

**2024 ANNUAL REPORT  
PLANNING AND ZONING BUREAU  
January 2025**

The following describes the activities of the Planning and Zoning Bureau in 2024.

**Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission held ten (12) meetings to review:

- a. Five (5) Major Land Development Plans
- b. One (1) Combined Major Land Development and Subdivision Plan
- c. One (1) Minor Subdivision Plan
- d. Four (4) Sketch Plans
- e. One (1) Site Plan Review
- f. One (1) Curative Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance
- g. One (1) Text Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance
- h. One (1) Map Amendment to the Zoning Map
- i. Two (2) Curb and Sidewalk Deferral Requests
- j. Two (2) Waiver Requests (street trees and street grade)
- k. One (1) Street Vacation Request (BPA)
- l. Annual Report
- m. Housing Strategy Report-Update
- n. Non-Utility Capital Improvement Program Review – 2025-2029

Residential Apartment Unit construction decreased by 372% in 2024 (82 units in 2023 versus 22 units in 2024).

The most significant of the Land Development reviews include:

1. **33 West Walnut Street (Bethlehem Parking Authority)** - The applicant proposes to demolish the existing mixed-use commercial office, retail and public parking garage and construct a six-tier structure containing 3,050 SF of commercial retail fronting W Walnut St and condominium and public parking for 517 vehicles. The structure would be built on Lot 2, a .682-acre or 29,689 SF parcel and Lot 2A, a .121-acre or 9,253 SF parcel; the parcels total .894 acres or 38,942 SF.
2. **2300 City Line Road (Bosch Rexroth)** - The Applicant proposes to construct a 52,395 SF Warehouse addition to an existing two-story office warehouse structure. The addition will replace an existing parking lot. The addition is proposed to be single story measuring approximately 34'-6" above finished floor. The addition will include five truck loading dock bays. The overall scope includes site improvements to parking, access roadways, lighting, landscaping, utilities and stormwater management. The parcel totals 5.18 acres, or 225,477 SF.
3. **2650 Linden Street** - The applicant proposes to construct a two-story multi-family (apartments) structure containing eight dwelling units; 16 off-street parking spaces and site appurtenances on 0.5002 acres or 21,787 SF lot.
4. **1513 Maple Street** - The Applicant proposes to construct a three-story multi-family (apartments) structure containing six dwelling units and 9 off-street parking spaces and site appurtenances on 0.2639 acres or 11,495 SF lot.

## **Zoning Hearing Board**

The composition of the Board saw significant rollover during the past year. Of the three sitting members and two alternates listed in the December 2023 roster, only Chair Jessica Lee and Alternate Carol Ritter were common to the December 2024 roster, and Ms. Lee departed at the end of 2024.

January 2025 begins with 2 veteran members (plus 1 sitting alternate), 2 new appointees and one remaining vacancy.

Appeals to the Zoning Hearing Board continued to maintain a full docket throughout the year. While overall applications were down slightly (56 in 2023 vs. 50 in 2024), there were multiple continuances resulting in several applications being spread out over two or more hearings; in total, 42 final decisions were rendered vs. approximately 52 the year prior.

## **Significant projects heard in 2024 included**

1. **The Eastern Gateway**, bookending the year in January with a proposed 69 residential unit development at the **NW corner of Steel Avenue and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street**:

- Appeal of Robert Littner on behalf of Greenway Park Associates, LLC, on behalf of property owners Robert and Nancy Koehler and Carmen Rivas to construct a 69-unit apartment complex with associated amenities and a lower-level parking garage which requires dimensional variances for rear yard setback, 20' required, 4.7' proposed, lot area per dwelling unit 1,200 sq ft required, 542.9 sq ft proposed, building length 180' maximum required, 221' proposed and buffer yard 8' width required, 4' width proposed. Applicant also seeks a special exception for the reduction of parking requirements where 116 spaces are required, 87 spaces proposed.

**APPROVED**, conditioned upon compliance with the Planning Commission's December 7, 2023 review letter.

- And in November, a proposed 116 residential unit development at the **SE corner of Williams and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street**:

Appeal of Pennrose LLC for 3 variances to enable a lot line change and development of Multi-Family Dwellings on the reconfigured new lots (Lot 1 and Lot 2); Lot 1 to have 60 dwelling units, where 56 are permitted; to reduce the required front yard from 10' to 0; and to waive the requirement for commercial use on the E Fourth St frontage

**APPROVED** without conditions.

2. **The 'Alley House' Initiative** proposed a 'pilot' project to the rear of at **1604 West Broad Street** in April:

Appeal of Reginald and Esmeralda Lewis, propose to construct 740 square feet detached accessory dwelling unit on the property where an accessory dwelling unit is not permitted. Rear yard setback, 20 feet required, and 4 feet proposed. Side yard setback, 4 feet required, 3 and 1 foot proposed. Applicant requests relief from the requirement that a detached building that is accessory to a dwelling shall not include cooking facilities, a shower or a

bath tub, and shall not be used for overnight sleeping purposes. In addition, no new principal building shall have its frontage on an alley.

