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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 10, 2015

Mr. Jason Bobst, Manager
West Norriton Township
1630 West Marshall Street
Jeffersonville, Pennsylvania 19403-3236

Re: MCPC #13-0187-006
Plan Name: Markley Farm Property
(79 lots comprising 55.3 acres)
Situate: Chestnut Avenue (N) @ Barwood Circle
West Norriton Township

Dear Mr. Bobst:

We have reviewed the above-referenced land development plan in accordance with Section 502 of Act 247, "The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code," as requested on November 9, 2015. This letter is submitted as a report of our review and recommendations.

## BACKGROUND

The applicant, Mikelen, LLC, is proposing to build 79 single-family detached homes in a cluster development on approximately 55 acres in the township's R2-Residence District. Our office previously reviewed the plan as a part of a conditional use application on July 20, 2015. A yield plan has been included with the submission that shows that a traditional subdivision would accommodate the same number of lots that the applicant is proposing.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONSISTENCY

A. West Norriton Township Comprehensive Plan - The proposal is generally consistent with the West Norriton Township Comprehensive Plan. The area surrounding the pond is identified as open space and a cluster subdivision will allow the township to permanently preserve this asset.

B. Monto 2040: A Shared Vision - The proposal is generally consistent with the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision.* This part of West Norriton Township is located in the

Suburban Residential Area. Suburban Residential Areas are areas that depend on automobile transportation and include a variety of housing types, with single-family residential being the most prominent. *Montco 2040* states that "trees, steep slopes, wetlands, and other sensitive land should be preserved, potentially as open space within a cluster development. "

## RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal, as it is generally consistent with local and county planning documents. However, we provide the following feedback, which we feel will help creative a more attractive and sustainable development:

## REVIEW COMMENTS

**SEWER FACILITIES**

A. Sewer - As we mentioned in our previous review, sewage capacity is still an apparent issue in the township. The applicant should work with the township to resolve the issue of how this development will be served with public sewer.

**WETLAND PROTECTION**

A. Grading - It appears that significant grading will need to take place very close to the wetlands area. The township engineer should review the grading plan to ensure that the proposed grading will not interfere with the wetlands area.

B. Meadow - The proposed riparian buffer meadow will help protect water quality and serve as a great amenity. We suggest that the applicant look to the Natural Lands Trust Gwynedd Wildlife Preserve as a resource and an example of a well-maintained meadow.

**TRANSPORTATION**

A. Trails - As we mentioned in our previous review, we commend the applicant for including a connected trail system throughout the development. The trails, and the connections to existing neighborhoods, will serve as a great amenity for residents of this development and for residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. It should also be noted that pedestrian access to and through the open space is required by Section 27-505.F.2(m) of the township code.

   1. Trail Connection Landscaping- One suggestion we have is that some landscaping be added along the trail connection between lots 75 and 76 to better define the corridor and provide some privacy for those residents.

B. Street Width - The plan shows streets with 30-foot wide cartways throughout the development, in conformance with the township code. However, we feel that a 28-foot wide cartway would be sufficient. This would provide for two 10-foot wide driving lanes and one 8-foot wide parking lane. Research has shown that narrower cartway widths help slow down traffic in neighborhoods and lead to a safer environment for motorists and pedestrians alike. Ten foot wide driving lanes are proven to be the safest width and one 8-foot wide parking lane is sufficient in a residential development. Narrower cartways also cut down on impervious surface which contributes to stormwater runoff.

**CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT OPTION**

A. Yield Plan - The yield plan should be examined by the township engineer to ensure its feasibility. A few of the lots appear questionable due to the fact that a large portion of the lot would fall within the riparian zone, including lots 14, 21, 23, 24, and 79.

B. Lot Size - Under the cluster development option allowed by the township zoning code, the lots can be 10,000 square feet as is depicted in the proposal. During the conditional use approval process some neighbors expressed concern that this was too small and not consistent with the surrounding area. In actuality, there are numerous homes nearby that sit on smaller lots than these homes will occupy. It should also be noted that the cluster option doesn't allow any more lots than would allowed under conventional lotting and it provides protected open space that can be utilized as an amenity by existing neighbors.

   To provide some context and hopefully alleviate some of the neighbors' fears, we have included a picture of nearby homes that sit on 7,500-square foot lots, 25% smaller than the applicant is proposing (Appendix 3).

## CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's land development proposal but we believe that our suggestions will create a more attractive development.

