

February 16, 2023

Jon Altshul  
Township Manager  
Westtown Township  
1039 Wilmington Pike  
West Chester, PA 19382

**RE: Review of Submission  
Visual Arts Center (VAC)  
1632 West Chester Pike  
West Chester, PA 19382  
(Westtown Township)**

Dear Mr. Altshul:

As requested, we have performed a review of plans and concept images for the Proposed New Building at 1632 West Chester Pike, that will accommodate a New Visual Arts Center. Materials that were provided to us are:

- Site Plans by Inland Design – (4) Sheets Dated 1/16/2023.
- Colored Concept Images of the Exterior Building Façade.
- Black and White Façade Elevations.

Our observations are as follows:

A) **Zoning**

- 1) This 3.096 acre net, 3.84 acre gross parcel exists in the R-3 “Residence-Office” Zoning District. The reduction from gross square footage to net square footage only deducts the site area that is within the Right-of-Ways of West Chester Pike and Green Lane, since the title line of the parcels exists within these Right-of-Way.

It does not deduct the areas within the site attributed to either the perennial stream or the flanking wetlands (Waters of the U.S.) The Ordinance that was written specifically for a Visual Arts Center does not require these deductions.

- 2) A Visual Arts Center is listed in the initial intent language of Chapter 170, Article 8 of the R3 "Residence-Office" Zoning District under 170-800A(6) with the following language "providing for a Visual Arts Center (VAC) use that promotes, educates, entertains, informs, and advances the visual arts in the community."

Section 170-801 use regulations under B(10) that was added 12/16/13, list a Visual Arts Center as a "Conditional Use", subject to 170-802G.

- 3) 170-802G has a 2 Page list of requirements for a Visual Arts Center.
- 4) From a dimensional standpoint, the zoning compliance block on Sheet 1 of the Inland Design drawings, shows the lot size, setbacks, building coverage and impervious coverage for a Visual Arts Center.
  - A second front yard setback line needs to be added, since this corner property has 2 front yards.
  - On the plan the dimension of the front yard setback is dimensioned to the building wall, and not the roof element, has a significant overhang. The dimension need to be instead listed to the roof for both yards.
  - All other zoning information in the zoning block appears to be compliant.
- 5) The plans show all development will occur with a 75-foot setback to the top of bank of the perennial stream. Although not dimensioned on the plan, the parking lot development line is approximately 45 feet from the wetlands at the closest point. I will defer to the Township Engineer on compliance of these two (2) dimensions.

**B) Proposed Development**

- 1) The site plans indicate a proposed 2,750 s.f. building, with a "water feature" surrounding the building.
- 2) When I look at the concept images that were provided, this "water feature" also seems to be approximately the same shape as the decorative roof above the building. This roof has an approximate area of 5,500 square feet, so it has twice the footprint size of the building below.
- 3) The concept plans indicate the undulating roof will be 32'-6" high at the low point, and 41'-4" high at the high point.

The maximum building height allowed is "four stories", and since a story is often considered to be 10 feet in our industry, this minor deviation needs to be discussed, to see how 4-stories is being interpreted.

- 4) There are (17) parking spaces proposed, and the requirement is for (1) space for 300 s.f. of building, so for the proposed 2,750 s.f. building, only (10) parking spaces would be required to be zoning compliant.

C) **Overall Aesthetics**

- 1) The language applying to the aesthetics, is unique, with the following wording:

*“Architecture and facade of VAC building: The architecture and facade of the VAC building shall, in and of itself, be a form of visual art. The VAC building facade shall incorporate unique or distinctive architectural design elements. As part of a conditional use application for a VAC, the applicant shall submit conceptual architectural facade renderings and elevations together with a general list of proposed building materials for review and approval by the Township and  
Township  
Architect.”*

- 2) Unlike many black and white parameters contained within a Zoning Ordinance, visual and aesthetics reviews can be quite subjective.

It is clear by the wording of the Ordinance, that the intent is to have a building facade with “unique or distinctive ”architectural design elements, and that the “building facade shall incorporate unique or distinctive architectural design elements.”

The proposed façade clearly captures the spirit and intent of the ordinance language.

D) **Roof**

- 1) It is clear that the roof structure is a major contributing element to the unique architectural statement of the building.
- 2) The overall design concept of the roof reminds me of roof elements in the following buildings:

- Church of St. Francis of Assisi, designed by Oscar Niemeyer in 1943.
- The Ronchamp Chapel, designed by Le Corbusier in 1955.
- The Opera House in Sydney Australia, designed by Utzon in 1959.
- Dulles International Airport, designed by Eero Saarinen in 1962.

Although the four (4) buildings are all larger in scale, the roof on all of these buildings, also provides a freeform, visual statement.

All of these buildings are considered to be examples of avant-garde, award winning architecture.

E) **Facades**

- 1) In addition to the architectural statement made by the roof design, the buildings' exterior walls also make a visual statement. The walls on the east, north, and west consist of perforated aluminum panels, with glass behind them, allowing the interior lighting to shine through the perforated panels. (I believe all the elevation drawings are mislabeled, with north and south being reversed, as well as east and west also being reversed). Since the perforated panel facades all face adjacent commercial buildings or West Chester Pike, I don't anticipate the light being projected through the holes being a problem, but no different than for a site light fixture, a photometric showing a foot-candles should be performed.
- 2) The greater concern I have is the at the 25-foot-high glass curtain wall and main entrance face south toward the rear of the townhouses, so a prediction of light spill through that façade wall, and to the south should be provided.

