



TO: Conshohocken Planning Commission

FR: Elizabeth H. Lankenau, AICP
Borough Planner

DT: November 21, 2012

RE: Proposed Zoning Amendment and Tentative Sketch Plan
Residential-Office District

On October 12, 2012, Provco Pineville Fayette, L.P, the equitable owner of the property located at 1109 – 1119 Fayette Street/1201 Butler Pike, submitted a proposed zoning ordinance amendment to the Borough of Conshohocken's Residential-Office (R-O) District and a Tentative Sketch Plan for a Wawa convenience store and gas station at the Fayette/Butler location.

This memorandum:

- 1) summarizes the existing R-O district, including its Legislative Intent;
- 2) summarizes relevant Borough planning policy documents and County guidelines to compare how the zoning amendment meets the goals and intents of those documents; and
- 3) reviews the Tentative Sketch Plan against the Subdivision and Land Use Ordinance.

EXISTING R-O DISTRICT

The R-O district extends along Fayette Street from 8th Avenue (including Borough Hall) to 12th Avenue (south side). It is bounded to the east by Harry Street, and to the west by Forrest Street. It is characterized predominantly by late 19th century, 2 ½ story free-standing and twin residences, many of which have been converted to at least partial office use. There are also some 3-story rows of a similar era, some of which have also been converted to 1st floor commercial and office use.

The Legislative Intent of the R-O district "is to encourage the retention and preservation of existing Victorian and early 20th Century residences by permitting residential uses and conditionally allowing limited office conversions. Furthermore, it is the intent of the Part to maintain the existing residential streetscape of upper Fayette Street through regulations that allow these conversions only when front facades and porches are preserved and if building additions and parking areas are not constructed in front yards." The 900 (west side), 1000, and 1100 (west side, opposite proposed Wawa site) blocks of Fayette best convey the residential feeling of the district that the legislative intent of the R-O district seeks to protect.

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The R-O district allows, by right, single-family detached dwellings, single-family semi-detached dwellings, a municipal or government office, and accessory uses in compliance with Section 27-811. Provisions are also given for conditional uses, conditional use standards, permitted use and conditional use dimensional standards, and parking lot requirements. Details of these sections are shown in *Table 1*. Exterior renovations in the R-O district must be reviewed by the Borough Design Review Committee, which makes its recommendations to Borough Council.

RELEVANT PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Fayette Street is one of Montgomery County's approximately 35 traditional downtown centers, and like many in the County, Fayette Street has evolved over the years, shifting as industries closed or moved and retailers relocated to shopping centers. A constant challenge, however, has been balancing economic development and preserving community character when redevelopment opportunities arise. Discrepancies in achieving this balance can be seen when moving from Lower to Upper Fayette Street.

Along Lower Fayette, north of 1st Avenue, the 19th century building stock has remained largely the same in overall building form with rows hosting first floor commercial with residences above and older freestanding houses that have been converted to other uses. On Middle Fayette, north of 4th Avenue, several buildings were demolished for more auto-dependent, mid- to late-20th century uses, such as banks with drive-thrus, a grocery-turned-pharmacy, and gas stations. Upper Fayette, which includes the R-O district, has generally held onto its late 19th and early 20th century residential buildings; however, many have been modified to accommodate office uses. A couple large, mid-20th century commercial buildings, such as the E. F. Moore Chevrolet dealership and the Town Valet Cleaners on the 1100 block, disrupt the otherwise leafy, residential feel of this part of Fayette.

Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan and Revitalization Plan Update

The Conshohocken Comprehensive Plan (2007) and the Revitalization Plan Update (2011) were prepared as part of a community-driven planning process. These documents identified what the Conshohocken community values, and set forward an implementation plan to protect and promote those values accordingly.

Themes for future development along Fayette Street become evident in these planning documents, including incorporating pedestrian friendly design, encouraging mixed-use development, and making sensitive physical transitions between zones to encourage greater connectivity while preserving community character. Both plans recognize that this dense, built-out borough has few commercial development opportunities to increase retail square footage and diversity along Fayette Street, and both plans encourage economic development that is sensitive to Conshohocken's physical character. Specific references to these documents are made in the *Other Planning Considerations* section of this review.

Montgomery County Town Center District Guidelines & Model Ordinance

Montgomery County has developed design guidelines for established Town Centers, such as the Fayette corridor. The guidelines document acknowledges that downtowns evolve,

but that changes can either enhance or diminish a sense of character and place. Similar to recommendations found in the Borough plans, the County recommends:

- Introducing a mix of uses. A mix of uses along a downtown corridor, on a block, and even within a building encourages greater pedestrian street activity and better ensures the economic success of downtown.
- Constructing a pedestrian friendly environment to maintain the main street character. The County refers to a “compatible streetscape,” meaning: how do buildings relate to the streetscape in terms of placement, scale, and massing; how do sidewalks, street trees, and landscaping add to the pedestrian experience; and how does the design of the building affect walkability and streetscape character (eg, building massing, setbacks, height, materials, window and door placement, etc.).
- Adopting zoning regulations to support a downtown character in concert with community goals identified in municipal planning documents.
- Preserving historic buildings.

In addition to guidelines, the County has prepared a model ordinance for downtowns that recommends permitted uses, conditional uses, prohibited uses, and provides other useful information for maintaining the character of an established downtown corridor. Among the prohibited uses along a downtown main street are gasoline service and filling stations. Other details of this model ordinance are shown in *Table 1*.

PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENT TO R-O DISTRICT

The proposal calls for amending the R-O district to include a new Subsection 5, which would permit, by right, a number of uses on properties that were last occupied or used as a nonconforming commercial use, provided that the property does not contain a Victorian or early 20th Century residential structure. Permitted uses would include business and professional offices, retail establishments, restaurants excluding drive-in or drive-thru, convenience retail food stores including the sale of fuel, and parking lots or garages secondary to the principal use. Details on dimensional standards, special regulations, and sign regulations are shown in *Table 1*.

Major differences exist when comparing the proposed zoning amendment against the Borough ordinance and County recommendations (*Table 1*). Under the amendment, greater intensity uses would be permitted by right; dimensional standards are drastically modified; a greater number of parking spaces are provided than needed and with no dimensional or landscaping standards; and the signage square footage vastly exceeds what is permitted elsewhere along Fayette Street.

Table 1: Comparison of R-O District, Proposed Zoning Amendment, and County Model Ordinance

