



~~April 1, 2025~~ **September 11, 2025**

Ms. Diana Chandler-Zimmerman
Board Secretary
Township of West Orange Zoning Board of Adjustment
66 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052

Re: **Planning Review Letter**
12-22 Woodland Avenue
Block #152.02, Lot 176, 179 & 186
Preliminary and Final Site Plan with Variances
ZB-25-2

Dear Ms. Chandler-Zimmerman,

This office has reviewed the application submitted by *Montclair Stables, LLC* ("**Applicant**"). The Applicant filed an application with the West Orange Board of Adjustment for the development and expansion of a private horse riding and training facility.

In preparation of this memorandum, the following documents were reviewed:

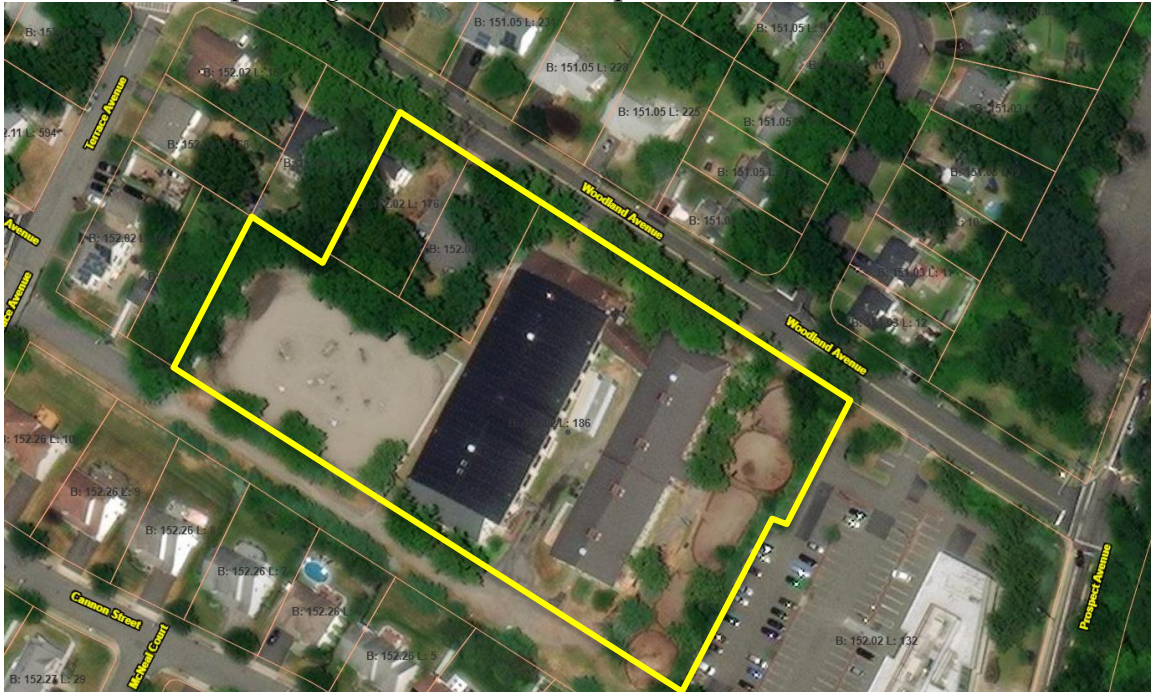
1. Cover Letter from Joseph Wenzel, dated February 6, 2025.
2. Township of West Orange Application Form for the Planning Board or Board of Adjustment, January 15, 2025.
3. Proposal and Reasons for Relief, prepared by Friend & Wenzel, LLC, undated.
4. Site Plan/Subdivision Checklist.
5. Sustainability Checklist.
6. Application for Tree Removal and Replacement Permit, dated January 15, 2025.
7. Verification of Taxes & Sewer Charges Paid, dated January 6, 2025, **updated September 2, 2025.**
8. 200' List, dated December 17, 2024, **last updated August 29, 2025.**
9. Corporate Filing for Montclair Stables, LLC, dated August 7, 2023.
10. W-9, Montclair Stables, LLC, dated January 6, 2025.
11. Boundary Survey, prepared by French & Parrello Associates, dated August 2, 2023.

