

Planning & Real Estate Consultants

December 3, 2020

Planning Board  
Township of Berkeley Heights  
29 Park Avenue  
Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922

**Re: Planning Review #1  
Application #SP-9-20  
Minor Subdivision + Preliminary and Final Site Plan  
Block 702, Lots 17 (portion) & 18  
JMF Properties  
Stratton House Redevelopment Area ("Former Kings Site")**

Dear Chairman Johnson and Members of the Board:

We are in receipt of the above referenced application, including the following documents submitted by the applicant:

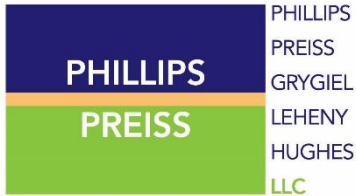
- Application for Site Plan Approval, Minor Subdivision Approval, and associated checklists, dated 9/29/2020.
- Site Plans entitled "Stratton House Block 702, Lots 17 & 18 Township of Berkeley Heights Union County, New Jersey," prepare by Bowman Consulting, dated 8/31/2020.
- Architectural Plans entitled "Stratton House Apartments Berkeley Heights Proposed Residential Development Block 702, Lots 17 & 18 Township of Berkeley Heights Union County, New Jersey," prepared by Devereaux & Associates, dated 9/23/2020.
- Elevation Presentations prepared by Devereaux & Associates, dated 10/6/2020.

We additionally referenced the following documents relevant to this application:

- Stratton House Redevelopment Plan, prepared by Phillips Preiss Grygiel Leheny Hughes LLC, adopted 9/8/2020, last amended 9/22/2020. ("Redevelopment Plan").
- Redevelopment Agreement by and between the Township of Berkeley Heights and Berkeley Heights Developers Urban Renewal, LLC for Block 702, Lots 17 (portion) & 18, dated November 2020.

#### **Site and Location**

The project site concerns Block 702, Lots 17 & 18, as well as adjacent Lone Pine Drive and Sherman Avenue rights-of-way. Existing Lot 17 totals 209,922 square feet and is



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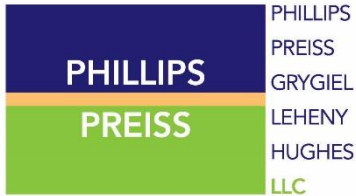
currently under a condominium form of ownership. The lot was formerly the site of a shopping center containing the Kings Food Market and several other retail shops and restaurants. It is currently improved with two multi-tenant commercial buildings and large surface parking lots surrounding the building complex. Existing Lot 18 totals 113,447 square feet and is a vacant lot.

The project site is located to the southeast of Springfield Avenue in a central location within Downtown Berkeley Heights. As such, the site is surrounded by a mix of multifamily, mixed-use, and commercial uses. Directly adjacent to the southwest is the Station Court apartments along Sherman Avenue and Sherman Avenue South. The Terrace at Berkeley Heights redevelopment project, as well as several retail, office, and commercial uses are located along Springfield Avenue and Sherman Avenue to the northwest. The site is also in proximity to the train station, Peppertown Park, Veterans' Memorial Park, proposed Mondelli Park and multifamily redevelopment project, and the Municipal Complex.

**Proposed Development**

The application involves a subdivision of existing Lots 17 & 18 to create a new Lot 18. The new Lot 18 will encompass existing Lot 18, a 82,104 square foot portion of existing Lot 17, and a 11,203 square foot Sherman Avenue right-of-way area that will be vacated and dedicated to the new lot. In exchange, a 8,459 square foot area along Lone Pine Drive will be dedicated to the Township as a public right-of-way. The resulting new Lot 18 will total 117,664 square feet, with 356.12 feet of frontage along Lone Pine Drive. Existing condo lines within Lot 17 will be vacated, and the remaining portion of Lot 17 containing the shopping center and surface parking will total 127,815 square feet.