	R-O District	Proposed Amendment / New Subsection 12-1202.5.A-D	Montgomery County Model Ordinance for Town Centers*
Permitted Uses	Single-family (SF) detached dwellings; SF semi-detached dwellings; municipal or government office; accessory uses in compliance with 27-811	Permitted on properties last occupied or used as a non-conforming commercial use, provided that property does not contain a Victorian or early 20 th Century residential structure; business and professional offices; retail establishments; restaurants excluding drive-in or drive-thru; convenience retail food store including the sale of fuel; parking lots or garages secondary to principal use	A mix of permitted uses; apartments on 2 nd fl and above; small-scale retail establishments; business and professional offices; personal service shops; food and beverage serving establishments, except drive-thrus; banks, except drive-thrus; religious buildings; private clubs; studios; government buildings; and other similar uses
Dimensional Standards	Min. lot size 3,500 sf for SF detached, and 2,500 sf for SF semi-detached; min. lot width 35' for SF detached and 25' for SF semi-detached; front yard setback 25' from ultimate right-of-way line, except where building line established, then the majority on that block; min. side yard 5'; min. rear yard setback 30'; max. impervious coverage 50% of lot area; max. building height 35'	Comply with 27-1205 except for: min. lot width 250' on a state highway; min. lot size 40,000 sf; min. side yard 25'; max. impervious coverage 90% of lot area; fuel pumps set back min. 15' from ultimate right-of-way	Min. lot size 2,500 sf; min. lot width 25'; buildings shall be built to sidewalk or avg. of 2 closest structures, or 10'-20' for plaza, etc; side yard 5'; max. impervious coverage 100%; max. non-residential bldg footprint 10,000 sf; Floor Area Ratio 2.0
Special Regulations	In R-O District, exterior renovations must be reviewed by the Borough Design Review Committee, which makes its recommendations to Borough Council.	May have more than one access way if separated by min. of 100'; right-in/right-out driveway max. 16' unless PennDOT requires greater width on driveways fronting a state road	Public plazas, courtyards, etc should be min. 500 sf; must be accessible from sidewalk; 30% must be landscaped with shade trees, shrubs, and mixed plantings with year-round interest; max. 20% concrete paving; 1 seating area per 30 sf; shall include trash containers; 1 shade tree per 500 sf; must connect to other activities, such as building entries; shall have an agreement for public access if constructed by a private entity

Table 1: Comparison of R-O District, Proposed Zoning Amendment, and County Model Ordinance (Cont'd)

R-O District		Proposed Amendment / New Subsection 12-1202.5.A-D	Montgomery County Model Ordinance for Town Centers*
Sign Regulations	<p><i>Monument signs</i> – 10 sf on any one side; not to exceed 4' in height; externally illuminated only</p> <p><i>Wall signs</i> – 20 sf in area; externally illuminated only</p> <p><i>Directional signs</i> – N/A</p>	<p>1 <i>monument sign</i>, max. 50 sf, internally or externally illuminated and placed no more than 10' above ground</p> <p>1 <i>wall sign</i>, max 70 sf, internally or externally illuminated; <i>fuel pumps</i>: 1 sign per pump at 2 sf/ea</p> <p><i>directional signage</i>, max. 2 per driveway access and max. 2 sf/ea, internally or externally illuminated</p>	<p><i>Monument signs</i> shall not exceed 20 sf, shall not exceed 5' in height, and shall have landscaping around base</p> <p><i>Wall signs</i> shall not exceed 10% of building façade, and shall not project more than 12" beyond the building</p> <p><i>Directional signs</i> shall not exceed 4 sf, and shall not contain advertising; sign illumination shall not include flashing, pulsating, or moving lights; back-lit, halo-lit, or reverse channel letters with halo illumination are recommended; lighting should be shielded to avoid glare</p>
Conditional Uses	Professional office; studio; residential conversions; funeral home; bed-and-breakfasts; parking lots secondary to primary use; other uses of similar intensity and scale; day-care facilities subject to 27-812	N/A	Apartment buildings, w/ conditions; parking garages; undertaking facilities/funeral homes; has conditions for replacement buildings
Conditional Use Standards	<p>Façade must be oriented to Fayette; must preserve, utilize and maintain an existing building consistent with the Victorian/early 20th century character of this section of Fayette; must preserve, repair, and maintain façade/porch in conformance with Façade Improvement Guidelines; must preserve existing front yard as a landscaped open space with only impervious coverage being sidewalks or pedestrian paths; landscaping consistent with Upper Fayette area; no parking lots or off-street parking between front wall of principal structure/curb toward which that wall is oriented; all refuse areas to be screened from view of adjacent streets by landscape buffer/opaque fence or wall (6' to 8' high) in conjunction with landscape material</p>	N/A	N/A

Table 1: Comparison of R-O District, Proposed Zoning Amendment, and County Model Ordinance (Cont'd)

R-O District		Proposed Amendment / New Subsection 12-1202.5.A-D	Montgomery County Model Ordinance for Town Centers*
Conditional Use Dimensional Standards	Min. lot size 4,000 sf; min. lot width for nonresidential uses 40' and 30' for residential uses; max. impervious coverage 60%, unless shared parking, then 80%	N/A	N/A
Prohibited Uses	N/A	Any adult uses and activity defined in Section 27-202	Automobile sales or repair establishments; gas and filling stations; drive-thru window or facilities; self-service storage; adult entertainment uses
Parking Lot Requirements	No parking in front yard; 10' setback from rear property line; 5' setback from side property line; 5' setback from rear of main building; landscaping in accordance with 27-2007 with native plant materials and naturalistic design encouraged	1 space per 150 gsf of floor area	Locate to the rear of the principal building or to the side (if not along a street; lot shall not extend more than 70' in width along any pedestrian street frontage without pedestrian amenity (eg, a plaza); visible parking shall be screened by 3' high fence, wall, or plantings; 1 space per 250 gsf of floor area for convenience stores; driveways shall not exceed 24' when crossing sidewalks

*Town Center District: Creating New Opportunities, Montgomery County Planning Commission, 2006 (<http://planning.montcopa.org/planning/cwp/view,a,1458,q,42477.asp>).

Planning Comments on Proposed Zoning Amendment

Table 2 responds to statements made by the Applicant on page 3 of the Zoning Application and page 4 of the cover letter prepared by the law offices of Eastburn and Gray, P.C., dated October 15, 2012. Additional comments about the application are provided in the next section, *Other Planning Considerations*.

Table 2: Zoning Application/Amendment Review

Zoning Application/Amendment	Is the Application/Amendment correct in its interpretation of the Legislative Intent and/or goals of planning documents?	Explanation
1. The “existing zoning does not provide a mechanism to encourage redevelopment of a site previously developed for [an] intense non-conforming retail purpose.” (p. 3, Zoning Application)	No	The existing zoning seeks to protect the residential-office character of the district, the uses of which are primarily in converted dwellings. There is no evidence to suggest that the intensity of use by an active car dealership is similar to that of a convenience store/gas station. The Applicant should demonstrate how the intensity is comparable between these uses, describe differences in peak activity for each type of use, and provide vehicular traffic counts for Wawa stores/stations of similar sizes and in similar borough environments.
2. “Redevelopment to accommodate additional retailers (to include a convenience store) is consistent with the Borough Revitalization Plan Update, May 2011” (p. 3, Zoning Application)	Yes, with exceptions	<p>The Revitalization Plan Update’s Market Analysis (Table 16) states the Borough can support a convenience store, which is one of among approximately 50 other types of retailers that could be supported in the borough. The Analysis explicitly does not include gas stations, and the Analysis does not comment on the appropriate locations for any of the retailers.</p> <p>The Comprehensive Plan suggests that the R-O district is an extension of the Fayette commercial corridor, and that the corridor should be examined for retail expansion opportunities. The Revitalization Plan Update recommends</p>