**APPROVED** subject to compliances with representations and warranties presented by applicant.

2. **2020 Worthington Avenue**, an adaptive re-use of a former church building into a community youth theatre was proposed and approved in July:

Appeal of Valerie Reinhardt on behalf of Pennsylvania Youth Theatre for a special exception to waive the minimum required off-street parking, zero spaces existing, 196 spaces were previously required for a place of worship, and 42 spaces are now required for a school/theater.

**APPROVED** without condition.

3. **838 Tioga**, an appeal for a Major Home Occupation originally heard in 2023 and subsequently appealed by a group of neighbors, was re-manded by the courts back to the Zoning Hearing Board for review and approval in August:

Order of the Court of Common Pleas of Lehigh County, dated January 5, 2024, upholding the granting of a Special Exception to operate a (Personal Service) hair salon and remanding the matter to the Zoning Hearing Board to deliberate and impose conditions, if any, deemed to be proper.

**APPROVED**, the Board accepted and endorsed conditions negotiated between the parties and attached them to the final decision.

4. **405 Selfridge, 406 Jackson and 412 Selfridge**, an appeal of Eray Donmez, on behalf of Lady Mohawk, LLC was likewise remanded back to the Zoning Hearing Board for further review (and testimony), which was conducted in August, with the potential of further hearings in 2025:

- i. Order of the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania, dated June 13, 2024, Vacating the Order of the Court of Common Pleas of Northampton County, dated June 21, 2023, and remanding the matter to the City of Bethlehem's Zoning Hearing Board to Vacate its December 9, 2022 determination.
- ii. Appeal of Eray Donmez, on behalf of Lady Mohawk, LLC, to Appeal the Determination of the Zoning Officer, dated June 19, 2024, and for an Interpretation that the submission of a plan on or about October 22, 2020, should be considered a land development plan, and the zoning code as of the date of submission should be applicable to the plan, and that Article 1327, SH Student Housing and Student Home Overlay Zoning District, Adopted March 3, 2021, Amended December 21, 2022, is not applicable to the plan

This application remains '**PENDING**' while the applicant attempts to restructure the plan to better comply with ordinance requirements.

5. **934-946 and 1004 Evans Street**, an appeal for relief to facilitate a proposed 37 residential unit project:

Appeal of David Hitzel on behalf of HH Evans Street LLC, for several dimensional variances to allow the construction of a multi-family building consisting of 37 apartments with 10 parking spaces (934-946 Evans) and a dedicated parking lot (1004 Evans) with 40 spaces for a total of 50 parking spaces for the development. Dimensional variances are requested for lot area per dwelling unit (1200 sf required, 525 sf proposed for 934-946 Evans only and 868 sf proposed if all lots are combined) with 16 dwelling units permitted, front yard setback (10 feet required, 0 proposed), side yard setback (15 feet required, 9 inches proposed) and parking spaces (56 spaces required, 50 spaces proposed). Relief is also requested from buffering and landscaping requirements, buffer strip at public street and parking lots (8 ft required, varying proposed with 0 feet minimum), street trees (4 required, 2 proposed in front of 1004 Evans), separation between curb line and principal parking lot (15 feet required, 11.8 feet and 8.5 feet proposed) and 4-foot-high parking lot fencing requirement (no fence proposed).

**APPROVED** without further condition.

6. **1220 Prospect Street**, heard in October, a proposal to create specific housing for Church Diocese teachers:

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown Requests a variance to permit establishment of a non-permitted Boarding House in the RS Zoning District in a former Personal Care Home, and to reduce off-street parking requirements.

**APPROVED**, with specific and detailed conditions related to permitted occupants and parking conditions.

7. **817-823 West Broad Street**, heard in November, proposes an 18 residential unit Multi-Family Dwelling project:

Appeal of Spinozzi II LLC for 3 variances: to waive the requirement for commercial use on the Broad St frontage, to reduce lot area per dwelling unit from 1200 SF to 737 SF, to reduce a required 8' eastern buffer yard to a 2'6" proposed width; and a Special Exception to reduce off-street parking requirements (27 required to 26 proposed), or, alternatively, a variance to utilize three 'compact car' parking spaces in a lot of less than 40 parking spaces.

