



27 July 2026

Commissioners of Cheltenham Township
Cheltenham Township
8230 Old York Road
Elkins Park, PA 19027
RE: The Enclave at Melrose Development

Dear Commissioners:

Over the past months the development of The Enclave at Melrose has been before the Planning Commission for various reviews, approvals and consideration. In general, the Planning Commission has been very supportive of the previously submitted development plans and was enthusiastic about the mixed-use development providing a hub of activity for the community. With its proximity to the train station and the Cheltenham School and access to major roads, this development and its proposed density will be a significant asset to Cheltenham. Thus, it became a huge surprise to us at the February 2026 meeting to see major changes to the development without any interim discussions, presentations or review to the Planning Commission. In fact, when these modifications were presented to the Planning Commission, we were basically told that the developer was doing what they were told by the Commissioners to do and their hands were tied. Because the rules that apply to the review of this amendment were so confining, and the legal requirements needed to permit opposition to the amendment so rigorous, the Planning Commission, as well as the Zoning Board, were not in a position to oppose the modifications of the amendment.

This letter is our effort as the Planning Commission to make clear that we are in opposition to the changes in plan that were proposed at the February meeting. This includes the following points that will be expanded upon in the rest of this letter:

- Loss of a much-needed new Community Center at a prominent location in the Township that will be easily accessible to the entire community due to its proximity to major roadway network and large population center



- Loss of significant retail square footage that could be supported by the Community Center, business development on the remainder of the site, the Cheltenham Elementary School, and the residential development planned.
- Deactivation of the prominent corner of Ashbourne, Ashmead and Front Street by removing the Community Center to be replaced by additional townhouses
- The relocation of plaza areas inside the development community to areas around the perimeter of the development that will be of little to no use

Ancillary to our objections to the changes to this development, we have also learned that instead of building a new Community Center, there are now plans to renovate the existing Rowland Community Center to provide that amenity. We also object to this proposal.

There are only so many opportunities that become available to a community to make major improvements, and because Cheltenham Township is so developed, this development may be one of the last significant opportunities to make major improvements for the community that would not involve major redevelopment or major site acquisitions that could potentially take years to be realized and would probably run against significant opposition. The balance of this letter will provide the Commissioners with details for each of the points above.

LOSS OF NEW COMMUNITY CENTER

The Township is in desperate need of new community amenities. So many of the facilities around the Township have been around for over thirty years and longer without any significant improvements or renovations. To be turning away the opportunity to create a new Community Center to support the new housing and commercial development is just unconscionable. Further, the original proposed location is a prominent and visible location, accessible by public transportation, and would further support larger community-oriented buildings on this busy intersection. With the prominence of this intersection comes a lot of supporting reasons to place a community facility in this location. The surrounding streets are already busy and can support the additional community use. This intersection is noisy and will support non-residential uses. The proximity of the Cheltenham School will support this proposed use and the added surrounding residential and commercial development will also



support this level of activity. Further, as a component of the proposed development in total, the activity and turnover of a Community Center in this location will support and activate the proposed retail spaces on the site. Placement of a Community Center in this location will make this intersection a prominent and active community amenity. Another element of disappointment is the placement of the community swimming pool in this new plan without the support of the Community Center. As a proposed outdoor pool, this facility will be open for only three months of the year and remain unused and inaccessible for the remainder of the year. This lack of activity in such a prominent location is a completely lost opportunity. Further, the area provided for the pool seems insufficient to provide pool services with few areas to sit and with the two pools separated by only six feet.

LOSS OF RETAIL SQUARE FOOTAGE

With the loss of the Community Center, it seems inevitable that the amount of retail space would be reduced...there is no longer an activity that would support the retail space proposed. This just seems unconscionable given the conversations that have been around for over thirty years around ratable properties and businesses. This Township needs these businesses to support community services and activities and to provide and support a tax base that is exceedingly being challenged to support the basic needs of the community.

This development provided the perfect opportunity to add retail to the Township. With the site location on major road networks. With significant residential and commercial square footage in the vicinity and the foot-traffic that would generate. With a Community Center that would drive activity to the site from 7am to 10pm. These are all components that exist solely in this location and development and will not be able to be replicated elsewhere in the Township.

DEACTIVATION OF A PROMINENT INTERSECTION

With the losses of both the retail and Community Center, this corner will remain in its current uninspired and car-centric intersection. Making matters worse, with the loss of significant community focused buildings at the corner, we now have a cul-de-sac along with the rears of twelve townhouses in which we will have no control over how these



properties are maintained and look over the years this development will exist. For those traveling on Ashbourne or Ashmeade, there will be no reason to visit and support this development.

With the loss of activity on this corner, it is likely more of the traffic to the site will use the Tookany Creek Parkway entrance which could create some congestion on that side of the site because all of the major site components will be accessed from the Parkway. Having significant activity and amenities across the development should provide a more balanced traffic flow to the development.

LOCATION OF PLAZA AREAS TO PERIMETER OF THE PROPERTY

Without good explanation, this development is now proposing plaza areas at Front Street and Ashmeade Road. We cannot think of a single good reason that anyone would be walking along these portions of the site, especially with the other changes in the development. As a result, these places will be unused, unkempt and completely useless.

REDEVELOPMENT OF THE ROWLAND COMMUNITY CENTER

As a component of this discussion, we learned that the Community Center use planned for The Enclave may now be placed at a renovated Rowland Center. We feel this would be a grave mistake. The existing facility is not well designed to accommodate community activities. It cannot support the parking needs of a Community Center that would ever try to support the needs of the entire community. It is inaccessible with a street network that cannot support the use and function needed. And finally, the amount of money needed to renovate this sixty-plus year-old building would be excessive and the end product would be compromised and inferior.

While we would generally support the feasible renovations of existing buildings to be the most sustainable approach, experience with buildings from the era of the Rowland Center are generally not good candidates for these types of projects. They generally will need to be stripped down to the bare structure to allow for modern envelope and systems and it is likely that even the existing structure will be insufficient to support the needs of a new modern Community Center. The lessons learned at the Cedarbrook School should be applied to this building.



CONCLUSION

The arguments against the proposed changes to The Enclave at Melrose are compelling as this will be a significant lost opportunity to make significant improvements of services to the residents of the Township. The decisions made here are going to be long-lasting and impactful and seem to have been advanced through a political process rather than with an understanding of the impact to the community and services that are needed in Cheltenham to keep this Township competitive with amenities offered in neighboring municipalities. We continue to ask our residents to pay the eighth highest millage in Township taxes (86% above the average), the highest millage in School taxes and the highest total millage in Montgomery County without seeing any real benefits or higher levels of services for that expenditure.

Instead of creating a vital and active development that will enliven the community, we will end up with the backside of a row of townhouses and a weak shell of retail that will not have the demographic pull to support the spaces. We cannot emphasize enough how poor these modifications are and had this plan been the original submission would not have received our support. Because of these changes, we want to make clear to the Township Commissioners that the Planning Commission does not support this development in its current configuration and will make every effort available to us to improve the design of this development as it is deserved by this Township.

Unanimously adopted by the members of the Cheltenham Township Planning
Commission
27 July 2026