		<p>exploring how some 1st floor professional offices in the R-O district could move upstairs so that small-scale retailers could move into the 1st floors, which would increase available retail square footage in existing buildings while also encouraging more pedestrian traffic along Fayette.</p> <p>The Revitalization Plan, Comprehensive Plan, and County guidelines for downtowns also make references to the importance of pedestrian friendly design, encouraging mixed-use development, and making sensitive physical transitions between zones to maintain community character and encourage greater connectivity throughout the Borough.</p>
3. "The amendment outlines standards for large lots including preservation of worthy period buildings and prohibits undesirable uses along Fayette Street." (p. 3, Zoning Application)	Yes, with exceptions	<p>To its credit, the Amendment is careful to specify that the proposed uses could occur only on non-conforming commercial sites that do not include Victorian-era or early 20th century residential buildings; however, "worthy" and undesirable" mean different things to different people. "Undesirable" could include any number of uses, including those proposed in the amendment.</p>
4. "Permitted and conditional uses...are limited in their nature and do not provide a reasonable opportunity to use or redevelop the site for one of these purposes." (p. 4, Cover Letter)	No	<p>Given the residential feeling of the streetscape in the R-O district, and the intent to have uses in this district that are compatible with the Victorian-era and early 20th century buildings, caution should be used in introducing uses of greater size and intensity. This site could be redeveloped with uses consistent with existing permitted and conditional uses, albeit likely at greater intensity.</p> <p>It is unclear what is meant by "reasonable opportunity."</p>

5. "The Declaration of Legislative Intent...does not apply to the subject site because the site does not contain existing Victorian or early 20 th Century residences, nor is the site now or previously used for residential purposes. Thus, there is no residential streetscape worth of preservation in this section of upper Fayette Street." (p. 4, Cover Letter)	No	The Amendment does not propose a change in the Intent. While the site is not a Victorian or early 20 th century residential property, the character of the district is, and the proposed amendment and tentative sketch plan do not propose a solution that is consistent with the existing streetscape character of Upper Fayette Street.
6. "The subject site is situated opposite a commercial use (the Town Valet Cleaners) and because of its adjacency to both a cemetery and a sports stadium, it is not surrounded by residential uses." (p. 4, Cover Letter)	No	The entire Borough is one square mile and all uses are proximate to each other. Sensitive transitions between zones and uses are important. The R-O district is only a block wide in each direction, abutting BR-1 districts. Furthermore, there are residential properties across from the site on the west side of Fayette, and residential properties on E. 11 th Avenue, Harry Street, and on the unit block of W. 11 th Avenue. The proposed convenience store/gas station use, and intensity of it, will only contrast more starkly by its adjacency to the cemetery at its northern border.
7. "The amendment will provide for the opportunity to create a use that will both beautify the streetscape and eliminate a distressed non-conforming use. In addition, the use conforms with a recommendation of the Revitalization Plan Update, May 2011, which suggests that the Borough accommodate additional retailers and at Table 16 specifically suggests a convenience store (size of 6,000s.f – Wawa will be about 4,100 s.f.)." (p. 4, Cover Letter)	Yes, with exceptions	The Amendment would make use of a vacant site, although "beautify" and "distressed" are open to interpretation. As in #2 above, the Market Analysis does state that the Borough could support another convenience store but does not state where that use would be appropriate, and the Analysis does not take into consideration gas stations, which is a major consideration in this amendment.

Other Planning Considerations

1. Legislative Intent. The Amendment does not propose a revision to the R-O district's Legislative Intent, which seeks to retain and preserve existing residential uses and conditionally allow limited office conversions. While a legal point of view may try to make a case that, "the Legislative Intent...does not apply to the subject site because the site does not contain existing Victorian or early 20th Century residences, nor is the site now used for residential purposes....[T]hus there is no residential streetscape worth of preservation....", this is not true from a community planning perspective. Preserving the mixed-use residential-office character of Upper Fayette should be paramount, and new uses - and the buildings they're in - should be compatible with their surroundings.

While it is reasonable to expect that most large-lot uses proposed for this district would be somewhat different in physical character and intensity from the late 19th and early 20th century residential/office buildings, other types of new uses could better meet the Legislative Intent and goals of the planning documents, such as a mixed-use development that incorporates first floor retail with residential units above. Several sections in the Comprehensive Plan support development that is sympathetic to its surroundings:

- a. Page 39 states, "The Borough's Residential Office District serves as a continuation of the existing commercial district. The Borough should maintain the upper portion of Fayette as a low-intensity, mixed use (residential office) area because this provides a sensible transition between residential and commercial areas. The Borough should also promote the conversion of the upper floors of business in this area to residential use. These smaller apartments may be ideal for first-time renters or elderly tenants."
 - b. Page 61 states that, "[Z]oning changes should create transition zones between the commercial core and residential areas, likely a combination of mixed use and low-intensity retail development."
 - c. Page 65 states that, "Permitting construction of high-quality development on limited developable space, while preserving residential...features of Conshohocken has been identified as a priority. Implementing tools that achieve this objective will promote a higher quality of life, increase economic well-being of its residents, and promote the community's attractiveness to future residents and business owners."
 - d. Page 75 states that to maintain community character, "An effort should be made to ensure that new construction matches the scale and rhythm of the existing structures."
2. Economic Development. Fayette Street is a highly visible and well traveled location, so it is understandable why any retailer would want to locate here. The Market Analysis of the Revitalization Plan Update identified the need for an additional 133,000 sf of retail space that could occupy approximately 50 stores in the borough. Retail vacancy is extremely low in the borough, and more space is needed to house this demand.

The Analysis identifies what uses could be supported, but does not comment on where these uses should be located in the borough. A convenience store is only one type of retail store that the borough could support; however, it should be

noted that the Analysis does not address gas stations. Page A-9 of the Analysis clarifies, “The term ‘retail store sales’ in this analysis includes those sales by establishments that are normally found in pedestrian-oriented retail shopping areas. This definition excludes the sale of automobile dealerships and repair facilities, service stations, fuel oil dealers, and non-store retailing.”

While a convenience store/gas station would redevelop this vacant site, a mixed-use building with a residential component would bring greater economic benefit to the borough than a convenience store/gas station because of higher real estate tax revenues generated by such a development (Urban Partners email, 15 November 2012). Furthermore, a mixed-use site in the R-O district could also begin to address meeting the demand for retail space and diversity demonstrated by the Market Analysis, providing space for multiple retail demands in one location such as a jewelry store, a clothing store, and a specialty goods store. If any amendment is made to the R-O district to address large-scale opportunities, it should be revised to allow for mixed-use buildings that have dimensional standards and other standards that reflect the character and uses of the surrounding district.

Several items in the Comprehensive Plan support maximizing retail opportunities on limited developable space in the borough:

- a. Page 31 states that during plan development, “The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee recognizes an opportunity to foster the development of downtown to serve its residents with a greater variety of shopping, restaurants, and entertainment that better reflects the increased spending power and interests of its residents.”
- b. Page 58 states, “As the service sector grows, the Borough’s future economic success will rely on its ability to attract business and industry with a knowledgeable and highly skilled labor force. Doing so brings a stronger spending power to the Borough and an increased demand for local goods and services. Currently, the Borough is experiencing some difficulty retaining residents as incomes rise or families grow. Therefore the Borough must invest not only in ‘bricks and mortar’ infrastructure but also in creating a strong ‘quality of place’...Future economic development should focus on the expansion of the commercial area and implementation of pedestrian-scaled design.” The paragraph goes on to explain that expanding the commercial core to the east, west, and south with mixed-use buildings would “enable the Borough to attract a variety of new businesses,” which is an argument that could be extended to large-lot development opportunities in the R-O district, such as the E. F. Moore and Town Valet Cleaners sites.

In the Revitalization Plan Update, economic development issues are also addressed.

