



EAST BRADFORD TOWNSHIP

CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Memo

To: Planning Commission members

From: Andrea Campisi, Director, Planning & Zoning/Zoning Officer

Date: September 18, 2020

Subject: **250 N. Bradford Avenue, West Chester Crossing (former Daily Local site), Final Land Development Plan, Application 641, Parcel #51-5-86.2**

Proposal

The attached Final Plan, prepared by ESE Consultants, Inc. dated September 27, 2019, last revised August 21, 2020, consisting of 37 sheets shows the following:

- Removal of the existing building, parking areas and driveways
- Construction of 56 townhomes with two-car garages and individual driveways with two parking spaces
- Three stormwater management systems
- A central community space
- A dog park
- 23 on-street parking spaces and two parking areas each containing five parking spaces

The property is in the R, Residential Overlay Zoning District and contains areas of manmade steep slopes ranging from 20 to greater than 30%. The development will be served by a new street (Road A) proposed to be dedicated to the Township that connects to both Strasburg Road and N. Bradford Avenue. Two alleys will provide access to the internal dwelling units. The units will be connected to existing public water and sanitary sewer facilities.

The following items were also submitted for review:

- A landscape plan prepared by ESE Consultants, Inc. dated September 27, 2019, last revised August 21, 2020
- A Transportation Impact Study prepared by Traffic Planning and Design, Inc. dated October 18, 2017, last revised March 13, 2020
- A Stormwater Management Report prepared by ESE Consultants, Inc. dated September 27, 2019, last revised August 21, 2020

The following reviews have been received by the Township:

- Carroll Engineering Corporation, sanitary sewer review dated September 17, 2020
- Carroll Engineering Corporation, engineering review dated September 17, 2020
- Stubbe Consulting, LLC, lighting plan review dated September 4, 2020
- Thomas Comitta Associates, Inc., landscape plan review dated September 17, 2020
- Gilmore & Associates, Inc. traffic review dated September 17, 2020

Township Advisory Board Reviews

The Historical Commission reviewed the application on September 15, 2020 and expressed safety concerns with respect to the access point at Strasburg Road. There was a general discussion of the traffic complications posed by this access point as well as potential safety hazards associated with anticipated pedestrian traffic at this crossing. It was also noted that the access point would be adjacent to the access point for the adjoining Ace Hardware store and this could pose even more potential for safety hazards. In addition to safety concerns, the Historical Commission also raised concerns about the lack of greenspace within the community, scant landscaping, and a retaining wall that will have a detrimental effect on an area designated as a scenic byway.

The EAC does not meet until Monday, September 28, 2020 therefore if any comments are made at that meeting staff will present them verbally at the Planning Commission meeting.

The following Township Advisory Boards opted to not review the Final Plan since they reviewed the Preliminary Plan and provided comments at that time:

- Trails Committee
- Parks and Recreation Board
- Traffic Committee

Land Use/Background Summary

The following approvals have been granted by the Township for this project:

- July 9, 2019 - Rezoning the property from R-4, residential to R, Residential Overlay Zoning District
- July 9, 2019 - Conditional Use approval subject to 34 conditions of approval
- July 14, 2020 – Preliminary Plan approval subject to 37 conditions of approval

The site formerly housed the Daily Local News headquarters. The commercial publishing use was legally non-conforming to the prior R-4 zoning because when the building was first constructed the site was commercially zoned. Two special exceptions were granted to the Daily Local News. The first was granted on January 3, 1992 and allowed an expansion onto the then existing building. The following condition was imposed on the approval:

- *This special exception is further conditioned upon the perpetual maintenance of the existing evergreen tree buffer and tree replacement thereof as and when necessary to provide a solid screen between this and the adjoining properties by the applicant or successors in title for the purpose of buffering the applicant's use from the adjoining tracts on the south and west.*

The second special exception and two variances, one to exceed the maximum lot coverage and another to exceed the 25% limit on expansion of a nonconforming use, were granted on June 21, 1993 and allowed the construction of a second addition onto the existing building. The following conditions were imposed on that special exception:

