CITY COUNCIL – ZONING COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT
COUNCIL VARIANCE

APPLICATION:	**CV25-077**
Location:	**1015 N. HIGH ST. (43201),** being 0.54± acres located at the northwest corner of North High Street and West Starr Avenue (010-048094; Victorian Village Commission).
Existing Zoning:	UCR, Urban Core District.
Proposed Use:	Non-accessory parking lot.
Applicant(s):	Equitas Health, Inc. c/o David Hodge, Atty.; 8000 Walton Parkway, Suite 120; New Albany, OH 43054.
Property Owner(s):	GGH, LLC; 1105 Schrock Road, Suite 400; Columbus, OH 43229.
Planner:	Eastman Johnson; 614-645-7979; roejohnson@columbus.gov

BACKGROUND:

- The site consists of one parcel developed with a vacant retail use and parking lot in the UCR, Urban Core District. The requested Council variance will allow a non-accessory parking lot to serve both the business on the parcel north of the site, and as a pay-to-park parking lot during off-business hours.
- A Council variance is required because the UCR district does not allow a non-accessory parking lot.
- To the north, south, and east of the site are mixed-use developments in the UCR, Urban Core Direct. To the west are condominiums in the R-4, Residential District and a parking lot in the CPD, Commercial Planned Development District.
- The site is located in the Victorian Village Historic District, which does not contain a recommended land use for this location. However, a Certificate of Appropriateness for the final building design is required from the Victorian Village Historic District.
- The site is located within the boundaries of the Victorian Village Commission, whose recommendation is for approval.
- Practical difficulties were not considered for this proposal because no standard variances are included.

CITY DEPARTMENTS' RECOMMENDATION: Approval.

The requested Council variance will allow a non-accessory parking lot to serve both the business on the parcel north of the site, and as a pay-to-park parking lot during off-business hours. The proposal reflects existing conditions, and the site could otherwise be used for parking if the former retail use was reestablished, or if this parcel was combined with the parcel to the north, which is under the same ownership. The interim non-accessory parking lot use supports area businesses until the owner is ready to redevelop the site. Staff finds that the proposal will not add an incompatible use to the area. Additionally, the final site design will require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Victorian Village Commission.

THE CITY OF COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR
DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING AND ZONING SERVICES

Council Variance Application

111 N Front Street, Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone: 614-645-4522 ▪ ZoningInfo@columbus.gov ▪ www.columbus.gov/bzs

STATEMENT OF HARDSHIP

Columbus City Code Section 3307.10 - Variances by City Council.

City council may grant the following zoning variances:

A. Permit a variation in the yard, height or parking requirements of any district only in conjunction with a change in zoning or a use variance and only where there are unusual and practical difficulties in the carrying out of the zoning district provisions due to an irregular shape of lot, topography, or other conditions, providing such variance will not seriously affect any adjoining property or the general welfare.

B. Permit a use of the property not permitted by the zoning district established on the property if such use will not adversely affect the surrounding property or surrounding neighborhood and if council is satisfied that the granting of such variance will alleviate some hardship or difficulty which warrants a variance from the comprehensive plan.

Before authorizing any variance from the Zoning Code in a specific case, city council shall first determine that such variance will not impair an adequate supply of light and air to the adjacent property, unreasonably increase the congestion of public streets, increase the danger of fires, endanger the public safety, unreasonably diminish or impair established property values within the surrounding area, or in any other respect impair the public health, safety, comfort, morals or welfare of the inhabitants of the city.

In granting a variance pursuant to this section, council may impose such requirements and conditions regarding the location, character, duration, and other features of the variance proposal as council deems necessary to carry out the intent and purpose of this Zoning Code and to otherwise safeguard the public safety and welfare.

The following factors shall be used in determining whether the applicant has encountered practical difficulties in the use of the property. Respond to the following statements:

1. Whether the property in question will yield a reasonable return or whether there can be any beneficial use of the property without a variance.

☐ Yes ☑ No

Without the variance, the property sits vacant and yields no operational or economic benefit. Continued use as a managed parking lot provides immediate functional and financial value.

2. Whether the variance is substantial.

☐ Yes ☑ No

The variance is modest and preserves a longstanding, low-impact use that was previously permitted. No physical changes or intensification of use are proposed.