- a. The Business Development Commission undertook a survey during the planning process for the Revitalization Plan Update. This survey, which was briefly summarized in the Update (p. 10), sought to understand what types of businesses are needed and desirable in the borough. It revealed that, “The respondents want to see Conshohocken become known for its ‘main street’ feeling and its sense of community, which is bolstered by the desire to see more independently owned stores.”

- b. A survey undertaken for the Revitalization Plan Update further supports what the Business Development Commission found. It revealed that respondents want “home-grown businesses” and that the Borough should be “proactive in deciding what businesses should move on to Fayette Street to ensure that those uses support a walkable environment (p. 16).”
- 3. Pedestrian Friendliness. Demolition of a non-conforming auto-oriented use in the R-O district represents a rare large-lot redevelopment opportunity in the borough, in this district, and on Fayette Street. Instead of trading one auto-oriented use (a car dealership) for another auto-oriented use of greater intensity (a convenience store/gas station), this site could host a variety of retail uses that animate the sidewalks with people moving comfortably among the office and retail businesses that line the corridor. A convenience store without fuel sales could be a component of this mixed-use scenario.

Several items in the Revitalization Plan Update discuss the importance of introducing new commercial opportunities in the borough that maintain the walkability of Fayette Street:

- a. Pages 5 states, “Fayette Street lacks retail diversity in community-serving retail establishments...and its excellent regional access is increasingly recognized by drive-thru chain retailers whose development needs diminish the ‘main street’ feel and walkability of this thoroughfare.”
 - b. Page 20 states, “...[T]he Borough should examine ways to encourage more foot traffic along Fayette Street...[which] can be improved through...introducing more active first floor retail along Fayette Street....”
- 4. Traffic. One of the goals listed in the Transportation and Infrastructure section of the Revitalization Plan Update (p. 45, Goal 10.3) recommends continuing “...the broad strategy of traffic calming throughout the borough by further enhancing Fayette Street....” This would include completing the streetscape improvements to 12th Avenue, such as the corner bump outs, to help ensure pedestrian safety. Amending the R-O district to allow for an intense auto-oriented use does not help to meet this goal.

The Revitalization Plan Update addresses stakeholder concerns about traffic on Fayette.

- a. In the Public Process section of the report where stakeholder interviews are summarized, it was noted that while “[T]he streetscape improvements along Fayette Street are good...more needs to be done to calm traffic... (p. 14)”

The Traffic Impact Study for the Proposed Wawa Development (McMahon, 2012), reports that the development would generate approximately 44 “new” trips during weekday morning peak hours, and 60 “new” trips during weekday afternoon peak hours, referencing two Institute of Transportation Engineers’ publications, one of which applies only to convenience stores. The Study notes that the “...proposed land use largely draws upon ‘pass-by’ traffic, which is already on the road heading to another primary destination (p. 1).”

Two issues are raised by this. First, are the 44 morning and 60 afternoon “new” trips only to the convenience store? How many trips are made for the gas station?

And second, while some of this traffic volume has a primary destination in Conshohocken, certainly others do not. If the Borough is trying to encourage independent, home-grown uses that cause people to spend more time and money in the borough, such as at specialty goods stores and restaurants, allowing a use that encourages “pass-thru” traffic does not help these long-term economic development goals.

To understand what the change from one auto-oriented use to another means, it is recommended that the Applicant provide: 1) traffic volume comparisons between an active car dealership and a Wawa convenience store/gas station, 2) information about what hours of the day are most active for each type of use, and 3) provide traffic counts for Wawa stores/gas stations of similar sizes and in similar borough environments.

5. Permitted vs. Conditional Uses. If Council agrees that the uses proposed in this amendment are appropriate for the district, members should consider whether those uses should be allowed by right or by conditional use. And, if an amendment to the district is made, mixed-use buildings should be included among the uses. The uses proposed are of a greater intensity than the existing ordinance, and site planning for a business or professional office versus a convenience store/gas station are different. Council may want to retain its authority to negotiate how certain types of new uses could best fit at a site in the R-O district that meets the specific Applicant’s and Borough’s needs.
6. Siting and Form of Building. Some of the concern about this proposed zoning amendment, and the uses that would be permitted by right, is related to site layout and building design, particularly given that the Borough’s Façade Guidelines do not adequately address infill development of this scale. More detail is provided in the review of the tentative sketch plan, but at a minimum, the new uses proposed as part of this amendment should:
 - a. Maintain the established building line at Fayette Street.
 - b. Orient the site so that the building fronts Fayette Street and accessory structures are placed behind the building.
 - c. Reduce the number of curb cuts for driveways
 - d. Design the building so that it reflects the scale, rhythm, and building materials of the early 19th and 20th century buildings on Fayette Street
Roof form and pitch should reflect the style of other buildings in the district.
 - e. Design the building so it has two “fronts,” one for pedestrians entering on Fayette, and one at the “rear” of the building for people who drive to the site. Parking, and other structures, should be located at the “rear” of the building.
 - f. Allow on-site lighting levels that are consistent with what is permitted in the R-O and Borough Commercial (BC) districts. If the Borough only permits externally illuminated signs along Fayette, that should be consistent in this amendment. Temporary signage should be prohibited.
 - g. Provisions for landscaping on the entire site should be met, or exceeded, to: serve as buffers between properties, soften the site generally, and to mitigate stormwater runoff. The amount of parking could be reduced to increase the pervious surface amount. If a greater number of parking spaces are acceptable to Council, its members may want to consider a shared parking agreement for stadium users during events.

WAWA CONVENIENCE STORE/GAS STATION: REVIEW OF TENTATIVE SKETCH PLAN

Existing Use

According to the Zoning Application submitted, the lot at 1109-1119 Fayette Street/1201 Butler Pike is 264' x 260' (63,360 sf). The now-vacant site is the location of the former E. F. Moore automobile dealership and service shop, and has one- and two-story buildings for auto sales and storage, administrative offices, fuel tanks, and surface lot parking/storage. It appears from an aerial that the site is 100% impervious.

The parcel falls roughly 40' into Whitemarsh Township's B Residential District.

Two site plans were submitted with the primary difference being the proposed uses for the unopened portion of Harry Street at the rear of the site.

Proposed Use

The proposal calls for the demolition of all buildings and structures on the site for the construction of a Wawa convenience retail food store (4,149 sf), which would also sell fuel. A canopy would cover ten (10) fuel dispensers, and 49 parking spaces would be provided for retail customers. The canopy would be approximately 30' high; it would be oriented to Fayette Street, extending 132' long x 30' deep. The site would be accessed by two driveways along Fayette Street, and one driveway to E. 11th Avenue via Harry Street.

The site would have 1 monument sign, 1 building-mounted sign, 5 pump signs, and 6 internally lit directional signs.

According to the application, improvements associated with the development would include: restoration of street and paving, stormwater management, striping for parking, fencing, landscaping, lighting, and signage.

The Wawa would be open 24 hours, seven days a week. It would have five full-time and 35 part-time employees.

Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) Design Standards

Section 22-403: Streets – The proposed subdivision and land development would occur along the existing street system. An unopened portion of Harry Street at the rear of the site (east side), is shown as being partially opened for access to 11th Avenue. If a Land Development Application is filed, the Borough Engineer will review this section to ensure that the proposal meets design standards.

Section 22-404: Alleys, Driveways, and Parking Areas – An alley is not located adjacent to this site.

