



## PHOENIXVILLE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Phoenixville Borough, Charlestown Township, East Pikeland Township, Schuylkill Township, West Vincent Township

**TO:** Erica Batdorf, Manager  
West Vincent Township

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

**DATE:** November 30, 2016

**RE:** **Consistency Review – Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan  
Proposed Changes to Land Development Plan  
Weatherstone Town Center Commercial Area**

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

- Protect the unique historical, cultural, aesthetic, agricultural and natural resources that contribute to the quality of life of the Region.
- Promote economic vitality through effective organization and coordination of development, attributes, and resources.
- Implement growth management techniques to provide for orderly and well-planned new development in the Region.
- Preserve open space in the Region.
- 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 within the Region.
- Maintain and improve recreation opportunities, including the trail system, of the Region.
- Address the specific needs and unique conditions of each municipality in the Region.

**Overview** – The current proposal represents a revision of the plan for the commercial component of the Weatherstone mixed use land development that was approved by Settlement Agreement dated September 17, 2007. The proposed plan includes a reduction in the amount of retail by 25-35%, a reduction of office by 67-87%, and a corresponding increase in the number of residential units by 230%. A previously proposed YMCA recreation center and a grocery store would not be part of the current proposal. Overall, the proposed development mix consists of

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50,000- 93,000 square feet of retail, 15,000-50,000 square feet of office, and 230 multifamily residential units of varying types on a 24.2 acre site at the intersection of PA Routes 100 and 401, the historic Ludwigs Corner crossroads. The residential component would consist of a mix of twins and townhouses, with apartments in conjunction with retail/office space in configurations similar to Eagleview in Uwchlan Township. Two primary green spaces are proposed, including a centrally located Town Square and a buffer green at the northeast corner of the Route 100/401 intersection. Sidewalks are proposed along the east perimeter road (Lexington Boulevard) and throughout the site interior, although none are indicated along Birchrun Road, Route 100, or Route 401.

The Applicant has provided selected summary data indicating similar or lessened development impacts attributable to the proposed plan versus the approved plan. Building coverage would be reduced from 20.2% to 15.8%, and impervious cover would be reduced from 74.9% to 69.3%. Traffic impacts would be slightly reduced in terms of peak and overall volumes, but still would be significant and generally consistent with the approved plan. Sewer demand would be increased and would exceed allocations set in the Settlement, but this is said to be offset by a corresponding re-rating of single family unit demand from 220 gallons per day to 200 within the existing development. Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality, thermal impacts, and runoff rates would be incorporated for protection of the Exceptional Value Birch Run watershed.

**Consistency with Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan (PRCP)** – The proposed plan revision for the Weatherstone Town Center Commercial Area is evaluated for consistency with the PRCP, specifically as follows:

Land Use Plan

- The PRCP promotes a walkable mixed use village at Ludwigs Corner. The proposed development is consistent with this objective.
- The Future Land Use Plan describes the site as mixed use, with residential development proposed at 10-12 dwelling units per acre (DU/ac), and site coverage at 20%. Although the proposed use is consistent with the PRPC, the development intensity is not.

The proposed development plan indicates the site divided between residential, mixed use office, and commercial. Residential use occupies approximately 15 acres of the site at a density of 15 DU/ac. Proposed impervious cover is 69.3%, or over three times that advocated by the PRPC.

It is noted that the proposed plan indicates a reduction of impervious cover from the Settlement Plan, from 74.9% to 69.3%, and in this regard is closer to consistency than is the Settlement Plan.

However, the development mix has been shifted to increase residential use from 100 to 230 DU, and commercial/office use reduced from a maximum 270,000 square feet (SF) to a maximum 143,350 SF. The shift in land uses, and intensities involves potentially increased impacts, particularly with regard to sewers, schools, recreation, emergency

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services, and municipal finances, which pertain to Regional Comprehensive Plan elements discussed later in this report.

- The Land Use Plan states that mixed use villages shall be pedestrian oriented and walkable. The proposed plan is largely consistent, with sidewalks proposed along Lexington Boulevard and throughout the interior of the development. Consistency should be improved by creating pedestrian links off site to existing businesses at Ludwigs Corner, and along Birchrun Road, Route 401, and Route 100, including crosswalks at intersections.

**Environmental and Natural Resources Plan**

- No critical environmental resources are directly impacted by the proposed development, and thus the plan is generally consistent.
- The project is within the Exceptional Value Birch Run watershed. It is noted that the impervious cover is reduced to approximately 6% less than the Settlement Plan, but is still well above the 20% maximum prescribed in the Land Use element of the Regional Comprehensive Plan. The Applicant's project narrative states that Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be incorporated to address water quality, thermal impacts, and peak runoff rates. This aspect should receive close attention as the land development plan moves through the approval process.
- It is noted that several of the building rooftops are oriented favorably for solar photovoltaic systems. In addition, green building techniques should be utilized to reduce environmental impacts. These are recommended consistent with the PRCP goal of environmental protection and can serve as a model project for the community, while affording occupants of the development substantial cost savings on electricity.