- *An additional row of evergreen trees, having a minimum height of six feet after planting and placed no more than eight feet apart on center shall be added to the existing stand of evergreen trees on the south and west sides of the Applicant's property to form a double row of evergreen plantings, and shall be continually maintained as an effective screen buffer, with replacement of trees as and when necessary. These plantings shall extend beyond and to the east of the addition for a distance terminating at the face of the existing building as it fronts on North Bradford Avenue.*
- *This double planted row of evergreen trees shall be perpetually maintained by the Applicant as a buffer, and tree replacement thereof shall be made as and when necessary to provide a solid screen, buffering the Applicant from the adjoining tracts on the south and the west.*

According to the Township Solicitor, the prior approvals run with the land and are not unique to an applicant. Therefore, the Board of Supervisors imposed a condition on the Preliminary Plan requiring the applicant to maintain the existing

buffers along the southern and western property lines in perpetuity. This requirement will also be included in the Homeowner's Association documents to ensure that all owners are aware of their obligation with respect to the buffer.

Comprehensive Plan

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update specifically references the Bradford Avenue/Lenape Road Corridor between Downingtown Pike and Birmingham Road and includes recommendations to make the corridor more pedestrian and bicycle friendly through the provision of additional sidewalk/trail connections, high visibility crosswalks and pedestrian friendly amenities such as benches and appropriately scaled street lighting. This property is located at an important intersection as the future residents of the townhomes will be within walking distance to both Bradford Plaza and West Chester Borough, destinations that future residents should be able to walk safely to without using a car.

Specific recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan include:

- Consider providing trail/bike/pedestrian connections along and across the corridor.
 - A sidewalk and/or multi-use trail along Bradford Avenue from Strasburg Road to Niels Street.
 - Improved intersections and crossings at: Strasburg Road, Miner Street, Price Street and Bradford Avenue.
- Enhance the appearance and safety of the corridor.
 - Consider street trees and/or streetlights (in cooperation with West Chester Borough) along Bradford Avenue as part of redevelopment.

The applicant is providing a continuous sidewalk along the entire frontage of the property and is extending a trail connection to connect to the existing trail on the Bradford Square property. The applicant is also providing crosswalks at the intersection of Strasburg Road and N. Bradford Avenue and is providing a crosswalk and a flashing overhead beacon at Road A and the western entrance to Bradford Plaza.

The site is also located along the Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway as it traverses the Township. The Plan states: *The Brandywine Scenic Byway will continue to be a place with a deep and varied history recognizable in the landscape and intertwined with a distinctive natural environment and pastoral scenic vistas – vibrant threads which together make a rich tapestry for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors alike.*

Official Map

The Township's Official Map shows a sidewalk along the frontage of this property which is being provided by the applicant.

Items for Discussion

Staff recommends the Planning Commission discuss the following topics with the applicant at the September 22, 2020 meeting.

1. Architectural Elevations

The following condition of approval was imposed by the Board of Supervisors on the Preliminary Plan:

The proposed buildings shall be constructed substantially as shown on the architectural elevations dated May 29, 2020, last revised July 14, 2020, with the exception of any de minimis changes.

The above referenced elevations only show the front of the proposed units, not the rear or sides. In their review, Thomas Comitta Associates, Inc. (TCA) recommends the applicant provide side (end unit) and rear elevations to confirm that they are consistent with the front elevations referenced in the above condition. Staff supports this recommendation. In addition, with respect to the side and rear facades, TCA recommends that finish colors and materials on the front of the unit wrap around the full sides of the unit, a full complement of windows (based on the interior layout) be provided, the painting of any exposed foundations, and eave returns for the gable ends. TCA also recommends the applicant submit rear elevations showing proposed materials, colors and

window treatments that correspond with the front elevations. Finally, TCA recommends that all garage doors be painted a non-white color to reduce their visual prominence. Staff supports these recommendations.

2. Retaining Walls

As indicated during the review of the Preliminary Plan, the retaining walls visible from the public right of way will be very prominent features of the development. Since the site is within the Brandywine Scenic Byway corridor, the design of these walls should be sympathetic to the corridor. The Board of Supervisors imposed the following condition on the Preliminary Plan:

The color and texture of proposed retaining walls visible from the public right of way shall be coordinated with other site features including the dwellings and the entry sign piers. The final design of the walls shall be subject to the approval of the Township. A product specification sheet of the proposed materials shall be included on the plan.

TCA recommends the applicant provide product specification information, including the color and texture, of the block used to construct the retaining walls and staff supports this recommendation. In addition, the applicant should present renderings of all retaining walls visible from the public right of way. This is an open issue.