F) **Neighborhood Compatibility**

- 1) When determining if a building is visually compatible, it is important to do that evaluation in the context of its surrounding.

Directly across the street are the 1-story Donohue Funeral Home and the 2-story McLaren Building. To the east across Green Lane are Thornton's Gulf Station and the PNY Sports Arena. To the south is the Townhouse Community of Ravencliff, and to the west is the 1-story building of the Construction Services Group.

- 2) At 40 feet in height, the proposed Performing Arts Center building will clearly be taller than any of the adjacent buildings, but the 40-foot height is allowed by Ordinance, and all of the buildings I have listed are commercial in use.
- 3) The greatest visual impact will be the rear of the townhouses on Eton Court which are approximately 300 feet away to the south.
- 4) There are 480 square foot illuminated graphic screens on the east and west exterior walls, where I feel more information is required for these to be evaluated. In particular, it is important to understand if these will be turned off at a certain hour. The Applicant should provide additional information how these screens comply with 170-802(5), Sections A Through G. At this point the screens appear to simply be "applied, versus integrated into the façade

## Summary

As I previously stated, a review of the aesthetics of a building leaves a lot of room for interpretation and personal taste. Although this proposed building is quite different than any of the other surrounding buildings, it is my opinion that it accomplishes the intent of the Zoning Ordinance for a Visual Arts Center, in that “the architecture and façade of the Visual Arts Center building shall, in and of itself be a form of visual art.”

I have referenced other buildings with similar exterior design elements, where the roof and façade components are the buildings’ statement, and these other buildings are considered to be architecturally noteworthy.

With that said, the building must still accomplish the balance of being compatible with the rights of its neighbors, which goes to the heart of the concept of zoning. Accordingly, a better understanding of the impact of light levels produced by the building itself, and its 480 square foot display screens on the east and west facades, must be provided.

The design of a building requires a progressive layering of ideas until it evolves into a complete package, so there are still some layers of details required here. Since I referenced a building by Le Corbusier, I will also use one of his quotes which was “creation is a patient search.”

I trust this information is helpful.

Respectfully submitted,



Robert H. Linn, AIA  
Registered Architect  
Principal - Linn Architects

RHL/dr

Enclosures: Neighborhood Aerial  
Photos of (4) Referenced Buildings  
Partial Site Plan – Sheet 3  
Zoning Compliance Block  
Colored Concept Images  
Black and White Façade Elevations



SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI



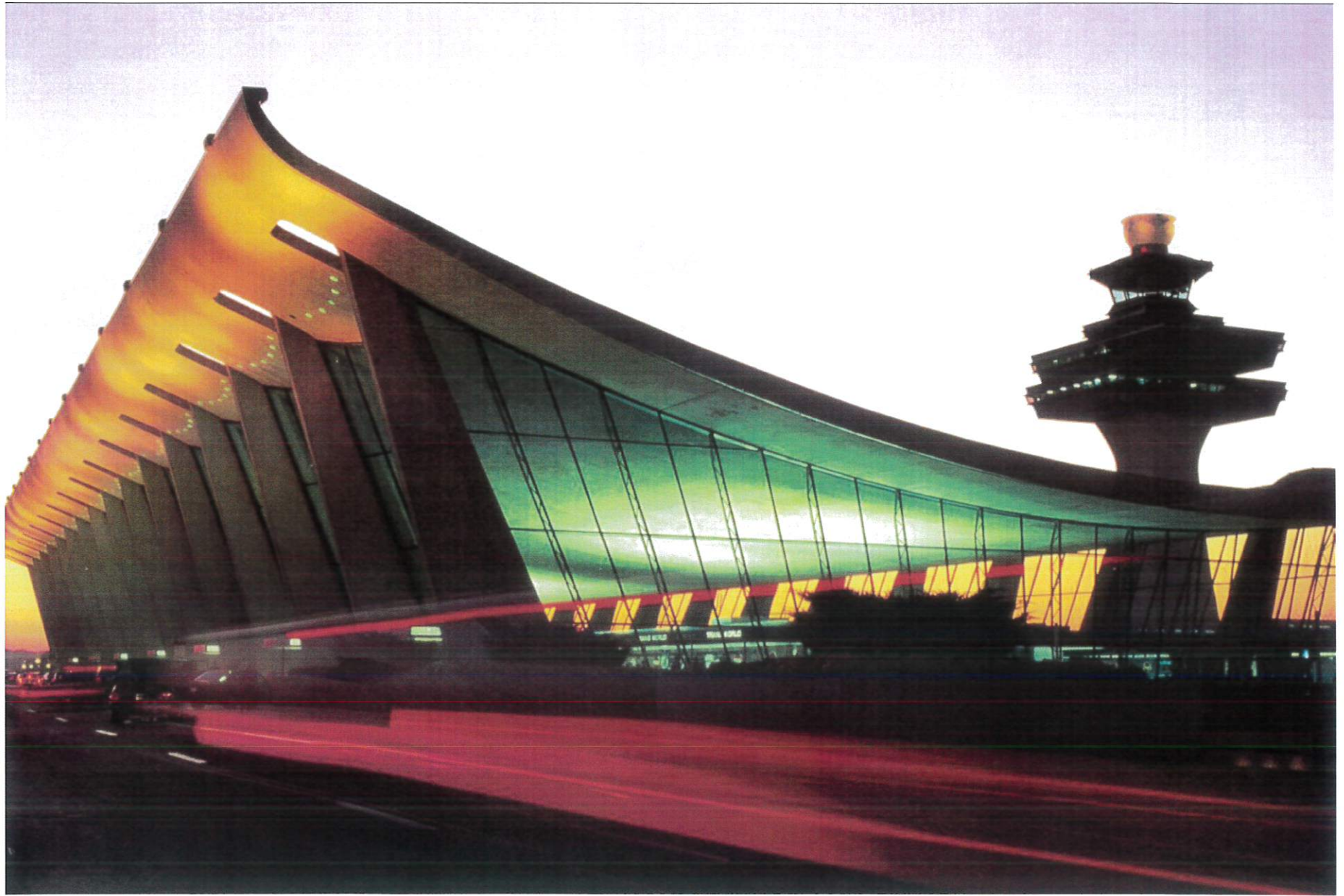


RONCHAMP CHAPEL



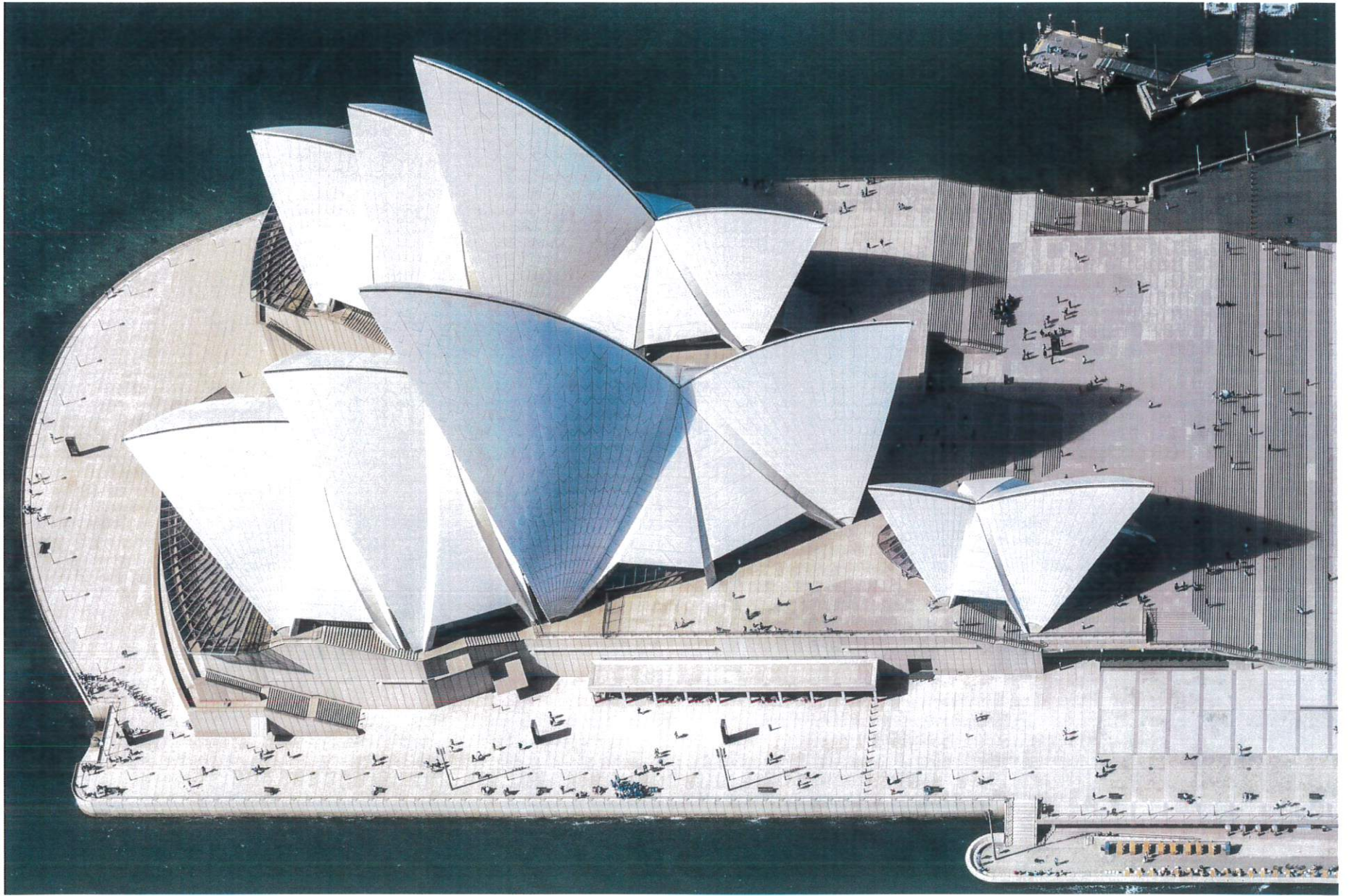


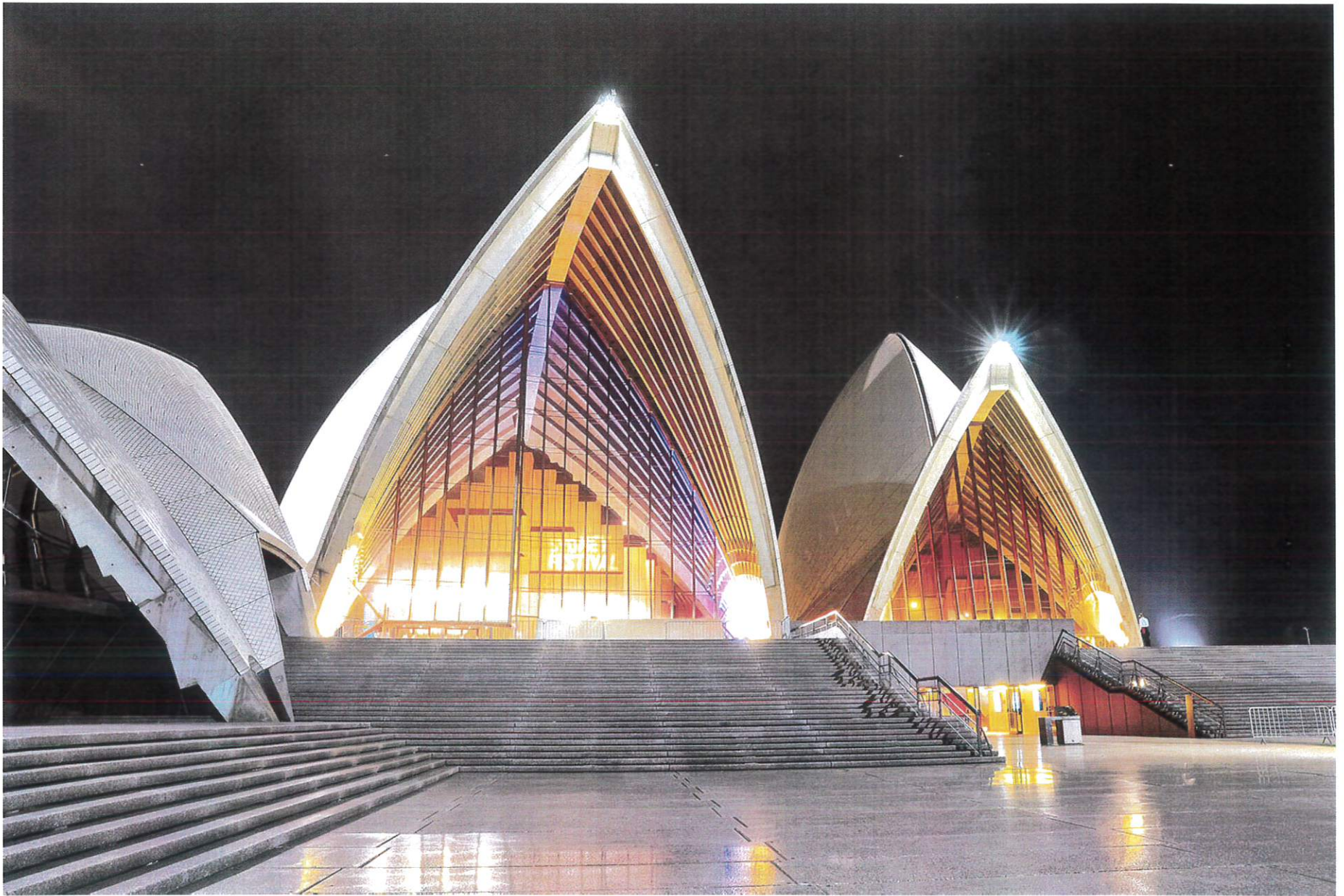
DULLES AIRPORT





SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE







**SITE**

Tom Toole Sales Group  
at RE/MAX Main Line

Donohue Funeral  
Home - West Chester

McLaren Philadelphia

Kencor Elevator Systems

West Chester Pike

West Chester Pike

Construction  
Services Group

Thornton's Gulf

PNY Sports Arena

Stacey Bauer,  
KELLER WILLIAMS...