3. Whether the essential character of the neighborhood would be substantially altered or whether adjoining properties would suffer a substantial detriment as a result of the variance.

☐ Yes ☑ No

The variance supports the character of the Short North by easing parking demand and discouraging nuisance activity. Adjoining properties are not harmed and, in fact, benefit from the stabilized use.

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4. Whether the variance would adversely affect the delivery of governmental services (e.g., water, sewer, refuse service).
☐ Yes ☑ No

There is no adverse effect on any public services or infrastructure. The use does not interfere with utilities, access, or public safety.

5. Whether the property owner purchased the property with knowledge of the zoning restriction.
☐ Yes ☑ No

The property was purchased when C-4 zoning permitted the parking use. The hardship arises from a later city-initiated rezoning under Title 34.

6. Whether the property owner's predicament feasibly can be obviated through some method other than a variance.
☐ Yes ☑ No

Combining parcels is technically possible but impractical and would interfere with future redevelopment plans. A variance is the most efficient and effective solution.

7. Whether the spirit and intent behind the zoning requirement would be observed and substantial justice done by granting the variance.
☑ Yes ☐ No

Allowing the existing use to continue aligns with the spirit of urban activation and safety. Granting the variance remedies a technical zoning conflict without harming planning goals.

List all sections of Code to be varied and explain your reasoning as to why this request should be granted.

NOTE: It is the applicant's responsibility to identify all variances required for the project. If any necessary variances are not included, a new application (and applicable fees) will be required.

I have read the foregoing and believe my application for relief from the requirements of the Zoning Code contains the necessary hardship, will not adversely affect surrounding property owners, and will comply with the variance(s) requested as detailed below (use separate page if needed or desired):

Please see attached.

Signature of Applicant David Hodge **Date** 8.7.25

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF USE VARIANCE REQUEST

Address: 1015 North High Street
Parcel: 010-048094
Applicant: Equitas Health, Inc.
Property Owner: GGH, LLC
Subject Property: 1033 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43201
Zoning District: UCR - Urban Core District
Requested Variance: Section E.20.100 Uses - To permit a non-accessory parking lot as a principal use in the UCR District
Date: August 21, 2025

Introduction and Background

Equitas Health, Inc ("Equitas Health") is a nonprofit community healthcare system and federally designated Qualified Health Center Look-Alike, with a facility located at 1033 North High Street in Columbus, Ohio. The organization is one of the nation's largest LGBTQ+ and HIV/AIDS-serving healthcare providers, delivering primary care, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, and HIV/STI prevention services across Ohio. Equitas Health's mission centers on reducing health disparities in the LGBTQ+ community and other medically underserved populations, and the organization plays a critical role in providing culturally competent, life-saving care.

GGH, LLC, a property holding company affiliated with Equitas Health, owns the subject site. The subject site is located at 1015 North High Street and adjacent to the Equitas Health facility described above. This property, most recently occupied by a check cashing business, has been vacant since at least 2021. The site includes a single-story building with a drive-through and a surface parking lot containing approximately 19 spaces. Equitas Health currently utilizes this lot for employee parking during the day, while leasing the spaces in the evening to visitors of the Short North Arts District through a professional parking management company. This dual-use arrangement has provided notable public benefit by easing Short North parking demand and improving safety and order on the property.

Historically, the property was zoned C-4 (Commercial), which permitted non-accessory parking as a principal use. However, under the City of Columbus's Title 34 rezoning initiative known as Zone In Phase 1, adopted by Ordinance No. 1315-2024 on May 20, 2024, the property was rezoned to the UCR (Urban Core) District. Non-accessory parking lots are no longer permitted in the UCR District unless accessory to a use on the same parcel. Because the adjacent Equitas Heath facility is on a separate parcel, the use of the subject site for parking is now classified as non-accessory and no longer permitted.

Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests a use variance from Section E.20.100 to allow continued use of the subject property as a non-accessory parking lot. No changes are proposed to the built environment. The parking lot will remain in its current configuration

and will continue to serve a valuable function for both the Equitas Health organization and the broader Short North neighborhood.

Request

The Applicant respectfully requests a variance to Title 34, Section E.20.100 - Uses, to allow non-accessory parking in the UCR District.

