

May 21, 2020

**TO:** Planning Commission Members

**FROM:** Jillian Dierks, Planner, Department of Building & Planning

**SUBJECT:** TENTATIVE SKETCH PLAN – 27 W. City Avenue, Bala Cynwyd, Ward 9, LD# 3853.

**This application was submitted under the zoning in place prior to February 27<sup>th</sup> and is not subject to the new zoning code requirements.**

### Proposal

The applicant, Denise R. Yarnoff, seeks Tentative Sketch Plan approval on behalf of AZ Bala Cynwyd, LLC, for the following:

- Demolition of the existing building;
- Construction of a one-story building with a 7,951 sq. ft. footprint;
- Construction of 24 parking spaces; and
- Installation of an eight-foot-wide sidewalk with a four-foot-wide hardscape verge along the property frontage.

The plan shows a two-way vehicular entrance and exit from W. City Avenue.



The proposal is illustrated on the attached plan set, dated May 11, 2020, prepared by Nave Newell. Also submitted were architectural renderings prepared by Nave Newell dated March 13, 2020.

### Property Description

The property is zoned CAD/Bala Village, contains 26,250 sq. ft. (0.6 acres) and has driveway access to W. City Avenue. It is currently improved with a building that has a 3,569 sq. ft. footprint and a 32-space parking lot that previously served a restaurant take-out use, which ceased operation in 2017. The property is surrounded by commercial uses on all sides except the rear of the property, which is a residential use in the MDR district.

### Property History

The existing structure on the subject property is *not* included on the Township's Historic Resource Inventory. It was built as a residence between 1900 and 1908. The original architect is unknown, but the office of Horace Trumbauer was involved with modifications to the building in the 1920s. At the time of its construction City Avenue was entirely residential, and this property was among the only homes that was retained and adapted as the corridor became commercial. The popular San Marco restaurant operated in the structure in the 20th century, and other restaurant uses followed.

2002: The property received Preliminary Land Development approval for the construction of an addition with a 135 sq. ft. footprint and the installation of a drive-through to support the conversion of the building to a KFC.

- 2017: The building was damaged, and the KFC closed.
- 2018: A Tentative Sketch Plan (Application No. 3807) proposing the demolition of the existing KFC building and construction of a new KFC building was submitted. The application is still pending and was never reviewed by the Planning Commission. Along with the Tentative Sketch Plan, the applicant submitted an appeal to the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) from the Zoning Officer's determination that the applicant was not entitled to reconstruct the non-conforming conditions on site, including the drive through, which was no longer a permitted use in CAD-BV. This appeal is pending and has not been considered by the ZHB as the applicant waived their rights to the 60-day hearing requirement.
- 2020: This application was submitted.

### **Purpose of Tentative Sketch Plan**

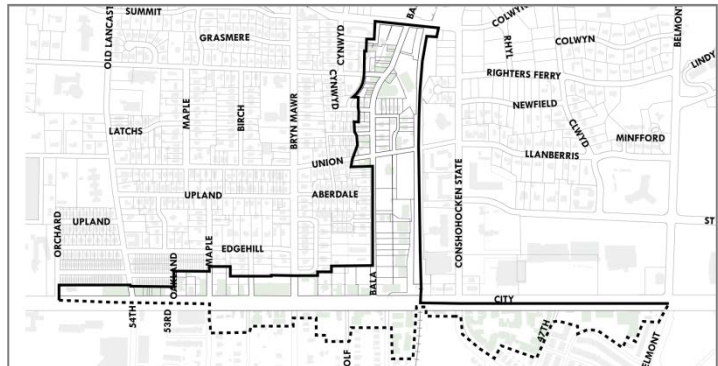
The purpose of a Tentative Sketch Plan is to determine appropriate locations for buildings, driveways and parking lots and how such improvements can least impact a site's natural features. It has become practice in the Township to use the Tentative Sketch Plan phase to flesh out other issues and give applicants a program to address at the Preliminary Plan phase.

### **Montgomery County Planning Commission Review**

The County review letter is attached. The County review included comments on driveway placement, truck circulation, and building design which have either been addressed on the attached plan or have been incorporated into the issues below as well as the recommended conditions of approval.

### **Zoning- City Avenue District- Bala Village (CAD-BV)**

The Bala Village District was created in 2014. The intent of the District is to encourage pedestrian-oriented development/redevelopment and more economically productive use of land along Bala Avenue between City Avenue and Montgomery Avenue and along City Avenue between the Cynwyd Rail Line and Orchard Road.



It recognizes the importance of Bala Village as a gateway to Lower Merion Township and as a neighborhood and transit-oriented center by permitting appropriate densities and a mix of land uses while providing sufficient on- and off-street parking.

