

Planning & Real Estate Consultants

March 10, 2021

Morris Plains Planning Board  
Borough of Morris Plains  
531 Speedwell Avenue  
Morris Plains, NJ 07950-0305

**RE:** Planning Board Application #PB-5-18  
M&M at Morris Plains, LLC  
Block 121, Lots 1.02-1.05  
200 Tabor Road  
1 Adams Ave. - Affordable Housing Component  
TRPUD District  
Amended Final Site Plan

Dear Planning Board Members:

### Introduction

The Applicant is seeking Amended Final Site Plan approval to expand the 34-unit affordable housing building at 1 Adams Avenue. Specifically, the units have become wider, and the half bath in the three-bedroom units are proposed to be converted to a full bath. In addition, an elevator was added to the building. No variances are required.

### Documents Reviewed

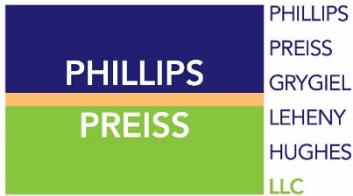
In preparing this report, we reviewed the following, in addition to the applicable sections of the Borough of Morris Plains Zoning Ordinance:

- Application for Development
- Checklist E
- Disclosure of names and addresses of stockholders or partners owning at least a 10 percent interest in a corporation or partnership of an application
- Architectural Plans for M&M at Morris Plains 200 Tabor Road Morris Plains, NJ 07950 consisting of 9 sheets, prepared by Marchetto Higgins & Stevie with revisions through January 13, 2021
- Engineering drawings for Amended Preliminary & Final Site Plan & Major Subdivision prepared by Bohler Engineering consisting of 10 sheets, prepared by Bohler Engineering, revised to October 20, 2020

### Site Context

The Site is Block 121, Lot 1.03 and is located within the Tabor Road Planned Unit Development District (TRPUD) in the central portion of the Borough of Morris Plains on the west side of Tabor Road (i.e., State Highway Route 53). Lot 1.03 is roughly ±1 acre in size.

The Site is a lot subdivided from a larger 62.69 acre tract, formerly known as Block 121, Lot 1, which received Subdivision and Site Plan approval in 2019 to develop 434 residential units of which 73 units are to be affordable; 15,000 square feet of retail/service/restaurant uses, and a hotel of not less than 135 nor more than 200 rooms. Block 121, Lot 1 was previously used as a pharmaceutical manufacturing



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facility from the 1940s to the 1990s by several companies the last of which was Pfizer Inc. Block 121, Lot 1 was the subject of a Builder's Remedy Complaint filed against the Borough of Morris Plains by M&M at Morris Plains, LLC ("M&M") on January 23, 2013. The Borough settled the Builder's Remedy litigation in June 2018. The settlement requires the Borough to take steps necessary to ensure that development of the former Block 121, Lot 1, specifically affordable housing, occurs in a timely manner and in accordance with the relevant affordable housing statutes and regulations.

As part of the 2019 Subdivision and Site Plan Approval, Block 121, Lot 1 was subdivided into 8 development lots including Block 121, Lot 1.03. Lot 1.03 is located adjacent to the Morris & Essex railroad line and the Watnong Brook. The 2019 approved site plan for Lot 1.03 included the development of 34 units of affordable housing in one ±42,690 square foot L-shaped 3-story building. The affordable units included 19 two-bedroom units and 15 three-bedroom units. Lot 1.03 would also include 21 parking spaces, a tot lot, and 2 ADA entrance ramps along the southern façade. There would also be landscaping surrounding the building and in the parking area.

**Proposed Project**

The plans for the currently proposed building differ from the 2019 approved plans in the following ways:

Total Square Footage

- The 2019 approved plans was for a ±42,690 square foot building.
- The proposed plans are for a ±43,393 square foot building.

ADA Ramps

- The 2019 approved plans showed two ADA ramps along the southern façade.
- The proposed plans show one ADA ramp and one paved walkway.

Elevator and Stairwells

- The 2019 approved plans did not have an elevator. There was a stairwell on the western façade and a stairwell on the southern façade.
- The proposed plans show an elevator. The Applicant has indicated that the elevator was added to the building to bring the units in line with other affordable units in the market. The proposed plans show a stairwell on the western façade in roughly the same location and configuration as the 2019 approved plans. There is also proposed a stairwell on the southern façade. However, the configuration of the stairwell is different.

Ground Floor

- The 2019 approved plans showed a ground floor that included 10 apartment units plus a package room, mail room, trash/recycling room, lobby and mechanical room.

