



Planning Analysis for the proposed rezoning of:

Abington Terrace

Abington Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

Prepared for:

BET Investments

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the impact of the proposed zoning change and anticipated development of the site on the surrounding community and Abington Township. This report will demonstrate that the proposed zoning and development of the site is in alignment with the goals objectives and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plans for Abington Township and Montgomery County, and the Old York Road Corridor Improvement Plan.

PLANNING ANALYSIS

Project Description

The subject property consists of 5.09 acres +/- located at Old York Road and Susquehanna Road in the heart of Abington Township. The site consists of four parcels located at 1059, 1067 and 1073 Old York Road and 1062 Huntingdon Road being tax map parcel numbers 30-00-49728-00-3, 30-00-49724-00-7, 30-00-49720-00-2 and 30-00-31708-00-5 (the "Property"). The Property has approximately 350 feet of frontage on Old York Road, 500 feet of frontage on Susquehanna Road and 90 feet of frontage on Huntingdon Road. The Property is within walking distance of Abington Hospital, the Abington Free Library, and many stores and services located along Old York Road. (see Figure 1). The Property does not include the cemetery on the corner which will remain.

The Property is located in the CS Community Service District and the R-3 Medium-Density Residential District. The Applicant, Abington Terrace, LLC, is requesting the property to be rezoned to the AO Apartment-Office District. This would allow senior apartment units in accordance with a proposed text amendment for a new use: H-12 Senior Apartment Units. The area surrounding the Property consists of a mix of districts. To the north, across Susquehanna Road are the AO and MS-L Main Street Low Intensity Districts, to the west, across the Old York Road is the CS District, to the south is CS, and to the east is the R-3 District. (see Figure 2).

The Property has been previously developed and is currently being used for both conforming and non-conforming uses; which include the YMCA gym and childcare facility, a single family residence, a funeral home and parking lots. The existing buildings are older and several additions have been constructed over the years. Several driveways currently provide access to the existing uses. The expected closing of the YMCA presents an opportunity for appropriate redevelopment of the subject property, increased pedestrian connections and the addition of a public "pocket park".

The Applicant is proposing to develop the Property with 180 luxury senior apartment units (the "Project"). The apartments will be located in one 3 story building and one 4 story building. The apartments will consist of one-and two-bedroom units. The proposed apartment units will be age-qualified and available to those over age 55. The Project will include upscale amenities such as: interior and exterior gathering areas, balconies, landscaped decks, a resort style pool and a fitness center. Parking spaces will be provided below the buildings and in a surface parking lot. A single drive located to the rear of the buildings will have one entrance on Susquehanna Road and one entrance on Old York Road. Access to the lower level parking and surface parking will be from the driveway. A publically accessible pocket park is also proposed at the southeastern portion of the Property, along Huntingdon Road (see Figure 3).

Existing Zoning

The subject property is currently split between the CS Community Service District and the R-3 Medium Density Residential District. The CS District allows institutional uses while R-3 District permits various medium and higher density residential uses.

Proposed Zoning

The Property is proposed to be rezoned to the AO Apartment-Office District (see Appendix A). The proposed intent of the AO District is to *“Provide for high density residential/apartment land uses, and limited office/professional land uses in areas of the Township which are well-suited for uses by virtue of their location, highway access, or other unique site characteristics; encourage attractive design and pedestrian friendly development; facilitate access to convenience retail or services for large apartment or office buildings; act as a transition zone adjacent to single-family residential districts, helping buffer those residential districts from arterial roads, higher-intensity commercial districts, or higher density residential districts.”*

A text amendment to the zoning ordinance is proposed (see Appendix B) which would add use H-12, Senior Apartment Units, allowing for a wider range of senior housing options in the Township where medical facilities, access to arterial highways and public transportation options are readily available. The senior apartment units would be permitted by conditional use. Special development regulations will apply to the proposed use such as; requiring a hospital to be located within 2,000 feet, access to public transportation within 400 feet and other standards. Use H-12 is proposed with a base density of 24 DU/AC and the ability to progressively increase the density through a series of bonuses. The density of 24 DU/AC is typical, although on the low side for senior housing. The density bonuses were included to encourage a higher quality project with respect to architecture, landscaping and sustainable practices in exchange for a slight increase in the number of units. The base density of 24 DU/AC is the same as use E-10 (Life Care Facility) which is permitted in both the CS and R-3 Districts. Unlike use E-10, which provides various levels of assistance and medical care, the senior apartment units will enable seniors to live independently. Most notably, use H-12 will provide an additional financial option for senior citizens. Rather than a large lump sum payment, seniors will be able to preserve their capital from the sale of their long-time home. The proposed use H-12 will fill a need in the Township for senior apartments.

