

**2020 ANNUAL REPORT
PLANNING AND ZONING BUREAU
12-22-20**

The following describes the activities of the Planning and Zoning Bureau in 2020.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission held eight (8) meetings to review:

- five (5) major land development plans
- three (3) combined major land development and subdivisions
- three (3) major subdivision plans
- three (3) minor land development plans
- two (2) sketch plans
- one (1) map amendment to the Zoning Ordinance (denied)
- five (5) text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance (1 denied)
- three (3) site plan reviews
- three (3) curb and sidewalk deferral requests
- SALDO ordinance review

The most significant of the Land Development reviews include:

1. **77 Wind Creek Blvd Land Development Plan.** The project includes the expansion of the hotel and conference center to include an additional 270 guest rooms, 35,200 sf of meeting place, 5,400 sf bar, 6,424 sf pool, and 11,600 sf spa. The entire property contains 56 acres but the area of disturbance is 7.3 acres.
2. **461 Webster Street - Lehigh University College of Business and Economics Expansion.** The college proposes construction of a 3 story 73,360 sf Business School Building for the current Rauch Business School. The project includes the demolition of three (3) existing buildings and a surface parking lot located on a .577 acre lot.
3. **774 – 784 Hellertown Road - Gas Station with Canopy and Convenience Store.** The developer proposes to combine four (4) existing lots into one (1) 1.83-acre lot and develop a 5,585 SF Convenience Store with eight (8) multi-product gasoline dispensers. The site currently includes a vacant restaurant, a vacant commercial development and a vacant dwelling unit with a 1-story barn. This development also proposes to relocate an existing billboard, currently located on Lot #4, to the north end of the combined property
4. **2285 & 2425 Schoenersville Road - Westgate Mall Land Development and Lot Consolidation Plan and sidewalk deferral request (Phase 2: Proposed Fuel Canopy).** The proposal is to construct a gas station with canopy and changes to the Schoenersville Rd parking lot area, located on 1.25 acres of the overall site.
5. **505 Wyandotte St and 414-420 Broadway Site Plan Review.** The project involves the demolition of an existing vacant auto service garage, 3 dwelling units, and two accessory

buildings, combine 4 lots into one 25,507 sf lot to construct an AutoZone retail store with off street parking.

6. **NE Corner of Selfridge & Jackson – 405 Selfridge Street, 406 Jackson Street and 412 Jackson Street -Sketch Plan Review.** The proposal removal of the 3 single family dwellings currently on the site, consolidating the 3 existing lots into one single lot containing 22,000 sf, and constructing 3 sets of 3 townhouses each for a total of nine (9) townhouses.

Zoning Hearing Board

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Zoning Hearing Board held no meetings in March, April or May, and each meeting thereafter was either held virtually or using a hybrid virtual/in-person format. The Zoning Hearing Board held 18 meetings in 2020 and heard 47 Cases, of which two were continued from 2019. Three cases were withdrawn prior to the hearing, including a case remanded back to the Board from the Court of Common Pleas, and one case has been continued to 2021. The Board approved 25 Variance Cases, eight (8) Dimensional Variance Cases for Single Family Dwellings and four (4) Special Exception Cases. The Board Denied 10 Cases, including a validity challenge. The Board considered two Interpretations, upholding one and overturning the other. Five appeals necessitated additional or special meetings because of the volume of testimony and/or the number of objectors. Significant Zoning Hearing Board appeals include:

1. Validity Challenge

Appeal of Beall Fowler, Robert Romeril, Martin Romeril, Barbara Diamond, Steven Diamond and Bruce Haines for a Validity Challenge to appeal the adoption and enactment of Bill No. 46 – 2018, Ordinance No. 2018-40, Section 1304.04 Reuse of Corner Commercial Uses Allowed in the RT (High Density Residential) and RG (Medium Density Residential) Districts, specific to Paragraphs 1-4, and as they relate to Two West Market Street. (Section 1304(b), and all associated Variances, Special Exceptions, and Interpretations).

This case began on 9/11/2019, and at their 2/26/ 2020, Regular Meeting, the Board denied the application, or in the alternative, upheld the ordinance.

