

MEMO – SEVERANCE ZONING PROPOSAL

To: Mayor Cuda and Members of Cleveland Heights City Council

From: MPact Collective – Severance Redevelopment Team

Re: Alignment Between Community Input and the Severance Overlay Zone (SOZ)

Date: 12/1/25

Purpose of This Memo

The purpose of this memo is to summarize how the proposed Severance Overlay Zone (SOZ) directly incorporates and responds to the community's stated goals. This summary draws from:

1. RAP Community Engagement Findings
2. FutureHeights Severance Survey (734 respondents, 2024)
3. Crowdsourced Conversations 2024 (11 breakout groups) and MPact Crowdsourcing meeting at Noble
4. Crowdsourcing Website Inputs (SeveranceClevelandHeights.com)

These four sources provide a consistent and robust set of community desires. The SOZ was intentionally drafted to address those priorities through required form, use, street design, and civic space standards. While we are siting these four sources MPact had dozens of other meetings as has been presented and as is attached to this memo.

Executive Summary

Across all engagement efforts—formal and informal—the community articulated a clear vision for Severance:

a walkable, mixed-use district with vibrant retail, family-friendly destinations, meaningful greenspace, a variety of housing types, and a predictable, transparent development framework.

The proposed SOZ is specifically designed to deliver that vision. It includes mandatory street and block networks, frontage requirements that create pedestrian-oriented

environments, mixed-use permissions, guaranteed civic space, affordable housing production, and a public-realm funding mechanism. Without the SOZ, most of these outcomes would remain optional, unenforceable, or impossible under the current zoning.

What the Community Said & How the SOZ Responds

1. Walkability, Connectivity, and a True Neighborhood Feel

Community Input:

- FutureHeights survey identified walking/biking paths as the #1 community priority (606 responses).
- Crowdsourced groups emphasized Severance “feels like dead zone” and must become walkable and connected.
- Residents across all sources dislike superblocks and auto-oriented layouts.

SOZ Response:

- Mandatory street and block network (1149.11) breaks up the former mall superblock.
- Build-to-line and frontage standards (1149.12) ensure buildings frame walkable streets, not parking lots.
- Pedestrian path requirements create safe, connected circulation across the entire site.
- Parking placement rules (1149.26) prevent surface parking from fronting major streets.

Result: A physically walkable district is guaranteed, not optional.

2. Retail, Restaurants, and Family-Friendly Destinations

Community Input:

- Top-ranked priorities: family-friendly restaurants (#2), coffee shops (#3), retail variety.

- Desire for local, unique, smaller-scale businesses; not another big-box store campus.
- Desire for entertainment and social destinations for families and young adults.

SOZ Response:

- Retail, restaurant, and entertainment uses are permitted by-right in SO-1 and SO-2 districts.
- Storefront frontage required along designated retail corridors (active edges, glazing, frequent entries).
- 175,000 SF retail/restaurant capacity allowed.
- Arts, culture, indoor recreation, and event spaces permitted to support destination programming.

Result: A vibrant, mixed retail district is supported and protected.

3. Meaningful Greenspace & Community Gathering Areas

Community Input:

- Strong desire for greenspace, walking paths, playgrounds, teen spaces, dog parks, and programmed outdoor areas.
- Community gathering space ranked #3 priority overall.
- Desire for active spaces, not just passive lawns.

SOZ Response:

- 10% civic space requirement on all sites (1149.13F).
- Multiple civic space types (greens, squares, plazas, gardens, playscapes).
- Programming and activation criteria built into civic space approval.
- 16-hour public access requirement ensures genuine public benefit.
- Civic Space Fund funded by the fee-in-lieu (\$35/sf) ensures cohesive, high-quality public realm.

Result: Guaranteed, connected, high-quality civic space across the entire district.

4. Housing Variety & Affordability

Community Input:

- Strong support for townhomes (54.4%), apartments (42.8%), and senior housing (62.9%).
- Majority support for mixed-income housing (60.2%).
- Desire to integrate housing into a vibrant mixed-use environment.