- The proposed plans show a ground floor that includes 10 apartment units plus a room for water meters, lobby, a package room, elevator, and two rooms (one for elevator and building controls, and the other for telephone, internet, cable and electrical controls). The proposed plans show electric/service meters located on the outside of the water meter room.

The proposed plans also show a  $\pm 1,125$  square foot amenity room in roughly the same location as the  $\pm 1,030$  square foot mechanical room shown on the 2019 approved plans. The Applicant expects the amenity area to include a small fitness area with treadmill and elliptical machines and an area for stretching, exercise, yoga, etc. The remainder of the area will be programmed as sitting and work areas, with cubicles for work or study from home and a small conference table.

#### Mail Delivery

- The 2019 approved plans showed a ground floor  $\pm 98$  square foot mailroom adjacent to a  $\pm 208$  square foot package room.
- The proposed plans show three “gang mailboxes” of between 12 and 16 boxes located outside the building adjacent to the western façade. There is also a package room smaller in size than was approved in 2019. The Applicant has indicated that mail will be delivered to curbside mailboxes similar to the Townhomes and Stacked Townhomes. The Applicant has also indicated that the package room could be expanded to accommodate any potential internal mailboxes.

#### Size of Two-Bedroom Units

- The 2019 approved plans included two-bedroom units approximately  $\pm 852$  square feet in size.
- The proposed plans show two-bedroom units approximately  $\pm 896$  square feet in size with 3 of the units approximately  $\pm 855$  square feet in size. The Applicant has indicated that the approved plans were conceptual plans. As construction plans evolved the Applicant decided to increase the size of the two-bedroom units by adding additional width to the living rooms.

#### Size of Three-Bedroom Units

- The 2019 approved plans included three-bedroom units approximately  $\pm 1,154$  square feet in size.
- The proposed plans show three-bedroom units approximately  $\pm 1,150$  square feet in size with 3 of the units approximately  $\pm 1,155$  square feet in size. The Applicant has indicated that the approved plans were conceptual plans. As construction plans evolved the Applicant decided to convert the second bathroom in the three-bedroom units from a half bath to a full bath. The units were also made wider and in some cases appear to be shallower.

#### Second and Third Floors

- The 2019 approved plans showed a mechanical room and a trash room on each of the second and third floors in addition to 12 apartments units.
- The proposed plans show a lounge, elevator, and trash/recycling room on each of the second and third floors in addition to 12 apartment units.

#### Trash and Recycling Rooms

- The 2019 approved plans show trash and recycling rooms on each of the floors.
- In comparison to the 2019 approved plans, the proposed plans show a smaller trash and recycling room on the ground floor and larger trash and recycling rooms on the second and third floors. The proposed plans also indicate that each of the trash rooms will accommodate three 96-gallon containers, two for recycling and one for trash. The Applicant has indicated that the trash/recycling will be collected by M&M porters each day and emptied to the trash and recycling container located on the west side of Adams Avenue. The Site Plan drawings show a 10 foot by 30 foot trash and recycling masonry enclosure which will match the building architecture located just to the southwest of the proposed building on the west side of Adams Avenue. The structure appears to be on Lot 1.02.

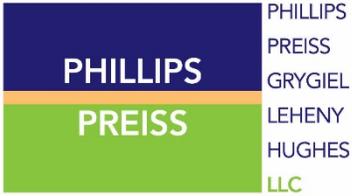
#### Architectural Design

- The 2019 approved architectural plans and the proposed plans are essentially the same. The proposed plans show electrical boxes along the east elevation. The cladding of the stairwell facades appears to have changed, as well.

#### **Comments on Application**

We offer the following for the Planning Board’s consideration:

1. The Applicant should provide testimony outlining all of the changes between the 2019 approved plans and the proposed plans including floor plans, the site plan, and the architecture.
2. The Applicant should provide testimony on the reason for the “gang mailboxes” and the potential for the resident mailboxes to be located indoors.
3. The Applicant should revise its Trash and Recycling Plan.
4. The Applicant should clarify where the door shown on the stairwell on the southern façade on the second and third floors leads to.
5. The Applicant should indicate on Sheet C-09 of the Site Plan set that 3 ADA parking spaces are being provided on Lot 1.03 and not 1 ADA space.
6. The Applicant should provide testimony on when and how often the trash enclosure located on the west side of Adams Avenue will be collected and what additional buildings’ trash will be stored in this enclosure.
7. The applicant should provide color renderings of the building elevations.



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8. The applicant should provide testimony as to the height of any rooftop mechanicals (e.g., elevator appurtenances) and how these mechanicals will be screened.

If the Board has any questions on the above, I would be happy to address them at the public hearing on the application.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Leheny, PP, AICP

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