The SALDO calls for a maximum driveway width of 25'. The site will have three driveways, two on Fayette (25' and 30") and one on a partially opened Harry Street (24'). The Applicant would need to request a waiver for the 30' Fayette Street driveway, and should comment further on how introducing two driveways on Fayette Street would not be hazardous to the pedestrian condition.

Parking lots shall be designed so the placement of entrances and exits minimize headlight glare, and lighting facilities should be arranged so they do not unnecessarily disturb occupants of adjacent residential properties or interfere with traffic by location or glare. If a Land Development Application is filed, the Applicant should be prepared to submit a Lighting Plan in conformance to the 0.5 footcandle requirement, and describe how glare will be minimized on nearby properties, particularly the residential properties on the west side of Fayette Street.

A 10' native evergreen buffer should be provided where the site abuts residential properties and public rights-of-way. One shade tree per 10 parking spaces must be provided.

The sketch plan shows 49 parking spaces, when only 28 are required under the Borough's existing ordinance. It is recommended that the Applicant review the County's Town Center ordinance for guidelines on convenience store parking. Under that scenario, only 17 spaces are needed. If Council finds that a greater amount of parking is needed than required for this use, a shared parking agreement during stadium events should be explored.

The parking spaces as shown measure 10' x 20'. The SALDO states that the minimum dimension shall be 9' x 18'. It is recommended that the Applicant consider conforming to this minimum dimension.

The Applicant should show how the Loading Zone will be screened.

If a Land Development Application is filed, the Borough Engineer will review this section to ensure that the proposal meets design standards.

Section 22-405: Sidewalks and Curbs –

The existing sidewalk will be replaced with a 5' concrete sidewalk and a 5' wide brick verge, similar to the streetscape improvements elsewhere on Fayette.

The SALDO calls for land developments with parking areas to have a network of sidewalks to support internal circulation, and specifies that vehicular drive aisles cannot be used to satisfy this requirement. The sketch plan shows striped crosswalks at the north and south ends of the lot leading to the store, but more clearly defined enhanced treatments may be appropriate, particularly with the site's proximity to the Stadium and the potential for young pedestrians. The Applicant should provide a Circulation Plan, with details about the paving to show how this pedestrian feature will stand out.

If a Land Development Application is filed, the Borough Engineer will review this section to ensure that the proposal meets design standards.

Section 22-406: Blocks – The site is located in the middle of an existing block.

Section 22-407: Lots – The SALDO states that building lines for all lots shall be in conformance with the minimum front, side, and rear yard requirements. As proposed, the proposal far exceeds the yard requirements of the R-O district:

- The gas canopy, which measures 132' x 30', is situated in front of the convenience store. The adjacent houses to the south have a front yard setback of 20' and the gas canopy is set back 44'. The convenience store is set back 130'.
- The adjacent houses have 5' side yards; the canopy has 66' side yard setbacks, and the convenience store has 87' side yards.

If this convenience store/gas station use is approved by Council, mitigating the intense use and physical impact of it is tied directly to lot layout, building design, and provision of site amenities. Recommendations for a revised site plan include:

- a. Maintain the established building line at Fayette Street.
- b. Orient the site so that the store fronts Fayette Street and the gas canopy is behind it.
- c. Reduce the number of driveway cuts from 3 to 2.
- d. Custom design the store so that it reflects the scale, rhythm, and building materials of the early 19th and 20th century buildings on Fayette Street. The roof form and pitch should reflect the style of other buildings in the district.
- e. Design the store so it has two "fronts," one for pedestrians entering on Fayette, and one at the "rear" of the building for people who drive to and park at the site.
- f. Reduce the amount of signage proposed so that it is more consistent with what is permitted in the R-O and Borough Commercial (BC) districts. Temporary signage should be prohibited.
- g. Install lighting fixtures with a similar footcandle to what is permitted in the R-O and BC districts.
- h. Greater landscaping is needed on the site to serve as a buffer between properties, soften the site generally, and to mitigate stormwater runoff. The amount of parking could be reduced to increase the pervious surface amount.
- i. Incorporate paths, seating areas, and more landscaping as an amenity for employees and visitors.

Section 22-408: Existing Structures on the Land – Land development approval will be issued upon the condition of the expeditious removal of existing structures in complete conformity to all other Borough procedural requirements. The Applicant should provide a Demolition Plan if a Land Development Application is submitted. The Applicant may also want to be prepared to explain whether and site environmental remediation is needed. If a Land Development Application is filed, the Borough Engineer will review this section to ensure that the proposal meets design standards.

Sections 22-409 through 22-419 – If a Land Development Application is filed, the Borough Engineer will review these sections to ensure that the proposal meets design standards.

Section 22-420: Natural or Historic Feature Preservation – The provisions of this section, if applicable, should be addressed through plan notes and/or on the site plan.

Section 22-421: Landscaping and Lighting – If a Land Development Application is filed, the Applicant should prepare a Landscape Plan, prepared and sealed by a landscape architect, and a Lighting Plan. Pedestrian lighting fixtures should be the same as elsewhere on Fayette. On the plans,

- It should be notated on the Landscape Plan that all plant material will be guaranteed by the developer for a minimum of two growing seasons.
- Shade trees must be provided along the public street, spaced no more than 30' apart. Please refer to the Shade Tree Commission's Recommended Shade Tree List for guidance.
- Screen plantings should be provided along the parking lot perimeter, Fayette Street, and adjacent to other properties, to ensure adjacent properties are not disturbed by the vehicles exiting the garages.

Sections 22-422: Open Space Areas and Community Assets. The SALDO calls for all land developments to include open space and outdoor recreational areas for site employees and visitors. The sketch plan shows a 130' long x 20' deep grassy "parking area buffer" along Fayette, and 20' long x 45' wide grassy areas at the northwest and southwest corners of the site near the cemetery and houses. These areas could be enhanced as an amenity for employees and visitors.

Sections 22-423: Bicycle Facilities. All land developments shall include provisions that encourage the use of bicycles. This is particularly true given the proximity to the Stadium. The Applicant should work with the Borough to discuss the most appropriate location for bike racks on or near the site.

Sections 22-424 Transit Facilities. All land developments shall upgrade existing transit stops. The Applicant should work with the Borough to best determine how the SEPTA bus stop can be improved.

Section 22-804: Park or Recreational Facilities, Land and/or Fees. This section requires that in commercial areas, provisions shall be made for suitable areas for walkways (connecting parking facilities with respective structures, sitting areas, bus stops, and other amenities). It also requires either a dedication of land to Conshohocken suitable for a park or recreational use, or a fee in lieu of dedication. The Applicant submitted two plan sets, one showing a portion of green space at the rear of the site along Harry, and another showing additional parking. The Applicant should explain how this section of the ordinance would be satisfied.

Summary and Recommendations

The review of the proposed zoning amendment and tentative sketch plan were made in light of broad community planning practices, review of the Comprehensive Plan and Revitalization Plan Update, and requirements of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. What has not been addressed to this point are the reasons identified in the Applicant's community survey for why a Wawa would be wanted in Conshohocken. The reasons are likely the same as in any community. Wawa has served as a community node in many local communities, and its customers have well-founded sentimental attachments. The stores are open 24 hours, staffed by friendly customer service teams, and provide convenient one-stop shopping for fresh food, cheap gas, and atm machines. The company is a community partner, known to help with local events. And finally, Wawa is a source of jobs and tax revenue and, in this case, would make use of a vacant site.