The proposed rezoning of the Property to the AO district and the H-12 Senior Apartment use are particularly well-suited for the Property. The AO District is already located to the northeast of the Property across Susquehanna Road. The Property’s location along Old York and Susquehanna Roads will provide residents access to nearby medical facilities, convenience retail stores and services, and is within walking distance of both a church and a synagogue. The Project will also serve as a transitional area between the higher intensity commercial areas to the north and west and the residential single family homes to the south and east. The attractively designed buildings will serve as a buffer from the arterial roads and provide increased pedestrian connections for the community.

Abington Township Comprehensive Plan

The current Abington Township Comprehensive Plan was adopted in July of 2007. The plan is an update of the 1992 plan. The proposed amendment and rezoning are in alignment with numerous elements of the comprehensive plan.

Housing Goals:

- As a community, Abington Township should work to maintain the existing housing diversity and encourage the creation of housing choices to meet the needs of current and future residents. *The proposed project will expand the housing options for seniors that would like to stay in the area.*
- Encourage housing which maximizes the use of existing transit infrastructure to achieve a greater utilization of available economic resources. *The proposed project is located on two arterial roads and is in close proximity to public transportation. The project will generate significant revenue for both Abington Township and Abington School District.*
- Develop/redevelop communities which allow for living, walking, and working within Abington Township. *The proposed project will redevelop a highly visible site. The project will have a pedestrian friendly design which will reinforce this central core area of the Township.*
- Explore the possibility of providing affordable and accessible housing units for the elderly and mobility challenged. *The project will provide needed housing for seniors. The units and building will be designed specifically for senior citizens many of whom have mobility issues.*

Transportation Goals:

- To relieve traffic congestion and provide for the safe and efficient access to commercial, recreational, and institutional centers. *The proposed project has a much lower traffic impact than the previous use. See Transportation Impact Study, prepared by McMahon Associates, dated November 2017.*
- Promote and encourage the use and expansion of public transportation. *The proposed amendment requires senior apartments units to have a close proximity to public transportation.*

Township Finance:

- Determine financing mechanisms and revenue sources to preserve the financial viability of the Township and ensure fiscal responsibility. *The proposed project will have a significant positive fiscal impact. Furthermore, senior housing does not generate any school age children. See Fiscal Impact Analysis, prepared by David C. Babbitt, AICP, dated November 9, 2108.*

Population Trends:

- Abington's population tends toward the older age cohorts when compared with the 5-County Region, and this is especially true when compared to Montgomery County. 19% of Abington's population was 65 years of age or older in 2000, while in the County the figure was 14.9% and in the 5-County Region it was 14%. *This illustrates the need for senior housing in Abington.*

Zoning:

- Instead of narrow, continuous strips, the existing corridors could be limited in length but expanded in breadth and integrated with the surrounding residential areas. This would create more Town Center areas providing a cohesive integration of commercial and residential. *Rezoning the property will form a transition between the commercial areas and residential areas.*
- To these ends, the Zoning Ordinance needs to be revised with the following objectives:
 - Redevelopment should lead to higher and better uses relative to current uses.

- Greater availability of residential rental properties in clustered developments or in town settings should be encouraged.
- The development of senior housing should be encouraged.
- The expansion of town settings should be encouraged.
- New permitted uses should be considered for old commercial/industrial areas where current uses are declining.

The proposed rezoning and text amendment will provide needed senior housing, help support the local area businesses and reinforce the fabric of this central core area of the Township.

Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan

The current Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, MONTCO 2040: A Shared Vision was adopted in July of 2015. The comprehensive plan designates the site as a growth area and is part of the Community Mixed Use and Town Center future land use areas (see Figure 4). The Community Mixed Use area encourages a mixture of different uses including higher density residential to act as a transition between non-residential and residential areas. The Town Center area encourages a mixture of uses including high density residential development next to traditional downtown areas. *The proposed project is in alignment with the County Comprehensive Plan.*

Old York Road Corridor Plan

The Old York Road Corridor Improvement Study was completed in 2010. The Improvement Study provides: “From the Township’s perspective, Old York Road has been underperforming as a setting for business and as a reflection of character of the community and this has affected its tax base and its quality of life.” The Improvement Study suggests measures that need to be taken to improve the Old York Road corridor. The proposed amendment and rezoning of the Property will allow a number of the Improvement Study’s recommendations to be realized through the Project:

Streetscape

- Wider sidewalks providing direct access to buildings fronting on the corridor. *Included in Project*
- Ambient street lighting through the use of pedestrian-scaled fixtures. *Included in Project*

Circulation

- Enhance the corridor for non-vehicular users. *The Project is pedestrian –friendly.*
- Enhance utilization of transit services. *The Project has close-proximity to public transportation.*

Land Use

- A mix of land uses is recommended along the corridor. The arrangement of these land uses should be mutually-supporting. *The proposed rezoning and amendment is consistent with this recommendation.*
- The future buildings will contribute to the pedestrian friendly character proposed for the corridor.
- Off-street parking will be behind buildings.
- Pocket parks are recommended by the corridor study.

Sustainability

- Smart growth-based recommendations such as; mixing of land uses, increasing intensity of the uses, improving pedestrian environments and siting development close to transit are included in the corridor improvement plan. *The proposed rezoning is in alignment with these recommendations.*

Transportation

From a planning perspective, access to the proposed senior apartments will be adequately provided by a new drive connecting to Old York Road and Susquehanna Road. A single access point is proposed for each road which eliminates several of the access points that currently exist. A Transportation Impact Study (McMahon, November, 2017) found that the Project will generate significantly less trips than the existing uses. Old York Road (S.R. 611) is classified by the Township as a major arterial. Susquehanna Road (S.R. 2017) is classified as a primary street. Sidewalks along the road frontages and throughout the Project will provide increased pedestrian connections for new residents and the existing community.

Fiscal Impact

A Fiscal Impact Analysis has been prepared for the Project which examines its projected fiscal impact to the Township and the Abington School District. The analysis projects the net fiscal impact of the Project to be highly favorable for the Township and School District because:

- 1.) Smaller apartment units result in fewer people per unit, lowering expenditures for the Township.
- 2.) Age-restricted units do not add school-age children, resulting in no expenditures for the School District.
- 3.) The proposed high end apartments will generate higher tax revenues.

The total combined annual surplus is projected to be \$3,052 per 1 bedroom apartment, \$3,457 per 2 bedroom apartment, and \$216 per structured parking space.

Commercial Facilities

A variety of retail and service businesses are located within a one-mile radius of the Property. The prospective residents of the senior apartment units will utilize the nearby businesses and have a positive impact on the local economy and help to revitalize Old York Road.

Utilities and Services

The Property is a proposed site for redevelopment and as such, public sewer and water services and utilities for gas and electric are readily available to the site. Capacity and service availability will be confirmed during the land development phase. All utility lines will be placed underground. Storm water drainage will be managed on site as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The Project also proposes the use of alternative energy sources and energy efficient buildings which will reduce the impact the Project has on the environment.

The impacts of the Project on Township police and fire protection will be negligible. The new community will be located in an easily accessible area of the Township and built to standards that easily accommodate fire trucks. The new buildings will be built to current building and fire codes. Any burden to the Township will be offset by the increase in tax revenue generated by the Project.

Neighborhood Character

The neighborhood surrounding the Property is currently a mix of many uses. Commercial, retail, single family residential, apartment, life care, service, medical, municipal and institutional uses are all in the

immediate vicinity. The proposed senior apartment use will not adversely affect the neighboring properties by means of noise, odors, smoke or vibration.

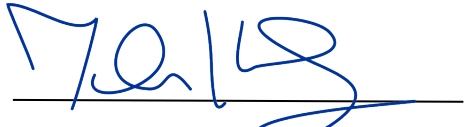
The buildings will be oriented towards the road frontages, in line with the existing development pattern of the neighborhood and the Old York Road Corridor. Parking will be located to the rear and in the lower level of the buildings. The Project will provide an appropriate transition between existing residential and non-residential uses in the area. The proposed pocket park will serve as an additional buffer between the existing residential area and the proposed senior apartments. The park will be available to new and existing residents. The architecture will be in character with the surrounding neighborhood and offer desirable design characteristics. (see Figures 5 and 6).

