



**CITY OF COLUMBUS
Hearing Officer for the
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
(February 11, 2025 Meeting)**

STAFF REPORT

Docket No. / Project Title: CDS-2024-033 (Cummins OLY)
Staff: Kyra Behrman

Applicant: Cummins Inc.
Property Size: 19.94 Acres
Current Zoning: I1 (Industrial: Light)
Location: 3540 West 450 South, in the City of Columbus

Background Summary:

The applicant has indicated that the proposed variance is for the purpose of allowing a primary structure to exceed the 40 foot maximum height by 4 feet, for a total height of 44 feet, and to allow an appurtenance (stair tower) to exceed the 50 foot maximum height by 4 feet, for a total height of 54 feet. The applicant is proposing to expand the existing research and development facility by adding onto the structure to allow for specialized equipment and test cells within the building.

Preliminary Staff Recommendation:

Variance #1 – Building Height – Approval, all criteria have been met.

Variance #2 – Stair Tower Height – Approval, all criteria have been met.

Zoning Ordinance Considerations:

District Intent: The intent of the I1 (Industrial: Light) zoning district is as follows: This zoning district is intended to provide locations for light production, assembly, warehousing, research & development facilities, and similar land uses. This district is intended to accommodate only industrial uses that are completely contained within structures and do not involve the outdoor storage of materials or the release of nuisance or polluting sounds, odors, or materials.

Development Standards:

Zoning Ordinance Section 3.23(C) to permits the maximum height of a primary structure to be 40 feet.

Zoning Ordinance Section 9.1(B)(4) allows necessary appurtenances (stair towers) to exceed the permitted height of a primary structure for the zoning district in which they are located by up to 10 feet.

Current Property Information:

Land Use:	Industrial – Research & Development (Cummins Olympia Facility)
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Site Features:	Research & Development facility, parking lot, small detention pond, open space, and woods
Flood Hazards:	No flood hazards exist on this site.
Street/Road Frontage:	450 South / SR 58 (Principle Arterial, Industrial, Suburban)

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use:		
	Zoning:	Land Use:
North:	I3c (Industrial: Heavy with commitments)	Industrial
South:	CC (Commercial: Community) CR (Commercial: Regional)	Vacant Gas Station / Convenience Stores (Get 'n Go and Circle K)
East:	I3 (Industrial: Heavy) AP (Agriculture: Preferred)	Cintas Single-family Residential
West:	CRc (commercial: Regional with commitments) I1 (Industrial: Light with commitments) I3c (Industrial: Heavy with commitments)	Vacant Parking lot Agriculture Cummins

Interdepartmental Review:	
City Engineering:	The Engineering Department has no concerns.
City Utilities:	No comments.
Fire Department:	We do not have any concerns related to the proposed height variance.

Planning Consideration(s):

The following general site considerations, planning concepts, and other facts should be considered in the review of this application:

1. The site contains 19.94 acres, an existing 65,850 square foot test facility with associated parking areas. The existing building is located on the northern portion of the site approximately 1,000 feet from the access from 450 South / SR 58; the southern portion of the site contains a small pond and woods.
2. The applicant is proposing to expand the existing 65,835 square foot building for additional test facilities; part of the expansion of the existing structure includes removing / demolishing 10,815

square feet, thereby leaving 55,020 square feet. The proposed expansion will contain 50,700 square feet; the structure, excluding the area to be demolished and including the proposed expansion, will contain 105,720 square feet.

