

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.

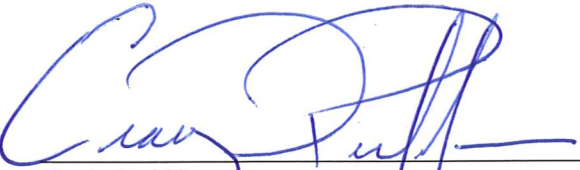
The following are key sections of the Ordinance:

- 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