Heather Glen Apartment  
in West Chester, PA

Ultimate Logistics GSA

Chesterfield Dr

Tunbridge Rd

Stafford Dr

Green Ln

Tunbridge Rd

Woodcrest Rd

Chilings Way

Heby Ct

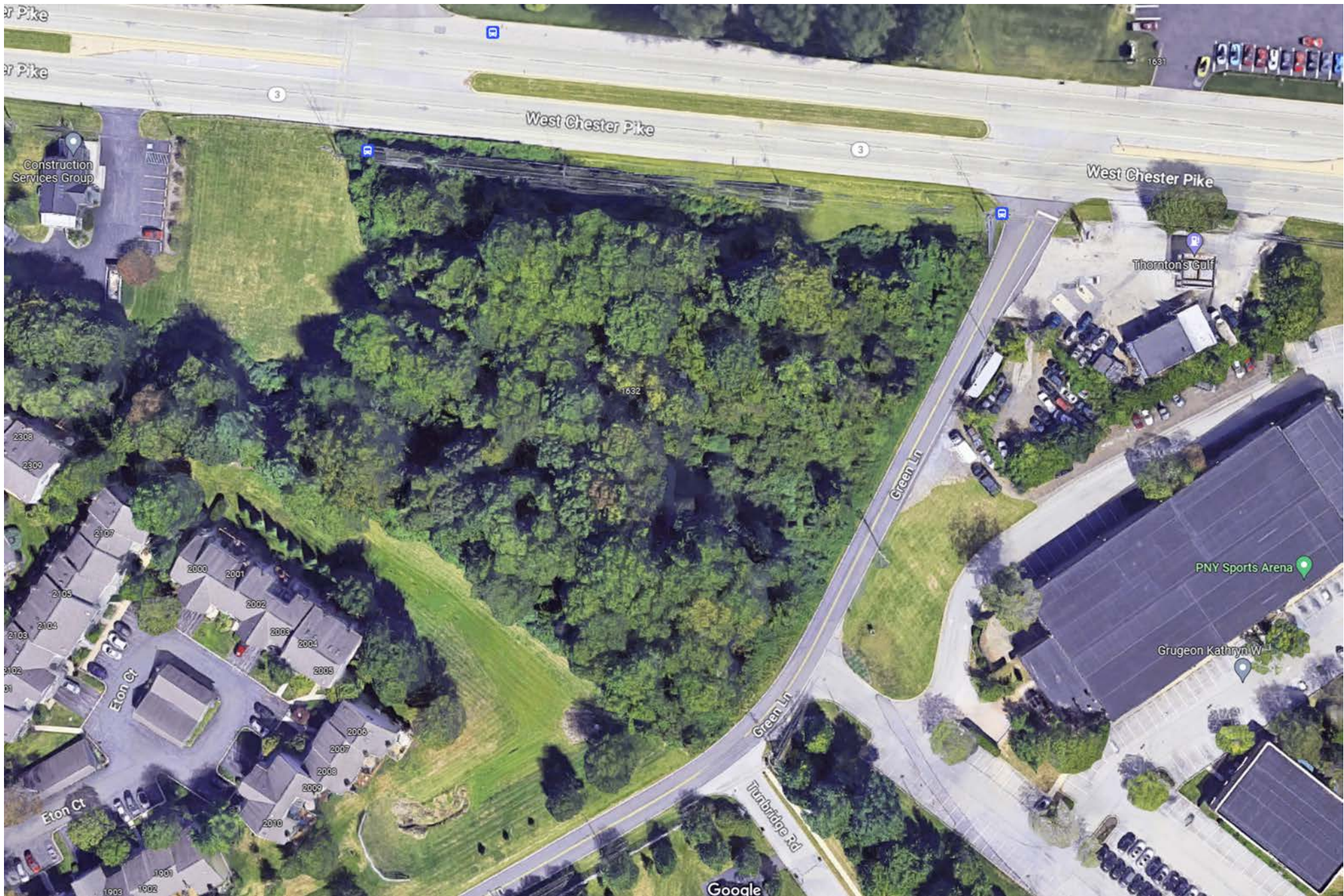
Stafford Dr

Leeds Ct

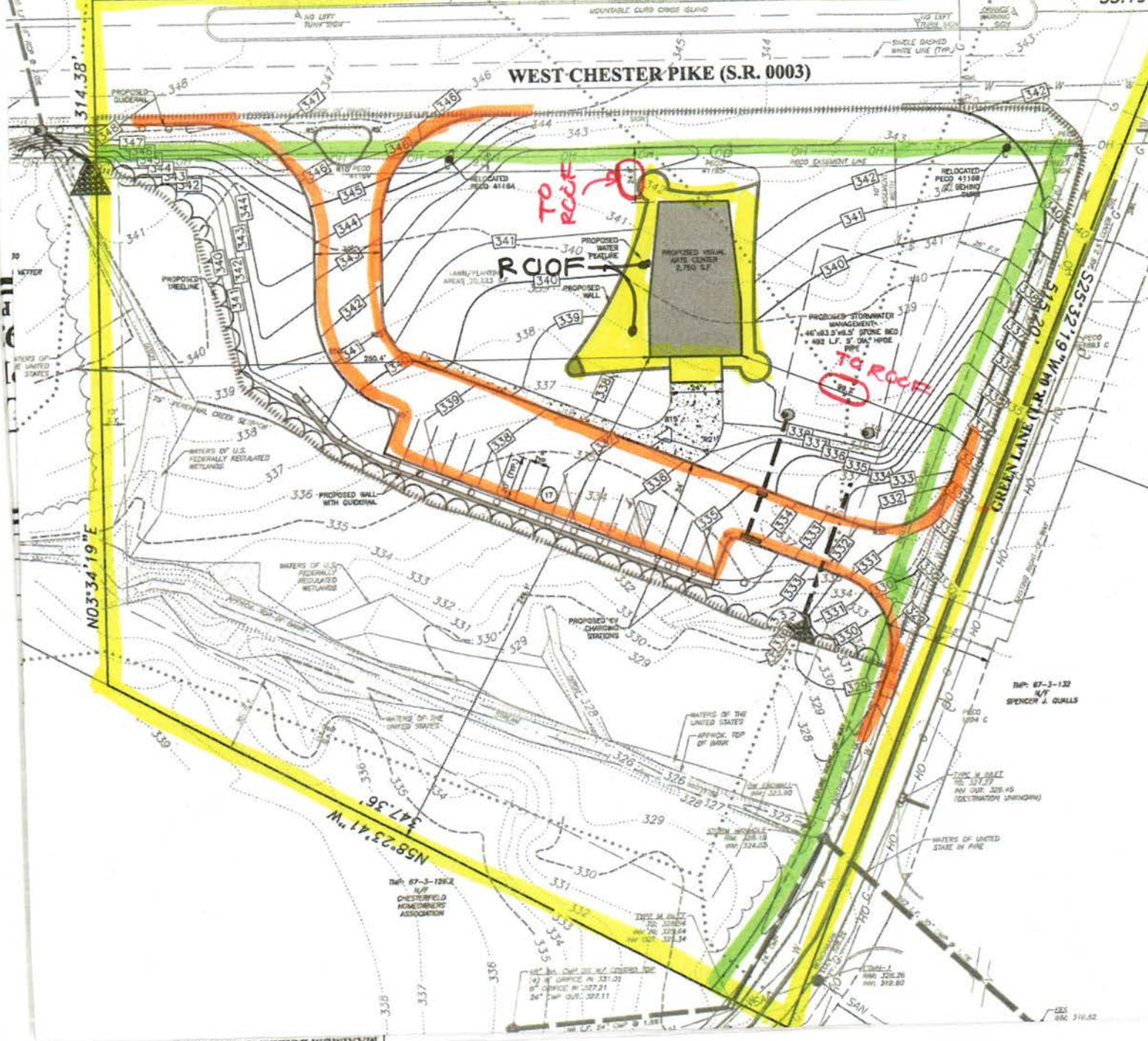
Halifax Ct

Chesterfield Dr

bridge Rd



# WEST CHESTER PIKE (S.R. 0003)



TRP: 67-3-132  
 4/7  
 SPENCER J. DALLS

TRP: 67-3-128.2  
 4/7  
 CHESTERFIELD HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