However, major concerns remain about the proposed amendment, and the convenience store/gas station proposal specifically. Among the broad planning to consider are:

- How might this amendment impact other properties R-O district?
- Do the sketch plans submitted for a convenience store/gas station make sense for this location?
- What might the long-term effects of the uses proposed in the amendment be for the borough, the district, and Fayette Street?
- Might other uses provide greater benefit over the long term (financially, greater retail space, contribution to quality of place)?
- How does a “pass-thru” auto-oriented use encourage people to spend quality time and money in the Borough? How many of these customers will stop to shop or dine at other Conshohocken businesses?
- How would an intense, auto-oriented use affect the community character of the R-O district? How would the quality of walkability and pedestrian connections be affected?
- Finally, if Council does determine that this use is desirable for this location, how can the site layout and building design be improved to mitigate the intense use and physical impacts on its surroundings?

The Applicant should address the following SALDO issues if a Land Development Application is filed:

1. Overall Site Layout and Design
 - a. Submit a Demolition Plan.
 - b. Recommendations for a revised site plan include:
 - i. Maintain the established building line at Fayette Street.
 - ii. Orient the site so that the store fronts Fayette Street and the gas canopy is behind it.
 - iii. Reduce the number of driveway cuts from 3 to 2.
 - iv. Custom design the store so that it reflects the scale, rhythm, and building materials of the early 19th and 20th century buildings on Fayette Street. The roof form and pitch should reflect the style of other buildings in the district.
 - v. Design the store so it has two “fronts,” one for pedestrians entering on Fayette, and one at the “rear” of the building for people who drive to and park at the site.
 - vi. Reduce the amount of signage proposed so that it is more consistent with what is permitted in the R-O and Borough Commercial (BC) districts. Temporary signage should be prohibited.
 - vii. Install lighting fixtures with a similar footcandle to what is permitted in the R-O and BC districts.
 - viii. Greater landscaping is needed on the site to serve as a buffer between properties, soften the site generally, and to mitigate stormwater runoff. The amount of parking could be reduced to increase the pervious surface amount.
 - ix. Incorporate paths, seating areas, and more landscaping as an amenity for employees and visitors.
2. Driveways and Parking Lot
 - a. Assess how driveway widths can be made consistent with the SALDO requirements, and reduce parking spaces to minimum dimension.

- b. Review the County's Town Center ordinance for guidelines on convenience store parking.
 - c. Consider a shared parking agreement with the Borough if more parking is provided than required.
 - d. Submit a Circulation Plan for pedestrian and vehicular traffic. More clearly defined or enhanced crosswalk treatments may be appropriate.
- 3. Lighting and Landscaping
 - a. Submit a Landscape Plan consistent with SALDO requirements. Address footcandle levels on the site and how glare from fixtures and traffic will be minimized at nearby properties, especially those on the west side of Fayette.
 - b. Submit a Lighting Plan consistent with SALDO requirements. Provide one shade tree per 10 parking spaces, and work with the Shade Tree Commission for appropriate street trees. Address the landscape screening at the perimeter of the site and for the Loading Dock.
- 4. Site Amenities
 - a. Work with the Borough to discuss the most appropriate location for bike racks on or near the site, and to determine how any adjacent transit stops can be upgraded. How can open space on the site be improved?
- 5. Section 22-804 – Dedication of Land or Recreation Fee
 - a. The Applicant should explain how this of the ordinance would be satisfied.
- 6. Traffic
 - a. Provide traffic counts for Wawa stores/gas stations of similar sizes and in similar borough environments. It would also be useful to have traffic volume comparisons between an active car dealership and a Wawa convenience store/gas station to understand how these uses differ.

***Review by Christine Stetler, Community Development and Zoning Officer
November 2012***

***Proposed Text Amendment to the Residential Office Zoning District of the 2001
Conshohocken Zoning Ordinance as Amended.***

Proposal Comments as They Relate to the Existing RO District Requirements

1. The submission cover letter indicates that the proposed amendment is consistent with the recent update of the Conshohocken Community Revitalization.
 - a. Expansion of the commercial district was a recommendation of the Revitalization Plan. However, expansion areas suggested were
 - b. between Spring Mill and East 3rd Avenue and the Avenues between Forrest and Harry Street.
 - c. The Plan's Vision Statement includes increasing and diversifying the Borough's retail supply. There is no indication how and where such diversification should take place.

The proposed amendment does expand the retail area and proposes diversified uses in the RO district. However these proposals apply only to large lots within the area.

2. The cover letter also indicates that there are no residential properties surrounding the subject property at 1109 – 1201 Fayette Street. This statement does not take into consideration properties on the west side of Fayette Street. There also are residential properties on East 11th Avenue, Harry Street, and on the 0 block of West 11th Avenue
3. The uses included in the proposed amendment include uses that currently are considered as conditional uses. The only differences being the lot size required, the presence of a Victoria or early 20th century residential structure and the retail use be on a previously non-conforming use site. New uses are drawn from retail and commercial uses permitted in the Borough's Business Commercial Zoning District. A convenience store with food and fuel sale is the only completely new use proposed.
4. The following compares the dimensional requirements of Residential Office District to those proposed as an addition to § 27-1202 5.

Dimensional Requirement	Existing Residential Office Requirement	Proposed Requirement for
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		§ 27-1202 5.
Lot size	2,500/3,500 square feet	40,000 square feet
Lot width	25' and 35'	250'
Front yard setback	25' or the established building line	No new standard proposed
Side yard setback	5'	25'
Rear yard setback	30'	No new standard proposed
Impervious coverage	50%	90%
Height	35'	No new standard proposed
Fuel pump setback	No standard as fuel sales are not permitted in the district	15' from the ultimate right-of-way

5. No changes were proposed to parking lot requirements or parking lot landscaping requirements. Parking still would not be permitted in the front of a building.
6. In addition to a 40,000 square foot lot, a proposed use would be required to be located on a lot with a current non-conforming use, and did not have a Victorian or early 20th century residential building on it.
7. The proposal prohibits adult uses and/or activities.
8. The proposal adds multiple access point on each street abutting the site. Section 27-2007 of the Zoning Ordinances limits access points to one (1) on each street that the property abuts.
9. Signs proposed as part of the text amendment are disproportionate to signs permitted in both the Residential Office and Business Commercial Districts, and are excessive considering the size and type of signage currently permitted in the Residential Office District. The amendment proposes allowing two (2) signs: one (1) monument and one (1) wall sign for the proposed uses. All other areas of the Borough permit only one (1) sign per building. Following is

a comparison of permitted and proposed signage in the Residential Office District.

Sign Type	Existing Ordinance	Proposed Amendment
Monument sign	10 square feet any one side	50 square feet
	Not to exceed 4' in height	Not to exceed 10' in height
	Externally illuminated only	Internally or externally illuminated
Wall sign	10 square feet in area	70 square feet in area
	Externally illuminated only	Internally or externally illuminated

Directional/accessory signs are proposed as smaller (2 square feet) than the current ordinance permits (4 square feet).

Signage in the Business Commercial District is limited to thirty-five (35) square feet. The only areas where wall signage as large as that being proposed is permitted is the Specially Planned Districts where seventy-five square feet is permitted.

There is no mention of moving or digital signage in the proposed amendment. Zoning relief still would be needed should the applicant wish to install digital signage.

