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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 19, 2018

Mr. Mark A. Penecale, Zoning Officer
Abington Township
1176 Old York Road
Abington, Pennsylvania 19001-3713

Re: MCPC #17-0301-001
Zoning Text & Map Amendment: Abington Terrace
Abington Township

Dear Mr. Penecale:

We have reviewed the above-referenced zoning text and map amendment in accordance with Section 609 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as you requested on December 26, 2017 (with an updated, marked-up draft received December 27, 2017). We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

Abington Township proposes a zoning text and map amendment to modify and expand the AO Apartment Office District. The amendment would rezone 4.64 acres from the CS Community Service and R3 Medium Density Residential District to the AO Apartment Office District. The zoning text amendment would create an "H-12 Senior Apartment Units" use, to be permitted by conditional use in the AO District. The maximum density allowed would be 50 dwelling units per acre.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The proposed zoning map amendment is generally consistent with *MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision, The Comprehensive Plan for Montgomery County*. The proposed zoning text amendment would affect an area where the future land use categories "Community Mixed Use and Services", "Town Residential" and "Town Center" converge; all of which are growth areas.



Although multifamily uses are envisioned in these areas by MONTCO 2040, these categories recommend that development be “compatible with residential areas,” have residentially-scaled buildings next to residential areas, and emphasize the importance of an adequate buffer.

RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) recommends approval of the proposed zoning map amendment; however we do not recommend the proposed text amendment be adopted at this time since we have concerns about the proposed significant increase in density. Please see below for our comments on the proposed text amendment.

REVIEW COMMENTS

PUBLIC PURPOSE

- A. Demand. Is the proposed significant increase in density a response to a dramatic increase in the demand for senior living in this area?
- B. This zoning amendment is linked to a proposed real estate development for senior housing. However, is there any reason to limit a proposed text amendment to senior housing, rather than allow apartments for all ages? (if impact on schools is the concern, new apartments in the county have been shown to host a very low number (.06 per unit) of school-aged children).

PLANNING FOR DENSITY

- A. The proposal would allow significantly more generous density and dimensional requirement than currently permitted in the AO Apartment Office District (50 dwelling units per acre, as compared with 24 for apartments in an E-10 Life Care Facility). As this is the second proposal in recent months that would dramatically increase density on the Route 611 corridor, we suggest the Township consider whether it is satisfied with the currently allowed densities. If not, we recommend that such a significant change in density as that proposed here only be undertaken as a result of a deliberative planning process. If the Township is interested in reevaluating its allowed densities, we recommend the Township consider updating its comprehensive plan, to strategically plan for a hierarchy of residential densities in appropriate locations (considering growth areas, rail station locations, infrastructure capacity, fiscal and school impact, and capacity to effect revitalization and redevelopment).

PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT: OTHER COMMENTS

- A. We recommend that increases in density be accompanied by requirements ensuring provision of premium design, greening and/or sustainability elements, and amenities (pedestrian, vehicular/transit).
- B. We recommend that major projects in the vicinity of Route 611 and Susquehanna Road, and related zoning, be evaluated in part based upon its ability to positively affect the intersection for both vehicles and pedestrians.

- C. We recommend revisiting AO District requirements for buildings on Route 611, so that special requirements apply, ensuring establishment of a build-to-line or decorative street wall/landscaping, and strong design and streetscape standards that are similar to the Main Street Districts.
- D. P.1. If Use E-12 is added, the Use Matrix in the zoning ordinance should be updated accordingly.
- E. P.2. The word "shall" should be changed to "should" or "recommended" where it cannot be enforced (#5).
- F. P.2. The requirement that cars must not be parked where they would block other cars is unnecessary since it exists in the current zoning ordinance (#5).

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC supports the proposed zoning map amendment, but not the proposed text amendment. 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 adopt this proposed zoning ordinance amendment, Section 609 of the Municipalities Planning Code requires that we be sent an official copy within 30 days.