TRP: 67-3-127.21  
 2/4  
 DATE: 10/27/11

TRP: 1  
 1/10  
 10/26  
 1/10  
 1/10

MAXIMUM BUILDING COVERAGE



## IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE TABLE

IMPERVIOUS CATAGORY	EXISTING	PROPOSED
BUILDING	0 S.F.	2,750 S.F.
PARKING AREA/ DRIVEWAY	0 S.F.	13,136 S.F.
WALK	0 S.F.	1,757 S.F.
WALLS	0 S.F.	750 S.F.
<b>TOTAL</b>	0 S.F.	18,393 S.F.

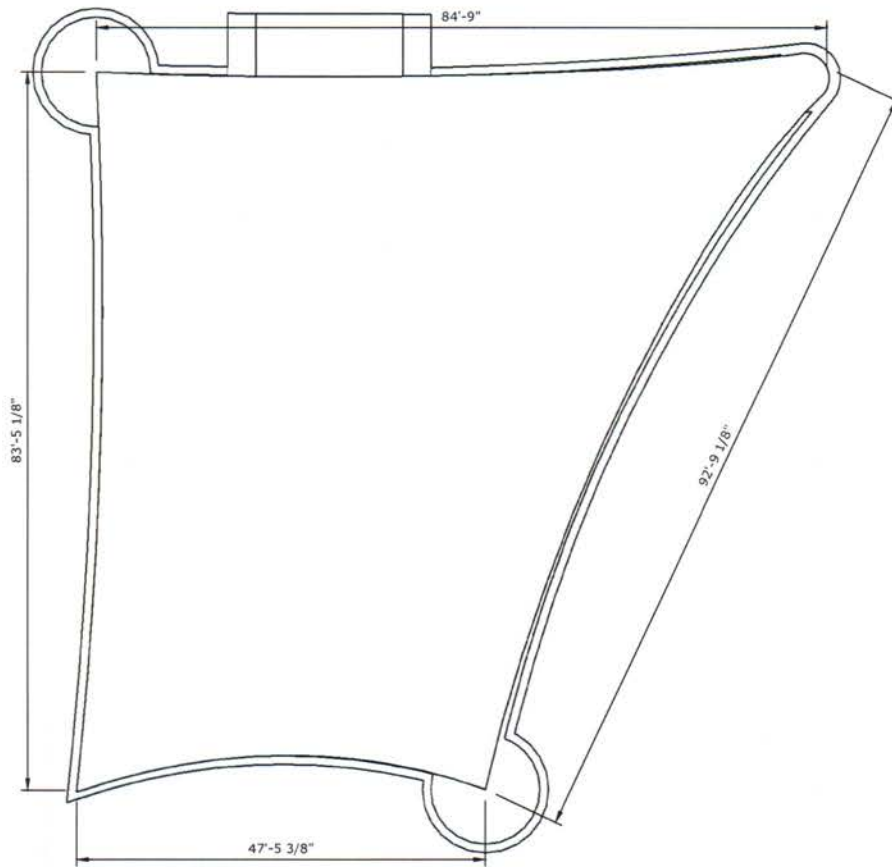
## ZONING: R-3 RESIDENCE-OFFICE DISTRICT

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OPTION 2 CONVENTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	REQUIRED	EXISTING	PROPOSED
MINIMUM LOT SIZE	3 ACRES	3.096 ACRES*	3.096 ACRES*
MINIMUM LOT WIDTH @ STREET LINE	300 FEET	469.56 FEET	469.56 FEET
MINIMUM FRONT YARD SETBACK	25 FEET	<del>10 FEET**</del>	<u>25.35 FEET</u>
MINIMUM SIDE YARD SETBACK	10 FEET	<del>10 FEET</del>	263.59 FEET
MINIMUM REAR YARD SETBACK	35 FEET	<del>10 FEET</del>	245.92 FEET
MAXIMUM IMPERVIOUS COVERAGE	65%	0%	13.64% (18,393 S.F.)
MAXIMUM BUILDING COVERAGE	35%	0%	2.04% (2,750 S.F.)
MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT	4 STORIES	N/A	42 FEET

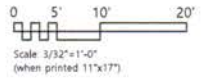
\* - SECTION 170-802-G.(2).(c): TRACT AREA SHALL BE THE NET AREA OF THE TRACT EXCLUDING EXISTING STREET RIGHTS-OF-WAY. TRACT AREA FOR A VAC SHALL NOT BE CALCULATED ACCORDING TO SECTION 170-1519. REFER TO TRACT AREA CALCULATION TABLE THIS SHEET.  
 \*\* - SECTION 170-802-G.(3).(a): WHERE THE TRACT IS A CORNER LOT HAVING TWO OR MORE STREET FRONTAGES OR WHERE 10% OR MORE OF THE TRACT IS ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSTRAINED AND UNDEVELOPABLE, ONE OF THE TWO REQUIRED FRONT YARD SETBACKS MAY BE REDUCED TO 10 FEET.