On the new Lot 18, the Applicant will demolish the former Kings Food Mart building and associated improvements in order to newly construct an inclusionary multifamily rental development with 211 units total, out of which 32 units (15%) will be set aside as affordable for very low, low, and moderate income households. The proposed building will range from 3 to 4 stories in height, with an interior courtyard to the rear and a 5-level parking garage. A driveway with a surface parking row will be provided on Lone Pine Drive for access into the garage, while an additional surface parking row and bike racks are provided along the southern façade of the building. Four hundred and twenty (420) total parking spaces are proposed, including 20 surface parking spaces that will be reserved for commuter parking during the day. Paver walkways and concrete sidewalks are proposed along Lone Pine Drive and western and southern facades of the building. The eastern façade will have a 22-foot wide grass paver emergency accessway and retaining wall.



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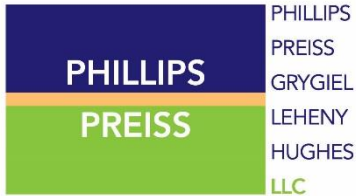
Lobbies are proposed near Lone Pine Drive and the southwestern corner of the building adjacent to the shopping center. The first floor of the building will also contain amenities including a business center, quick mart, storage, fitness and game rooms, community room, mail and package rooms, leasing office, and trash rooms. Units facing the courtyard will also have private balconies. The residential building facades will be constructed with a mix of light and red brick, hardie siding and panels, and cast stone base, while the garage will feature a mix of brick cladding, stained concrete and metal safety grilles. The roofline will be adorned with a combination of synthetic trim and aluminum cornices. Other detailing includes metal canopies above pedestrian entrances, aluminum sunshades above top floor windows, cast stone window heads and sills on other floors, and aluminum rails enclosing the balconies. New landscaping will be provided along the entire building façade except along the emergency accessway.

The Application also involves several off-site improvements. Notably, new landscaping and streetscaping will be provided along the driveway entrances of the remaining Lot 17 portion (following the subdivision). Improvements will be made to the existing sidewalks and curbs, while new street trees and plantings, lighting fixtures, bike racks, pavers, benches, and trash receptacles will be installed.

**Compliance**

The proposed development is subject to the standards set forth in the Stratton House Redevelopment Plan. On November 23, 2020, the Township Council determined by resolution that the proposed redevelopment project was consistent with the Redevelopment Plan and Redevelopment Agreement. As described in detail in the Consistency Review Report prepared by our office dated November 4, 2020 and referenced in the Resolution, the proposed project was found in substantial compliance with planning objectives and development standards of the Redevelopment Plan. The report additionally noted that certain site and building design specifications would be assessed in detail during site plan review, as follows:

- Section 3.4.2 requires that the highest datum line of any parapet on the parking garage roofline shall not extend more than 3 feet above the height of the fourth-floor residential roof deck. The applicant shall provide such measurements to demonstrate compliance or seek relief for this deviation.
- Section 3.5.5 requires that standard parking stalls have minimum dimensions of 8.5 feet by 18 feet; compact parking stalls have minimum dimensions of 7.5 feet by 15 feet; and a maximum of 30% of parking spaces as compact parking stalls. The applicant shall provide dimensions of parking stalls and the percentage of compact stalls, if any, to demonstrate compliance or seek relief for this deviation.



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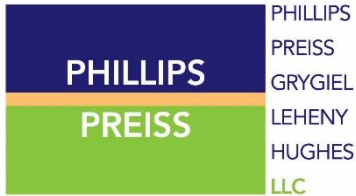
- Section 3.5.6 requires 12 electrical vehicle charging stations as part of the 420 parking spaces proposed (When 100 and more parking spaces are provided, 6 charging stations plus 2 charging stations for each additional 100 parking spaces are required). The applicant shall indicate the location and number of electric charging stations provided to demonstrate compliance or seek relief for this deviation.
- Section 3.7.2 requires the interior courtyard to include both hardscape and planted area and seating in sun and shady spots. Fountains, pools, or other water features are also encouraged. The applicant shall provide design details of the interior courtyard to demonstrate compliance or seek relief for this deviation.