General sign requirements permit one (1) additional monument sign for gas stations to advertise gas prices. These signs are limited to sixteen (16) square feet and a height of twelve (12) feet. Such signs also must be setback ten (10) feet from the curb line. There is no setback proposed for the monument sign. There is no indication of what would or could be advertised on the monument sign.

10. Lot sizes in the Residential Office District: There are no lots in the Residential Office District which measure 40,000 square feet. Meeting the required lot size for the uses proposed would require the assembly and consolidation of one (1) or more lots.
11. A petition in support of a Wawa being located on Fayette Street in the Residential Office District accompanied the application for a zoning text amendment. There were a total of 1,912 signatures. Of that number 807 or 42% were from individuals identified as living outside of Conshohocken Borough. This figure does not include signatures not identifying and address or those using business addresses rather than residential addresses. Few of the signatories were from the area immediately around the site of the proposed Wawa. Six (6) individuals from the 0 and 100 block of East 11th Avenue supported the project, no signature were from the 1000 block of Harry Street

and two (2) signatures were from the 1000 block of Fayette Street. There were twenty-eight (28) signatures from the area immediately north (1200, 1300, and 1400 blocks) of the Borough boundary at 12th Avenue.

Sketch Plan Review

Christine Stetler, Zoning and Community Development Officer

November 2012

1109 – 1201 Fayette Street – Sketch Plans Review

The proposed site consists of a 63,360 square foot lot located primarily in Conshohocken Borough and a smaller portion in Whitemarsh Township. The site is in Conshohocken's Residential Office Zoning District, and the proposed use is a convenience store with gasoline sales, associated parking, signage and landscaping.

The Developer submitted two (2) proposed sketch plans for the site, with the only significant difference being the proposed use of the unopened portion of Harry Street at the rear of the site.

Following are comments on the plans.

1. The project must be reviewed by the Conshohocken Design Review Committee. Proposed design does not comply with the Façade Guidelines established for Fayette Street.
2. The project proposes to place parking in the front of the convenience store. This is prohibited under the current Borough Zoning Ordinance. The proposed text amendment to the Residential Office district does not address this issue.
3. There are several instances where the proposed plan does not meet the requirements for parking lot design, and the issues are not addressed in the proposed text amendment to the Residential Office district.
 - a. One (1) tree per ten (10) parking spaces is required in parking lots. Additional information will be needed to determine if the plan meets the Zoning Ordinance requirements.
 - b. Bumper guards or curbs are required in parking lots. The Developer should be prepared to discuss whether either will be provided for all parking spaces.
4. The number of parking spaces proposed (49) exceeds the required number (1/150 square feet for a retail use or 28 spaces.).
5. The number of handicapped parking spaces proposed (3) exceeds the number required (2 – 50 total spaces requires 2 handicapped parking spaces.).

- a. Hp parking spaces are proposed at the corners of the convenience store adjacent to a handicapped ramp. However, there also are planting areas adjacent to the hp parking spaces. Will a person with a disability be required to navigate around the planting area to access the ramp and store? If so, this could be a seriously unsafe condition.
 - b. Will there be access through the bollards? If so, what is the distance between the bollards, and is there a curb or will the walkway to the store be located at grade.
6. Landscaping on the site appears to be limited to buffer areas; two (2) planting areas at the front corners of the convenience store; a planting area behind the right-of-way line, and in the case of Plan A the unopened area of Harry Street at the rear of the site.
7. Height is indicated at thirty feet (30') which is below the Zoning Ordinance limit of thirty-five feet (35'). Does this height apply to both the height of the building and the canopy over the gasoline pumps? If not, what are the heights for each structure?
8. The plan shows a reduction in impervious coverage at the site from ninety-seven point nine percent (97.9%) to eighty-three point two percent (83.2%). There is no difference in this reduction on the notes for Plan A and Plan B. Can it be assumed that the unopened area of Harry Street is not included in the impervious coverage figure? If so, what is the total area of the Harry Street green space in Plan A? If it is determined that the unopened portion of Harry street is part of the overall site, the impervious coverage in Plan B would be increased significantly.
9. Monument signage is proposed. The elevation shows digital signage. At present moving or digital signage is not permitted in the Borough. That the monument is could be digital is not addressed in the proposed zoning text amendment to the Residential Office district. Will the sign be used only to display gasoline prices or will other messages be displayed? The Developer should be prepared to discuss this issue.
10. Are two (2) or three (3) access points being proposed on Fayette Street?
11. Per the Borough's Building Inspector, there are minor items on the site which will need to be addressed as the project proceeds, and detectable warning devices must be installed at all required locations.
12. In Plan A, the Developer should be prepared to discuss maintenance of the green area at the rear of the site. A fence is proposed between the developed site and the green area. If the unopened portion of Harry Street is determined to be part of the site, the Developer would be responsible for this maintenance.

13. Plan A shows a green area in the unopened portion of Harry Street, and Plan B shows twenty-two (22) parking spaces and a roadway in that location. The issue of how the unopened portion of Harry Street should be used should be made by Borough Council taking into account the access needs of A. A. Garthwaite Stadium which is to the east of the rear of the site.

Elizabeth Lankenau

From: Chris Stetler <cstetler@conshohockenpa.org>
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2012 2:59 PM
To: Elizabeth Lankenau
Subject: FW: wawa

Hi Liz,

Initial review of sketch plan from Code Enforcement Department.

Chris

From: RVB
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2012 2:55 PM
To: Chris Stetler
Cc: Fran Marabella
Subject: wawa

Chris,

I have reviewed the submitted information for this project and find only minor items that will need to be addressed on the site plan as the project moves forward. Detectable warning devices must be installed at all required locations. Some required locations did not depict the warning devices.

My office has no other concerns at this point based on the submitted site plan information.

David A. Naples, MCP
Building Code Official (Third Party)
Borough of Conshohocken
c/o Remington, Vernick and Beach, Engineers
922 Fayette Street
Conshohocken, PA 19428

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COURTHOUSE • PO Box 311

NORRISTOWN, PA 19404-0311

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WWW.MONTCOPA.ORG/PLANNING

November 26, 2012

Ms. Christine M. Stetler
Community Development and Zoning Officer
Conshohocken Borough
1 West First Avenue—Suite 200
Conshohocken, Pennsylvania 19428

Re: MCPC #12-165-001 & 12-165-002
Plan Name: 1109-119 Fayette Street-Wawa
Zoning Text Amendment, R-O Residential Office District
(1 lot comprising 1.45 acres) – Sketch Plan
Situate: Fayette Street (E), North of 11th Avenue
Conshohocken Borough

Applicant's Name and Address

Provco Pineville Fayette LP.
795 E. Lancaster Ave, Ste. 200
Villanova, PA 19085

Contact: E. Van Rieker, AICP
Phone: 215-699-4070

Dear Ms. Stetler:

We have reviewed the above-referenced zoning text amendment in accordance with Section 609 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," and a tentative sketch plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on October 18, 2012. We forward this letter as a report of our review and recommendations.

Background

This submission includes a zoning text amendment to the borough's existing R-O- Residential Office District, Section 27-1202, Permitted Uses, to include a new Subsection 5, and a tentative sketch plan for the construction of a Wawa convenience store with gas pumps at 1109-1119 Fayette Street.