SECOND FRONT YARD

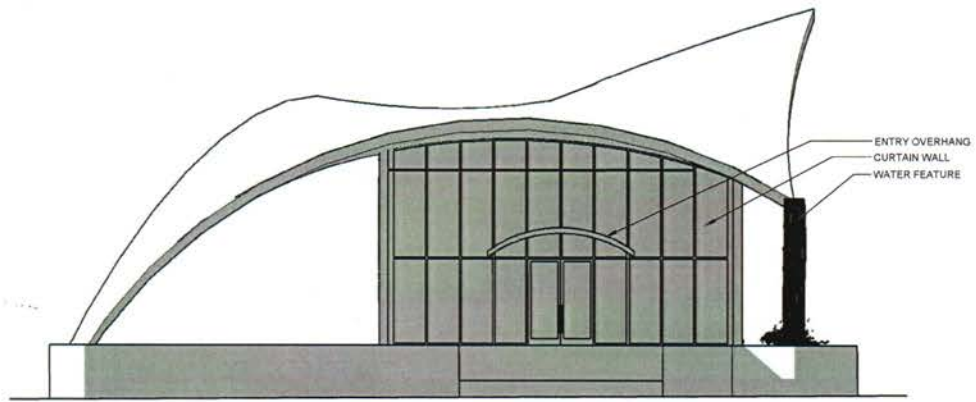
WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER



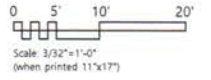
ROOF PLAN



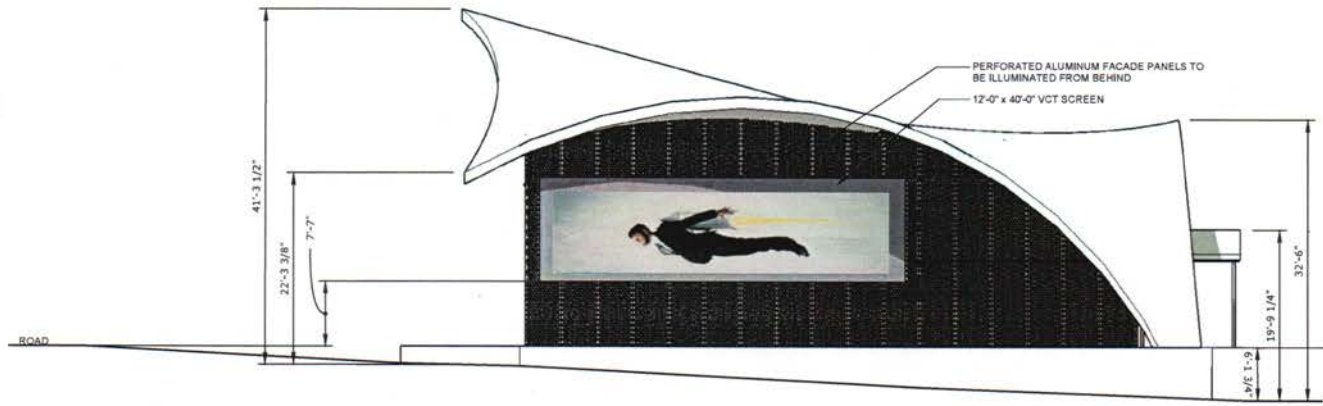
WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER



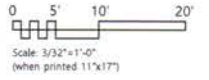
~~NORTH ELEVATION~~  
**SOUTH**



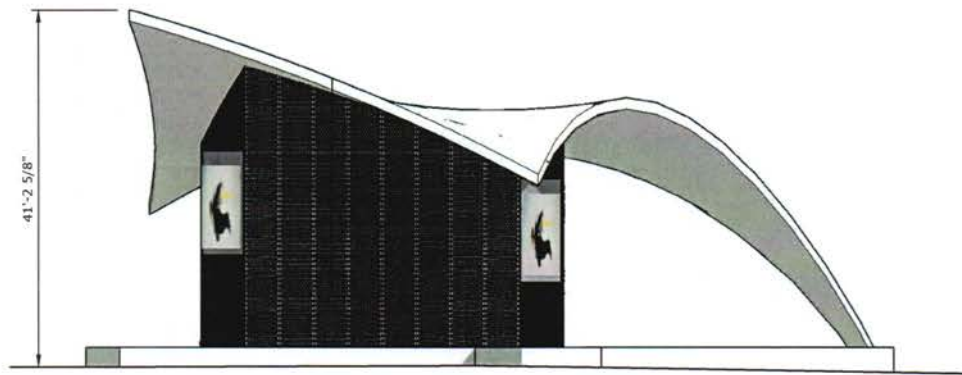
WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER



