

**2019 ANNUAL REPORT  
PLANNING AND ZONING BUREAU  
Last revised 01-22-20**

The following describes the activities of the Planning and Zoning Bureau in 2019.

**Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission held ten (10) meetings to review:

- three (3) major land development plans
- four (4) combined major land development and subdivisions
- two (2) major subdivision plans
- one (1) minor land development plan
- two (2) sketch plans
- one (1) master plan review
- three (3) map amendments to the Zoning Ordinance
- one (1) text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance
- five (5) site plan reviews
- two (2) curb and sidewalk deferral requests
- three (3) sign waiver requests
- SALDO ordinance review ordinance review

The most significant of the Land Development reviews include:

1. **MARTIN TOWER COMPLEX**– 1170 Eighth Avenue – The overall Master Plan of the site was presented to the Commission in accordance with the OMU Zoning District provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. **BETHLEHEM ARMORY**– 345 Second Avenue – The project proposes the redevelopment of the former Armory building and attached structures. Proposed is the construction of a 4 story multifamily building and the reuse of two garage additions (built 1938 and 1968) for a total of 70 (twenty 2 bedroom and fifty 1 bedroom) units. The Armory “drill hall” space located on the first floor will contain a live/work unit for an artist. The 2.57 acre site will also contain 101 parking spaces.
3. **WIND CREEK HOTEL EXPANSION** – 77 Wind Creek Blvd. – The project proposes the expansion of the hotel and conference center to include an additional 270 guest rooms, 35,200 sf of meeting space, 5,400 sf bar, 6,424 sf pool, and 11,600 sf spa. The entire property contains 56 acres but the area of disturbance is 7.3 acres. This project was submitted in 2019, but will be reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2020.
4. **RAUCH BUSINESS CENTER EXPANSION AT LEHIGH UNIVERSITY**- Morton Street and Packer Avenue – The project proposes the construction of a new 18,500 sf Rauch Business Center Building to expand the current Rauch Business School at Lehigh University. This project was submitted in 2019, but will be reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2020.

5. **2675 COMMERCE CENTER BOULEVARD MANUFACTURING BUILDING** – The project proposes the construction of an approximately 88,000 square foot manufacturing/office/warehouse building along with parking and related improvements.
6. **565 LEHIGH STREET APARTMENTS** – The project includes the demolition of a one story commercial structure and erection of a 3 story building with 30 apartments on a 1.29 acre lot. In 2019 the site plan was reviewed and the Zoning Hearing Board granted relief for variances to allow the project to proceed. The land development will be reviewed in 2020.

### **Zoning Hearing Board**

The Zoning Hearing Board held 22 meetings in 2019 and heard 46 Cases. The Board approved 22 Variance Cases, 9 Dimensional Variances Cases for Single Family Dwellings and 8 Special Exception Cases. The Board Denied 5 Cases, Dismissed 1 Case and considered 5 Interpretations. Five (5) appeals necessitated additional or special meetings because of the volume of testimony and/or the number of objectors. Significant Zoning Hearing Board appeals include:

#### **1. 345 Second Avenue**

Appeal of Peron Armory, LP, for a Special Exception to change one non-conforming use to another non-conforming use to allow a Live Work Unit in the drill hall area of the existing Armory Building. Applicant additionally seeks relief from conditions of the prior Zoning Decision dated January 28, 2018, which limited the project to 20 two-bedroom and 50 one-bedroom units for a total of 70 units and requests one additional dwelling unit.

**This case began on 3/7, with decision made on 4/24.**

**The Board approved the Special Exception for a Live/Work Unit with the condition subject to the testimony given.**

#### **2. Two West Market Street**

Appeal of Morning Star Partners L.L.C. for a Special Exception for a professional office use pursuant to Section 1304.04(b) of the Zoning Ordinance.

**This case began on 4/30, with decision made on 6/12.**

**The Board approved the Special Exception without conditions.**

#### **3. 1311 Santee Mill Road and 1361 Santee Mill Road**

Appeal of Victoria Bastidas on behalf of Friends of Johnston, Inc., for an interpretation from a decision of the Zoning Officer, or in the alternative, a use Variance to permit as accessory uses those uses listed under, “Anticipated Public Programs, Activities and Events,” within an Environmental Education Center.