3. The applicant is seeking approval to exceed the maximum height for a primary structure by 4 feet, for a total height of 44 feet. The ordinance allows a primary structure to be 40 feet in height. The applicant has indicated that the roof of the expansion will be 40 feet in height; however, a parapet wall will extend beyond the roof to 44 feet in height. The proposed expansion includes significant amounts of rooftop mechanical equipment related to the building's testing use. The applicant has indicated that the parapet wall is needed to provide for the safety of employees accessing and maintaining the rooftop equipment.
4. Zoning Ordinance Section 9.1(B)(1)(d) allows the mechanical equipment to be up to two times the building height limit, or up to 80 feet in height. The height of the proposed mechanical equipment varies, but does not exceed 60 feet.
5. The applicant is also seeking approval to have two stair towers exceed their maximum height by 4 feet, for a total height of 54 feet. The ordinance permits stair towers to be 10 feet taller than the maximum permitted height of structures in the zoning district (in this case, up to 50 feet in height). The stair towers are each approximately 260 square feet in area. The applicant has indicated that the stair towers extend 14 feet above the roof so as to elevate the stair door and prevent snow on the roof from entering that door, while still providing functional doorway headroom and other adequate clearances.
6. The subject site is located within Woodside Northwest Industrial Center. The general area contains other manufacturing and warehousing facilities. Surrounding properties are predominantly located in either the I3 (Industrial: Heavy) zoning district, with a 60-foot maximum building height or the CR (Commercial: Regional) zoning district, with no maximum building height.
7. A single-family dwelling is located approximately 640 feet southeast from the proposed expansion area. The home is separated from the building expansion by approximately 500 feet and existing woods.

Variance #1 – Primary Structure Height Provisional Findings of Fact/Decision Criteria:

The Board of Zoning Appeals may approve or deny variances from the development standards of the City of Columbus Zoning Ordinance. The Board may impose reasonable conditions as part of an approval. A variance from the development standards may only be approved upon a determination in writing that:

- 1. The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community.**

Provisional Findings: The increase in height by 4 additional feet will not create any risks to public safety. The actual top of the roof is at 40 feet and the parapet extends beyond that height for employee safety. Both the City Engineer and Fire Department expressed no concerns with this proposed height increase. This criterion has been met.

- 2. The use and value of the area adjacent to the property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner.**

Provisional Findings: The general area contains industrial uses; a single family dwelling is located on an adjoining parcel to the east. The existing woods and vegetation on the applicant's site provide a natural screening of the proposed addition from the residential use. Other structures in the area are in zoning districts with either a 60-foot or no height limit. The adjoining properties will still be able to use their properties and would not be adversely affected. This criterion has been met.

- 3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property. This situation shall not be self-imposed, nor be based on a perceived reduction of, or restriction on, economic gain.**

Provisional Findings: The applicant explains that the height increase is necessary to provide employee safety when servicing the specialized roof-mounted equipment for the testing facility. The subject

property is the only I1-zoned property in the area, with surrounding properties having either a 60 foot maximum or no maximum building height. This criterion has been met.

Variance #2 - Stair Tower Height Provisional Findings of Fact/Decision Criteria:

The Board of Zoning Appeals may approve or deny variances from the development standards of the City of Columbus Zoning Ordinance. The Board may impose reasonable conditions as part of an approval. A variance from the development standards may only be approved upon a determination in writing that:

- 1. The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community.**

Provisional Findings: The increase in height by 4 additional feet to allow for the stair towers will not create any risks to public safety. The location of the existing building and the proposed expansion does not create any safety risks to the general public. Both the City Engineer and Fire Department expressed no concerns with this proposed height increase. This criterion has been met

- 2. The use and value of the area adjacent to the property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner.**

Provisional Findings: The adjoining properties are not expected to be adversely affected due to the increased height of the stair towers. The subject site contains existing woods and vegetation to visually shield it from the adjoining residential use. Other structures in the area are in zoning districts with either a 60-foot or no height limit. This criterion has been met.

- 3. The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property. This situation shall not be self-imposed, nor be based on a perceived reduction of, or restriction on, economic gain.**

Provisional Findings: The applicant states the necessity for the increased height of the stair towers is to provide adequate clearance from the roof as well as ensure their functionality for roof access and roof-top equipment maintenance access. The subject property is the only I1-zoned property in the area, with surrounding properties having either a 60 foot maximum or no maximum building height. This criterion has been met.

Board of Zoning Appeals Options:

In reviewing a request for development standards variance the Board may (1) approve the petition as proposed, (2) approve the petition with conditions, (3) continue the petition to a future meeting of the Board, or (4) deny the petition (with or without prejudice). Failure to achieve a quorum or lack of a positive vote on a motion results in an automatic continuance to the next regularly scheduled meeting.