THE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB OF
BALA CYNWYD
EST. 1906
P.O. Box 717 • Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

May 12, 2026

Chris Leswing, Director of Building and Planning
Lower Merion Township
cleswiing@lowermerion.org

Lower Merion Township Planning Commission

Re: Amended Ordinance: Place of Assembly and Permitting Religious as a Regulated Use in the CAD-BV District

Dear Chris and the members of the Planning Commission,

I write to you in my capacity as the President of the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, one of the oldest civic associations in Pennsylvania. We are 350 members strong. The most important part of our mission is to advocate for our community on matters of public concern.

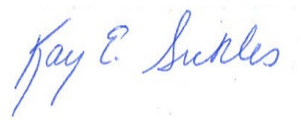
We write to express our unified opposition to the draft Amended Ordinance as currently written with respect to both the introduction of religious use onto Bala Avenue and the introduction of single use residential development within the Bala Village corridor. The NCBC believes that the issues this Amended Ordinance seeks to address could be more appropriately considered through a conditional use process with an appropriate separation distance to ensure a balanced distribution of religious and non-commercial uses along the corridor. Conditional use standards for these uses within the district should be clearly defined and include considerations related to site design, parking location, signage, frontage treatment, and compatibility with the pedestrian-oriented character of Bala Avenue.

The discussion centered on the community's desire to prioritize the long-term commercial vitality and mixed-use character of Bala Avenue, along with concerns about encouraging patterns of development or activity that could discourage commercial reinvestment, reduce opportunities for active commercial uses, or weaken the pedestrian environment. The Board also felt additional discussion and analysis were needed to better define the boundaries of the proposed transitional area, as many members felt Union Avenue provided a more appropriate boundary.

Additional concerns were raised regarding existing front-facing parking conditions, the scale, the loss of ground floor retail opportunities and character of signage adjacent to the historic commercial core, and the loss of storefront architectural standards associated with commercial uses without replacement design standards to ensure future development contributes positively to the streetscape and overall vitality of the corridor.

We look forward to a vibrant exchange of ideas and thank you for your consideration.

Best,



Kay Sickles

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cc: Members of the Board of the NCBC
Commissioner Gilda Kramer
Commissioner Jeremiah Woodring
Commissioner Lou Rossman