In response to an earlier recommendation from staff, the applicant moved the proposed street trees along N. Bradford Avenue to the base of the wall to better screen the wall.

3. Recreation Area

The Board of Supervisors imposed the following condition on the Preliminary Plan approval:

The Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance requires a fee in lieu of recreational and open space land in the amount of \$5,780 per unit. The applicant has requested a waiver of that fee, believing the recreational and open space amenities provided fulfill the intent of the recreational fee requirement. The Township does not agree to the applicant's request for a full credit; however, the Township acknowledges that the enhanced pedestrian network including the provision of safe access to the abutting Bradford Square Shopping Center and other green areas shown on the plan justify a credit in the amount of \$173,680, which amount is a reasonable approximation of the cost associated with installation of said improvements. The Township is further cognizant of the fact that property is located in the R-Residential Overlay District which, at the time of the applicant's conditional use application, required a set aside of 1,500 sq. ft. of "community space" per acre of gross tract area for a total 9,150 sq. ft. of community space, which is not required in any other zoning district in the Township. The applicant's plan provides 23,191 sq. ft. of community space. The Township believes that in this unique circumstance the applicant should not be required to pay the full amount of the recreational fee as to require same would ignore the recreational and open space facilities actually provided. Accordingly, the Board also grants a waiver to the extent necessary from the design requirements of § 95-34.1 of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The applicant shall submit a recreational and open space fee of \$2,678.57 per unit. Each unit fee shall be paid at issuance of a use and occupancy permit for the unit. A note shall be placed on the final plan stipulating the amount of the fee in lieu of dedication of recreational and open space land to be paid.

This issue is resolved.

4. Fire Department Access & Fire Hydrant Locations

The Township's Fire Marshal and the First West Chester Fire Department are in the process of reviewing the plans. Their comments will be presented once they are received. This is an open issue.

5. Community Sign

The proposed sign is shown on sheet 36 of the plan set. A sign will be placed at each entrance to the site at Road A where it intersects with Strasburg Road and N. Bradford Avenue respectively. Per Zoning Code Section 115-95(3)D, Residential subdivision signs, the Planning Commission should review the sign and provide comments to the Board of Supervisors.

6. Proposed Street Names

The applicant proposed the following names for Road A and the two alleys:

- Road A: Daily Drive
- Alley B: Hodgson Alley
- Alley C: Thomson Alley

It was noted during the review of the Preliminary Plan that Daily Drive would be an acceptable street name for Road A. After reviewing the name with the County, it was recommended that it be changed to Daily Local Drive. Local Lane and McClellan Drive were recommended as alternatives to Hodgson and Thomson Alley. An additional possibility for one of the alleys is Star Tavern Lane since at one time the Star Tavern existed across the street from the site. Therefore, this is an open issue.

Staff recommends the Planning Commission engage in a discussion with the applicant to discuss the issues noted above but does not recommend any action be taken on the plan at this time since reviews are still pending with some advisory boards and the Fire Marshal/Fire Department. The attached recommended conditions of approval are presented for information only. Please contact me with any questions.

Recommended Conditions of Approval:

1. All conditions contained in the Preliminary Plan approval issued by the Board of Supervisors dated July 14, 2020 remain in effect and shall be complied with by the applicant.
2. The applicant shall comply with the requirements in Subdivision and Land Development Code Sections 95-8C, 95-14F, 95-14G, 95-14I and 95-14J.
3. The following documents shall be submitted to the Township for review and approval by the Township Solicitor and/or Township staff prior to recording the Final Plan:
 - All required Homeowner's Association documents and declarations
 - All required easements
 - The community site maintenance manual
 - The winter maintenance plan
4. The two community signs at the entrance to Road A shall be subject to the approval of the Board of Supervisors and shall be subject to a separate review for compliance with the Zoning Code by the Zoning Officer.
5. Sheet 2 of 37 shall be revised to indicate that the site is in East Bradford Township not Upper Uwchlan Township in both the Township Engineer's and the Planning Commission's signature block. The professional engineer's certification shall be revised to reference East Bradford Township not East Allen Township. Only one signature line is need for the Planning Commission per Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 95-14A.
6. A certification shall be added to the Erosion and Sediment Control plans per Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 95-14F.
7. The property owner(s) shall comply with all applicable federal, state, county, local and East Bradford Township ordinances and laws regardless of specific mention herein unless waivers have been granted.