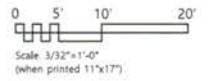
EAST ELEVATION  
WEST



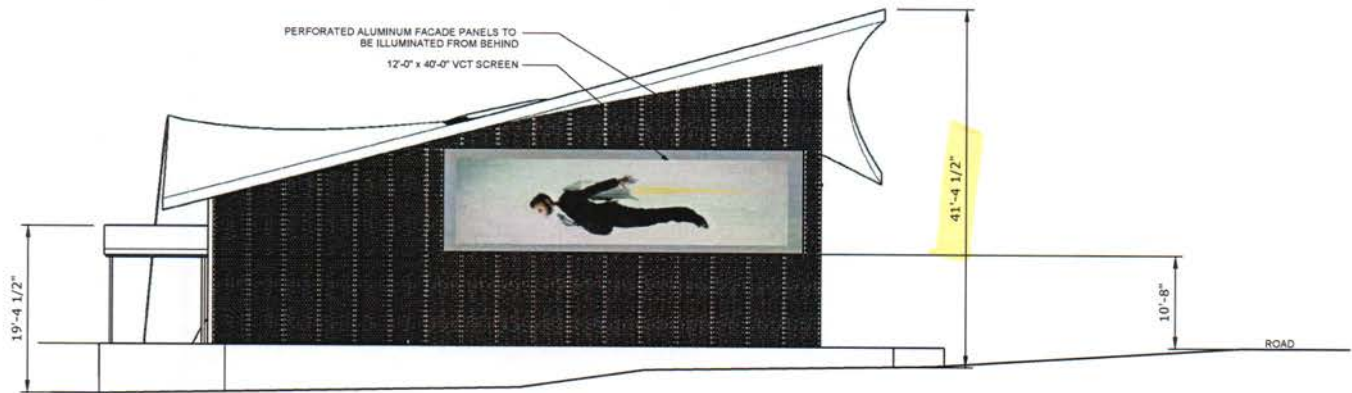
WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER



~~SOUTH ELEVATION~~  
**NORTH**



WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER



WEST ELEVATION  
**EAST**

0 5' 10' 20'  
Scale: 3/32"=1'-0"  
(When printed 11"x17")

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER

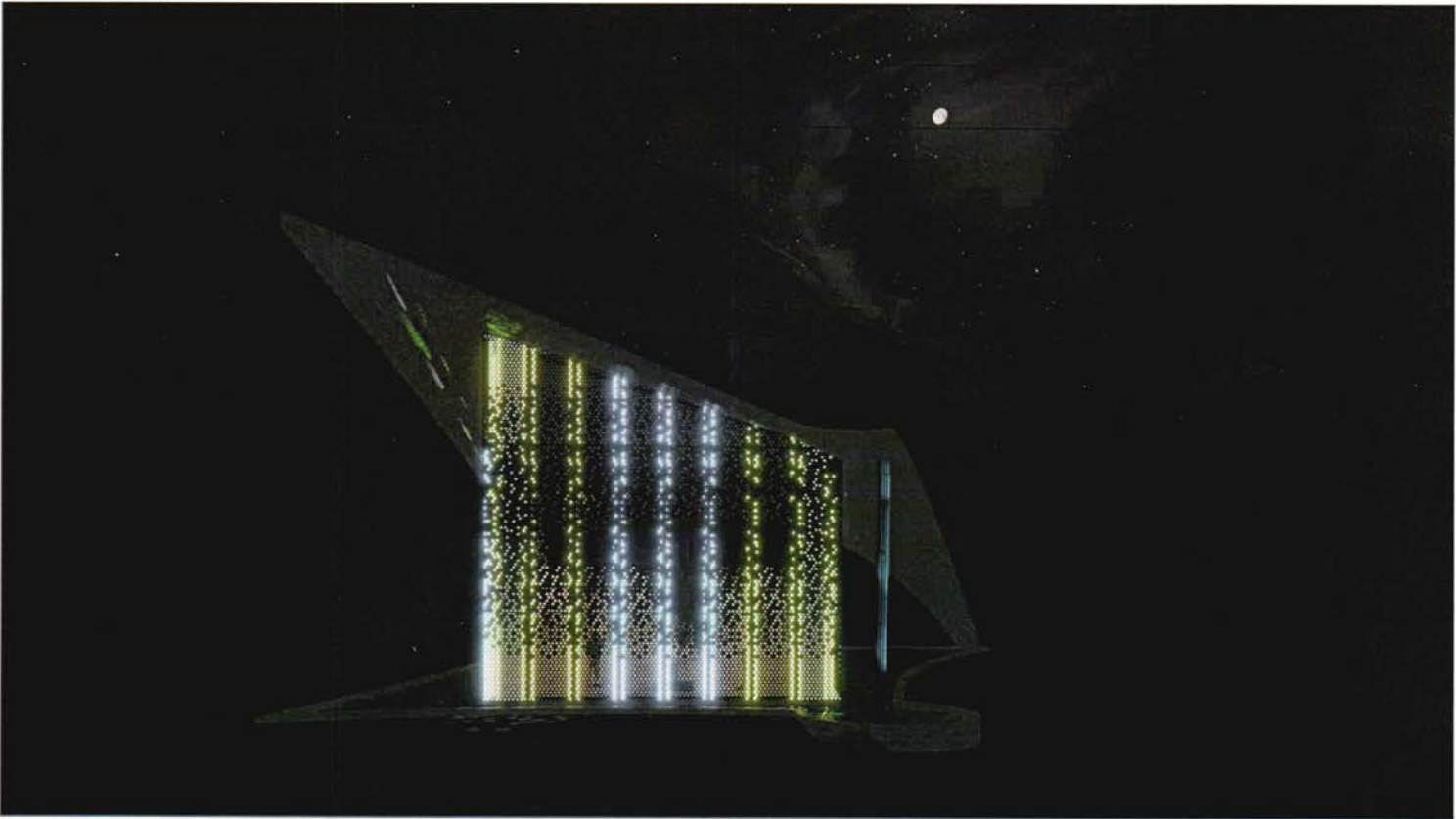


WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER





WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER



WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER



WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP VISUAL ARTS CENTER

