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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY
PLANNING COMMISSION**

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JODY L. HOLTON, AICP
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

August 28, 2017

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

Re: MCPC #17-0177-001
Plan Name: NOBA – 206-212 Bala Ave & 5-9 N. Highland Ave
(1 lot/86 du and 6,650 sq. ft. commercial on approximately 1.33 acres)
Situate: Highland Ave (N); Bala Ave (W)
Township of Lower Merion

Dear Mr. Leswing:

We have reviewed the above-referenced tentative sketch plan as you requested on July 26, 2017.
We forward this letter as a report of our review.

BACKGROUND

The applicant, CP Acquisitions 27, LLC, proposes to consolidate seven parcels located at 206 through 212 Bala Avenue and 5 through 9 North Highland Avenue to create an approximately 1.33 acre lot. All existing structures are proposed to be demolished and a 5-story mixed-use building with 86 dwelling units and 6,650 square feet of commercial space is proposed to be constructed. Additional improvements shown at this time include 112 parking spaces provided on two levels, an outdoor roof deck and courtyard, bike storage, underground stormwater management facilities, and an approximately 9,700 square foot public gathering space off of North Highland



Avenue. The property is located in the Township's CAD-BV – City Avenue District – Bala Village zoning district.

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

LOT CONSOLIDATION

The tentative sketch plan sheets submitted at this time do not appear to show the parcels proposed to be developed as consolidated. Future submissions should include lot consolidation or subdivision plans

ZONING ORDINANCE COMMENTS

- A. Maximum Side Yard Setback. Section 155-219.C.(3) of the Township's zoning ordinance requires a maximum side yard setback of 15 feet, which can be extended to 25 feet for a vehicular driveway. The northern frontage of the proposed building appears to be greater than 15 feet from the side yard property line closest to Hardie Way, and it is unclear from the information provided what this space will be used for.
- B. Loading Zone. An 8-foot by 40-foot area along the North Highland Avenue frontage of the site is labeled as a "Loading Zone" on Sheet 1. Section 155-219.C.(2)(e) of the Township's zoning ordinance prohibits loading/unloading zones at or in front of the building.
- C. Off-Site Transportation Improvement. The table labeled "NoBA Total FAR Calculation" on Sheet 1 lists an FAR bonus for Off-Site Transportation Improvement (OSTI). Future versions of the plans should include information about the proposed Off-Site Transportation Improvement (OSTI) and how it will comply with the requirements of §155-219.E.(7).
- D. Greening Standards. Future versions of the plans should demonstrate how the applicant proposes to comply with the greening standards, as required by §155-219.C.(6) of the Township's zoning ordinance.
- E. Development Design Standards. Future versions of the plans should demonstrate how the applicant proposes to comply with the development design standards, as required by §155-219.F. of the Township's zoning ordinance.

PUBLIC GATHERING SPACE

An approximately 9,700 square foot public gathering space is shown on the lot currently located at 9 North Highland Avenue. Although the conceptual designs provided for this space incorporate attractive elements such as landscaping, bistro tables, and a shade canopy, we feel that the somewhat isolated location and dead-end linear nature of the public gathering space as shown will not serve the Bala Village commercial area as successfully as a public gathering space with direct access from Bala Avenue would.

We encourage the applicant to work with the Township to explore alternate locations for the public gathering space that would encourage safe pedestrian access and use by the public. For example, §155-219.C.(2)(g) allows the build-to line to be extended an additional 20 feet where public gathering space is provided between the build-to line and the building entrance. Therefore, the applicant could consider pushing the building further back from Bala Avenue to create a public gathering space that is more closely integrated with Bala Avenue. Alternatively, an attractive pedestrian courtyard that is directly accessible from Bala Avenue could be integrated into the proposed commercial frontage.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

Future versions of the plans should include a truck circulation template demonstrating how large vehicles such as trash trucks and emergency vehicles will safely access the site.

STREETSCAPE DESIGN

Sheet 1 of the submitted plans shows a 15.4-foot wide sidewalk along the Bala Avenue frontage of the site and an 8-foot wide sidewalk along the North Highland Avenue frontage of the site. No street trees or planter areas appear to be provided within the sidewalk area. The addition of street trees, raised planter areas, and other landscaping could have the effect of softening the appearance of the proposed large structure, creating an inviting pedestrian realm, and helping to manage stormwater management on-site.

In general, future versions of the plans should include a landscape plan demonstrating compliance with the Township's landscaping requirements, including the provision of street trees along both the Bala Avenue and North Highland Avenue frontages.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate that MCPC generally supports the applicant's proposal to construct a mixed use building along Bala Avenue, however, feel that incorporating additional landscaping and relocating the proposed public gathering space so that it has direct pedestrian access from Bala Avenue could serve to create a more attractive development that is more closely integrated to the larger Bala Avenue commercial area.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marley Bice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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

c: CP Acquisitions 27 LLC, Applicant
Yohn Engineering LLC, 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 Site Plan
Attachment B: Aerial Image of Site