



**DELAWARE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**

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January 21, 2016

Mr. Joseph Romano  
Marple Township  
227 S. Sproul Road  
Broomall, PA 19008-2397

RE: Name of Dev't: Cardinal Crossing Towne Center  
DCPD File No.: 24-8108-16  
Developer: Wes O'Kula, Goodman Properties  
Location: West side of Reed Road on the northern  
side of Interstate 476  
Recv'd in DCPD: May 26, 2015

Dear Mr. Romano:

In accordance with the provisions of Section 502 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the above described proposal has been sent to the Delaware County Planning Commission for review. At a meeting held on January 21, 2016, the Commission took action as shown in the recommendation of the attached review.

Please refer to the DCPD file number shown above in any future communications related to this application.

Very truly yours,

Linda F. Hill  
Director

LFH/pmg

cc: Wes O'Kula, Goodman Properties



**DELAWARE COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**DCPD**

Court House/ Government Center , 201 W. Front St., Media, PA 19063  
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Date: January 21, 2016  
File No.: 24-8108-16

PLAN TITLE: Cardinal Crossing Towne Center

DATE OF PLAN: May 15, 2015

OWNER OR AGENT: Wes O'Kula, Goodman Properties

LOCATION: West side of Reed Road on the northern side of Interstate 476

MUNICIPALITY: Marple Township

TYPE OF REVIEW: Preliminary Subdivision  
Preliminary Land Development

ZONING DISTRICT: Institutional, R-B and R-C  
Residential (Current Zoning)

PCC-Planned Community Center and  
PCR-Planned Community Residential  
(Proposed Zoning)

SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE: Local

PROPOSAL: Subdivide 1 lot totaling 213.28 acres into 2 lots

Develop 150.16 acres with 20 single-use buildings comprised of retail, service commercial, a medical office, and a hotel, totaling 997,235 sq. ft.

Develop 63.12 acres with 303 townhouses

UTILITIES: All Public

Date: January 21, 2016  
File No.: 24-8108-16

RECOMMENDATIONS:                   Revise and resubmit preliminary  
  plan incorporating the following  
  remarks

STAFF REVIEW BY:                   Dennis DeRosa, Karen Holm, Tom  
  Shaffer

REMARKS:

**BACKGROUND**

New zoning regulations for two new zoning districts, "PCR-Planned Community Residential" and "PCC-Planned Community Center," were drafted and submitted for review (zoning text amendment). The site is proposed to be rezoned from its current zoning districts, I-Institutional and R-B and R-C Residential, to the new zoning districts (zoning map amendment). Comments and recommendations for the zoning text and zoning map amendments have been formulated and provide a foundation for the subdivision and land development review.

**CURRENT PROPOSAL**

The site is proposed to be subdivided into two lots, where each lot will then be developed in accordance with one of the two new zoning districts proposed within the zoning text/map amendment in an accompanying review. One lot, totaling 150.16 acres, will be developed with a large big-box retail complex, service commercial, a hotel, and a medical office in accordance with the new PCC-Planned Community District. Another lot, totaling 63.12 acres, is proposed with 303 townhomes to be developed in accordance with the new PCR-Planned Community Residential District.

The site is located across the street from Saints Peter and Paul Cemetery and the Lawrence Park Shopping Center. It was formerly the site of Don Guanella Village and the Cardinal Krol Center for the disabled until its sale to a commercial real estate developer

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REMARKS (continued):

in late 2014. The property is currently zoned INS-Institutional and R-B and R-C Residential. However, Goodman Properties, the new owner, is proposing to develop the site under proposed zoning regulations accompanying the plan.

The plan shows a total of 20 nonresidential buildings, ranging from 5,585 sq. ft. to 199,000 sq. ft., interspersed with 4,994 parking spaces. Five of the largest stores proposed are big-box type retail and shown in a semi-circle fronting on Sproul Road, with the rear portions of buildings being the focal point for the proposed 300-plus residential community.

The plan shows an additional commercial development located in the rear portion of the site abutting I-476. Included in the approximately 1,000,000 sq. ft. of building space is a 65,000 sq. ft. hotel, a 100,000 sq. ft. medical office building, and an 80,000 sq. ft. fitness center.

**CONSISTENCY WITH TOWNSHIP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The current proposal, as well as the accompanying zoning text and map amendments are inconsistent with the Township Comprehensive Plan, which classifies the site as "Community Services" and "Wooded."