**APPROVED**, with specific conditions related to a proposed 'Party Deck' on one of the upper-level roofs.

### **Historic Review Boards**

This Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) held 11 meetings and reviewed a total of 46 projects in 2024. The reconstruction project of the Walnut Street Parking Garage and an addition at 346 West Street were two of the more substantial projects reviewed.

The Historic Conservation Commission (HCC) held 12 meetings and reviewed a total of 32 projects in 2024. The demolition of single-family home and reconstruction of 4 units at 1304 Spring Street; demolition of single-family home and reconstruction of 4 2-bedroom dwelling units at 330 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street;

construction of a hotel at 14-36 West 3<sup>rd</sup> Street; and demolition of a two-story factory and the adjoining garage at 355 Shawnee Street were four of more significant projects for HCC to review.

### **Special Projects**

**South Bethlehem Greenway** – The city successfully acquired the 9/10 of a mile of Norfolk Southern land that prohibited the connection of the South Bethlehem Greenway to the northern end of the Saucon Rail Trail in Hellertown. The acquisition of this land closed one of DCNR's top ten trail gaps and, once constructed, will allow users to go from the South Bethlehem Greenway to Veterans Park in Quakertown. The City continues to apply for additional funding for the construction of the trail to actually build this trail connection.

**Parks and Recreation Master Plan** – The city received a grant from DCED's Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program to create a Parks and Recreation Master Plan citywide. The Plan will guide decision-making and strategic planning of the rehabilitation and maintenance of recreational opportunities in the city by identifying recommendations for short-term improvements, along with long-term strategic goals of the City's parks and recreational offerings. The goal in this project is to create a well marketed, interconnected network of parks, trails, and programming that are equitable and accessible to people of all abilities. Community outreach will begin in 2025.

**Complete Streets Plan / Bike Infrastructure Feasibility Study** – The city received a Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Planning grant through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to create a citywide Complete Streets Plan and Bike Infrastructure Feasibility Study. This builds off the effort underway on East and West Broad Street. These plans will provide recommendations for safe, convenient travel and access for users of all ages and abilities, regardless of their mode of transportation.

**Broad Street Activation** – The Broad Street Active Transportation Plan was completed in 2021 to address bicycle, pedestrian safety and transit improvements along the entire Broad Street corridor. Bethlehem received grant awards for PA DCED Multimodal grants and a federal Safe Streets 4 All grant. Construction will occur in phases throughout the Broad Street corridor to install protected bike lanes, enhanced crosswalks, transit improvements and other related amenities in the corridor.

**Housing** – Planning for updated housing initiatives continues to be a significant priority. In partnership with Lehigh University, Bethlehem is researching how other communities address accessory dwelling units in residential areas. Appropriate amendments to the Zoning Ordinance are anticipated to be prepared later in 2025.

In addition, Bethlehem was previously awarded federal Choice Neighborhood grant funds in partnership with the Bethlehem Housing Authority. The project will address development of a long-term housing and neighborhood plan for the Pembroke/Stefko area. The city is currently working on the Early Action Project at Dutko Park, near Stefko Boulevard and Pembroke Road intersection. This 2-year planning project began in fall of 2023 and will continue into 2025.

**Monocacy Way** – Construction was previously finalized for the northern end of the Monocacy Way extending from the Burnside Plantation northward to Illick's Mill Road and the Monocacy Park complex. The next step to completion of Monocacy Way is to close the gap and make a full trail connection to Sand Island and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. A grant award was received from DCNR for this stretch of the trail. An engineering consulting team has been selected. Design of the trail began in 2024 and will continue into 2025. Construction will then follow in late 2025.

**Climate Action Plan Subcommittees** – The Planning Bureau leads two of the subcommittees created to implement the Climate Action Plan recommendations – Land Use & Greenspace and Transportation & Mobility. The city continues to work with all subcommittees to move forward with the goals and objectives of the CAP.

**Northside Alive** – The city and neighborhood committees completed designs for the redevelopment of Friendship Park. Final engineered plans were completed. Several grants were received for this project. The project will be bid and constructed in 2025.

**SouthSide's Tomorrow** – The Planning Bureau continues to work with Community Action Development Bethlehem (CADB) to provide staff support for the SouthSide Tomorrow plan. Specifically, the Bureau works most directly with the Public & Green Spaces subcommittee. The committee continues to concentrate on activities and improvements in the Greenway, community gardens and improved sidewalks and street lighting.

**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, SouthSide Tomorrow, Northside Alive, South Side Arts District and others.