

JENKINTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday July 15, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.
Virtual ZOOM Meeting

Meeting attendees from JBPC: Jon McCandlish, Peter Van Do, Eric Horowitz, Allison Shertzer, Rob Ghormoz. Not present: Lucinda Bartley, Phil Zimmerman

Also attending on Zoom: George Locke (Jenkintown Borough Manager and Zoning Officer), Khal Hassan (Borough Engineer, Pennoni), Vincent J. Celenza, Vince Celenza, Jean Thompson, Claire Warner (Montgomery County Planning Commission), Jason Korczak, Alexandria Khalil, Leonard Altieri (attorney for applicant), Steve Spindler, Maureen Lucak, Joanne Bruno, among others from the public on Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook.

Names may be referred to by initials in the following meeting summary.

Call to Order

Jon McCandlish called the meeting to order at 6:37 JM (PV)

Public Comment

The first order of business is public comment. EH spoke of how 100 block of Cedar Street is on the border of three zoning districts and has worked with developers to support their projects in exchange for addressing residents' concerns. He said a Cedar Street resident said that tenants at 501 Washington Ave have to pay an extra fee to have a permit to park in their lot so they park on the adjacent Cedar Street. Cedar Street residents already have limited street parking available. EH proposed that when the PC looks at parking guidelines for apartments and considers parking options if this should be question to developers? He also commented on safety issues regarding the pedestrian crosswalk with flashing lights on Washington Lane. Lastly, EH brought up concerns about a new illuminated billboard at the Fox Pavilion, which shines a bright light directly onto Cedar Street that is visible to 30 homes with moving graphics.

The JBPC commented on the structure of lease agreements in these buildings, agreeing that a policy charging tenants separately for a parking space may be desirable for tenants who do not own a car but will induce tenants with cars to seek free parking on nearby streets, imposing a cost on the residents of those streets. They asked if there are any policies in place related to the fee structure to use the parking spaces of borough apartment buildings and noted that this matter could be raised during the planning process. There was also discussion about the flashing light crossing and driver awareness at crosswalks. Some members shared similar experiences, and there was a conversation about possible improvements in crosswalk design and enforcement. Future improvements are also expected at Washington Ln and Walnut. The LED billboard with moving graphics has only been up for a couple weeks and GL was unaware of it. He said he can ask Abington about this. He wondered if it was installed with their knowledge. Khal Hassan said PennDOT has some say in the location along a federal highway.

Reports/Actions

P.C. Meeting Minutes Approval – P.C. Secretary, Eric Horowitz

The May minutes were reviewed. JM asked to include the JBPC letter to the borough council regarding 459-71 York Road as an appendix. Minutes were approved JM (PV).

New Business / Business for Discussion

The order of the agenda was re-arranged, moving 459-471 York Road to after 7:15pm while awaiting for one participant to arrive.

- DCED – Main Street Matters Program Grant Opportunity
George Locke and Joanne Bruno presented the grant description with potential match requirements. There was some concern about whether it would be feasible to meet them, as the match wouldn't be required until 2026.

The presenters and the JBPC discussed that the grant has two focus areas where one could be for a business' building or façade improvements, or alternatively another focus would be for planning, business improvement, and development. A suggestion was made by a council member about hiring a Main Street manager, a role that could potentially address some needs, particularly highlighted by Alex during the previous borough council meeting. This role could be helpful for George and others in the borough. These require a 50% match.

The idea of hiring a Main Street manager was raised by the JBPC in connection with the 2035 comprehensive plan, which suggests such a position could be filled either by a consultant or a dedicated employee. The role itself would involve business coordination, promotion activities, and helping to attract new businesses. Previous examples of Main Street managers in other boroughs were discussed, though opinions on their effectiveness varied.

Claire provided more details about the role, explaining that it typically involves working with local businesses to attract new ones, coordinate marketing efforts, and manage things like facades or promotions. She was uncertain if other local boroughs used Main Street managers but mentioned the possibility of checking with other planners.

A broader discussion then ensued about the business landscape in the borough. The JBPC noted the concentration of nail salons in commercial areas and highlighted possible reasons for the lack of diversity of newly opened businesses. The small size of many commercial spaces was highlighted as a contributing factor. Joanne proposed that if a Main Street manager were hired, they could work closely with developers to diversify commercial spaces, ensuring a more balanced mix of businesses in new developments. Several JBPC members agreed that diversifying the business landscape was critical. Possibly if a staff position were created with this in mind they could be responsible for tasks like business recruitment, vacancy issues, and street marketing. It was noted that this position would offer professional development and the potential for collaboration with neighboring municipalities. Some members emphasized that having a paid position would allow for consistent focus on economic development.

There was consensus on the importance of acting quickly to address the grant as it is due by the end of August. At one point, the conversation shifted toward the logistics of applying for grants and coordinating efforts, with some business members suggesting that collaboration with organizations like the Jenkintown Community Alliance might be a good idea. It was pointed out that understanding the specific frictions preventing businesses from opening in the borough could help identify solutions.