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

Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files.

Sincerely,

Brandon Rudd, Senior Planner
610-278-3748 - brudd@montcopa.org

c: Mikelen, LLC, Applicant
Woodrow & Associates, Inc., Applicant's Representative
Bruce Shoupe, Chrm., Township Planning Commission
Christen Pionzio, Esq., Township Solicitor
Joseph Estock, P.E., Township Engineer
Michael Valyo, Township Director of Public Works & Planning
E. Van Rieker, Planning Consultant

Attachments: Oblique Aerial Image
Aerial Map
Street View Image

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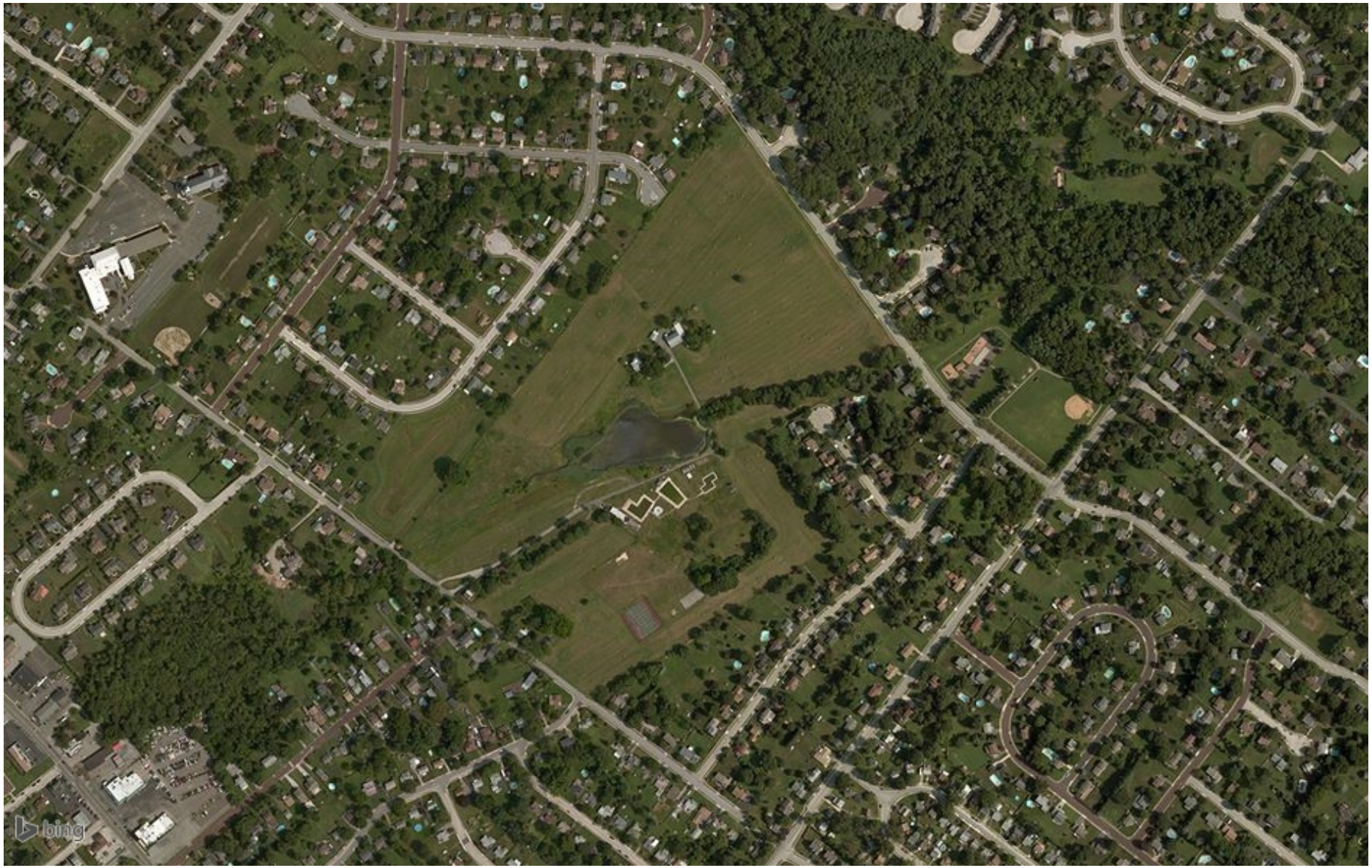
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