**This case began on 5/29, with decision made on 10/15.**

**The Board denied the interpretation that a year-round, Nature-Based Early Childhood Education Program is part of or accessory to an Environmental Education Center.**

**The Board denied the request for a use variance to permit a year-round, Nature-Based Early Childhood Education Program.**

**The Board provided an advisory opinion that any activity listed under, “Anticipated Public Programs, Activities and Events,” but for a year-round, Nature-Based Early Childhood Education Program, be permitted provided that they are part of an Environmental Education Center.**

#### **4. Validity Challenge**

Appeal of Beall Fowler, Robert Romeril, Martin Romeril, Barbara Diamond, Steven Diamond and Bruce Haines for a Validity Challenge to appeal the adoption and enactment of Bill No. 46 – 2018, Ordinance No. 2018-40, Section 1304.04 Reuse of Corner Commercial Uses Allowed in the RT (High Density Residential) and RG (Medium Density Residential) Districts, specific to Paragraphs 1-4, and as they relate to Two West Market Street. (Section 1304(b), and all associated Variances, Special Exceptions, and Interpretations).

**This case began on 9/11, with additional testimony provided at hearings held on 10/24, 11/12, 12/11, 1/8/20 and 1/10/20. The Board ordered Memoranda of Law from the Appellant’s, Objector’s and Intervenor’s Counsel. The Board will consider the memoranda, hear closing statements and deliberate at their 2/26/ 2020, Regular Meeting.**

#### **5. 830 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

Appeal of Abraham Atiyeh on behalf of Pennsylvania Venture Capital, Inc., for a Use Variance to convert an existing structure into 67 dwelling units (66 efficiency apartments and 1 one-bedroom apartment); and Variances to decrease the minimum required off-street parking spaces, 118 required, 67 proposed; to decrease the minimum distance between parking spaces and any multi-family dwelling, 15’ minimum separation distance, +/- 14’, +/- 4’, and 0’ proposed; and to exceed the maximum number of parking spaces within any one lot, maximum 40 spaces permitted, 46 spaces proposed.

**This case began on 9/25, with decision made on 1/8/20. The Board approved the Variance with conditions that there shall be no more than 40 dwelling units, with 67 off-street parking spaces, constructed as per the layout in Exhibit A-11.**

### **Historic Review Boards**

There were 43 appeals before the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) and 41 appeals before the Historic Conservation Commission – South Bethlehem and Mount Airy (HCC) in 2019.

In 2019, the Planning Bureau received a Certified Local Government grant to assist with historic preservation planning, specifically in south Bethlehem. The grant will allow research and recommendations into ordinance or policy revisions to balance development and historic preservation. The study will be underway in 2020.

## **Special Projects**

**South Bethlehem Greenway** – Design and engineering for Phase 5 of the Greenway is nearing completion. Plans were revised in 2019 to accommodate additional land area necessary for a construction area. Phase 5 creates a connection between the existing Greenway trail and the ballfields at the northern end of Saucon Park off of Millside Drive. Construction of Phases 5 is expected to occur in the latter half of 2020.

A separate DCNR grant provides opportunity for the construction of an active play area between Adams and Webster Streets, which is also anticipated to be constructed in 2020.

**South Side Vision 2020** – The Planning Bureau continues to work with the Community Action Development Corporation (CADCB) to provide staff support for the South Side Vision 2020 plan and projects. The Bureau assists in project implementation through the Development subcommittee. The committee continues to work with a lighting consultant to develop a lighting plan for South Bethlehem and coordinate lighting initiatives. The draft plan was reviewed with the Development Committee and the full SS Vision Board. The Final Plan will be circulated early 2020.

The Planning Bureau also participates in discussions with the Southside Vision 2020 Housing subcommittee. In 2019, the housing committee was particularly interested in student housing impacts in South Bethlehem and worked with the City to develop draft policies for student housing, including zoning amendments. These policies will be developed into ordinances in 2020.

**Wayfinding/Signage Project** – The City continues to work with PennDot for the release of permits to install later phases of the wayfinding and signage program. Also, the City continues to pursue additional funds for this project. The City will also be working with ArtsQuest for the installation of gateway artwork related to the wayfinding program in 2020. The gateway artwork is possible through a Northampton County grant.