Argument in Support of Use Variance Request

1. Whether the property in question will yield a reasonable return or whether there can be any beneficial use of the property without a variance.

Although the UCR zoning allows for future redevelopment, such redevelopment is neither imminent nor economically justified at this time. The current use of the property as a parking lot delivers essential value to Equitas Health's operations and fulfills a pressing neighborhood need for parking. Without the requested variance, the site would be relegated to vacancy—contributing no active use, no benefit to the public, and no return on the property owner's investment. In contrast, continued use as a managed parking facility yields a practical and immediate return for both the property owner and the community.

2. Whether the variance is substantial.

The requested variance is modest in scope and preserves an established use that was compliant under the previous zoning designation. It does not introduce any new structures, increase density, or alter the physical appearance of the site. Moreover, the use is inherently low-impact—entailing no noise, odors, or disruption to nearby residents or businesses. The variance simply allows continuation of a parking use that has long existed on the property and that continues to provide measurable benefit. In this context, the variance is not substantial.

3. Whether the essential character of the neighborhood would be substantially altered or whether adjoining properties would suffer a substantial detriment as a result of the variance.

The essential character of the Short North—marked by mixed-use development, pedestrian activity, and vibrant commerce—will be preserved and enhanced by the continued use of this parking lot. Far from detracting from the neighborhood, the variance supports its functioning by providing parking capacity to meet local demand. In addition, the presence of a professionally managed lot has deterred nuisance behavior and enhanced public safety after hours. Adjoining properties are more secure and enjoy a more stable environment as a direct result of the subject property's current use.

4. Whether the variance would adversely affect the delivery of governmental services.

There is no adverse impact to any governmental services. The use of the site as a surface parking lot has no bearing on water or sewer infrastructure, waste collection, emergency vehicle access, or fire safety. The property remains fully accessible and does not impede any utility easements or service routes. This longstanding use has operated without conflict or concern from any public agencies.

5. Whether the property owner purchased the property with knowledge of the zoning restriction.

At the time of acquisition, the site was zoned C-4, and the parking use was fully permitted. The current restriction arose after the adoption of Ordinance No. 1315-2024, which rezoned the site to UCR. The hardship stems entirely from this legislative change, which was part of a citywide initiative and not foreseeable by the owner at the time of purchase. The owner acted in good faith and is now subject to a zoning restriction that frustrates both the property's function and the community's interest.

6. Whether the property owner's predicament feasibly can be obviated through some method other than a variance.

Theoretically, the parcels could be replatted to consolidate ownership and create an accessory relationship. However, this solution imposes administrative burdens and constrains long-term flexibility, particularly in light of Equitas Health's plans to someday repurpose the building as a pharmacy with a drive-through. Such replatting is an inefficient and unnecessary mechanism when a variance offers a clear and equitable solution. The variance is the most practical, least disruptive, and most appropriate remedy under the circumstances.

7. Whether the spirit and intent behind the zoning requirement would be observed and substantial justice done by granting the variance.

The spirit and intent of the UCR district is to encourage active, mixed-use development in Columbus's urban core. This proposal does not undermine those principles. In fact, it enhances them by preventing the degradation of a vacant site and ensuring it remains actively used and safely managed. Granting the variance does not enable sprawl or car dependency. Rather, it facilitates continued support for an essential healthcare institution and serves the surrounding community. Substantial justice is achieved by allowing the site to function in a way that reflects its context and history.

Additional Criterion: Yard, Height, or Parking Variance Justification

Though this request does not involve changes to physical form, the need for a parking variance arises from unique site circumstances, specifically, the division of ownership between adjacent parcels. This condition, while not topographical, is nonetheless a practical difficulty that restricts the use of the land in a way not contemplated under the current code. The subject lot is ideally suited to support the Equitas Health facility next door. Granting the variance will ensure continuity of use, avoid deterioration of the

property, and serve the general welfare by improving neighborhood safety and supporting local services.

