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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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JOHN COVER, AICP
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 12, 2020

Mr. Christopher Leswing, Director of Building & Planning
Building & Planning Department
Township of Lower Merion
75 East Lancaster Avenue
Ardmore, PA 19003

Re: MCPC #18-0099-002
Plan Name: 27 W. City Avenue – Autozone
(7,951 sq. ft. commercial on approximately 0.71 acres)
Situate: W. City Avenue (N); east of Bryn Mawr Avenue
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on January 9, 2020. We forward this letter as a report of our review and recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, AZ Bala Cynwyd, LLC, proposes to demolish the existing structure on the site and construct a 7,951 square foot retail store and 25 surface parking spaces. The proposed building will be built-up to the sidewalk with an urban garden between the sidewalk and building frontage. Vehicular access to the parking area will be provided via a single driveway off of City Avenue along the western property line. Additional improvements shown at this time include a proposed stormwater management facility and an eight-foot wide sidewalk and other streetscape improvements along the City Avenue frontage. The site is located in the township's CAD-BV City Avenue District – Bala Village zoning district.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE

The Land Use Element of the 2016 Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies this portion of the City Avenue District area as a Neighborhood Main Street, which is an area that is typically located within walking distance of residential neighborhoods. In addition, the Bala Village area of the City Avenue District is identified as a Town Center in the Future Land Use Plan of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision*. Town Centers are traditional downtown areas with a mix of retail, institutional, office, and residential uses.



RECOMMENDATION

The Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) generally supports the applicant's proposal. However, in the course of our review we identified the following issues that we feel should be addressed prior to moving forward with the land development. Our review comments are as follows:

REVIEW COMMENTS

DRIVEWAY PLACEMENT

The proposed 22-foot wide driveway is shown along the western property line. Due to the shape of the proposed building and the configuration and placement of the existing building on the adjacent property to the west, there is only 25-feet of space between the proposed building and the existing building on 31 W. City Avenue, at the intersection of the proposed driveway and City Avenue. The driveway placement within such a narrow space between two buildings could potentially impact sight distance for vehicles exiting the site.

We encourage the applicant to consider whether an alternate driveway placement could improve sight distance for vehicles exiting the site. For example, flipping the site design so that the proposed driveway is located along the eastern property line could potentially improve sight distance for exiting vehicles and create an opportunity for future driveway consolidation with the adjacent property at 25 W. City Avenue. In addition, shifting the driveway to the eastern side of the property would increase the amount of space available for vehicles waiting to turn left into the site from City Avenue, without backing up into travel lanes or into the dedicated westbound left turn lane at the intersection of City Avenue and Bryn Mawr Avenue.

TRUCK CIRCULATION

Future versions of the plans should include a truck turning template demonstrating how large trucks will be able to safely enter and exit the site.

BUILDING DESIGN

The applicant has provided architectural concepts in the form of building elevations for the front and left (or western) elevations of the proposed building. We suggest that future versions of the plans should include building elevations for the other sides of the building, especially the right (or eastern) side of the building which could potentially be prominently visible to pedestrians and westbound traffic on City Avenue. Architectural features that create the appearance of additional window openings and/or trellises with additional plantings could add visual interest to this façade.

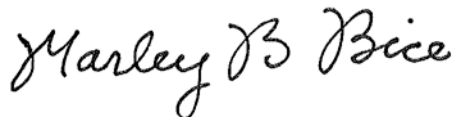
CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal to construct a new commercial building; however we believe that our suggested revisions will help the development better achieve the township's planning objectives for the City Avenue District – Bala Village district.

Please note that the review comments and recommendations contained in this report are advisory to the municipality and final disposition for the approval of any proposal will be made by the municipality.

Should the governing body approve a final plat of this proposal, the applicant must present the plan to our office for seal and signature prior to recording with the Recorder of Deeds office. A paper copy bearing the municipal seal and signature of approval must be supplied for our files. Please print the assigned MCPC number (#18-0099-002) on any plans submitted for final recording.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marley B Bice". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marley" and the last name "Bice" being more prominent than the middle initial "B".

Marley Bice, AICP, Principal Planner II
610-278-3740 – mbice@montcopa.org

c: AZ Bala Cynwyd, LLC, Applicant
Nave Newell, Applicant's Engineer
Gilbert P. High, Jr., Esq., Twp. Solicitor
Ernie B. McNeely, Twp. Manager
Edward P. Pluciennik, P.E., Twp. Engineer

Attachment A: Reduced Copy of Applicant's Proposed Site Plan
Attachment B: Aerial Image of Site