

**TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION**  
***Building and Planning Committee***  
**Issue Briefing**

**Topic:** Tentative Sketch Plan, 75 St. James Place & 119, 121, 123, 125 & 127 Coulter Avenue, Suburban Square, Ward 5, SD# 3782

**Prepared by:** Christopher Leswing, PP, AICP, Assistant Director, Planning

**Date:** July 21, 2017

**I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:**

The Board of Commissioners will review and make a recommendation on this pending land development application.

**II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:**

The Board of Commissioners is required to render decisions on all land development applications.

**III. Current Policy or Practice (If Applicable):**

The Board of Commissioners reviews and approves land development applications on a case by case basis.

**IV. Other Relevant Background Information:**

The Planning Commission reviewed this application on May 1, 2017 and recommended approval subject to the conditions listed in the agenda. The proposal includes the construction of a six-story mixed use building containing retail at the first floor and residential apartments above.

Major issues with this application include concerns from the North Ardmore Civic Association over the height of the building and potential traffic externalities. Traffic externalities will be addressed during the review of the Preliminary Plan.

It is relevant to provide the Building & Planning Committee with background on how the maximum height of the proposed building was determined. The property is in the Mixed Use Special Transportation District (MUST), which is a zoning overlay on commercially zoned properties within 1,500 feet of the Ardmore Train Station. The MUST District has three sub-districts with different height regulations based upon the distance from the train station. The subject property straddles the six-hundred-fifty-foot and one-thousand-foot MUST rings. Mixed use buildings within this ring are permitted to be between 52 feet-65 feet, depending upon lot size.

The applicant proposes to utilize incentives in the MUST to construct a building that is 63 feet tall. To achieve this height, the applicant proposes adding 24 feet to a 39-foot-tall building by utilizing Zoning Code Section 155-87.22F.6a.2 which states:

*Exceptions to building height limitations. Building heights may be increased as set forth below, except that in no event may the height of a building in the MUST District exceed 91 feet.*

**(a)** *The building height limits may be increased by 24 feet, provided at least one of the following requirements is met:*

**[1]** *A single- or mixed-use development that provides either five dwelling units or 20% of the total number of dwelling units (whichever is greater) of moderate-income housing units as described in § 155-87.24A.*

**[2]** *The developer shall contribute a sum of money equal to 5% of the construction costs of the building. This fund shall be controlled by the Township and be dedicated to use for moderate-income housing units as described in § 155-87.24A. The method of payment of this contribution shall be established during the land development approval process.*

The applicant is proposing to contribute a sum of money equal to 5% of the construction costs of the building.

Staff also notes that there is a provision within MUST limiting the maximum height that can be obtained through incentives. Zoning Code Section 155-87.22.F.7a states:

*No building more than 1,000 feet from the midpoint of the in-bound station platform shall exceed by more than 28 feet the height of the tallest building or buildings that front on the same street and are located within 150 feet of such building. For a corner lot, this provision shall be applied to buildings within 150 feet on all street frontages.*

Because the recently constructed parking garage is 41 feet tall, the proposed base building height is consistent with this provision.

**V. Impact on Township Finances:**

While there will be an increase in tax revenue should this project be constructed, staff has not performed a detailed analysis as to the extent of the increase.

**VI. Staff Recommendation**

The Planning Commission recommendation includes conditions of approval drafted by staff.