Use Variance Considerations under Section 3307.10(B)

The proposed use will not adversely affect the surrounding properties or neighborhood. Rather, it provides an orderly, predictable, and well-managed use for a property that might otherwise fall into disuse. This lot relieves the pressure on on-street parking, reduces traffic circulation conflicts, and promotes a sense of safety and stewardship in the area. The hardship here is not self-imposed, but instead the product of a regulatory change that has inadvertently restricted a highly functional and beneficial use. Granting the variance aligns with good planning practice, furthers the goals of the comprehensive plan, and ensures the community continues to benefit from an important civic institution.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the Applicant respectfully requests that Columbus City Council grant a use variance from Section E.20.100 to permit the continued use of 1015 North High Street as a non-accessory parking lot in the UCR District. The request is modest, reasonable, and grounded in fairness. It preserves a longstanding use, resolves a pending zoning violation, enhances neighborhood safety, and ensures continued operational support for one of the region’s most vital healthcare providers.

CV25-077
1015 N. High St.
Approximately 0.54 acres

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ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
DEVELOPMENT

Certificate of Appropriateness

VICTORIAN VILLAGE COMMISSION

This Certificate of Appropriateness is not a zoning clearance or a building permit. This document does not relieve the applicant from the responsibility of filing for and obtaining any required zoning clearance and/or building permit from the City of Columbus Department of Building & Zoning Services (645-6090 / 111 N. Front Street) and following all other applicable codes and ordinances of the City of Columbus.

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 1015 N. High St.
APPLICANT'S NAME: Underhill & Hodge LLC (Applicant)/ GGH LLC (Owner)
APPLICATION NO.: COA2500974

MEETING OR STAFF APPROVED DATE: 10/08/2025 **EXPIRATION:** 10/08/2026

The Victorian Village Commission hereby certifies that the application for the above referenced property and a copy of this Certificate of Appropriateness are on file with the city's Historic Preservation Office. The Commission has reviewed the application and taken the following action(s) in accordance with Columbus City Code 3116 & 3319 and the architectural guidelines:

☒ **Approved: Commission** ☒ **or Staff** ☐ Exterior alterations per APPROVED SPECIFICATIONS
☐ **Recommendation for Approval**: Requested re-zoning/special permit/variance per APPROVED SPECIFICATIONS

APPROVED SPECIFICATIONS:
Recommend approval of application COA2500974, 1015 N. High St., as submitted:

Variance

- The Applicant respectfully requests a variance to Title 34, Section E.20.100 - Uses, to allow non-accessory parking in the UCR District.

MOTION: Skinner/Sprite (4-0-0) RECOMMENDED.

☒ **Drawings Required**
This Certificate of Appropriateness is only valid for work performed in accordance with the motion so passed and approved by the Commission, and shall accompany plans submitted for zoning clearance and/or building permits.

James A. Goodman, M.S.
Historic Preservation Officer

mg

Staff Notes:

Date Issued: 10/17/2025

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PROJECT DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

APPLICATION #: CV25-077

Parties having a 5% or more interest in the project that is the subject of this application.

THIS PAGE MUST BE FILLED OUT COMPLETELY AND NOTARIZED. Do not indicate '**NONE**' in the space provided.

STATE OF OHIO
COUNTY OF FRANKLIN

Being first duly cautioned and sworn (NAME) Eric Zartman
of (COMPLETE ADDRESS) 8000 Walton Parkway, Suite 120, New Albany, Ohio 43054
deposes and states that they are the APPLICANT, AGENT, OR DULY AUTHORIZED ATTORNEY FOR SAME and the following is a list of all persons, other partnerships, corporations or entities having a 5% or more interest in the project which is the subject of this application in the following format:

For Example: Name of Business or individual
Contact name and number
Business or individual's address; City, State, Zip Code
Number of Columbus-based employees

1. GGH, LLC 1105 Schrock Road, Suite 400 Columbus, Ohio 43229 (Zero Columbus-based employees)	2. Equitas Health, Inc. 1105 Schrock Road, Suite 400 Columbus, Ohio 43229 (239 Columbus-based employees)
3.	4.

☐ ***Check here if listing additional parties on a separate page.***

SIGNATURE OF AFFIANT _____

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence this 22 day of August, in the year 2025

_____ 1-26-30
SIGNATURE OF NOTARY PUBLIC — My Commission Expires

Notary Seal Here

ELIZABETH CARON
Notary Public, State of Ohio
My Commission Expires
January 26, 2030

This Project Disclosure Statement expires six (6) months after date of notarization.