was received from township staff on July 22, 2025.

### ADDITIONAL REVIEW COMMENTS

We have reviewed the most recent “SOPI” submission and feel that the comments from our July 7, 2025 review letter (please see Attachment B) have been addressed; however, we wish to offer the following additional comment based on the most recent plan submission:

- Shrub Species Diversity: The proposed plant list for new plantings does not appear to meet the minimum species diversity requirements in Table 5.8.1. of the township’s subdivision and land development ordinance as eight shrubs of a single species are proposed where three species would be required.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant’s Proposed Site Plan  
Attachment B: MCPC #25-0116-001 Review Letter Dated July 7, 2025





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SCOTT FRANCE, AICP  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 7, 2025

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

Re: MCPC #25-0116-001  
Plan Name: Gratz College Addition  
(860 sq. ft. institutional on approximately 0.53 acres)  
Situate: Bala Avenue (south /east of Levering Mill Road  
Lower Merion Township

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 June 5, 2025. We forward this letter as a report of our review.

## BACKGROUND

The applicant, Gratz College, proposes to consolidate two parcels at the corner of Bala Avenue and Levering Mill Road and construct a building addition with an 860-square foot footprint to connect the two existing buildings on the combined site. Both of the existing buildings are listed as Class II historic resources on the township's historic resource inventory. The vehicular driveway to Bala Avenue will be removed while the vehicular driveway from Levering Mill Road will remain. Additional improvements shown at this time include sidewalk repairs, ADA curb ramps and crosswalks, stormwater management, and landscaping. The property is located in the township's IC3 Institutional Civic 3 zoning district.



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies this property as Institutional in the Future Land Use Map. In addition, this property is identified as Town Center in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. Town Centers are traditional downtown areas with a mix of retail, institutional, office, and residential uses. The project specifically advances the statement that “historic buildings should be preserved, rehabilitated, and reused.”

## REVIEW COMMENTS

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant’s proposal; however, in the course of our review we have identified the following issues that the applicant and Lower Merion Township may wish to consider prior to moving forward. Our review comments are as follows:

## REVIEW COMMENTS

### ZONING ORDINANCE COMMENTS

We suggest that the location of the proposed bicycle rack be clarified and shown consistently across the plan submissions. It appears that the bicycle rack near the Bala Avenue pedestrian entrance is shown in different locations relative to the sidewalk on the civil site plan and the landscape plan. In addition, sufficient information should be provided to ensure compliance with the bicycle parking clearance and location requirements in Sections 155-8.8.B. & C. of the township’s zoning ordinance.

### SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE COMMENTS

We suggest that the landscape plan be revised to include a landscape compliance chart as required by Section 135-5.7.E. of the township’s subdivision and land development ordinance (“A compliance chart shall also be included, which demonstrates compliance with all of the requirements of this article and any applicable chapters.”). For example, additional calculations should be provided regarding street trees along both street frontages of the site and any required landscape buffer plantings.

## CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the proposed development; however, we believe that our suggested revisions will better achieve the township’s planning objectives for institutional 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 (#25-0116-001) 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, Community Planning Assistant Manager  
610-278-3740 – [marley.bice@montgomerycountypa.gov](mailto:marley.bice@montgomerycountypa.gov)

- c: Marc Henderson, P.E., Applicant's Engineer
- Gilbert P. High, Jr., Esq., Twp. Solicitor
- Ernie B. McNeely, Twp. Manager
- Jody Kelley, Twp. Secretary
- Joseph Mastronardo, P.E., Twp. Engineer
- Charlie Doyle, Twp. Asst. Dir. of Planning
- Colleen Hall, Twp. Senior Planner
- Greg Prichard, Twp. Hist. Preserv. Planner
- Holly Colello, Twp. Planner
- Sarah Carley, Twp. Planner
- Hope Viviani, Twp. Planning Technician

- Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
- Attachment B: Aerial Image of Site