

August 18, 2025

Robert Bailey
Project Manager
Civil Solutions Associates, Inc.
7450 Industrial Parkway, Unit B
Plain City, Ohio 43064

RE: Stormwater Drainage Manual (SWDM) Type III Variance Request – Olentangy Village
Condominiums Retaining Wall

Mr. Bailey:

This letter is in response to the subject variance request to the SWDM Sections 1.3.2 *Permanent Protection of the Stream Corridor* and 1.3.3 *Prohibited Uses in the Stream Corridor Protection Zone*. More specifically, SWDM Section 1.3.2 provides for permanent protection of the Stream Corridor Protection Zone (SCPZ), and Section 1.3.3 lists specific activities and facilities prohibited within the SCPZ, which include buildings/structures, removal of native trees, filling, excavation, and other changes in topography within the SCPZ. A variance is requested to allow a replacement of two existing timber/wooden retaining walls with a single precast modular block retaining wall, and installation of riprap near the existing Olentangy Forest Drive stream crossing. The goal of the project is to provide long-term protection of the existing condominium buildings and surrounding common grounds from streambank erosion.

The variance application was submitted to the City on July 30, 2025. As part of the Variance review process, the subject Variance request was posted on the City website on July 31, 2025 to solicit public comments. No public comments were received in response to the posting. The Variance Review Committee has met and reviewed the subject Variance application on August 18, 2025.

The submitted variance application was found by the Variance Review Committee to be in compliance with the SWDM Stream Protection Type III Variance application requirements.

Three alternatives were considered within the application for the requested Section 1.3 variance – Full Compliance (No Impact), Minimal Impact and the Preferred Alternative.

- Full Compliance Alternative – This alternative would replace the existing retaining walls in-kind, with the same materials in the same locations, constituting a maintenance activity. This Alternative would be in full compliance with the SWDM, not requiring a variance but still requiring SCPZ impact mitigation. This alternative does not address the underlying issue of streambank erosion threatening the existing buildings. Erosion forces undermining the existing



retaining walls and also the space between them will continue to be the threat resulting in safety concerns.

- Minimal Impact Alternative – This alternative would replace the two existing timber/wooden retaining walls with two new precast modular block walls in the same general location where the existing walls currently are, but projecting further into the streambank. The proposed use of the precast modular block retaining walls will address the issue of erosion undermining the existing walls. This alternative, while attempting to limit the SCPZ impact by generally placing the proposed retaining walls where the existing ones currently are, does not address streambank erosion occurring along the streambank between the two existing walls.
- Preferred Alternative – This alternative would install a single precast modular block wall spanning the area between the two existing walls to be replaced. This alternative provides the long-term structural stability and protection against streambank erosion threatening the existing buildings desired by the Condo Association.

As mitigation for the proposed SCPZ impacts, the following conceptual plan has been proposed. Two rows of live willow stakes at 2 ft. spacing will be planted along the stream bank in the proposed mitigation area. Additionally, as part of its 2026 budget, to be approved by the unit owners, Olentangy Village is endeavoring to undertake invasive species eradication measures within the SCPZ, and also planting native species trees. Pollinator friendly plantings will be introduced in the areas within the SCPZ that are now currently mowed by Olentangy Village neighbors (this practice will discontinue). The extents of these future efforts will be determined by the owners' voting. The SCPZ outside of the limits of the existing buildings, common areas and proposed wall will be protected by a conservation easement.

Upon reviewing and discussing the application submitted by the applicant, the Variance Review Committee agreed with the applicant that the Preferred Alternative with the proposed SCPZ impact mitigation plan represents the applicant's good faith effort to comply with the SWDM stream protection requirements to the maximum practical extent. The Committee further agreed with the applicant's argument that the Full Compliance and Minimal Impact Alternatives would not result in a viable, long-term solution to the existing streambank erosion issue threatening the existing buildings and other community amenities.

In light of the above, the subject Variance Request (Type III SWDM Section 1.3), the Preferred Alternative is conditionally approved contingent upon the following stipulations:

- Storm CC-Plan and Stormwater Management Report must be submitted and approved by the City of Columbus. The plans shall include an SCPZ impact mitigation plan as conceptually described above and in the variance application submitted to the City on July 30, 2025, which must be approved and deemed acceptable by the City.
- The portions of the SCPZ outside of the existing buildings and common areas, as outlined in the Preferred Alternative plan, will be protected by a permanent conservation easement, and SCPZ



signs will need to be installed per SWDM requirements to demarcate the SCPZ/conservation easement.

No approval contained herein relieves or absolves the applicant of any provisions of applicable state or federal laws. Please contact PR/SRM Section Manager Greg Fedner, P.E. at 614-645-8072 with any questions.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Priestas, P.E., Administrator
Division of Water Reclamation

pc: Variance Review Committee
File