The applicant indicates that there would be a monument sign at the Lone Pine Drive entrance, but no details have been provided. The proposed sign is required to comply with the height and area standards in Section 5.4.2.2 of the Municipal Land Use Procedures Ordinance for monument signs in downtown districts, as well as additional design standards in Section 19.5.6 and 19.5.7 governing downtown signage. Namely, the proposed sign face must not exceed 4 feet in height by 6 feet in width and shall not exceed 12 feet in height from grade. Materials must be stone, brick or wood foundations, and follow the color standards in Section 19.5.7. The applicant shall provide more details on the proposed monument sign to demonstrate compliance or seek design waivers.

**Planning Comments**

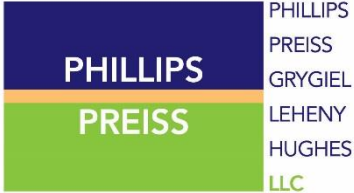
1. The applicant shall provide additional details as requested in the “Compliance” section of this letter. If any deviations from Chapter 3 of the Redevelopment Plan as specified above are identified, the applicant shall seek relief from the Board in accordance with Section 6.2.3 of the plan.

This section provides two basis for granting relief: 1) by reason of exception narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific piece of property or by reason of exceptional topographic conditions or physical features uniquely affecting the specific piece of property, the strict application of the regulation would result in peculiar difficulties to, or exceptional and undue hardship upon the Redeveloper; 2) the purposes of this Redevelopment Plan would be advanced by a deviation from the strict requirements of this plan and the benefits of the deviation would outweigh any detriments. Additionally, the Redeveloper must demonstrate that the deviation can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good or to the intent and purpose of the Redevelopment Plan.



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2. In regards to any required design waivers from the Municipal Land Use Procedures Ordinance, the MLUL at N.J.S.A. 40:55D-51b allows the Planning Board to grant such exceptions as may be reasonable and within the general purpose and intent of the provisions of the ordinance, if the literal enforcement will exact undue hardship because of peculiar conditions pertaining to the land in question.
3. The applicant should provide testimony regarding green technologies and other sustainable practices incorporated into the design and construction of the building and site, which are strongly encouraged by the Redevelopment Plan. The Board should note that the Environmental Commission, in its memo dated November 2, 2020, recommended green infrastructure to mitigate stormwater runoff, installing white roofing or a green roof, and replacing certain areas of the landscaping with native plants.
4. The applicant should provide testimony regarding the recession depth of the roll-down grates over parking garage entries, which is recommended to be at least 1 foot deep relative to the façade in order to help break up the façade plane and create shadow lines.
5. The garage elevations are consistent with the requirements of the Redevelopment Plan and Redevelopment Agreement. We recommend that the color of the stained concrete on the parking garage elevations should match the color of the Hardie paneling on the residential elevations.
6. The applicant should provide testimony regarding access, enforcement and control of access, and maintenance of the emergency access lane. Section 3.7.4 of the Redevelopment Plan requires that the grass plantings be regularly vacuumed and maintained to ensure plant health and continued stormwater infiltration. We recommend that this requirement be incorporated as a condition of approval.
7. The applicant notes that the 20-space surface parking lot will be reserved for commuter parking during the day. The applicant should discuss the specific parameters of this arrangement, such as the hours for which spaces will be available for commuter parking, the mechanism for enforcement, and if any signage identifying such rules will be installed. If the Board finds these parameters to be satisfactory, we recommend that they be incorporated as a condition of approval.



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- 8. The applicant should provide testimony regarding traffic and circulation, including personal vehicles, move-in/move-out vans, emergency vehicles, and fire and garbage collection trucks. We defer to the Township engineer for further comments regarding this issue.
  
- 9. The architectural design of the building is generally compliant with the Redevelopment Plan and Part 19 Design Standards of the Municipal Land Use Procedures Ordinance. The applicant should provide colored elevations, 3D renderings, and material samples to assist the Board in considering the merits of the design.
  
- 10. We additionally defer to the Township engineer regarding the adequacy of grading, paving, erosion and sediment control, drainage and stormwater management, lighting, and utilities proposed.

We trust that the above information is responsive to your needs.

Respectfully submitted,

Keenan Hughes, AICP, PP