

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community and Economic Development Interoffice Memo

TO: Michael Colón, City Council President
FROM: Craig D. Peiffer, Assistant Director, Bureau of Planning and Zoning
RE: Proposed Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO).
DATE: April 11, 2025

At their April 10, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting, the Commission voted 4 – 0 to recommend a favorable opinion to City Council for the adoption of the updated subdivision and land development ordinance.

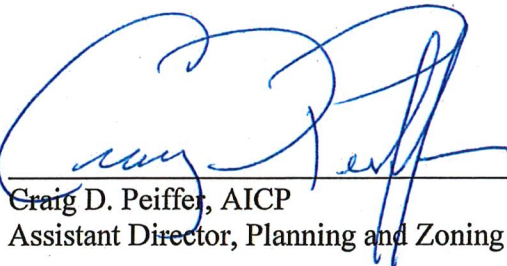
The memo to the Planning Commission from the Planning Bureau, dated April 4, 2025, and the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Climate Action Support charts are attached for reference.

Please place this proposed agenda item on an upcoming city council meeting agenda. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions.

C. City Council Members
Mayor J. William Reynolds
Laura Collins, Esq, Dir. DCED
Jack Spirk, Esq., Solicitor

DATE:

04.11.2025



Craig D. Peiffer, AICP
Assistant Director, Planning and Zoning

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community and Economic Development Interoffice Memo

To: Planning Commission Members

From: Craig Peiffer, Assistant Director of Planning and Zoning

Re: Key Points of Draft Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance

Date: April 4, 2025

The Planning Commission has reviewed an updated, draft version of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) at prior meetings in 2021 and 2023. Final edits to the ordinance have been completed and we are able to place the document on your agenda for final review and recommendation to City Council.

Bethlehem's current SALDO was initially adopted in 1975 and a comprehensive overview of the ordinance has not been completed since that time. The main reasons for all of the work to revamp the proposed SALDO are the following:

- Incorporate the City's Climate Action Plan goals and objectives, including less impervious surfaces, green stormwater design, more pedestrian friendly and bike friendly streets and sidewalks, narrower streets, clearer landscaping requirements.
 - Formally include LANTA and the EAC in the plan review process.
 - Clarify our current procedures for submission, classification, and review of Major and Minor LD and Sub plans
 - Simplify Lot Consolidation Plan procedures
 - Incorporate Site Layout and Design Standards into the document for certain commercial and core areas of the city.
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The Planning and Zoning team has been working on this document for the last several years. The final draft of the ordinance was compiled with the team work of all of the departments in City Hall that review land developments – Public Works, Fire, Traffic, Zoning, Engineering and others. The draft was also reviewed by LANTA and the EAC. Prior drafts were also discussed at previous Planning Commission meetings.

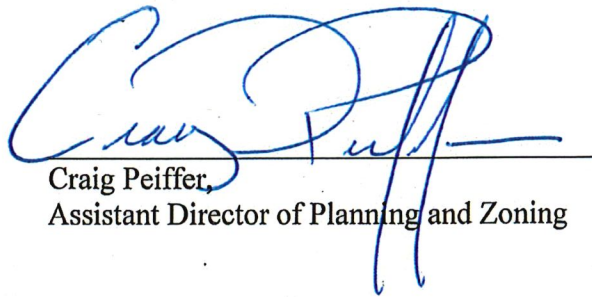
The following are key sections of the Ordinance:

- Section 1341.07 – Modifications, Waivers and Deferrals. This section typically refers to deferrals for curb and sidewalk, reductions in street widths, or alternatives that reduce impervious coverage.