**Housing Plan**

- Mixed use village scale development is to be encouraged, with housing targeted to growth areas. The proposal is consistent with this objective.
- Residential diversity is to be promoted through the provision of different residential types and lot sizes within the same project. The proposed development consists of apartments, townhouses, and twins, and a large single-family residential component was previously developed. The plan is viewed as consistent.
- The Housing Plan seeks to address housing affordability, and West Vincent is rated in the PRCP as having the lowest affordability in the region. The provision of apartments and attached single family housing could address this somewhat. However, information on the target market and pricing would be required to make this determination.

**Economic Development Plan**

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- Ludwigs Corner is identified as a mixed use village site within a priority economic development area. The plan is consistent.
- Ludwigs Corner is proposed in the PRCP to be a pedestrian oriented retail village with goods and services to support area residents. The plan is generally consistent in this regard, but could be improved with effective pedestrian accessibility between the proposed development and existing business in the area.
- The Comprehensive Plan describes a village development at Ludwigs Corner with 150,000 SF of retail and office use within a walkable mixed use center. The Applicant's proposal is for 65,000-143,000 of commercial/office space, with the development mix shifted more toward residential than on the Settlement Plan or in the PRCP. Given the changes in land use and development patterns since the 2008 PRPC, this is viewed as consistent.
- A diversity of housing types to support the area workforce is recommended in the PRCP. The apartment and attached single family housing may be consistent with this objective, depending on their target demographics.
- The PRCP states a concern that the service demands of residential development be counterbalanced by commercial development that provides fiscal benefits to schools and local government. The change in development mix to reduce commercial/office in favor of more residential units should be evaluated in this context.

**Community Facilities Plan**

- The PRCP advocates consistency with the municipal Act 537 Wastewater Treatment Plan. The shift in development mix from office/commercial to residential results in an increase of sewer demand of 5,320 gallons per day (GPD) over that allowed per the Settlement Agreement. The Applicant proposes that this increase is offset by a 9% reduction in the per unit flow rating for the existing single family component of the development. The Township will need to verify compliance with the sewage facilities and its Act 537 plan as the land development process proceeds.
- The Community Facilities Plan promotes structural and non-structural BMPs for water resources protection, which is especially critical in the Exceptional Value Birch Run watershed. This aspect should receive close attention as the land development plan moves through the approval process.

**Recreation and Community Services**

- The PRCP advocates regional coordination of community facilities, and in particular convenient access to recreational amenities. The provision of recreational amenities is unclear on the plan, and there is limited pedestrian connectivity beyond the site to attributes such as existing commercial development around Ludwigs Corner and proposed adjacent residential development.

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- A balance of passive and active recreation amenities is an objective of the PRCP, and the Regional Comprehensive Plan documents an existing shortage of park and recreation facilities in West Vincent. There are no park or recreation amenities in proximity to the development, and there is no detail regarding such features on the development plan. It is recommended that recreational amenities be incorporated into the design. At the least, off site pedestrian connectivity should be enhanced.
- The Northern Federation Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Resources Plan and the PRCP indicate a proposed Brandywine Trail to link the trail system in Uwchlan Township to the Horse-Shoe Trail. The Brandywine Trail is to be comprised of improved surface and country road segments and is shown as traversing the proposed development site. The plan makes no provision for this vital trail connection and should be revised for consistency.
- The residential component of the development would be significantly increased over the Settlement Plan, from 100 DU to 230 DU. This will result in increased impacts on schools, recreation demand, and emergency services that need to be quantified and accommodated as necessary. No information on these impacts has been provided.

**Transportation and Circulation Plan**

- The plan should support the implementation of recreational trails and pedestrian connections that link residential areas, villages, and economic centers. Off site connections including sidewalks, crosswalks, and the Brandywine Trail should be included on the plan for consistency.

**Cultural Resources Plan**

- Although there would be no direct impact to significant cultural resources, the proposed development lacks pedestrian connections to the Historic Ludwigs Corner crossroads settlement. Sidewalks and crosswalks connecting to this regional landmark and commercial center should be incorporated to promote consistency.

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**Conclusion** - The proposed Weatherstone Town Center Commercial Area development is inconsistent with the Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan (PRCP) in terms of the following important aspects:

- Proposed residential density exceeds PRPC policy for mixed use villages.
- The plan does not integrate the development with adjacent commercial areas, residential areas, and cultural landmarks with pedestrian connections.
- There are no specific provisions to address the Township’s deficit of recreational resources or the recreational needs of the proposed development.
- The Brandywine Trail is not supported.