2. Remand, 251 East Church Street

Hearing by Order of the Court of Common Pleas of Northampton County in Case No. C-48-CV-2018-remanding the appeal of the Zoning Hearing Board's Decision dated April 13, 2018, to the Zoning Hearing Board for further consideration of the matter, including the consideration of additional evidence pertaining to the issues raised by the Objectors in the appeal to the Court, as well as evidence on any other issue germane to Applicant's request for Special Exception. (The Decision granted the Appeal of Valerie Peters for a Special Exception to establish a Bed & Breakfast on the premises with one room available for rent after a hearing held on February 28, 2018.

This case was to begin on 2/12, continued to 5/6, and then withdrawn by the applicant on 9/30. Subsequently, the appellants filed a motion to dismiss the remand order, which was approved by the Court of Common Pleas on 11/13, and where the Court ordered and directed the Zoning Officer to exercise due diligence in ascertaining whether the premise is being used as a bed and

breakfast or otherwise is in violation of the City of Bethlehem zoning ordinances.

3. 517 Center Street

Appeal of Christ Church United Church of Christ and Bethlehem Emergency Shelter, Inc., to modify a condition of a Use Variance approved by the Zoning Hearing Board, with Decision dated December 29, 2017, which granted the operation of a homeless shelter from 5:00 PM to 7:00 AM from December 1st through March 31st. The modification is to extend the days of operation to November 1st through April 30th; the hours would remain as-is.

This case was heard on 6/24, and by unanimous vote, the Board granted the requested modification to the prior condition. The Appellant has filed an appeal with the Court of Common Pleas.

4. 810 & 813 Monocacy Street

Appeal of Plamen Ayvazov on behalf of Monocacy General Contracting, LLC, to convert the structure at 810 Monocacy Street into 33 multi-family dwellings, which requires Dimensional Variances from the minimum lot area per dwelling, 1,200 SF required, 468 SF proposed, or 12 units permitted, and maximum building height, 60' required, 61'-6" proposed and a Special Exception for 810 Monocacy Street and 813 Monocacy Street for a reduction in off-street parking, 58 required, 9 proposed.

This case was heard on 8/12, and by majority vote, the Board denied the request for maximum number of units and minimum number of parking spaces. The applicant subsequently modified the plans and refiled the application as follows:

Convert the structure at 810 Monocacy Street into 24 multi-family dwellings, which requires Dimensional Variances from the minimum lot area per dwelling, 1,200 SF required, 644 SF proposed, or 12 units permitted and a Special Exception for 810 Monocacy Street and 813 Monocacy Street for a reduction in off-street parking, 42 required, 40 proposed.

This case was heard on 10/28, and by unanimous vote, the Board granted the necessary relief subject to conditions.

5. 2105 Creek Road

Appeal of Abraham Atiyeh, on behalf of Creek Investors, LLC, and Exchange 9, LLC, for a Use Variance to permit Single-Family Semi-Detached Dwellings (also known as Twin Dwellings); construct eight, two-story, 4,912 SF dwellings and two, 2-story, 4,800 SF dwellings.

This case was to begin on 8/26, continued to 9/23, and then withdrawn by the applicant on 12/9. Although the case was not heard by the Board, it elicited significant public protest including emails from 32 residents, letters from the City of Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council, the Saucon Creek Watershed Association and Lower Saucon Township and a 57 page petition from a citizen's organization, Save Creek Road.

Historic Review Boards

There were 30 appeals before the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) and 32 appeals before the Historic Conservation Commission – South Bethlehem and Mount Airy (HCC) in 2020.

In 2019, the Planning Bureau received a Certified Local Government grant to assist with historic preservation planning, specifically in south Bethlehem. In 2020, a planning consulting team was selected a task force was convened and a public meeting held to initiate the plan development process. The City is in the process of taking much of the feedback and comments received at these initial meetings and preparing drafts of recommendations to various ordinances and policies to balance the city's policies for economic development with historic preservation initiatives. The study will conclude in spring of 2021.

Special Projects

South Bethlehem Greenway – The city moved ahead this year with construction of an active play area on the greenway at Webster Street with the assistance of DCNR funding. Design and engineering have continued for Phase 5 of the Greenway which will be constructed in 2021. This phase creates a connection between the existing Greenway trail and the ballfields at the northern end of Saucon Park off of Millside Drive.

South Side Vision 2020 – The Planning Bureau continues to work with the Community Action Development Corporation (CADCB) to provide staff support for the South Side Vision 2020 plan and projects. The Bureau assists in project implementation through the Development subcommittee. The committee continued to work with a lighting consultant, which developed a lighting plan for South Bethlehem, beginning with a demonstration street. The draft plan was presented to the full SS Vision Board. The plan will be reviewed with City Staff prior to finalization.