**DESIGN COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**General Comments and Recommendations**

1. Although the site is being proposed in accordance with a mixed-use pedestrian-oriented development concept, it is essentially designed as a large shopping center complex back-dropped by a townhome development located on an adjacent lot. The plan shows a big-box shopping center, with smaller standalone businesses along Sproul Road and a smaller "main

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REMARKS (continued):

- street" area behind. While Buildings 7-12 and their associated plazas and adjacent public spaces appear to follow a "main street" configuration, Buildings 1 and 2 are proposed as single-tenant anchors (or big-box), and Buildings 3-6 appear to be split among mid-sized businesses. The view from the proposed townhomes will be that of the rear and side portions of five big-box stores surrounded by parking spaces.
2. Pedestrian access to the smaller commercial building area is not facilitated, where a distance of approximately 1,350' is shown from the closest residential structure. The closest residential structure to the area proposed to contain a fitness center and medical office is approximately 1,050'; therefore, it is doubtful that residents will access this area on foot.
  3. It would be preferable to see most of the site developed using main street design concepts. Ideally, instead of big-box stores, a grouping of smaller commercial buildings should be placed in proximity to the residential development. The residential section and hotel should be brought closer to the proposed retail. This would reduce walking distances and the need to drive to multiple locations within the site.
  4. Buildings 3-6 (and perhaps the businesses fronting on Sproul Road) should be integrated with Buildings 7-12 either in a grid pattern, or some other network, with some on-street parking, and perhaps some structured parking, especially via at-grade underneath the buildings. Buildings 1 and 2 could be left as standalone "big boxes." Additionally, some buildings could be attached to each other, with structured parking to reduce walking distances and to allow people to park in one place rather than have to drive from one store to another, similar to the Concordville Towne Center.

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REMARKS (continued):

5. If smaller retail and service-oriented commercial cannot be located closer to the residential community, a better design would be to incorporate vertically mixed-use buildings to attain a pedestrian realm, where public squares and green plazas would be preferential to areas presently dominated by parking.
6. The buildings should be oriented in a manner that concentrates density and building coverage on more developable portions of the site, so as to reduce impacts on more environmentally sensitive portions of the site.

Circulation and Parking

1. The proposed site design would benefit greatly from better connections between the housing units and the shopping areas, especially in the northern section of the townhomes. While sidewalks and other amenities appear to be proposed to facilitate residential pedestrian access, the distances between the residential portions of the site and the shopping areas appear to be prohibitively far to walk.
2. The long internal access roads and parking areas may also discourage residents from patronizing the shopping area on foot due to potential traffic conflicts. This could be addressed by redesigning the site in either a grid pattern, or at least with more integration between residential and commercial areas.
3. An expanded main street business district should be placed closer to the residential units, with the big boxes farther away. The applicant should remove excess paving and increase pedestrian space, while orienting the buildings toward a more pedestrian friendly space, so as to create a town square feeling.

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REMARKS (continued):

4. A connection should be incorporated between the two residential areas via a pedestrian path, and it is recommended that the connection be integrated into the proposed trail network.
5. Interior roads should be built as "complete streets," which would include on-street parking, sidewalks, and bicycle lanes consistent with a traditional neighborhood development scheme.
6. Removal of the highway oriented development (Buildings 12, 13, 14, and 15) along Sproul Road would make this site less car-oriented. Work these into the main street concept.
7. The proposed sidewalk network is generally complete, but additional sidewalks are needed in several locations. A sidewalk along Sproul and Reed Roads (Sproul Road to Parkway Drive) property frontages is needed. A sidewalk along Driveway G behind Building 3 is needed. Highly-visible crosswalks should also be provided. Crosswalk improvements are needed at Sproul and Reed traffic signals.
8. Parking is shown at one-space per 200 sq. ft., where the proposed regulations within the zoning text amendment require 4.5 per thousand GFA. The review of the accompanying zoning text amendment recommends that the regulations require no more than 4 spaces per 1,000 of GFA, while provided parking spaces should be no more than required.

Any parking installed that exceeds the minimum required should be maintained as pervious paving or some other form of green infrastructure to reduce stormwater runoff. Although not mentioned in the zoning text amendment, perhaps a threshold of spaces (i.e. 2,000) could be set above such number, where a structured parking area could be constructed to maximize site space.

REMARKS (continued):

Environmental Features

The site contains a significant number environmental constraints. As such, the applicant should consider preserving substantial portions of the site, particularly in areas adjacent to stream banks, on steep and very steep slopes, as well as in areas containing existing tree and vegetative cover. Other portions of the site that are suitable for construction could potentially be developed with increased density and building heights to minimize overall coverage.

**Trees**

1. As stated in the accompanying zoning text amendment review, the Township should not adopt proposed regulations permitting the clear-cutting of more than 50% of the trees. The proposed regulations governing tree removal significantly deviate from prevailing municipal regulations, including the Township's currently adopted tree protection standards in Section 300-63. Existing trees and ground vegetation should be preserved as much as feasible and incorporated into the design of the proposed development so as to mitigate the stormwater runoff, reduce the potential for a heat island effect, and to make the development more attractive.
2. The site contains 175.31 acres of woodlands out of a total area of 213.28 acres. The applicant is proposing to remove or clear-cut 144.82 acres (or 83%) of the existing wooded area. It is recommended the applicant redesign the proposed building layout to preserve significant tree cover and/or focus construction on the front portion of the site where the existing Don Guanella facility is located, an area that is has already been developed.

