

The Brandywine Proposal

- The Brandywine proposal states “Our development concepts contemplate a 400-car, fully automated parking garage beneath a 226,920-square-foot office building “Cube 1” and the addition of 200 parking spaces at our existing parking facility located at 1 and 101 West Elm St.,”
- Assuming 3 parking spaces per 1000 SF of office, 681 parking spaces will be required.
- 60% of the tenants of the building will be coming over the bridge from West Conshohocken.
- The intersection of Fayette and Elm is already classified by Padot as a borderline “F”.
- ⊗ The ground floor plan, showing setbacks and sidewalks, does not jive with the picture. The design totally ignores the 20 foot setback requirements on Elm street and on Fayette street.
- ⊗ The design is such that you would think it is intended for mid-town Manhattan
- ⊗ With the underground parking garage accommodating 400 cars and assuming Brandywine Realty Trust will own the 1 Elm and 101 Elm street office buildings in perpetuity or Brandywine will require any future owner to allow for the 200 parking spaces required from “Cube 1” in the named parking garage, the proposal is still short 81 parking spaces.
- ⊗ Amazingly, this proposal wants to add 400 cars make a turn into an automated underground garage whose entrance is at Elm street between an operating firehouse, that needs to maintain constant clear and quick egress for emergency calls to service our community, at any moment, and a failed intersection that most of the time has cars and trucks backed up onto the bridge trying to make a left turn onto Elm street. This condition will only get worse as development west of Conshohocken continues to expand. Regardless of which direction the cars come from in the morning, they will need to stop and wait their turn to enter into the “holding” area for the carriage that carries the vehicle to one of the 400 storage slots in the underground system. And what happens when the automated system breaks down?
- ⊗ Exiting out of the garage at 5 PM onto Fayette street will be another horrific adventure. Cars coming down Fayette to cross the bridge are already lined up to above First Ave. They will need a traffic cop to regulate entry onto Fayette street; and then how does one make a left and proceed North on Fayette street?
- ⊗ 1704 Rittenhouse, Philadelphia PA is a luxury condominium that has 65 automated underground parking spaces. (<http://www.woehr.de/en/project/items/philadelphia-multiparker-710.html>)
- ⊗ Automated parking systems are primarily designed for residential use which doesn’t have the “Rush hour” entry and exit periods that an office building has.
- ⊗ This office proposal has six times as many underground parking spaces (for office use NOT residential use which is less intensive), than the 1704 Rittenhouse condominium in center city.
- ⊗ To house 400 cars it will require an excavation hole approximately 78 feet deep (12 levels of parking with 34 cars per level)..... in Conshohocken?? not even in Manhattan!
- ⊗ And then to top it all off, to the West and adjacent to the underground entrance garage doors is a service entrance garage door into and out of the building onto Elm street. Trucks will back into, or park at the curb and wait their turn, to deliver and/or remove trash from “Cube 1”.
- ⊗ What a great entrance to Conshohocken! Eight garage doors lined up within 150 feet of a failed intersection topped off with a 14 story cube screaming out “Welcome to Conshohocken”
- ⊗ The proposed office is 80% of the size of One Tower Bridge in West Conshohocken. Just imagine the height of a building equal to One Tower Bridge sitting next to the firehouse. The perspective drawing of the building is worth 10,000 words..... Certainly not a “*high quality real estate development that reflects the Borough’s outstanding culture.*”