The Planning Bureau also participates in discussions with the Southside Vision 2020 Housing subcommittee. The housing committee participated in the development of zoning ordinance amendments related to student housing. The Student Housing Zoning Amendment and Overlay Map was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission in late 2020 and will be considered for adoption by city council in early 2021.

Wayfinding/Signage Project – The City continues to work with PennDot for the release of permits to install later phases of the wayfinding and signage program. The City also continues to pursue additional funds for this project. The City will be working with ArtsQuest for the installation of gateway artwork related to the wayfinding program. The gateway artwork is possible through a Northampton County grant.

Monocacy Way – A Northampton County Open Space grant and a PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) grant are combined to enhance and upgrade the Monocacy Way trail. The improvements will start north of Schoenersville Road and continue

around the Monocacy Park Complex to Illick's Mill Road. Design and engineering for this project are underway. Construction is expected to take place in 2021.

Zoning Amendments – The Bureau has been working on several amendments and revisions to the Zoning Ordinance in 2020. The Student Home Overlay Amendment and text revisions to the allowed uses for first floor retail, restaurant, and personal service uses in the CB and CL Zoning Districts were recommended for approval by the Planning Commission. The final drafts of these amendments were forwarded to City Council. The Bureau continues to look at other areas of the Zoning Ordinance for appropriate modifications and amendments.

Boards and Committees - Planning and Zoning Bureau staff continue to support and participate in a variety of regional and local boards and commissions, including Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Lehigh Valley Transportation Study, South Side Vision 2020, South Side Arts District, Lehigh Valley Section of the Pennsylvania Planning Association and others.

Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance - The Bureau has been updating the SALDO with the assistance of URDC, a local consulting firm. All relevant bureaus have been meeting with the Planning Bureau staff to revise relevant draft sections. The draft SALDO was initially presented to the Planning Commission in December 2019. A draft final document and revised summary report is being prepared by URDC and will be presented to the Planning Commission for a recommendation to forward to City Council in 2021.

Northside 2027 – The City reach out to community representatives, Moravian College and BASD to support the Northside 2027 Neighborhood Plan. This year a major street tree planting effort was completed in the neighborhood through the management of the City Forester. The city continues to search for grants to assist with some of the major initiatives proposed in the Northside 2027 Plan. A task force and support committees are being formalized and the City is working with the Community Action Committee of Bethlehem for support staff and additional community outreach.

South Side Planning Grant – Bethlehem is a Certified Local Government (CLG) which allows the city some additional funding opportunities for historic preservation projects as long as we meet some basic historic preservation criteria. As a part of that program the City received a CLG grant in 2019 to support additional planning efforts in south Bethlehem related to the coordination of historic preservation and economic development efforts on the south side. In 2020 a consulting firm was selected, a task force was assembled and a public meeting was held. In early 2021 recommendations will be forwarded for discussion related to some policy and ordinance amendments related to development in south Bethlehem. The goal of the project is to help protect important historic resources in south Bethlehem while allowing development to move forward in a compatible way.

WalkWorks Grant – In 2020 the Planning Bureau applied for and received a WalkWorks grant that will allow for some design and engineering of bike, pedestrian and transit improvements for the length of the east and west Broad Street corridors. The project was noted as a catalytic project in LVPC's MoveLV Plan and will consider corridor improvements in the Northside 2027, downtown and West Bethlehem/Mount Airy areas of the city. The project will be completed by end of 2021.

Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study – Bethlehem has received grant funding from both Northampton County and DCNR to support the planning and feasibility engineering for a pedestrian bridge over the Lehigh River. In 2020, the Planning Bureau worked with a committee

