

# CITY OF BETHLEHEM

## Department of Community and Economic Development

### Interoffice Memo

**TO:** Planning Commission members

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

**RE:** Zoning Map Revision Request – Skyline West

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Attached is correspondence and a petition from Skyline West to rezone four parcels located between Route 378 and Conestoga Street and behind 143 W Broad Street. The request is to rezone the parcels from I (Institutional) to CL (Limited Commercial).

#### **BACKGROUND**

The parcels are currently owned by the Redevelopment Authority and are undeveloped. The land is wooded and steeply sloped. Currently the parcels have no reasonable access from a public street. Access is proposed through the parcel fronting on W Broad Street.

The parcels are surrounded by Route 378 to the west, additional undeveloped lands of the Redevelopment Authority to the south, Conestoga Street and the Colonial Industrial Quarter to the east and the 143 W Broad Street (a single family dwelling) to the north. (See attached aerial map)

The four parcels are currently zoned I (Institutional) along with the open space areas of the Colonial Industrial Quarter and the Monocacy Creek area to the east and south. West of Route 378 is RT (High Density Residential) zoning along First Avenue and continuing westward into west Bethlehem. 143 W Broad Street is zoned CL (Limited Commercial) along with the rest of the W Broad Street corridor. (See attached zoning map)

The request contains 4 parcels and 1.8 acres to be rezoned from I to RT.

The lots proposed to be rezoned currently have no practical access except through 143 W Broad Street.

Ultimately, the project proposes to develop multi-family residential development as permitted in the CL zoning district.

#### **DISCUSSION**

**Zoning Districts** – The Institutional District generally includes all publicly owned properties and facilities. The purpose of the Limited Commercial (CL) District is to “provide for less intensive commercial uses in areas that include many existing homes or small lots that are immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods. The intent is to control uses that are most likely to generate nuisances or hazards for nearby residents, such as 24 hour operations.” All of W Broad Street is zoned CL. Residential uses are permitted in the CL zoning district at the same density and with the same requirements as the RT High Density Residential District. All of the West Bethlehem neighborhood to the west of this project area is zoned RT.

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These parcels are located in a pivotal area abutting the downtown. The parcels are the transition area and a buffer between the Colonial Industrial Quarter and route 378. The parcels are walkable to both the downtown area and also the commercial corridor of West Bethlehem and they are located in a transition area between the two. Therefore, the parcels could support more than one zoning district designation.

**Comprehensive Plan** - The Housing and Neighborhoods chapter of the Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan promotes smart growth principles for new development such as creation of a range of housing opportunities and choice, walkable neighborhoods and maintaining a sense of place. The Downtown Revitalization and Economic Development chapter encourages development and maintenance of a physical environment in and around the downtowns that project vitality and encourages people to live, work and play in Bethlehem. In fact, the City has been looking for and incentivizing development of new residential units in and around the two downtown areas to support the health and vitality of the downtown businesses.

At the same time the Comprehensive Plan, in the Environmental Conservation chapter, encourages protection of sensitive natural features such as . . . woodlands and steep slopes and encourages developers to preserve open space. The chapter encourages the use of green technology in site design and building construction. These parcels are wooded and steeply sloped. Specific provisions exist in the Zoning Ordinance to address steep slope requirements and tree removal during new development. All of these ordinance requirements must be met for new development.

These parcels are located in the North Side Historic District. Exterior changes, demolition and new construction in the local ordinance historic district are regulated by the Historic and Architectural Review Board (HARB). The project proposes the demolition of the single family house at 143 W Broad Street and the new, infill construction of a multifamily building. The HARB had a preliminary review of the project at their April meeting, but no action was taken. A more thorough discussion will take place at their June meeting. The Historic Preservation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan encourages that historic resources are not unduly affected by new land development nearby. HARB will evaluate the significance of the home and review design of the new construction at their upcoming meeting.

In addition, a 14 acre portion of the North Side Historic District, including the Colonial Industrial Quarter and other buildings located on Main Street, is now also under consideration as a World Heritage cultural site. In 2012, the district was also named one of eight National Historic Landmark Districts in Pennsylvania and one of 200 in the country. The site proposed to be rezoned and developed will be visible from the proposed World Heritage site, but is not abutting.

**Project Proposal** – The current proposal includes the removal of the single family home at 143 W Broad Street, the consolidation of 143 W Broad Street parcel with the four lots proposed for rezoning and the construction of a 50 unit apartment building with underground parking.

The proposed rezoning is one step in the full review that will be required for this project. HARB review is also necessary for the demolition of the single family home and review of the design of the new construction. Zoning Hearing Board review will likely be necessary at least for parking, slope zoning and relief from the commercial use requirement. The project qualifies as a land development and will require land development approval by the Planning Commission.

Bethlehem is a very desirable place to live, work and enjoy the amenities of urban living. The City is experiencing significant demand for new development projects. However, it is important to balance the benefit of new development with the compatibility of the existing community.