12. Site Plan, prepared by Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC, dated January 10, 2025, **last revised August 25, 2025.**
13. Planning Report, prepared by Stonefield Engineering, dated February 5, 2025.
14. Drainage Report, prepared by Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC, dated January 10, 2025, **last revised August 26, 2025.**
15. Drainage Areas Plans, prepared by Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC, dated January 10, 2025.
16. Landscape Plans, prepared by Bosenberg Landscape Architecture, dated December 27, 2024.
17. Proposed Cut & Fill Calculations, prepared by Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC, dated January 10, 2025, **last revised August 20, 2025.**
18. Montclair Stables Operating Narrative.
19. **Engineering Review Letter, prepared by CME Associates, dated April 3, 2025.**
20. **Response to SPRAB Report, prepared by Joseph Wenzel, dated September 5, 2025.**
21. **SPRAB Report Response, prepared by Stonefield Engineering, dated September 5, 2025.**
22. **Steep Slopes Disturbance Report, prepared by Cunningham Engineering & Design, LLC, dated August 26, 2025.**
23. **Landscaping Design Response to Engineer Review Memo, prepared by Bosenberg Landscape Architecture, dated September 5, 2025.**
24. **Exterior Lighting Cut Sheet.**
25. **Proof of Publication, dated September 4, 2025.**
26. **Affidavit of Service, dated August 29, 2025.**

Property Information

The property that is the subject of this Application is commonly known as 12-22 Woodland Avenue and identified as **Block #152.02, Lots 176, 179, and 186** in the municipal tax records for the Township of West Orange. The site is the location of the former Essex Equestrian Center. It consists of two stable buildings, and outdoor riding arena, and a small un-striped parking lot. The property is 150,302 square feet (3.46 acres) in area. In addition, the property includes a single-family residential home on lot 176, which is proposed for demotion as part of the expansion.

The site is accessed via Woodland Ave, off Prospect Avenue. The site is bound by residential homes to the north, west and south, and a three-story office building with associated parking located at 155 Prospect Avenue to the east.



*Figure 1: 2023 Aerial Image of the site at 12-22 Woodland Avenue is outlined in yellow.
Source: NJ-GeoWeb*

Site Photos (taken March 26, 2025)



Figure 2: View of the site facing southwest from end of Eagle Ridge Way



Figure 3: View of the site facing southeast from end of Eagle Ridge Way



Figure 4: Fence line of 41 Eagle Ridge Way property to the north



Figure 5: View of 40 Eagle Ridge Way from the site



Figure 6: House to be removed as part of the expansion



Figure 7: Existing parking lot area and side of the indoor riding arena



Figure 8:

Project Overview

The Applicant, Montclair Stables, LLC, proposes to reactivate the former Essex Equestrian Center into a “private horse riding and training facility”, which as described by the applicant, *“The stable is a private training facility specializing in Hunter/Jumper training. The clientele in training are people intending to compete in show jumping at the highest level of the sport. The facility will be used by those involved in the training operation, which consists of the trainers, barn staff, and riders. The facility consists of three main areas: The stable (barn area), the indoor riding arena, and the offices/viewing rooms connected to the indoor riding arena. There is also an outdoor riding arena.”*

The previous Essex Equestrian Center appeared to offer riding lessons, and this does not appear to be the case for this new proposed utilization. The applicant should provide testimony to the Board as to whether riding lessons will be offered. The buildings are proposed to remain as is, with an expanded outdoor riding arena, 3 grass paddocks, and a new striped parking lot consisting of 11 parking spaces, with 2 ADA compliant parking spaces.



The house at 28 Woodland Ave (Lot 176) in the R-5 zone will be removed as part of the expansion.

Completeness

Our office has reviewed the checklist of required items Major Site Plans Applications.

Waivers are requested for the following items:

#30. Topographic features of the subject property.

#46. Solid Waste Management Plan

#47. Site identification signs, traffic control signs, and directional signs

Zoning (§25-7.1)

The site is primarily located within the R-1 Single Family Residential District, which is generally described as permitting one-family dwellings on 80,000 square foot lots.

Permitted uses within the R-1 zone are as follows:

- One family, detached dwelling
- Water reservoir, well tower, filter bed
- Federal, state, county or township building
- Golf course and golf club house
- Farm, nursery, greenhouse and similar uses
- Hospital

Permitted Accessory Uses include:

- Required accessory parking
- Private garage
- Horticultural or agricultural building
- Customary accessory building or structure
- Private swimming pool
- Home occupation
- Home professional office
- Signs



- Fences and dividing walls
- Farm produce stand for produce grown on premises
- Private storage shed
- Greenhouses

Permitted Conditional Uses include:

- Commercial recreation
- Public school
- Private school
- Library
- Museum
- Park or playground
- Public utility building or structure
- Telephone exchange
- Private club, other than a golf club
- House of worship

The following are the bulk standards for the B-2 zone:

- Maximum Height: 2.5 stories and not to exceed 35 feet
- Minimum Lot Area: 80,000 square feet
- Minimum Lot Width: 150 feet
- Minimum Front Yard: 40 feet
- Minimum Side Front Yard - Corner Lot: 40 feet
- Minimum Side Yards: 25 feet/25 feet
- Minimum Rear Yard: 50 feet
- Maximum Building Coverage: 20%
- Maximum Lot Coverage: 30%

Part of the property is also located within the R-5 Residential District, which is generally described as permitting one-family dwellings on 10,000 square foot lots.