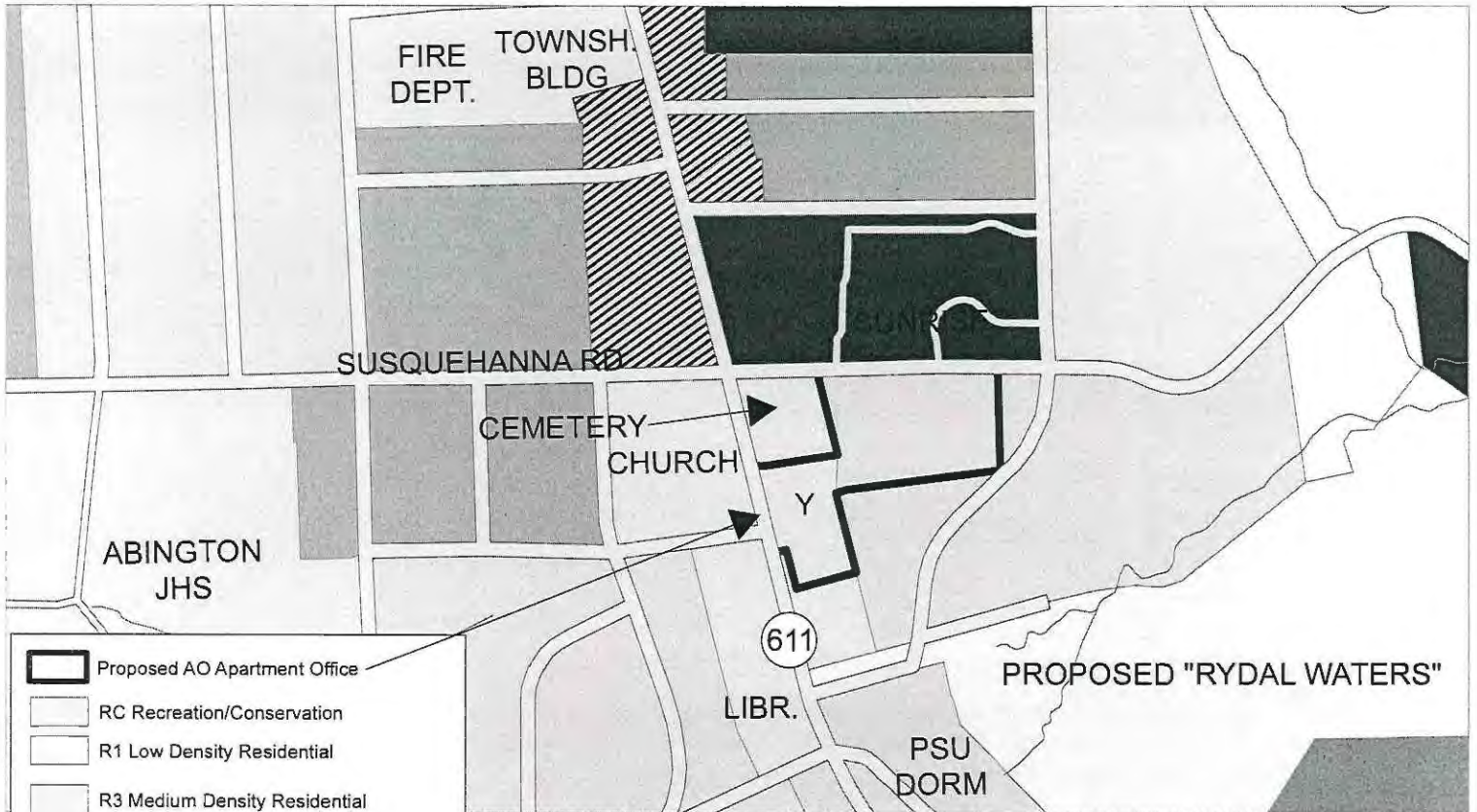
Sincerely,














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c: Lucy Strackhouse, Chair, Township Planning Commission
Richard J. Manfredi, Township Manager
Michael P. Clarke, Esq., Rudolph Clarke, LLC; Township Solicitor
Michael E. Powers, P.E., Township Engineer

Appendix: Existing zoning map with proposed map change




-  Proposed AO Apartment Office
-  RC Recreation/Conservation
-  R1 Low Density Residential
-  R3 Medium Density Residential
-  R4 High Density Residential
-  AO Apartment Office
-  SNR Senior Neighborhood Residential
-  BC Business Center
-  MS-H Main Street High Intensity Density
-  MS-L Main Street Low Intensity Density
-  CS Community Service

Proposed change from CS Community Service and R3 Residential to AO Apartment Office

Zoning boundaries as of April 2017

The Zoning Districts displayed on this map were determined by the Zoning Code of Abington Township. The date printed on this map is the latest information received from the Township by the Montgomery County Planning Commission. This information should not be considered the official "Adopted Zoning Map". Any question regarding the location of a district boundary should be directed to the Township.

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This map is based on 2015 ortho photography and official sources. Property lines were compiled from individual block maps from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment Appeals, with no verification from the deed. This map is not meant to be used as a legal definition of properties or for engineering purposes.



Base map prepared May 2016