A zoning map amendment is often a first step in the process of project approvals when necessary. A zoning map change runs with the land but, in this case, the rezoning would only be necessary to accommodate the proposed project. If a zoning map amendment is favorably

recommended to City Council, it could be recommended conditioned upon a final City Council reading following the necessary project relief from other reviewing bodies, such as HARB and the Zoning Hearing Board.

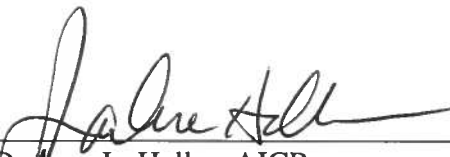
This amendment proposal will be placed on the May 10 Planning Commission agenda for consideration of a recommendation to City Council.

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Attachments

CC: Mayor Donchez  
Alicia Karner  
Ed Healy  
Tracy Samuelson  
Suzanne Borzak

DATE: 5-7-18

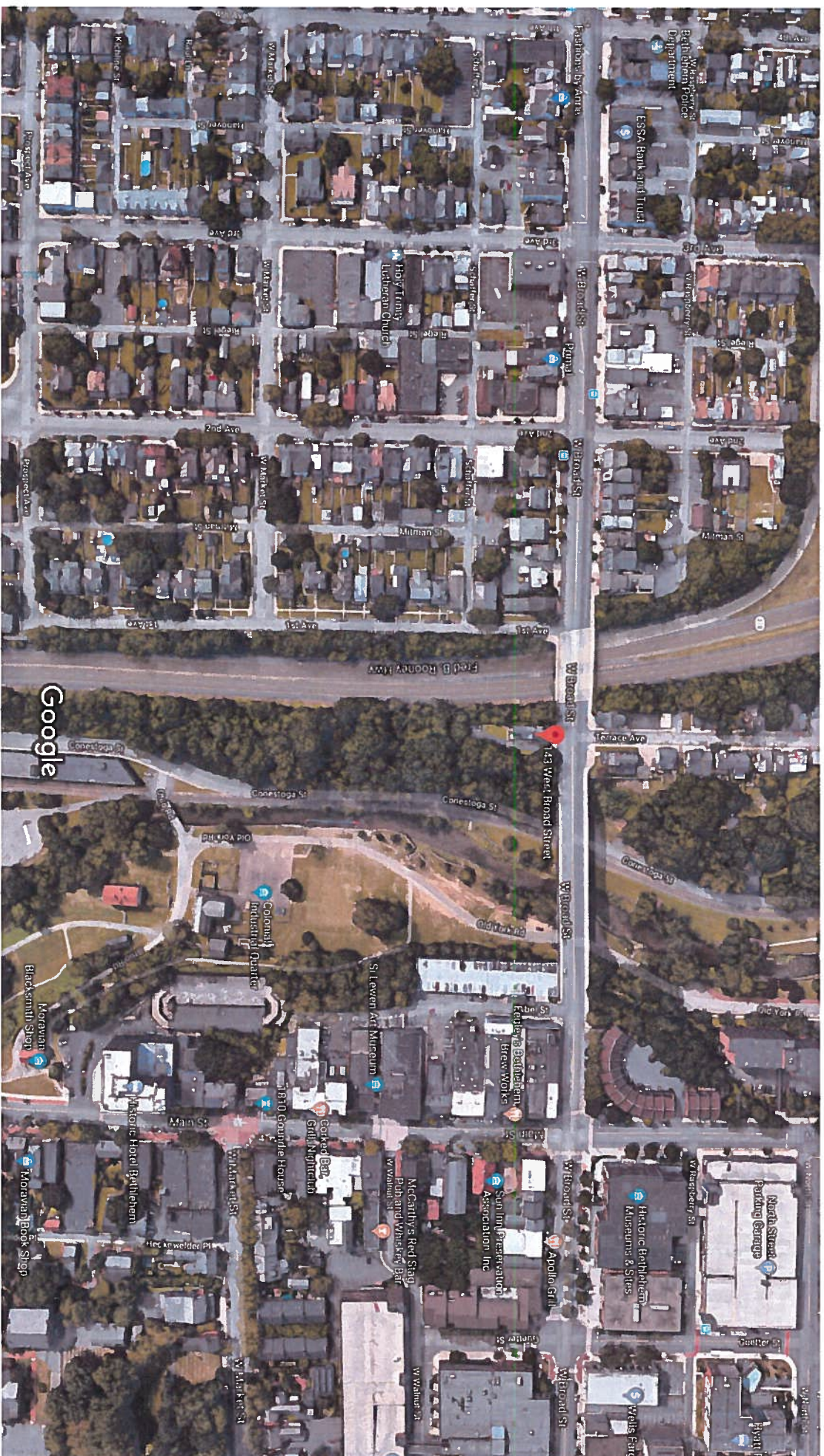


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Darlene L. Heller, AICP  
Director of Planning and Zoning



Google Maps 143 W Broad St



Imagery ©2018 Google, Map data ©2018 Google 100 ft