The stated general goals and objectives include the following specific purposes:

- Encourage multiple-use real estate development within the BV District that creates a sense of place and welcomes residents, visitors and workers;
- Preserve and enhance the special character of the traditional early-20th Century Bala Shopping District.
- Encourage pedestrian- and transit-oriented development through adoption of high standards of architecture and design;
- Minimize to the greatest extent possible any adverse impacts on existing residential neighborhoods of any new development in the BV District;
- Promote the livability and identity of the district by providing for dwellings, shops and workplaces in close proximity to each other;

- Enhance the visual character and identity of the district through appropriate building scale and design, landscaping and signage, and by encouraging the renovation and erection of buildings and storefronts that provide direct connections to the street and sidewalk;
- Discourage the dependence on automobile use by promoting alternative modes of transportation, including rail and bus, bicycling and walking, thereby reducing traffic congestion;
- Promote the smooth and safe flow of vehicular traffic through the corridor while reducing cut-through traffic in the neighboring residential districts;
- Encourage the development of shared parking and attractive, unobtrusive and convenient off-street parking facilities to reduce on-street congestion and facilitate vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

The following table details the bulk, area and setback requirements for the existing and proposed conditions. The applicable zoning regulations can be found [here](#):

CAD-BV Zoning District Standards		Required	Existing	Proposed
Minimum Net Lot Area		n/a	26,250 sq. ft.	26,250 sq. ft.
Bulk	Max. Building Area	70% (18,375 sq. ft.)	14% (3,569 sq. ft.)	30% (7,951 sq. ft.)
	Floor Area Ratio (FAR)**	1.25-2*	.14	.29
	Max. Impervious Surface	80% (21,000 sq. ft.)	87.5% (22,969 sq. ft.)	77% (20,184 sq. ft.) (2,785 sq. ft. reduction)
	Max. Building Height	65'	37'	19.5'
Setback	Build to Line	20' min. 25' max.	63'	25'
	Minimum Side Yard	10' min.-15' max. or 25' max.**	32' & 44'	11.1' & 25'
	Minimum Rear Yard	25'	66'	83'
	Buffer***	20'	7.4'	20'
Parking	Parking (Retail)	3 parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of FA (7,951/1000 x 3 = 24 Spaces)	32	24

\* Base FAR in the BV shall be 1.25. Total FAR with density increases as set forth in § 155-219.E may not exceed 2.

\*\*The maximum dimension of the side yard setback may be increased up to 25 feet from the side lot line, where the side yard includes a vehicular driveway.

\*\*\* Where a BV development abuts a residential use in a residential zoning district along a side or rear property line, there shall be a buffer area of at least 20 feet.

## Issues

### 1. Building Form

The CAD-BV does not include a minimum commercial building height, so a one-story building is permitted. Staff has included a recommendation that the applicant consider increasing the height of the building to two stories. Staff understands that the applicant's proposed tenant prefers a one-story structure.

### 3. Architecture

While architectural renderings of the proposed building were included with this application, the applicant will be required to demonstrate compliance with the architectural design standards in the CAD-BV (Zoning Code Section 155-219.F.4) at the Preliminary Plan stage. In addition to conforming to the CAD-BV standards, staff recommends that the design of the proposed building also be complementary in character and materials to the existing buildings within the Bala Village District and the surrounding neighborhood.

In reviewing the submitted rendering, staff identified concern with the following elements:

- The amount of hardiboard Hardie Board shown along the primary front façade. Glazing in this location would be a more appropriate material. If glazing is not being shown due to interior programming of the space staff recommends that interior layout be adjusted or the applicant explore providing glazing in this location and include blinds or a wall located behind the glazing, as is done with the CVS on Rock Hill Road.
- The use of Mountain Ledge Stone Veneer. While stone is a material found within Bala Village, staff recommends that the applicant consider a stone material that is less texturized or rustic in character and would be more complimentary to the existing neighborhood character.



#### 4. Landscape Plan

While a Landscape Plan is not required at this stage, the applicant provided a schematic landscape rendering. Staff recommends that the applicant provide appropriate buffer plantings in the rear of the property to mitigate visual impacts of the use on adjacent residential properties. The landscape plan should also include a streetscape treatment that includes street trees and is well-defined and welcoming on City Avenue. Staff notes that the greening standards contained in Subdivision and Land Development Code Section [135-41.4](#) are required along the property frontage.

Staff has included a condition requiring the Landscape Plan to comply with the following requirements:

- Natural Features Code Sections 101.9.A & 101-9.B;
- Subdivision & Land Development Code Section 135-30 & 135-41.4; and
- Zoning Code Section 155-167.7 & 155-219.C.9.

With this plan review there was much discussion regarding the trees located along the property boundary with 25 W. City Avenue (Enterprise), including a layout redesign to reduce impact to the trees. Ultimately it is the opinion of the Township Arborist and the applicant's arborist that the trees are at the end of their life and in a state of serious decline.

#### 5. Stormwater

In his review, the Township Engineer noted that since the principle building will be demolished, stormwater rate and volume controls shall be provided considering the predevelopment ground cover condition as meadow. The applicant has indicated that they intend to reuse the existing stormwater management system on the site and that a comprehensive inspection will be completed, and appropriate testing conducted. The stormwater management will be fully evaluated in the Preliminary Plan process.

#### Action

The Planning Commission must take the following actions for this application:

A. Provide a recommendation on the Tentative Sketch Plan.