- Upcoming Training Opportunities – PSAB Building a Stronger Planning Commission

PV and GL presented potential training opportunities for members of the planning commission, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Municipal League. GL mentioned that there was a budget for training, and interested members should reach out to him for registration.

- 459/471 York Road Final Land Development

It was discussed that since the last presentation a month ago, the design plans had progressed significantly. The discussion focused on a variety of topics related to elevations, materials, and addressing previous comments from both the Borough Council and the JBPC.

Jason explained that the previous design showed the stone wrapping around the side of the building and meeting the brick panel at a corner, and the new renderings were revised to better fit the surrounding volumetric elements. Since their last submission on June 27th to the borough, they addressed most of the comments, including the concerns raised in the review letter. However, there were still a few unresolved issues, like receiving the final feedback on the project's landscape design. The developer's team had also added more trees and street planters along Cherry Street and York Roads to comply with requests from the JBPC. Jason noted that the sidewalks on York Road made it challenging to incorporate certain green

infrastructure like trees, but they were working within those constraints. Additionally, they proposed adding street trees along the side and rear of the property.

There was also mention of electric vehicle charging stations, but after discussions with fire marshal and experts, it was determined that adding them could present fire risks and other challenges that outweighed the benefits. As a result, the inclusion of charging stations was not recommended.

The project had already received preliminary approval from the Borough Council, and most of the waivers were granted. The team was now awaiting final approval after addressing all the JBPC's feedback, including the need to secure an HOP (Highway Occupancy Permit).

The Design Review Board was mentioned, and while the project hadn't gone through the review yet, it was planned for the future. The JBPC raised concerns about the north elevation, which would be visible from York Road, particularly in relation to materials and how they would blend with adjacent buildings. The applicant's team was responsive, ensuring that the final plans would comply with these design aesthetics.

The updated plans included improvements like extending the sidewalk in front of the garage, implementing decorative paving patterns, and ensuring the streetscape matched the borough's existing aesthetic. The project also planned to meet the borough's requirements for street lamps, crosswalks, and accessibility features, with some suggestions for additional ADA curb ramp improvements based on further input from the property owner across the street.

One issue that was addressed was the potential visibility of rooftop mechanical units. Initially, there were concerns about rooftop units being visible, but the applicant clarified that the building would use quiet, energy-efficient mini-split systems with no large rooftop units, ensuring that they wouldn't be visible above the parapet.

The final items included reviewing green roof options, where the developer's team considered replacing artificial turf with real plantings to reduce the heat island effect and improve stormwater management. There was also a focus on ensuring that the materials and designs would blend well with the surrounding environment, ensuring the project would complement the neighborhood's overall aesthetic.

JM reviewed the JBPC letter and how the updated design addressed it. Here's a summary:

Landscape and Green Roof: The landscape architect reviewed the plan. The idea of incorporating a green roof with more planting was considered, but it was deemed impractical due to the weight constraints of the structure. Additionally, the landscape architect suggested a green roof would be hidden from view and not worth the added weight. While real plants were suggested, the team acknowledged that it was not a necessity and could potentially be revisited later. The roof will feature seating areas, pavers, and gathering spaces instead.

Storefront Renovation: There was a suggestion to renovate the storefront for the smaller lot alongside the new construction. However, the architect expressed concerns that a modern storefront design might not fit the existing building's architecture. The JBPC clarified that their request was not necessarily about aesthetics but about updating the facade to be more consistent with the new building. The team agreed to revisit this with the architect.

Garage Entrance Size: The garage entrance, initially designed with an 18-foot opening, raised concerns due to a 20-foot drive aisle. The entrance width was adjusted to 20 feet, addressing the concerns of the planning commission.

Charging Stations and Fire Safety: The question of whether electric vehicle charging stations should be placed inside the garage was raised. The fire marshal expressed concerns about the safety risks of charging stations within the structure, citing past incidents. The engineer agreed with the fire marshal, recommending a waiver for the placement of the charging stations. It was clarified that the applicant would not need to install them within the garage.

Lighting and Sidewalks: There was some back-and-forth about the positioning of an existing cobra light along York Road, with the JBPC asking for a borough assessment if whether the current pole could be relocated. The sidewalk on Cherry Street will have an 8-foot width, with a 5-foot remaining walking area, after accounting for the tree pit size.

Roof Equipment and Safety: There were concerns about the positioning of condensing units on the roof, as they must be placed 10 feet from the edge or a 42 inch fence would be needed. The parapet is 36 inches. The developer's team clarified that the condensing units would be placed more than ten feet from the roof edge.

Throughout the discussion, the JBPC expressed their appreciation for the applicant's engagement and willingness to address their concerns. There was also a reference to the architectural significance of the twin building and its historical relevance. The applicant agreed to continue refining the design based on feedback and revisit certain points with their architect.