CONCLUSION

This Planning Analysis demonstrates that the proposed rezoning of the Property to the AO- Apartment Office District, and the proposed text amendment adding use H-12: Senior Apartment Unit, will not have a negative impact on the surrounding area and the Township overall. In summary:

1. The Property is an infill location in the existing central area of Old York Road.
2. The Property is in a transitional location, situated between, commercial and institutional areas to the north and west and residential areas to the south and east.
3. There is a need in the Township for additional senior housing options for an aging population.
4. The Project is in alignment with both the Township and County comprehensive plans.
5. The Project is in alignment with both the Old York Road Corridor Plan
6. The Project is not of a scale or type that will overburden township resources.
7. The Project will not have a negative environmental impact on the Property or surrounding areas.
8. As a redevelopment site, the Project will utilize improvements that are already in place.
9. The Project will not have a negative impact on the Abington School District.
10. The Project will increase public space within the Township and provide increased pedestrian connections.

In my professional opinion, the proposed rezoning of the Property to the AO District, and the proposed text amendment creating the H-12 use are appropriate for the Property and consistent with Abington Township's Comprehensive Plan.



John H. Kennedy, AICP

FIGURES

Figure 1: Site Aerial



Figure 2: Abington Township Zoning Map

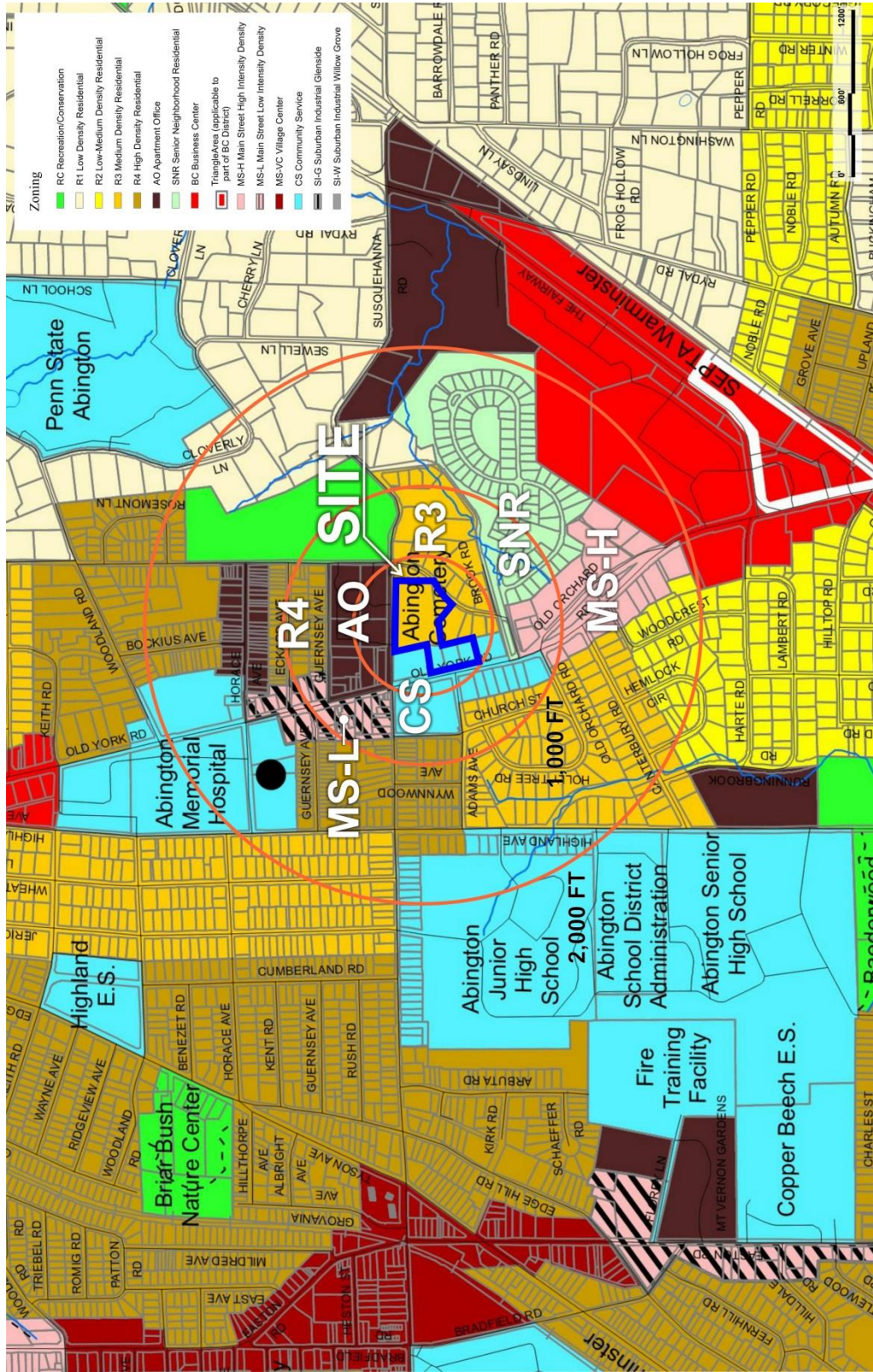


Figure 3: Concept Plan

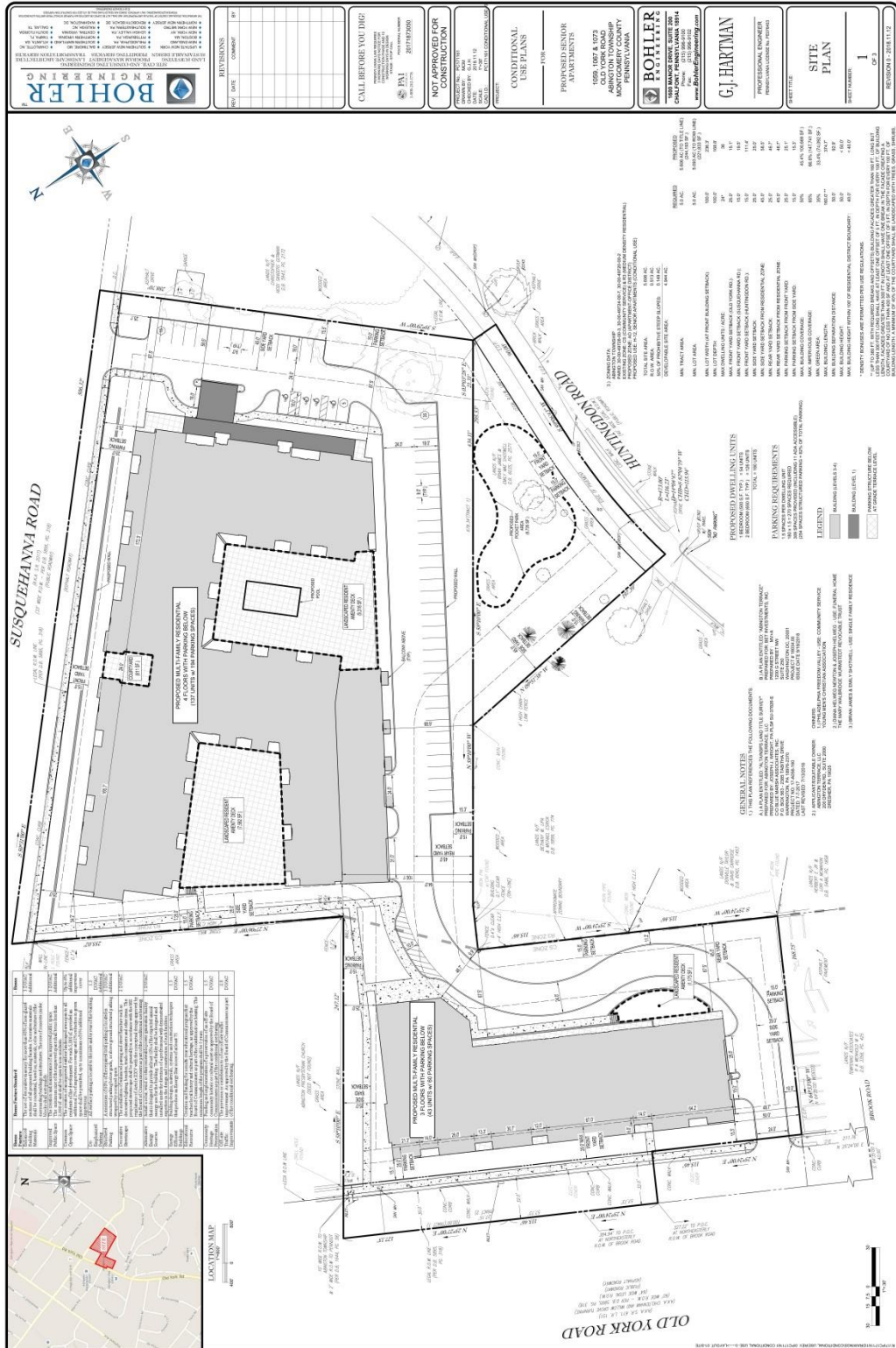


Figure 4: Future Land Use -Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan

