

# CITY OF BETHLEHEM

## Department of Community and Economic Development

### Interoffice Memo

**TO:** Eric Evans, President of City Council

**FROM:** Darlene L. Heller, Director of Planning and Zoning

**RE:** Zoning Text Amendment – Residential Treatment Facilities 1,000 foot buffer

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At its May 10 meeting the Planning Commission voted to recommend that the above-referenced Zoning be approved to reflect a 500 foot buffer requirement rather than a 1,000 foot buffer. All other aspects of the zoning amendment are recommended to remain the same.

Please feel free to contact our office if you would like to discuss this matter further.

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**CC:** City Council Members  
Mayor Callahan  
J. Kelly  
S. Borzak  
T. Samuelson  
Law Bureau  
C. Spadoni

DATE: 5/11/2012

LSJ DCH

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Darlene L. Heller, AICP  
Director of Planning and Zoning

# CITY OF BETHLEHEM

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## Department of Community and Economic Development Interoffice Memo

**To:** Planning commission members  
**From:** Darlene L. Heller, Planning Bureau  
**Re:** Zoning map amendment – Residential Treatment Facilities 1,000 foot buffer  
**Date:** May 4, 2012

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A zoning ordinance amendment has been proposed to require a separation distance between Residential Treatment Facilities, Temporary Shelters and Overnight Shelters from schools, public parks and playgrounds, daycare centers and college or university campuses.

### **Description**

In the current ordinance, residential treatment facilities are permitted in all residential zoning districts. They are defined as

“A facility whose primary function is to temporarily house individuals for the purpose of receiving medical, psychological, or social treatment and/or counseling. This shall only apply to those groupings covered as protective classes under federal law.”

The current sections of the Ordinance that outline the specific requirements for this use are attached.

### **Analysis**

Although the City recognizes the need for the services provided by these uses, it is also recognized that the uses need to be properly sited within the community. Sections 1325.08(j) and (k) include many operational requirements. The proposed text amendment is proposed as an additional measure to protect neighborhood character. The buffer described in the amendment is an appropriate tool to protect the existing character of neighborhoods and minimize any impacts of residential treatment centers in any one neighborhood community. However, there is concern that the 1000 foot buffer that is proposed may be too restrictive. In consultation with the City Solicitor’s office, the Planning Bureau recommends that the buffer be recommended for approval to City Council at a distance of 500 feet.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that the proposed Zoning text amendment be forwarded to City Council with a recommendation that the separation distance be reduced to 500 feet rather than the proposed 1,000 feet.

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Darlene L. Heller,  
Director of Planning & Zoning

CC: Chris Cooper  
Joe Kelly