SOZ Response:

- Townhomes, apartments, senior housing permitted in mixed-use districts.
- 2,500 total units allowed—scaled to support retail and walkability.
- Mandatory 20% affordable housing within each threshold (1149.22C).
- Housing prohibited on ground floor of active retail frontages, preserving commercial vibrancy.

Result: A balanced, intentional housing program that supports residents and small businesses.

5. Arts, Culture, Youth, Small Business, and Community Identity

Community Input:

- Requests for arts spaces, performance venues, youth recreation, incubators, coworking, and small manufacturing.
- Desire for “Cleveland Heights flair”—unique identity, not generic retail.
- Community wants Severance to feel lively, safe, and inclusive.

SOZ Response:

- Permitted uses include arts, galleries, performance, indoor recreation, artisan production, coworking.
- Frontage and transparency standards create safe, vibrant edges for youth and families.
- Civic space programming supports concerts, food trucks, events, seasonal activities.

- Form-based rules ensure architecture and streets reflect CH character, not national big-box formats.

Result: A distinctive district that strengthens Cleveland Heights' cultural identity.

6. Transparency, Predictability, and Long-Term Confidence

Community Input:

- Strong desire for trust-building, clear processes, and transparent decision-making.
- Need to avoid ambiguity that leads to misaligned development or underinvestment.

SOZ Response:

- Form-based code gives predictable outcomes—developers know expectations upfront.
- Clearly defined review and approval processes (1149.3).
- Measurable development thresholds control pace and scale.
- Public realm fund provides transparent tracking of civic space investments.
- Fixed frontage, street-wall, glazing, and setback rules eliminate guesswork and discretionary interpretation.

Result: A transparent, consistent regulatory environment that builds confidence for residents and investors.

Why the SOZ Is Needed

Without the SOZ, the current zoning:

- Does not require walkability or mixed-use.
- Allows auto-oriented, parking-lot-heavy redevelopment.
- Has no civic space requirement, meaning public spaces remain optional.
- Cannot require affordable housing or mixed-income development.
- Provides no mechanism for a street network or connected public realm.
- Does not guarantee active, safe, pedestrian-friendly edges.

The SOZ is the only regulatory tool that can translate years of community input into enforceable, achievable outcomes.

Conclusion

After years of engagement, the community's desires are clear and consistent. The SOZ is a direct, comprehensive response to that input, and it provides the development standards necessary to deliver a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use district centered on public life, economic vitality, and long-term sustainability.

The community asked for a Severance that reflects the best of Cleveland Heights. The SOZ provides the framework to make that vision real.

Severance Project Meetings Chart

This chart lists many but not all Severance project meetings in chronological order from the earliest (2024) to the most recent (late 2025). There were dozens of one on one and small group meetings with community members, meetings with SAG reps, Church groups, Building owners on Severance Circle, impromptu meetings with City leadership and staff that are not captured below.

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Meeting / Date</u> | <u>Meeting With</u> |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – FutureHeights Crowdsourced Conversation (Heights High) | Future Heights and Community |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Initial Councilmember One-on- One Meetings | Council Members |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Council Committee of the Whole Presentation | Council Members and Public |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Planning Commission Meeting | Planning Commission and Public |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Architectural Review Board (ARB) Meeting | ARB and Public |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Council Committee of the Whole Update Presentation | Council Members and Public |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Cleveland Foundation Discussion | Foundation Rep |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Western Reserve Land Conservancy Meeting | Land Conservancy Rep |

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| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Metro Collaboration Session | Metro Health Rep |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – PCFO Meeting | PFCO Rep |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – NEORSD Infrastructure Meeting | NEORSD Rep |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Tour with Councilman Cobb (Pinecrest, Van Aken, Richmond Mall) | Councilman Cobb |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Meeting with Developer for Park Synagogue | Developer Reps |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Port of Cleveland Coordination | Port Rep |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Case Western Collaboration | Case Rep |
| 2024 | 2024 Meeting – Peace Campus Arts Collaboration | Peace Campus Tenants |
| 2025 | January 21, 2025 – Reaching out to Renters / Severance Council Meeting | CH Staff / Council Members and Public |
| 2025 | January 22, 2025 – Severance Redevelopment Project Walk | SAG Rep |
| 2025 | January 28, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting / Building Heights Brainstorm | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | January 29, 2025 – Severance Overview for MSASS Students | Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences Students |