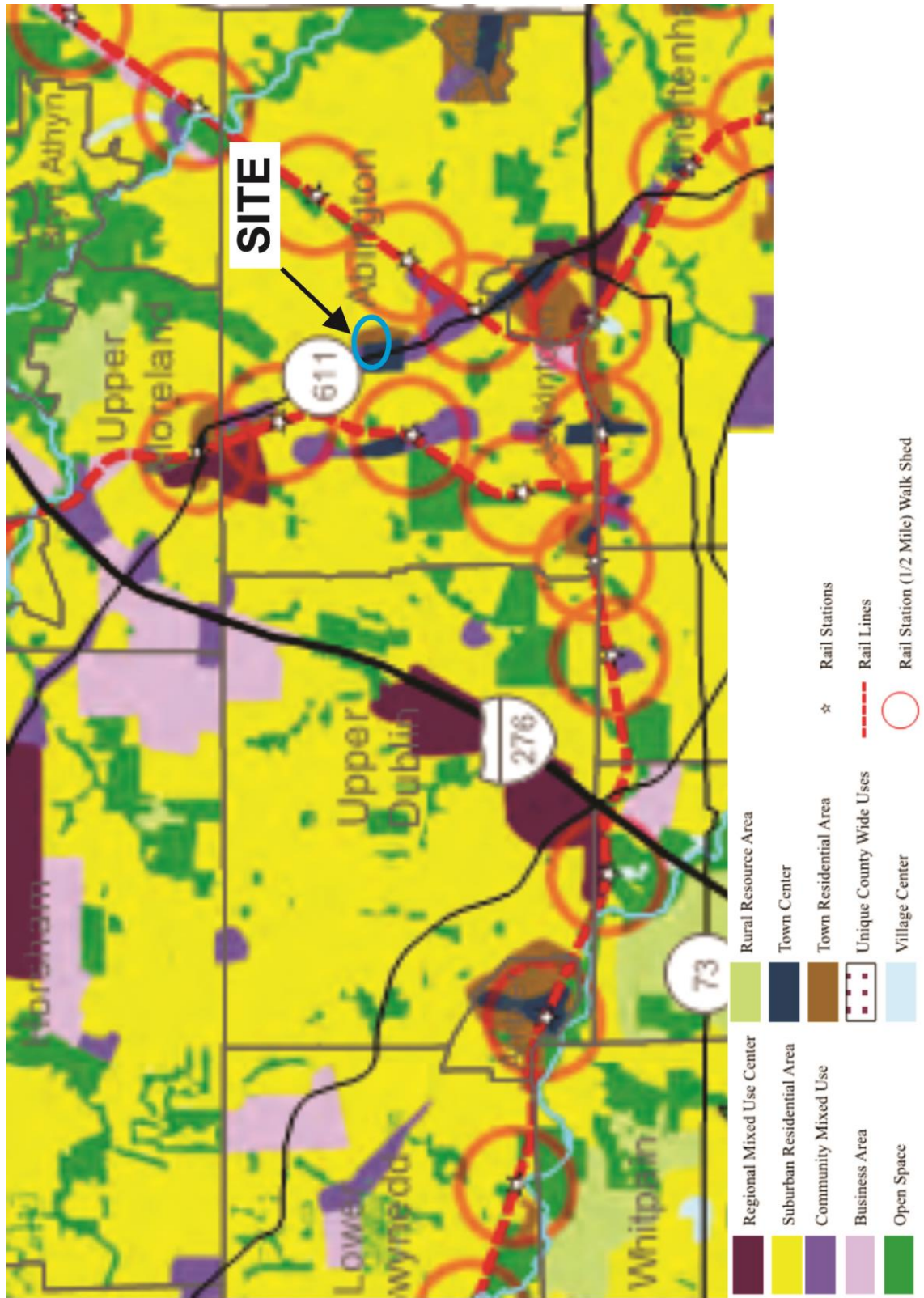


Figure 5: Proposed Building Elevation from Old York Road



Figure 6: Proposed Building Elevation from Susquehanna Road



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Appendix A
The Proposed Map Amendment

Appendix B
The Proposed AO- Apartment Office Amendment