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REMARKS (continued):

**Steep Slopes**

1. The site contains 31.32 acres of steep slopes (15% to 25%), where the applicant proposes to disturb 20.82 acres (or 66%) of the area. Additionally, the site contains 12.68 acres of very steep slopes (25% or greater), where the applicant proposes to disturb 8.82 acres (or 70%) of the area.
2. Regulations within the proposed zoning text amendment governing slope protection for this specific site deviate considerably from prevailing municipal slope regulations, including currently adopted Marple Township regulations found in Section 300-62, which prohibit construction within very steep slopes areas, and only permit by conditional use, conservation and passive recreation uses that require structures and vehicular driveways for single-family detached dwellings when no practical or feasible alternatives exist.
3. It is recommended the applicant redesign the proposed building layout to minimize steep slope and very steep slope disturbance, as construction in these areas could have the potential to significantly increase erosion and stormwater runoff, which will need to be addressed through extensive and costly stormwater management facilities requiring periodic maintenance to function as intended. Failure to maintain respective facilities has the additional potential to exacerbate erosion and sedimentation, thereby adversely effecting downstream areas.

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REMARKS (continued):

**Open Space/Landscaping**

1. Community open space should be part of a project this large. Such open space could include one or more passive or active recreation areas and facilities. Consideration should be given to adding a park or several pocket parks within the residential areas to prevent the need for residents to drive to a community park.
2. The central/eastern portion of the proposed development shows trail access to the shopping area, and the plan calls for trails and a potential connection to the Darby Creek Greenway. However, there are opportunities to better integrate residential areas and create a more formal connection to this regional trail. The Planning Department staff is available to discuss options for connecting to the Greenway.
3. The Blue Route/I-476 was designated a Pennsylvania Scenic Byway so as to enhance and maintain the visual quality of the highway. As such, billboards are prohibited and landscaping is maintained to preserve the Blue Route's characteristic parkway feel. It is recommended that the berm along the Blue Route behind the proposed fitness center not be removed (as noted on the plan), as this would significantly alter the characteristic views from (and to) the Blue Route. It is also recommended that more planted areas preserved along the edge so as to maintain the visual quality of the area.
4. Extra attention should be given to landscaping and greening of the site, with a focus on the frontage along PA 320. More tree cover along the frontage of Sproul Road would greatly improve the visual appeal of the site, while helping to maintain its current wooded look. The applicant should consider installing a protected tree-lined buffer strip (roughly 60'-80') along Sproul Road.

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REMARKS (continued):

**Stormwater Management**

1. The proposed development has the potential for significant stormwater impacts downstream. In order to help mitigate the effects of the large amount of impervious cover created by this proposal, the developer should consider the following recommendations:
  - Redesign the land development to eliminate any unnecessary paving and incorporate sustainable best management practices including rain gardens, green roofs, pervious paving, and depressed curbs that drain to landscaped islands that serve as stormwater infiltration areas.
  - Given the potential water quality and habitat impacts associated with development of this site, consideration should be given to protecting the widest buffer practicable along the streams.
2. The Township Engineer must verify the adequacy of all proposed stormwater management facilities.

**Sewage Facilities**

The developer should contact the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regarding required planning module approval for the proposed mixed use development.

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REMARKS (continued):

#### **HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The proposed development sits on an area that has a mix of high, medium and low potential for underground archaeological resources. Development near the creek beds has a higher sensitivity for these potential underground resources.

The buildings presently on the site that will be demolished are the Don Guanella Center and the Cardinal Kroll Center. Both were created in the 1960's for developmentally disabled boys and men. Though the buildings may be old enough to be historically significant, they do not appear to be National Register eligible.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The proposed development is inconsistent with the Township Comprehensive Plan, which designates the site as best suited for "Community Services" and "Wooded." A high-density, intensive mixed-use land use classification, as proposed, is not suitable for the entirety of the site, due to its significant wooded areas and environmental constraints.

The proposed site design is inconsistent with a mixed-use pedestrian-oriented layout, and the proposed development does not appear to adequately address protection of existing sensitive environmental features on the site. Therefore, it is recommended that the plan be redesigned to better preserve sensitive areas, to reflect a true mixed use building scheme, to minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic, and facilitate pedestrian connections within the development, as well as to make connections to the Darby Creek Greenway. Revised plans should be prepared in accordance with recommendations within a comprehensive plan update and proposed zoning map and zoning text amendments.