COMMENTS

Existing Zoning

The existing R-O-Residential Office District parallels Fayette Street from 8th Avenue to the borough line and extends one block east to Harry Street and one block west to Forrest Street. It consists primarily of residential dwellings and office conversions. The intent of the district is to encourage the retention and preservation of existing Victorian and early 20th century residences

by permitting residential uses and allowing by conditional use limited office conversions. Maintaining the existing residential streetscape by preserving front facades, porches and prohibiting building additions and parking in the front yard are also goals of the district. The R-O District allows prohibiting building additions and parking in the front yard are also goals of the district. The R-O District allows by right single-family detached dwellings, single-family semi-detached dwellings, municipal and government offices, and accessory uses. Professional offices, studios, residential conversions, funeral homes, bed and breakfast, parking lots as secondary uses, other uses of similar intensity and scale, and daycare centers are permitted as conditional uses. Conditional use standards in the district are designed to preserve the residential character along Fayette Street. These include requiring all primary building facades to be oriented toward Fayette Street, preserving existing buildings, front facades, porches, and front yards as open space and prohibiting parking in the front yard. The R-O District has evolved over time to accommodate the conversion of many residential uses into offices and other uses. The borough's Comprehensive Plan and Revitalization Plan Update encourages economic development and envision in the future providing a variety of uses along Fayette Street, such as mixed-use developments and additional commercial uses, including retail, while preserving the existing community character.

Proposed Amendment

The proposed zoning text amendment to the R-O District includes adding a new Section 5, which permits uses such as business and professional office, retail establishments, restaurants excluding drive-in or drive-thru, convenience store with the sale of fuel, and parking lots as secondary uses by right in the district. Under this new amendment these proposed uses would be permitted on properties last occupied or used as a nonconforming commercial use, provided that the property does not contain a Victorian or early 20th century residential structure. The lots would be required to be a minimum of 40,000 square feet in size with a lot width of at least 250 feet along a state highway. Impervious coverage would be permitted to be 90 percent of the lot area and multiple access points would be permitted on abutting streets. Sign regulations would permit signs larger than currently allowed including one 50 square foot monument sign, and one 70 square foot wall sign. Currently it appears there are limited lots in the R-O District that are 40,000 square feet or have a width of at least 250 feet. To meet the proposed lot size/width requirements consolidation of existing lots would be needed. In the R-O District minimum lot sizes for residential uses range from 2,500-3,500 square feet, and 4,500 square feet for conditional uses. Professional office and parking lots as secondary uses are currently permitted in the R-O District as conditional uses.

This proposal offers the borough both advantages and disadvantages. Some of these include the following:

Advantages

- The redevelopment of an underutilized site in the borough that is currently not in scale or character with the surrounding uses or the intent of the R-O- District.
- Useful convenience retail business that provides jobs and tax revenue.
- Offers improved streetscape improvements and parking for the recreational use.

Disadvantages

- The Wawa is a 24 hour 7 days a week operation that will impact the surrounding neighborhood with additional traffic, noise, and lighting.
- This proposal as submitted differs in character than the surrounding properties and existing uses permitted in the R-O District.

Sketch Plan

In addition to the zoning text amendment, the applicant has submitted two tentative sketch plans for the construction of a 4,149 square foot Wawa convenience store including a 30-foot canopy structure over 5 fueling stations (10 fuel pumps), with 49 parking spaces on 1.45 acres. The Wawa will be open 24 hours, seven days a week. The difference between the two sketch plans is the use of the unopened portion of Harry Street adjacent to the site. This area is proposed as either a landscaped area or a parking area for the adjacent recreation use. The site is the former location of the E. F. Moore Chevrolet automobile dealership and contains several outdated buildings used for auto sales and administrative offices, fuel tanks, and surface parking. This property is located along the borough's border with Whitemarsh Township and a small portion of the site is within Whitemarsh Township. Adjacent to the site to the north is a cemetery, to the east a portion of the unopened Harry Street and a borough recreational use, across Fayette Street is the Town Valet Cleaners, a non-conforming commercial use, and office conversions and residential uses are in close proximity.

Recommendation

The Montgomery County Planning Commission supports the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties within our developed communities. We suggest, due to the obsolete nature of the current use and buildings, the lot size and its location at the edge of the borough, the non-conforming commercial use across Fayette Street, the location of the cemetery and open space surrounding the property on two sides (helping to mitigate adverse impacts of development on neighboring properties), a more intense use than currently permitted in the R-O District may be appropriate in this location. However, the site should be designed to fit into the existing character of the area, promote a pedestrian friendly environment, and meet the goals of the borough for this area of Fayette Street.

If the borough determines that the proposed convenience store with gas pumps is an appropriate use for this site issues regarding the hours of operation, noise, lighting, traffic including access, buffering and landscaping and site design will need to be addressed. To ensure that any development of this site is compatible with the existing character of Fayette Street and the intent of the R-O District, the borough should add specific design requirements to the proposed zoning amendment. These additions could include building design standards that regulate building placement, scale, and massing, roof design and building material requirements, lighting regulations and noise standards, streetscape improvements with sidewalk connections to Fayette Street and the adjacent borough park, provision of public amenities including plazas, seating, and public parking, additional buffering/landscape requirements to mitigate impacts on adjacent properties, and gas canopy design standards to reflect the residential character of the area. At this time, the borough may also want to consider allowing office use as a permitted use with design standards, while permitting the more intensive uses

proposed as conditional uses. We suggest the borough also include mixed-use developments as a use in this district.

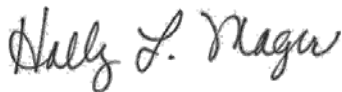
We have made a preliminary review of the tentative sketch plan submitted along with the request of zoning text amendment. The sketch reflects a lot of thought and effort by the applicant to make the convenience store use work well on the site and fit into the surrounding neighborhood. Yet, we recognize the need to further explore design options that would make it more compatible with the overall vision for Fayette Street in Conshohocken, and mitigate the intensity of the 24-hour high volume convenience store use. Design options to be explored include reorientation of the gas pumps to the rear of the site or to the northeastern side of the property. If the gas pumps were reoriented, the building could be placed closer to Fayette Street and designed to be more compatible in scale with the existing buildings. Even if not relocated, further building design elements including roof pitch, window treatment, dormers, and building materials could be modified to address important architectural themes in the borough. Other design elements to buffer the site along Fayette Street should be designed to fit into the surroundings. One potential design solution to enhance the site buffering would be to continue the stone wall that exists along the cemetery bordering in Whitemarsh Township across the entire frontage. We also recognize that it will be very important to manage and control vehicle and pedestrian circulation, parking, lighting, and sound emanating from this use given the sites use and hours of operation.

Traffic generation for the Wawa will be more intense throughout the day and evening than the former car dealership. Fayette Street is a heavily traveled arterial leading directly to I-76 and I-476; the applicant should work with the borough to fully implement a recently approved CMAQ grant (Congestion Management Air Quality) to upgrade the signal system all along Fayette Street to a full traffic adaptive system.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the borough and the final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the borough.

Should the governing body adopt this proposed ordinance amendment, Section 609 of the Municipalities Planning Code requires that we be sent an official copy within 30 days.

Sincerely,



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- c: Provco Pineville Fayette LP, Applicant
E. Van Rieker, AICP, Applicant's Planning Consultant
Joseph S. Baran, PE, Bohler Engineering, Applicant's Engineer
Elizabeth Lankenau, KSK, Borough's Planning Consultant
David Bertram, Chrm, Conshohocken Planning Commission
James R. Watson, P.E, Remington, Vernick & Beach, Borough Engineer
Michael Savona, Borough Solicitor