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| 2025 | February 4, 2025 – Severance Circle Sewer Review / Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff / Wade Trim Engineers / Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | February 11, 2025 – Deal Point Merrill on Severance | Deal Point Merrill Rep |
| 2025 | February 28, 2025 – RTA Meeting | RTA and CH Staff |
| 2025 | March 4, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | March 11, 2025 – Severance Noble Neighbors Intro Zoom | Nobel Neighbor Rep |
| 2025 | March 26, 2025 – Novel Road Public Meeting and Crowdsourcing Event | Community Members |
| 2025 | March 26, 2025 – MPact Catch-Up Meetings (Larson, Cobb, Cuda, Posch) | Council One on One Catchups |
| 2025 | March 27, 2025 – CMHA Severance Circle Resident Meeting | CMHA Residents |
| 2025 | March 27, 2025 – ICP MPact Meeting | ICP Rep |
| 2025 | April 1, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | April 8, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | April 15, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting / Renters Session | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | April 21, 2025 – Severance Mall Plan Presentation | Pennrose Rep |

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| 2025 | April 22, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | April 22, 2025 – SAG Meeting | SAG Reps |
| 2025 | April 27, 2025 – Severance Video Review Building Heights | Building Heights Rep |
| 2025 | May 5, 2025 – Severance Architecture Board of Review Meeting | ABR and Public |
| 2025 | May 6, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | May 13, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | May 20, 2025 – Severance Mall Meeting | Community Members |
| 2025 | May 20, 2025 – Heights School Board Meeting | School Board Members and Community |
| 2025 | May 27, 2025 – Renters / Severance Session | CH Staff |
| 2025 | June 5, 2025 – Severance Discussion | Community Members |
| 2025 | June 10, 2025 – Severance Follow-Up Discussion | Local for Sale Developers |
| 2025 | June 17, 2025 – Crowdsourced Conversation Preparation for Severance | Future Heights Rep |
| 2025 | June 18, 2025 – Severance RTA Meeting | RTA and CH Staff |
| 2025 | June 24, 2025 – Renters / Severance Session | CH Staff |

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| 2025 | June 25, 2025 – Crowdsourced Conversation: Severance Town Center Part II | Future Heights and Community Members |
| 2025 | June 26, 2025 – Severance Zoning Meeting | CH Staff |
| 2025 | July 1, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | July 8, 2025 – Renters / Severance Session | CH Staff |
| 2025 | July 9, 2025 – Community Solar | Community Solar Rep |
| 2025 | July 15, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | August 1, 2025 – Severance Town Center Development / Heights Schools | School Board |
| 2025 | August 5, 2025 – Severance Concept Plan Review | SAG Rep |
| 2025 | August 12, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | April 19, 2025 – SAG Meeting | SAG Reps |
| 2025 | August 19, 2025 – Renters / Severance Session | CH Staff |
| 2025 | August 25, 2025 – Severance Communications Collaboration | CH Staff |
| 2025 | August 28, 2025 – Severance Zoning Discussion | CH Staff |
| 2025 | September 3, 2025 – Severance RTA Meeting | RTA and CH Staff |

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| 2025 | September 3, 2025 – Severance NCA/CRA/TIFF Process Meeting | CH Staff |
| 2025 | September 23, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | September 24, 2025 – Severance Roadway Design Meeting | CH Staff and Mannik Smith Engineers |
| 2025 | September 24, 2025 – Transportation Committee Meeting | Committee Members |
| 2025 | September 26, 2025 – Severance Zoning Meeting | CH Staff |
| 2025 | September 30, 2025 – Severance Code Review Session | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | October 1, 2025 – Severance Zoning Draft Review | Transportation Committee Member |
| 2025 | October 2, 2025 – Intro Session on Severance Zoning | Community Members |
| 2025 | October 3, 2025 – ABR Special Meeting on Severance Zoning | ABR Member |
| 2025 | October 21, 2025 – Severance Code Conformance Meeting | CH Staff/Namdar Rep |
| 2025 | October 23, 2025 – Severance Zoning Meeting | CH Staff |