



PHOENIXVILLE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Charlestown • East Pikeland • Phoenixville • Schuylkill • West Pikeland • West Vincent

TO: E. Jean Krack, Manager
Phoenixville Borough

FROM: Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee
Edward A. Theurkauf, RLA, ASLA, APA, Theurkauf Design & Planning, LLC

DATE: June 24, 2020

RE: Consistency Review – Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan
Final Subdivision Plan dated 5-8-20
Odessa Residential Apartments and Undetermined Residential Use

The Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee (PRPC) is a coalition of Charlestown Township, East Pikeland Township, Phoenixville Borough, Schuylkill Township, West Pikeland Township, and West Vincent Township that coordinates efforts to advance regional common interests. The PRPC operates within the parameters of a Regional Comprehensive Plan and Intergovernmental Implementation Agreement to direct growth into the Region's established communities and designated growth areas, to maximize the efficient use of public infrastructure, and to preserve the Region's rural areas. To achieve its purpose, the PRPC works to:

- Protect unique historical, cultural, aesthetic, agricultural and natural resources, and quality of life.
- Promote economic vitality through effective organization and coordination of development, attributes and resources.
- Implement growth management practices to provide for orderly and well-planned new development.
- Preserve open space.
- Develop multi-modal transportation choices for better mobility in and through the Region.
- Encourage walkable communities with a mix of uses and a range of housing options where appropriate.
- Maintain and improve recreation options, including the trail system.
- Address the specific needs and unique conditions of each member municipality.

Overview - The plan is for development of a residential development including 240 Apartments, and another 260 unit residential building of undetermined use that was previously described as an Assisted Living and Independent Care facility. The Apartments will be in three four-story buildings, each with (80) dwelling units. The undetermined residential use is proposed as a three or four-story building. Access is provided from Fillmore Street and from a proposed Northern Relief Road connecting Township Line Road and Fillmore Street via Ashburn Road. The project abuts the Schuylkill River Trail.

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Consistency with Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan (PRCP) – The plan for the proposed Odessa Development is evaluated for consistency with the PRCP, specifically as follows:

Land Use Plan

Use Consistency - The Future Land Use Plan describes the site as within a Mixed Use area, which may include a residential component integrated with the majority commercial uses. Although the proposed use would be entirely residential, its proximity to the Schuylkill River Trail gives it good multimodal access to downtown Phoenixville, and there is potential access to the mixed use corridor on Schuylkill Road via the trail associated with Crossover Boulevard. The plan is viewed as consistent from a land use standpoint.

Plan Layout - The site should be designed to create a pedestrian scale streetscape, with building entrances oriented to the street. The main circulation road through the site has parallel on street parking with sidewalks along building frontages and entrances for Buildings B and C. However, in general the layout is reflective of a suburban apartment complex, with buildings to varying extents surrounded by parking lots rather than creating architecturally reinforced street frontages. In addition, there are no street-facing building entrances for Building A, Building B has no entrance facing Fillmore Street, and Building D has no entrance facing the Northern Relief Road. The plan should be revised for greater consistency.

Pedestrian Access - Mixed use areas are to be designed as pedestrian-friendly, with sidewalk connections between adjacent lots and uses. Additional crosswalks should be provided for improved connectivity between the proposed buildings. In addition, the sidewalk should extend along the entire Fillmore Street frontage, and crosswalks should be provided at the intersection of the Northern Relief Road and Township Line Road. The plan should be revised for greater consistency.

Parking Configuration - Front yard parking shall be eliminated or minimized, or at least screened from the street. Parking is not visible from Fillmore Street, and lots situated between buildings and the Northern Relief Road are well set back and screened with shrub vegetation. The main circulation road through the site has parallel on street parking. The plan is viewed as consistent in this regard.

Architecture - Façade and roofline variations should diminish the apparent scale of buildings, and architecture should create interrelationships between exterior and interior space with winds, doors, courtyards, etc. The plan indicates uninterrupted linear facades of up to 170 feet length, there are no evident transitional quasi-public spaces along the streets, and we have no information on architecture. It is recommended that these features be worked out in the approval process so that the development is consistent with Regional policy.

Environmental Resources Plan

The site is nearly entirely covered in young successional forest and includes a wetland of approximately 0.1 acre and small areas of steep slope. All of these features would be eradicated or dramatically altered by the proposed development. There are no apparent critical habitat areas that would be impacted.

