



1330 S. FOURTH STREET, COLUMBUS, OH 43206 | WWW.MERIONVILLAGE.ORG

October 7, 2020

TO: City of Columbus Councilmembers  
Columbus South Side Area Commission

Dear Commissioners and City Council:

The Merion Village Association would like to provide our feedback regarding the proposed development at 280 E Whittier St. (*commonly known as the Pizzuti development of the former Giant Eagle.*)

**Section 1: Density (330 units proposed or 141 units/acre)**

- After review of the proposal and relative density in the area the Merion Village Association recommends a Mixed Use 2 as the density level that would fit in the neighborhood at 26-45 units/acre, in accordance with C2P2.
- The proposed rezoning and density would fall under Mixed Use 3, at > 45 units/acre. At 141 units/acre this is an extremely dense development. We understand and support the goal of allowing a lower barrier for entry and development of mixed-income neighborhoods stated by the applicant, however, there has not been an indication of the potential rents being asked or the potential apportionment as affordable housing. Given the housing shortage in Columbus we understand the desire to increase the housing stock, but any concessions given to the developer must come with verifiable commitments to affordability.
- Alternatively, a development at 90 units per acre, or double the Mixed Use 3 threshold would result in around 211 units. If this was proposed with 236 parking spaces available both the density and parking would be more supported. This would also be indicative of elimination of approximately 1 floor, avoiding the height concerns.
- Similarly, a development at the Mixed Use 2/Mixed Use 3 breakover of 45 units per acre would result in around 105 units. If this was proposed with 236 parking spaces available this would likely be supported as it would provide enough spaces for all units and the retail space.

**Section 2: Parking Variance (330 residential units, 529 per code, 236 provided).**

- After review of the proposal and relative density in the area the Merion Village Association recommends a Mixed Use 2 as the density level that would fit in the neighborhood at 26-45 units/acre, in accordance with C2P2. With the reduction to mixed use 2, a parking variance requirement is likely eliminated, which is desired.
- While recognizing that the City Code requirements for parking are outdated and incorrect for urban applications, the provided parking does not appear to be sufficient for the planned uses. With a mixed use of both retail and residential a portion of the parking would need to be allocated for the retail uses. This would leave less than half the units with any parking option within the footprint. While Merion Village is very supportive of creating walkable and bikeable communities, this appears unrealistic given the current level of transit development in Columbus.
- As noted above, a development at 90 units per acre, or double the Mixed Use 3 threshold would result in around 211 units. If this was proposed with 236 parking spaces available both the density and parking would be more supported. This would also be indicative of elimination of approximately 1 floor, avoiding the height concerns.
- We agree with the City Staff request for traffic study and will await the results to comment.

**Section 3: Height (62-ft Requested; Rezoned Height District is 60-ft, Original District 35-ft).**

- There have been a number of concerns expressed regarding the height of the building and conformity within the surrounding neighborhood which would be more supportive of a 35-50-ft maximum height for similar buildings along Whittier. With the change in land use from R2F to Mixed Use the new height district requirement increases to 60-ft.



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**Section 4: Amount of Retail Space in Mixed Use (8,359 SF of 346,500 SF or 2.4% proposed).**

- The South Side Plan (2014) recommends this location for Community Commercial. Merion Village is generally supportive of incorporation of mixed use, and mixed use at this site, however the 2.4% allocation is a very small apportionment of the total. It is also unclear in the current documents where the retail is intended to be placed. The association requests that a higher percentage, particularly the area fronting Whittier be considered for a total of at least 5% or roughly 17,325 square feet be allocated for retail. This does not have to be a single business but could consist of multiple storefronts along Whittier.

**Section 5: Incorporation and Location of Green Space**

- The applicant presented that they wanted to incorporate the building and public space into the neighborhood, however the placement of the greenspace within the core of the building does the opposite. This will create an amenity for residents only and does not tie in the building and greenspace to the neighborhood. The association requests that a portion or all the greenspace be moved to the outer edges, particularly along Kossuth and/or Jaeger with street trees for screening.
- We are supportive of the City staff comments:
  1. Replace one shade tree in grate on Jaeger Street.
  2. Provide tree protection for all existing street trees adjacent to this property throughout the construction process.
  3. Request street trees 40' on center of S. Grant Avenue.
  4. Work with Recreation and Parks to coordinate any impact or consideration of moving the COGO bike corral adjacent to the site.
- We also request that additional bike parking and other multi-modal means be incorporated in the project given the requested parking variance. This is in keeping with the C2P2 guidance for Mixed Use Development which states: "Mixed use development should support a variety of mobility options including walking, biking and transit".

Respectfully,

Merion Village Association  
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CC: *Beth Fairman-Kinney, City of Columbus*  
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