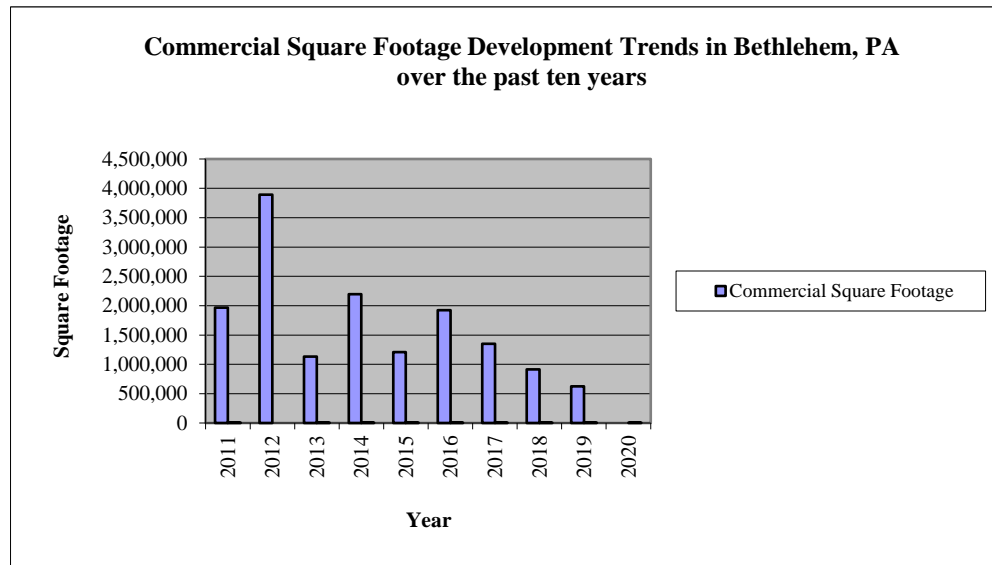
of community representatives in the selection of a planning and design firm. A task force has been developed to lead the project. The study will be completed in 2021.

Development Trends

The following charts and graphs depict development trends in Bethlehem for the past 10 years.

The commercial square footage totals reflect mostly warehouse and medical office development, but these numbers also include some of the recent expansion of Lehigh University and Wind Creek Casino.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Commercial Square Footage	1,967,900	3,892,217	1,132,254	2,195,142	1,210,854	1,924,765	1,351,335	916,286	622,763	187,160

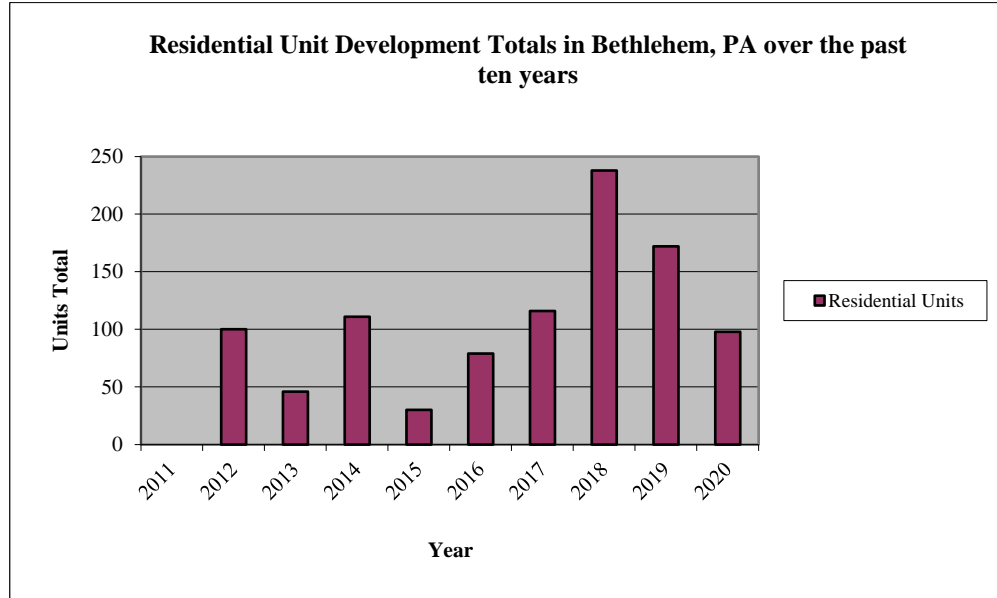


***2012 includes the Majestic Bethlehem Center**

Over the last several years, the demand for new housing has transitioned from owner-occupied units to market rate rental apartment units. This trend is confirmed through the recent proposals such as the Armory, Wilbur Mansion and the 546-548 N. New Street Apartment developments.

The following shows the number of residential dwelling units approved by year.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Residential Units	0	100	46	111	30	79	116	238	172	98



The final chart shows the total number of plans submitted by year.

Total number of subdivision and land development projects

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Land Development	4	13	10	11	8	8	9	12	11	8
Subdivision	1	2	1	0	1	5	6	4	6	3
Minor Land Development	2	4	2	0	7	2	3	2	2	3
Minor Subdivision	2	8	7	2	8	7	5	7	5	6