Permitted uses within the R-5 zone are as follows:

- One family, detached dwelling
- Water reservoir, well tower, filter bed
- Federal, state, county or township building



- Golf course and golf club house
- Farm, nursery, greenhouse and similar uses
- Hospital

Permitted Accessory Uses include:

- Required accessory parking
- Private garage
- Horticultural or agricultural building
- Customary accessory building or structure
- Private swimming pool
- Home occupation
- Home professional office
- Signs
- Fences and dividing walls
- Private storage shed
- Greenhouses

Permitted Conditional Uses include:

- Public school
- Private school
- Library
- Museum
- Park or playground
- Public utility building or structure
- Telephone exchange
- Private club, other than a golf club
- House of worship
- Banquet and Conference Centers
- Hotels and Restaurants on 10 or more acres
- Townhouse/low-rise residential cluster development
- Additional off-street parking

The following are the bulk standards for the R-5 zone:

- Maximum Height: 2.5 stories and not to exceed 35 feet
- Minimum Lot Area: 10,000 square feet
- Minimum Lot Width: 75 feet
- Minimum Front Yard: 30 feet
- Minimum Side Front Yard - Corner Lot: 25 feet



- Minimum Side Yards: 10 feet/8 feet
- Minimum Rear Yard: 30 feet
- Maximum Building Coverage: 35%
- Maximum Lot Coverage: 45%

The applicant needs variance relief for §25-9.2 Housing of animals:

§25-9.2 Housing of animals

In any residential district on a lot of two acres or more, a building or enclosure for the housing of animals may be constructed or maintained only as an accessory to the main building on the same lot. No building or enclosure shall be used for the housing of more than three domestic or farm animals and such building or enclosure shall not be within 50 feet of any lot line. See § 10-12 of Chapter 10, Animals, of the Revised General Ordinances of the Township of West Orange for additional regulations for household pets and other animals.

Planning Comments

The Applicant seeks a D-2 Expansion of a Previously Existing Nonconforming Use in relation to the expansion of the outdoor riding arena, grass paddocks, and parking lot.

The Applicant will also need to seek a D(1) Use Variance for the proposed use in the R-5 zone, where it is not currently existing and is not permitted within the R-5 District.

N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70(d) permits a Board of Adjustment “in particular cases for Special Reasons” to grant a variance to permit “a use or principal structure in a district restricted against such use or principal structure.” This represents the Positive Criteria of the statute. In addition, a showing of the Negative Criteria is necessary to obtain a “d” variance. The applicant must demonstrate that the proposed variance can be granted “without substantial detriment to the public good and will not substantially impair the intent and the purpose” of the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

When considering the granting of a “d” variance, an applicant must demonstrate that special reasons are satisfied by either showing that the proposed use “inherently serves the public good” or that it promotes the general welfare because

the proposed site is particularly suited for that use. It was held in *Medici v. B.P.R. Co.*, 107 NJ 1 (1987) that the only “special reasons” which can be considered are those which promote the general purposes of zoning, as listed in N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2. The court emphasized in *Burbridge v. Mine Hill Twp.*, 117 NJ 376 (1990), however, that the MLUL includes all the zoning purposes listed in N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2, not only the promotion of the general welfare. Therefore, each of these listed purposes may support an application for a “d” variance.

The following bulk variances are required:

Type	Required	Existing	Proposed	Variance
Stable front yard to Woodland	40 feet	29.32 feet	29.32 feet	Pre-existing nonconforming
Arena front yard to Woodland	40 feet	29.33 feet	29.33 feet	Pre-existing nonconforming
Arean front yard to Nicholas	40 feet	9.93 feet	9.93 feet	Pre-existing nonconforming
Maximum Building Coverage	20%	25.38%	24.73%	Yes
Maximum Lot Coverage	30%	40.28%	36.0%	Yes
Fence height	Not more than 50% solid and 4 feet in front yard	None	100% solid and six feet	Yes
Parking Spaces	No standard for proposed use*	N/A	11 (2 ADA)	
Loading Spaces	No standard for proposed use*	N/A	All deliveries and removals to be made	



			on Nicholas Ave	
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The closest use associated with this applicant may be “commercial recreation” which requires 1 per 150 square feet of gross floor area, plus 5 per each outdoor court or field.

