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MEMORANDUM

To: Branchburg Township

From: C. Richard Roseberry P.E., P.P., AICP

Date: March 11, 2016

Re: Stoney Brook Associates Project
MC Project No. 16000174A

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

S/K Stoney Brook Associates is responding to an RFP issued by Branchburg Township for the development of an upscale multi-family rental community on Block 58, Lot 36, 53 and 4, a 51.74 acre tract with frontage on Stoney Brook Road, Old York Road and Evans Way. The site is currently zoned I-2.

The upscale rental community envisioned by S/K Stoney Brook Associates would include 654 apartments located within 16 buildings consisting of a mix of one, two, and three bedroom units. All apartments will be located in four-story, elevator-serviced buildings. 15% of the rental units (98) will be designated as “affordable” units, distributed throughout the development. The entire community would be served by a 5,000 square foot recreation/club facility capable of accommodating all on-site households

SITE SUITABILITY AND DEVELOPABILITY

- 1) **The subject site is particularly suited for this rental residential development because it would serve as an appropriate land use transition between existing industrial uses and residential uses.**

The S/K Stoney Brook Associates site is located at the edge of two residential zones – the LD Low Density / 1 acre residential zone fronting on Stoney Brook Road to the west and the MDR Medium Density Residential Zone on Brenkenridge Drive to the north. The site is also located across from the CF Zone District encompassing White Oak Public Park and adjacent open space west of the site. To the east is the I-2 Industrial (5 acre) Zone which fronts on Evans Way, which forms the eastern property line of the subject site. To the south of the site across Old York Road, the area is zoned I-2 industrial.



The subject site is the first vacant tract along Old York Road positioned between light industrial/corporate office development that begins on Route 202 and the residential neighborhoods to the west.

Along Stoney Brook Road, the subject site faces eight (8) single family homes on lots of approximately 30,000 to 50,000 square feet in area. Along the northern border, the site lies adjacent to Society Hill, a 232 unit townhouse condominium development with a density of 8.44 dwelling units per acre. To the east, the light industrial development along Evans Way features nine (9) industrial developed lots. South of Old York Road, there are two large industrial buildings on two lots.

The proposed project would be more compatible with the existing residential neighborhood than the potential industrial development permitted by current zoning. The I-2 zone district would permit a variety of industrial uses on a site of 5 acres or more with maximum impervious coverage of 65 percent and a 50 foot building height. The minimum setback from a residential zone boundary line is 100 feet. S/K Associates is projecting approximately 200,000 square feet of industrial building floor area could be developed on this lot within the current zoning restrictions. An expansion of industrial development of this property could impact existing residential neighborhoods due to noise, excessive light at night, intrusions into privacy and security, the unsightly appearance of massive building structures and increased truck traffic.

The site has been owned by S/K Stoney Brook Associates for approximately 20 years and has clear title and is free from any encumbrances that would prelude development of affordable housing. As described above, the site is adjacent to compatible land uses and has access to appropriate streets, water and sewer infrastructure. The site can be developed consistent with the Residential Site Improvement Standards and all agencies with jurisdiction over the site; and is consistent with the site suitability criteria delineated in N.J.A.C. 5:93-5.3(b).

2) **The S/K Stoney Brook Associates proposed residential development supports the purpose of the Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2**

40:55D2 - To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare:

The S/K Stoney Brook Associates project promotes and enhances the general welfare because it will result in the provision of affordable rental housing. This project has the potential of generating 98 rental affordable housing credits for Branchburg, not including any applicable bonuses.



- 3) **The proposed site meets the definition of a “Developable Site” per N.J.A.C. 5:93-1.3.** The site has access to public water and sewer infrastructure along the frontage of the tract and is within the service area of Elizabethtown Water. The site is within the Somerset Countywide Wastewater Management Plan and the service territory of the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewage Authority. The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan designates this site as being in Planning Area #2, which is a growth area.

- 4) **The proposed density of the development at 15.2 units per acre is consistent with the density of other sites designated in the Township’s current Fair Share Plan, and is consistent with N.J.A.C. 5:93-5.15 that requires a minimum density of 10 units per acre and a maximum set-aside of 15% for rental housing.**

In July of 2010, the Township of Branchburg adopted a revised HEFSP to replace the previous 2008 HEFSP. The 2010 HEFSP provides sufficient information to determine anticipated densities, as the Land Development Ordinance contains little guidance on acceptable inclusionary development densities within the Township

The Fair Share Plan (beginning on page 85) describes the proposed mechanisms in satisfying the Township’s obligation. Page 3 of the Fair Share Plan contains a section entitled “Inclusionary Residential Zoning”. The plan calls out the Vollers property (Block 17, Lot 2) as an inclusionary site and states that “as few as 15 acres...would be able to accommodate the construction of the 250 apartments that would generate 50 affordable rental units, based on a 20 percent set-aside”. This translates to a density of 16.7 units per acre. The report also calls out the Triangle Site (Lots 3, 3.01 and 3.02 in Block 74) as a 100% affordable property. The document states that the 9.48 acre property would be developed at a density of 12 to 15 units per acre.

- 5) **The S/K Stoney Brook Associates proposed residential development would be substantially consistent with the zone plan and zoning ordinance amendments contemplated in the Branchburg Township Master Plan Re-examination Report, adopted May 23, 2006 by the Branchburg Planning Board.**

In this report, the Township examined “the goal of orderly, compatible infill” and found that “to assure compatible, orderly infill development, attention should be paid to areas where non-residential development will occur in close proximity to existing residences especially densely settled neighborhoods” (Branchburg Master Plan Re-examination Page 5). This report goes on to discuss how the use of targeted housing could be substituted for non-residential zones to reduce incompatible land use conflicts. Although the Master Plan Re-examination report specifically mentions zoning for age-restricted housing, the report does point out that age-targeted units in a blended community like the proposed project do appeal to childless couples and single persons.



“Providing a balance and diversity of non-residential uses remains a goal of this re-examination report. However, the potential build-out of non-residential zones, which will attract truck-intensive uses and limited employment, does not appear to reflect a balance, but rather is heavily loaded with industrial uses. Additionally, in locations where non-residential uses will intrude into established residential settings, or where future residential development will be negatively impacted by non-residential uses, it is appropriate to reconsider the most appropriate uses for some of these zones.”

The S/K Stoney Brook Associates proposed residential community achieves the goal of the Branchburg Master Plan as it is located in close proximity to the existing residential neighborhoods and would be more compatible with the existing residential neighborhood than the potential industrial development permitted by current zoning.

The S/K Stoney Brook Associates proposed residential development would be without question aesthetically more appealing to the surrounding residential neighborhood than what I-2 zoning would produce. In order to attract Millennials and Empty-Nesters, S/K Stoney Brook Associates would have to provide attractive residential details, lush landscaping and superior amenities. By contrast, industrial development on this site could result in a large boxy utilitarian building with outside truck loading activity behind a simplistic landscaped perimeter which may serve only to screen views but not delight the eye.

The proposed elevator-serviced apartments will attract childless couples ranging from the young professionals who are not ready to form a family to singles, divorced persons of varied ages and, and finally the mature household or empty nester who is seeking either an apartment to “downsize” or “right-size” in a new smaller residence with lifestyle features one cannot find a conventional active-adult development. The residential development envisioned by S/K Stoney Brook Associates will host a diversity of household types, social viewpoints and interests. The rental community permits a wider household demographic more closely matching the broader character and perspective of Branchburg’s population.