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Given the project location in a Mixed Use area, the proposed impacts on environmental resources are not in themselves inconsistent. However, additional measures should be incorporated in the plan to mitigate these impacts and improve consistency with Regional policy:

- Bio-retention areas 1 and 2 are planted as natural areas with wetland seed mix. However, bio-retention areas 3 and 4 are largely in lawn, which has no habitat value, does not promote water quality and infiltration, and requires labor intensive and environmentally harmful maintenance practices. Basins 3 and 4 should be vegetated as natural meadow or successional areas to promote environmental health.
- To mitigate for woodland removal and habitat loss, native reforestation plantings should be implemented in and around basins and along property boundaries.
- The PRCP advocates creation of protected greenways. The site lies adjacent to the Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) corridor and includes bio-retention areas with native vegetation. Native reforestation plantings should be implemented in and around basins and along property boundaries, especially contiguous to the SRT.

Energy Conservation and Sustainability Plan

The following measures should be incorporated to promote consistency with the Regional Comprehensive Plan:

- The development should be LEED and/or SITES certified, or at least should embrace some of the environmental and energy sustainability technologies and methods that would qualify for certification.
- The plan indicates building orientations that could support solar photovoltaic systems, serving as a model project for the Region while affording considerable cost savings on electricity. This and other systems such as ground source heat pumps should be considered consistent with the PRCP objective to increase utilization of renewable energy.
- The development should include electric vehicle charging stations.

Housing Plan

Housing Diversity - The PRCP advocates provision of a diversity of housing options. The plan increases the availability of multifamily housing choices in the Region and is thus consistent with this objective.

Affordability – It is unclear how the proposed development advances the Regional policy of promoting housing affordability. This should be considered in the approval process.

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Economic Development Plan

A diversity of housing types to support the area workforce is recommended in the Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan. The proposed apartment housing and residential use in Building A may be consistent with this objective, depending on target demographics and affordability.

Community Facilities Plan

The PRPC advocates development that reduces stormwater impacts through management strategies integral to the development. The following recommended practices would reduce stormwater impacts and stresses on the proposed surface stormwater infrastructure:

- Green roofs
- Pervious paving on parking areas, plazas, and walkways
- Meadows in place of lawns
- Infiltration beds dispersed through the site

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

The PRPC promotes the provision of recreational facilities for all new developments, and the expansion of a Regional bicycle network. The following would enhance the proposed development's consistency:

- The plan does not indicate any specific recreational amenities, other than a stormwater basin that is identified as "public open space". Because the nearest public park is approximately 1/2 mile away, it is recommended that playground and recreation facilities be proposed on site, particularly if young children are present.
- The Schuylkill River Trail and Crossover Boulevard trail are directly adjacent to the site and only 1,600 feet from one another. However, there is no proposed bicycle access through the site connecting these two regional multi-modal trails. The plan should be revised to incorporate 10 foot wide bike paths through and into the site.

Transportation Plan

Traffic Impacts - Road improvements should be coordinated to improve safety and relieve congestion. The Northern Relief Road would make an offset intersection at Township Line road and should be re-aligned directly opposite Crossover Boulevard. In addition, traffic impacts on Fillmore Street, Township Line Road, and nearby intersections should be quantified in a Traffic Impact Study and mitigated as appropriate.

Bicycle Accessibility - The Regional Comprehensive Plan advocates development of a Regional bicycle trail network. The plan should incorporate bike paths through and into the site that provide critical links between the Schuylkill River Trail and the Crossover Boulevard Trail.

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Public Transportation - The proposed multi-family development may have residents who do not drive, and others who may desire to limit driving. SEPTA bus route 139 comes to within 4/10 mile of the site. Feasibility of re-routing to provide a stop at the development should be investigated.

Conclusion - The proposed Odessa development is viewed as generally consistent with the Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan in terms of use and providing for a regionally diverse housing stock. However, the following changes are recommended to advance other goals and objectives of the PRCP:

- **More detail should be provided in terms of architecture and streetscape enhancement.**
- **Pedestrian connections within and off site should be improved.**
- **Naturalized meadow and woodland plantings should be incorporated to a greater extent.**
- **Renewable energy and sustainable construction practices should be utilized.**
- **Housing affordability recommendations should be considered.**
- **Green stormwater infrastructure for surface and groundwater protection should be incorporated.**
- **Bicycle infrastructure and connectivity should be enhanced, including a bicycle path connection linking the Schuylkill River Trail with the Crossover Boulevard Trail in East Pikeland.**
- **A recreational program for the development should be provided.**
- **The Northern Relief Route should be aligned with Crossover Boulevard.**
- **Public transportation access should be improved.**

cc:

PRPC Governing Representatives

Richard Kirkner
Hugh Willig
Rusty Strauss
Mark Donovan
Charlie Humphries
Sara Shick

Planning Commissioners/Alternates

Debra Johnston
Bill Westhafer/Wendy Leland
Ron Hoinowski
Curt English
Jim Wendelgass
Julie Foster/Mike Schneider

Municipal Managers

Jean Krack
Linda Csete
Kimberly Moretti
EJ Mentry
Jim Wendelgass
John Granger

Catherine Anne Porter, Smith & Porter, PC
Susan Elks, AICP, Planning Services Director, Chester County