The Keystone Properties Proposal

- In the Keystone Properties proposal, we are told that “One Conshohocken” will consist of a new 8 level parking garage, a new 200,000 SF, 14 floor office building and a new 200 room, 18 floor world class boutique hotel complete with a “Piazza” area with stores, four to five full service and quick service restaurants, a stage for live music/entertainment, and fireworks.
- Assuming 3 parking spaces per 1000 SF of office (600) and 1.2 parking space per hotel room (240) and 126 spaces needed to service the tenants of the office building that Keystone owns on Elm street, it totals a need for a 966 car parking garage.
- ⊗ According to the drawings that we have seen the new garage will be approximately 230' long x 115' wide for a total of 26,450 SF per level. We understand that designers for the type of parking garage shown figure 330 SF per car is required which equates to 80 spaces per level. 966 total cars divided by 80 cars per level equates to 12 level parking garage NOT 8 levels. ⊗
- Front and Elm Street intersection is almost a failure now.
- Access to the site is a left hand turn at either Elm Street or at First Ave.
- ⊗ 60 to 70% of the office tenants and hotel patrons will be coming from West Conshohocken.
- ⊗ The left turn at Elm Street would add additional backup to “F” intersection that now exists.
- ⊗ Left and right hand turns onto West First Ave, to get to the garage, brings substantial traffic to the bordering residential area and will impact the First Ave intersection.
- ⊗ Deliveries, and trash removal at Elm St will negatively impact responses to emergency calls.
- ⊗ The impact on the Washies and their response times to emergency calls will be severe.
- ⊗ Given the near failure and left hand turn problems of the Fayette and Elm street intersection, approval by PADOT is unlikely because the service garage would be too close to the firehouse and too close to the Fayette and West Elm intersection.
- ⊗ Therefore deliveries and trash/garbage removal will probably be in front of the old firehouse, which impacts the front entrance to the Washies Fire Hall and their rental hall activities.
- ⊗ The drawing of the proposed hotel shows a front entry with portico and elevated driveway ramp parallel to Fayette street for discharging and picking up passengers, and for loading and unloading luggage and then trying to exit at the red light corner of West Elm and Fayette street. We have all experienced driving up to the front of a hotel but not a single lane driveway. And if we did, the remark would be, what idiots designed and approved this fiasco. It just will never work and will back up onto sidewalk and into Fayette Street.
- ⊗ U turns in the middle of the Fayette street block to get to hotel entrance driveway is an accident waiting to happen. The repercussions will be laid at the foot of those who approve this.
- ⊗ Setback requirements at Elm street adjacent to the Washies garage doors have been ignored.
- ⊗ The height of the proposed hotel is almost 5 times what is allowed by the existing zoning.
- ⊗ The picture of the intersection on page 11 says it all. Is this what we want?
- ⊗ Having experienced the Piazza at Schmidts in Northern Liberties, we believe the concept is not for Conshohocken. The tenants in apartments surrounding the Phila. “Piazza” project are much different than the homeowners in Conshohocken. Those tenants chose to move to the Piazza, and be part of the rock concerts and other activities, whereas this proposed Piazza concept is being forced on the residents of Conshohocken to bail out Borough Council from the poor stewardship of the Verizon building, and poor decision that was made, when Council had an offer to buy the building for what the Borough had originally paid for the building.

☹ In summary, the proposed developments submitted by Keystone and Brandywine are fraught with problems and completely out of character for the surrounding area. The proposed developments are too high and too dense for surrounding area and certainly not in conformance with existing BC zoning that limits buildings to a height of 40 feet with setbacks of 20 feet from the sidewalks.

- Someone said there are two decisions to be made. We disagree! There are many decisions to be made. The immediate and most important one for Borough Council is to STOP. Take a slow breath and think, and then revisit what has happened to date. The proposed changes to the density of the block are so substantial, that they will forever impact Conshohocken and revert back to the days of horrific traffic jams at the corner of Fayette and Elm street. All one has to do is to view the countless pictures in the Conshohocken library or at the Historical Society to understand where we were, where we are now, and what the impact of these changes will trigger. The reality of the request for “Expedited” proposals is that the tail (The Verizon Building) is wagging the dog. Borough Council is not professionally qualified to act on these proposals let alone make a decision as to changing the zoning to allow for proposed type of development on this block so that they can extricate themselves from their past stewardship.

- We want our voices heard as to whether we want to start changing zoning in areas that immediately affect our lives, our homes, our property values and the essential character of our town, regardless of all the hyperbola contained in the proposals. But before that, we need to have the professional planners that are available from the Montgomery County Planning Commission to preliminarily review the concept of even changing the zoning on this block. We pay the taxes to fund their work. We are entitled to hear their professional opinions.

- We also need to hear the professional opinions of the planning firm Kise Straw Kolodner, our professional planners regarding the necessary changes to the zoning of this “transition” block between the Special Planned Zoning area south of Elm street and the unique character of our Central Business District envisioned by the “Comprehensive Plan” that they authored as a result of the Borough hiring them to give the Borough Council a long range direction for the future, all of which was updated in 2011, and is posted on our Borough website at <http://conshohockenpa.org/borough-services/planning-and-development/doc/132/raw> . We tax payers who fund their studies and reports and who pay their yearly retainers are entitled to see and hear their position.

- In addition, we also need to get preliminary input and listen to the professionals at PADot whose approvals will eventually be required.

☺ Thankfully, we have the Garthwaite stadium and Sutcliff park for fireworks and concerts. The wonderful photo on your website is a testament to that. We also have a 100 foot strip along the river where concerts and firework displays can be held. Why jam this Keystone concept of a Philly style “Piazza” down our throats?

- We are concerned that the cart is being put before the horse, because the rush is on to make up for the inaction of the past years on the Verizon building and a desire for parking now that the parking arrangement with Pulver at the Two Tower Bridge has fallen apart.

- Borough Council made one mistake by letting a building deteriorate. Let’s not let them make another mistake by allowing them to rush and select a developer’s response to a CYA request for proposal which will negatively affect Conshohocken forever and which will be much more devastating than a building with some mold problems. Council needs to go back and rethink the problem at the Verizon building, and their parking arrangements with Pulver.