- Article 1342 – Definitions. All proposed definitions have been reviewed against the Zoning Ordinance so that both ordinances are consistent. SALDO continually references the Zoning Ordinance definitions.
- Article 1345 – Preliminary/Final Plans. All land development and major subdivision plans will be referred to as Preliminary/Final Plans. The Fee Schedule for submissions will also reflect this reference. The submission procedure is much clearer and delineates the applicant's and the Planning Bureau's responsibilities for circulating plans.
- Article 1346 – Minor Subdivisions, Minor Land Developments, Lot Line Adjustment Plans, and Lot Consolidations. The abbreviated procedure for the administrative review and approval of these minor plans is described. Lot Consolidations only require preparation of a unification deed comprising all lots to be merged. We will no longer require the applicant to prepare a surveyed plan simply to merge lots. Once the deed description is approved, the approved deed description will need to be recorded. This will be a significant savings to the applicant.
- Article 1348 – Recording of Plans. A more specific procedure is outlined in this Section.
- Article 1349 – Design Standards and Required Improvements. In Section 1349.04, Streets, Private streets are required to be built to the same standards as public streets. Most new cul de sac streets in the City within the last 15 years are private streets. Future streets will most likely be private also, therefore clearly stipulating this requirement ensures that all streets in the city will be durable. In Section 1349.04.E, the Access Management section is expanded to create many safety requirements for motorists. The chart for Design Standards for Streets on p. 55 was examined carefully and reduced cartway widths were included when appropriate. Section 1349.04.L, required transportation improvements, incorporates requirements for bicycle and pedestrian improvement, and permits the payment of a fee in lieu of street widening, transit improvements, or the installation of curbing and sidewalk. In Section 1349.08, Stormwater Management, subsection C entitled Green Stormwater Design stipulates policies incorporating rain gardens, bioswales, vegetated areas in the public right of way, and porous pavers.
- Many of the above policies reflect the goals of the City's Climate Action Plan.
- Design Standards that were previously required as a part of the Zoning Ordinance have been moved to the SALDO so they can be considered as a part of land development plan reviews.

Because this document is the update to an ordinance, the Planning Commission is a recommending body. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation to City Council regarding this current SALDO draft.

After your vote, the ordinance will be forwarded to City Council for review by Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, a public hearing and subsequent adoption.



Craig Peiffer,
Assistant Director of Planning and Zoning

CC: Laura Collins
Atty. Matt Deschler
Basel Yandem

SUBDIVISION & LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN SUPPORT

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN STRATEGY	SALDO - PROVISIONS / REQUIREMENTS
T1.1 - Enhance LANTA bus service	1349.04(K)17 – Bus shelters shall be incorporated into all streetscape designs. 1349.04(L)3.c – Bicycle/Pedestrian Improvements and Transit Improvements. All developments shall incorporate these improvements to increase walkability. 1349.04(M)3 – Contents of a traffic impact study shall include all nearby transit routes and stops 1349.04 (M)4(b) – Traffic study shall identify improvements/facilities to be installed or actions to be undertaken to ensure provision of mass transit access to the site where feasible in consultation with the transit provider. 1349.06(O) Public Transit Access – Where feasible, the City may require that a subdivision or land development include provisions for mass transit or paratransit access to the site in consultation with LANTA.

T1.2 – Improve bike mobility and safety	1349.04(K)14 – Bicycling. To the maximum extent possible, all new and widened streets should be designed to consider bicycle traffic. 1349.04(L)3.c – Bicycle/ Pedestrian Improvements and Transit Improvements. All developments shall incorporate these improvements to increase walkability. 1349.04(M)1 – Traffic Impact Studies. Purpose. . . . to promote the construction of transportation infrastructure which can accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, mass transit services and emergency service vehicles. To promote safe on-site sheltered or indoor bike parking for all buildings over 20,000 sf or containing more than 20 dwelling units. To participate in creating funding of City bike routes in the vicinity of proposed development.
T1.3 – Provide “Safe Routes” for pedestrians in and around town	1349.04(K)16 – Pedestrian Improvements, Crosswalks, sidewalk bumpouts, hand man signalization and other appropriate pedestrian amenities shall be incorporated into all street designs where applicable. 1349.04(L)3.c - Bicycle/ Pedestrian Improvements and Transit Improvements. All developments shall incorporate these improvements to increase walkability. 1349.04(M)1.h – Traffic Impact Studies. Purpose. . . . to promote the construction of transportation infrastructure which can accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, mass transit services and emergency service vehicles. 1349.14 Curbs. . . . Consideration should be given to extending curbs at street intersections in a manner that reduces the width of cartway that must be crossed by pedestrians. These curb extensions can be designed to still allow turning movements by buses and trucks and can be designed to only occupy areas where parking is already prohibited. 1349.15 Sidewalks, Pathways and Driveway Aprons. Sidewalks with curbs shall be required along each side of all new, widened or extended streets and when proposing new development.
T1.9 – Revise building codes and development zoning to allow for access for walkability and transit access	Throughout the new SALDO developers and redevelopment projects are encouraged/required to increase walkability and access for pedestrians, enhance sustainable transit practices and provide easily-accessible, sheltered bicycle parking. All of these initiatives are enhanced where the zoning ordinance allows for mixed use