The JBPC reviewed other requests the developer was requesting relief from consideration. One of the first points involved electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. There was confusion regarding fire safety concerns with EVs charging in covered parking structures. The primary concern, as clarified, was the potential for incidents during charging, as opposed to general concerns with parking EVs under a roof. While some expressed doubt about the basis for these concerns, the fire marshal's recommendation was to avoid placing charging stations inside a structure due to fire hazards.

There were some questions about window area calculations in the submitted plans. The concern was that large portions of the facade were left out, potentially skewing the window-to-wall ratio. After review, it was confirmed that the design did comply with codes, with no issues raised.

The applicant was also asked about outreach to neighboring property owners regarding ADA curb ramps at intersections with properties across the street. They confirmed that attempts had been made but responses were still pending.

Phil Zimmerman although not present raised a concern relayed through Jon about waivers and variances granted for the project, specifically regarding planting, buffering, screening, and area requirements. He recommended that the JBPC support a fee-in-lieu of full compliance, though this issue would require further discussion by the borough council.

Ongoing Business

- Jenkintown 2035 Comprehensive Plan Implementation

A discussion about zoning priorities followed, with members expressing the need to prioritize zoning issues before tackling some walkability and design standards. A document would be created to aid in this prioritization.

- Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) - Historical marker program. No update.

- Bike and Pedestrian Safety (Sub-Committee update) No update.

- Public Parking Lot Directional Signage Plan (update)

Several updates followed on various initiatives, such as the borough's parking inventory, directional signage, and a traffic study. The public parking lot signage was approved by the council, with plans to order and install new signs. For the parking study, about 70% of the work was completed, and additional traffic counts were being conducted.

- Town Center Street Parking and Traffic Study - West Avenue (update) No update presented.

- 181-141 Off-Premises Signs Ordinance (Tabled – ongoing discussion)

Other Business

EH re-introduced the idea of a "Dark Sky" initiative to be considered for the comprehensive plan, aimed at regulating outdoor lighting levels to reduce light pollution. There was a suggestion to get feedback from the council on the feasibility and enforcement of such an initiative before further action was taken. This would be added to future agendas.

Adjournment A motion to adjourn was made and seconded. JM (RG)



MEMORANDUM

TO: Jenkintown Borough Council
Jenkintown Borough Design Review Board
George Locke, Borough Manager
Applicant – 459/471 York Road

FROM: Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission

DATE: 19 July 2025

RE: 459/471 York Road – Final Land Development

To whom it may concern,

The Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission (PC) met at our regularly scheduled public monthly meeting on 15 July 2025. During this meeting, the PC reviewed a proposed Final Land Development application under consideration for a new mixed-use development consisting of 40 dwelling units and ground floor retail fronting York Road. The address of this development is 459/471 York Road, and the commercial name of the proposed new apartment building is “459 Flats.” The development will also feature a new public “pocket park” with seating and landscape at the corner of Cherry and Johnson.

With the stipulation that the below conditions shall be considered and met, the present members of the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to support the application for Final Land Development at 459/471 York Road.

Conditions for Planning Commission Recommendation:

1. Address all Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) comments from PennDOT;
2. Address all outstanding Pennoni/Borough Engineer comments from forthcoming letter;
3. Ensure inclusion of a painted high-visibility continental crosswalk at York/Cherry, similar to the indicated crosswalk at Johnson/Cherry. *At the 15 July PC meeting, the applicant indicated that this request would be accommodated;*

- 4. The JBPC has previously written about a desire to see a more cohesive palette of materials and design approach on all the building elevations, in particular the North elevation which is blank and somewhat featureless as currently designed. Please see below for illustration of this issue:



Above: York Road Elevation featuring higher-level of finish, contextual materials such as brick and stone



Above: North Facing Building Elevation featuring panelized flat materials with no contextual relationship

Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission
19 July 2025 | 459/471 York Road – Final Land Development

Given that this façade will rise above the adjacent structures and be highly visible from adjacent streets and properties, the Planning Commission asks that Design Review Board and Borough Council similarly condition their approvals on a more contextually appropriate palette of materials on the North Façade, to better match the other building elevations, particularly the elevation facing York Road.

The Planning Commission provides feedback based on an application's suitability and compatibility with the Borough's long-range plan. As such, Planning Commission review is not intended to be comprehensive, and presumes the proposed design meets all applicable codes and standards pertaining to building, fire, health, safety, and accessibility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jon McCandlish', written over the word 'Sincerely,'.

Jon McCandlish, Chair

Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission

COPY: Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission
Lucinda Bartley (*in absentia at the 15 July PC meeting*)
Rob Ghormoz
Eric Horowitz, Secretary
Jon McCandlish, Chair
Allison Shertzer
Peter Van Do
Phil Zimmerman (*in absentia at the 15 July PC meeting*)