The following changes are recommended to advance the goals and objectives of the PRCP:

- Residential intensity should be decreased from 15 DU/acre to 12 DU/acre maximum.
- Additional perimeter sidewalks and offsite pedestrian connections should be provided.
- Design development should include specific BMPs with benefits to the Exceptional Value Birch Run Watershed quantified.
- Solar energy and sustainable architecture should be incorporated into the design.
- Information should be provided to show how the proposed dwelling types will address issues of housing affordability in the community.
- The Applicant should document impacts of the development on sewage facilities, schools, recreation demand, emergency services, and municipal finances, and should propose appropriate mitigation of any negative impacts.
- An improved surface to support the Brandywine Trail should be provided.

cc:

PRPC Elected Representatives

Jonathan Ewald  
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Rusty Strauss  
Barbara Cohen  
John Jacobs

Planning Commissioners/Alternates

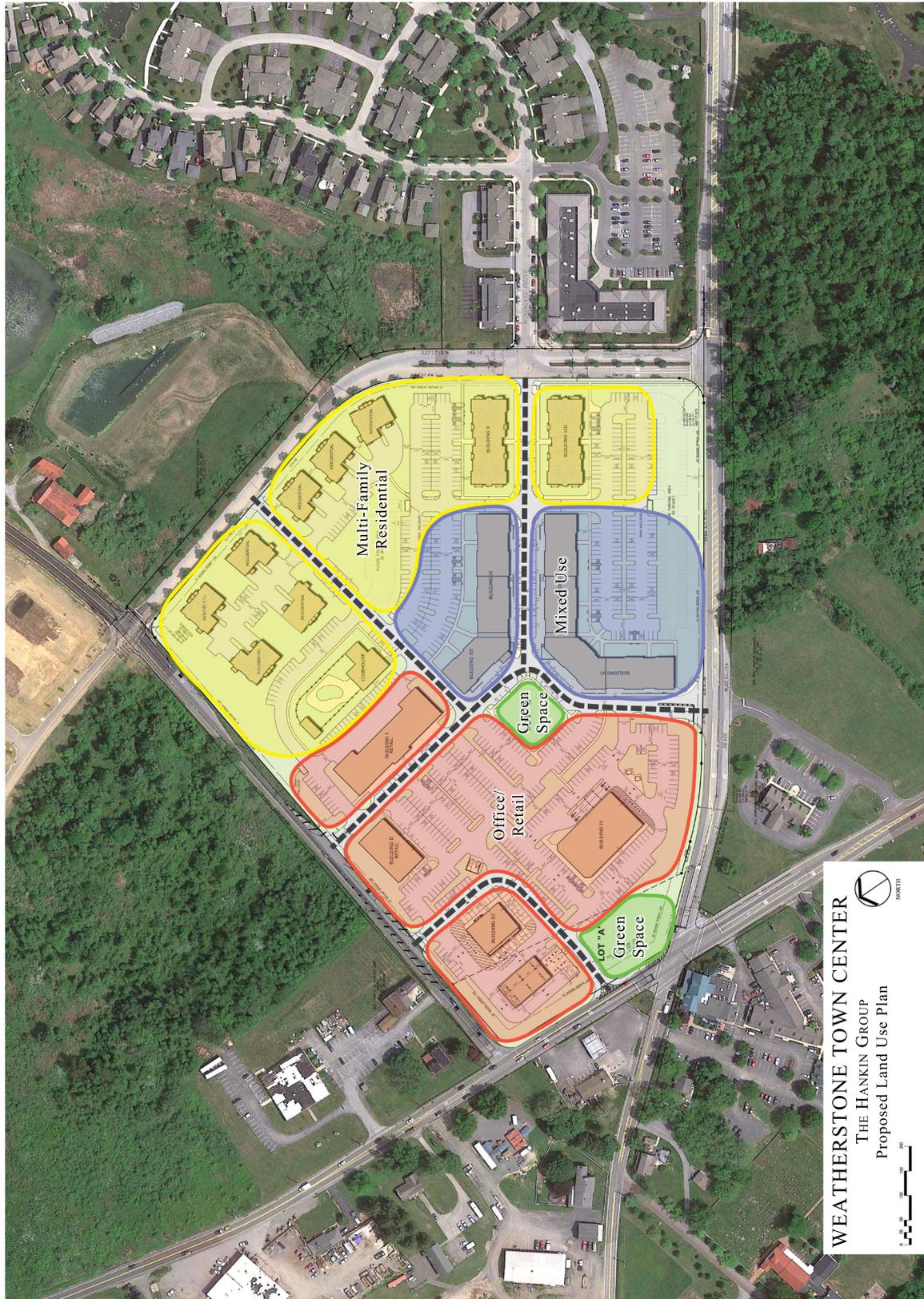
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EXHIBIT C: WEATHERSTONE TOWN CENTER - PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN



WEATHERSTONE TOWN CENTER  
THE HANKIN GROUP  
Proposed Land Use Plan

# EXHIBIT B: WEATHERSTONE TOWN CENTER PLAN