	Bike racks are required in or around every multi-use, commercial, educational, and industrial use building in both the Zoning Ordinance and the SALDO. (See strategies T1.1, 2 and 3 above)
T2.2 – Decrease parking, provide parking discounts, and eliminate minimum parking requirements	Parking requirements are located in the Zoning Ordinance rather than the SALDO, but since the completion of the Climate Action Plan the parking requirements in the Zoning Ordinance were reduced. The prior requirement for parking was 1.75 spaces per dwelling unit. The current requirements are 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit and 1 space per unit if the unit qualifies as an affordable unit. The Zoning Ordinance currently provides some parking modifications for adaptive reuse projects, commercial uses in the CL zoning district, seasonal outdoor dining, shared parking and off-site parking.
T3.2 – Adjust city codes and zoning to expedite EV infrastructure	EV charging is not addressed in the SALDO, zoning ordinance or building codes at this time. Representatives of the EAC are currently reviewing best practices for these requirements/provisions in both private and public parking areas. Our offices continue to work with EAC members to find appropriate solutions for Bethlehem.
L1.1 – Review and update land use ordinance and zoning to encourage land-use patterns that mitigate climate change impacts	The new SALDO ordinance has been under development for a few years and includes many of the updates necessary to address the related CAP recommendations. The Zoning Ordinance will be reviewed in 2024 for further updates and amendments to address, not only CAP recommendations, but also recommendations from the newly completed Opening Doors housing strategies report. See Strategies T.1, 2 and 3 above.
L1.2 – Integrate land use and transportation to reduce trip lengths and promote multiple modes of travel, including public transit	

L1.3 – Review new developments through the lens of sustainability via a recommending body	All new developments are reviewed by Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) and LANTA. All EAC and LANTA comments are shared with applicants and incorporated into final plans to the greatest extent possible.
L2.1 – Expand the inventory of Bethlehem's trees and ecosystem services	1349.19 Landscaping – Street trees shall be required meeting the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. All tree species are subject to the approval of the City Forester and should be chosen to be tolerant to droughts and extreme precipitation conditions, which will worsen because of global climate change. SALDO landscaping requirements also state that additional planting materials shall be liberally located throughout the site.
L3.1 – Update tree ordinances and other applicable regulations/zoning ordinances to prioritize and preserve native species of plants and trees, as well as climate-resistant species	1349.19 Landscaping - All tree species are subject to the approval of the City Forester and should be chosen to be tolerant to droughts and extreme precipitation conditions, which will worsen because of global climate change. 1349.19 Existing healthy mature trees shall be preserved wherever practical and protected during construction. A variety of species is also recommended to make landscaping more resistant to disease and harmful insects.
L4.1 – Promote green roofs	Use of native plant species of trees and plantings are strongly encouraged. Incentives for green roofs are currently provided in the Zoning Ordinance by removing any building areas covered by green roofs from any impervious coverage calculation for a project.

L6.3 – Create and expand permeable parking lots and driveways	1349.04(F)9 – Street Design Standards . . . With approval of the Planning Commission and after review by the City Engineer, requirements for street design may be altered to reduce total site impervious areas, provided that the public safety objectives are still met. 1349.04(K)15 – Porous Surfaces. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider suitable alternative surfaces that allow infiltration, . . . Where porous/pervious surfaces are used for streets, driveways, or public sidewalks, a construction detail shall be provided to the City, along with information that shows the material is suitable for its intended purpose. The location and construction detail for the porous impervious material shall be subject to approval by the City. 1349.15 – Sidewalks, Pathways and Driveway Aprons. This section allows a main pedestrian walkway constructed of concrete, but with un-mortared porous pavers used between the sidewalk and curb . . . to reduce stormwater runoff . . . and to promote the health of street trees.
Goal L6. Improve stormwater management through green infrastructure	1349.08(C) Green Stormwater Design - . . . opportunities shall be considered to incorporate planting and infiltration areas in coordination with the layout and design of utilities, sidewalks and street trees. . . . grass or vegetated areas or porous paving materials should be considered between the curb and sidewalk. . . . areas of paving shall be minimized . . . Rain gardens and bioswales should be installed and planted to promote infiltration and filtering of pollutants where appropriate. Storm basins should be designed in a more naturalist manner with plantings that do not require weekly mowing for the interior. 1349.15 Sidewalks, Pathways and Driveway Aprons. – This section allows a main pedestrian walkway constructed of concrete, but with un-mortared porous pavers used between the sidewalk and curb . . . to reduce stormwater runoff . . . and to promote the health of street trees.

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