Additional Planning Comments:

1. Applicant will need a variance for the housing of animals in a principal structure, which is not a permitted use within the R-1 district.
2. Applicant shall describe how it will meet the requirements of **§10-12 KEEPING OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS** or what specific waivers from the code’s requirements it seeks from the Board.

Conclusions

The above comments are based on the review of the materials submitted to date. Nishuane Group reserves the right to provide new or updated comments as additional information becomes available. Further, this report should be cross-referenced with the Board Engineer’s Review Letter and other Municipal Reviews. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully submitted,

George Wheatle Williams, PP, AICP
Principal, Nishuane Group, LLC.

Erik DeLine, PP, AICP, LEED AP
Associate, Nishuane Group, LLC.

Appendix 1: N.J.S.A 4:1C-9.3

The applicant references this code in discussions of the stable hand occupying the same premises. For the Board's information, that code is provided below:

New Jersey Statutes Title 4. Agriculture and Domestic Animals 4 § 1C-9.3

a. The committee shall adopt, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c. 410 ([C.52:14B-1 et seq.](#)):

(1) rules and regulations to implement subsection j. of section 6 of P.L.1983, c. 31 ([C.4:1C-9](#)); and

(2) an agricultural management practice that permits the housing of a full-time, year-round equine-related farm employee in the same building in which horses are housed or boarded on a separate floor or in a separate addition of the building from where the horses are housed or boarded.

b. Except as provided in subsection d. of this section, the rules and regulations and agricultural practices adopted pursuant to subsection a. of this section shall, notwithstanding any local health code or zoning ordinance to the contrary, authorize:

(1) the construction, installation, and provision of housing for any full-time, year-round equine-related farm employee as part of any building or facility constructed, or approved to be constructed, on a commercial farm for the housing or boarding of horses; and

(2) any full-time, year-round equine-related farm employee to be housed in the same building or facility where horses are housed or boarded provided that the full-time, year-round equine-related farm employee housing meets the specifications set forth in subsection c. of this section.

c. Full-time, year-round equine-related farm employee housing established in the same building or facility where horses are housed or boarded shall be located:

(1) on a separate floor of the building or facility above a floor where horses are housed or boarded and separated from the floor on which horses are

housed or boarded by a ceiling and floor with at least the fire rating required for separation between residential and non-residential uses pursuant to the State Uniform Construction Code; or

(2) on the same level of the building or facility where horses are housed or boarded in an addition that is completely separated from the part of the building or facility where horses are housed or boarded by a wall that qualifies the addition as a separate building for the purposes of the State Uniform Construction Code.

The floor on which, or the addition in which, full-time, year-round farm employee housing is established shall have a ventilation system separate from the ventilation system operating on a floor or in an addition where horses are housed or boarded.

d. The construction, installation, and provision of housing pursuant to this section shall comply with any other provision of the State Uniform Construction Code and Department of Community Affairs standards and requirements which do not exclude the construction, installation, or provision of housing units in the same building as the boarding of horses under the State Uniform Construction Code.

e. No certificate of occupancy shall be denied for housing of a full-time, year-round equine-related farm employee in a building where horses are housed or boarded if the housing complies with the provisions of subsections a., b., c., d., and i. of this section.

f. Housing constructed, installed, or provided pursuant to this section shall be used only as housing for full-time, year-round equine-related farm employees, and shall not be used to house any migrant or seasonal employee or worker.

g. This section shall not apply to housing constructed, installed, or provided pursuant to the "Seasonal Farm Labor Act," P.L.1945, c. 71 ([C.34:9A-1 et seq.](#)) and housing constructed, installed, or provided pursuant to this section shall not be subject to any provisions of that act.



h. Housing constructed, installed, or provided pursuant to this section shall be exempt from the provisions and requirements of P.L.1966, c. 168 ([C.2A:42-74 et seq.](#)).

i. This section shall apply only to housing constructed, installed or provided in connection with barns, stables, or other farm structures housing horses. Housing for any farm employee shall not be provided in any structures housing any other type of farm animal or domestic livestock other than horses.