**Monocacy Way** – A Northampton County Open Space grant and a PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) grant are combined to enhance and upgrade the Monocacy Way trail. The improvements will start north of Schoenersville Road and continue around the Monocacy Park Complex to Illick's Mill Road. Design and engineering for this project are underway.

**Zoning Amendments** – The Bureau has been working on several amendments and revisions to the Zoning Ordinance in 2019. Student housing, short term lodging and other miscellaneous amendments are being developed. The final drafts of these amendments will be finalized for review in 2020.

**Grants** – The Bureau was involved in applying for several grants that were received in 2019. Bethlehem received two grants from DCNR to support Rose Garden improvements and also a feasibility study for a Pedestrian Bridge over the Lehigh River. Northampton County also supported Bethlehem with grants for Gateway Art. The PA State Historic Preservation Office also awarded a grant to Bethlehem for Southside Planning.

**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, South Side Vision 2020, South Side Arts District, Lehigh Valley Section of the Pennsylvania Planning Association and others.

**Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance** - The Bureau has been updating the SALDO with the assistance of URDC, a local consulting firm. All relevant bureaus have been meeting with the Planning Bureau to revise relevant draft sections. The first half of the draft SALDO was completed in 2018 and the second half was finished in fall 2019. The draft SALDO was initially presented to the Planning Commission in December. A draft final document and revised summary report will be before the Planning Commission for recommendation to forward to City Council in 2020.

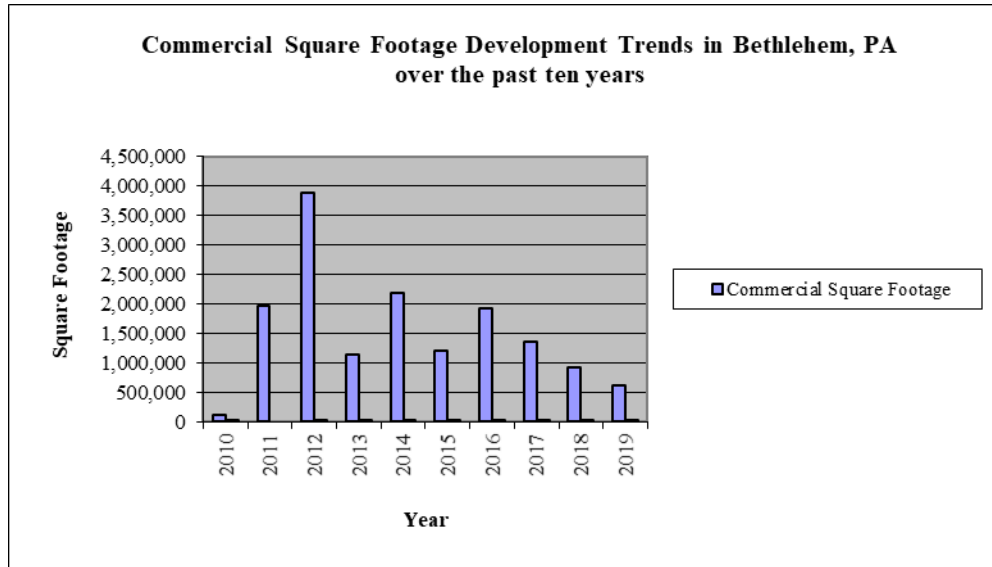
**Northside 2027** – The City has been working with community representatives, Moravian College and BASD to adopt the Northside 2027 Neighborhood Plan. The plan was finalized in 2019. Phase 1 park improvements were completed in Friendship Park. A PennDOT grant has been submitted to assist with installation of a continued median on Broad Street, improved crosswalks at Thomas Jefferson and William Penn Elementary Schools and improved crosswalks at E Broad and High Streets. Plan implementation will continue in 2020 with organizational development and community outreach.

**Development Trends**

The following charts and graphs depict development trends in Bethlehem for the past 10 years.

The commercial square footage totals reflect mostly warehouse and medical office development, but these numbers also include some of the recent expansion of Lehigh University and Wind Creek Casino.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Commercial Square Footage	102,342	1,967,900	3,892,217	1,132,254	2,195,142	1,210,854	1,924,765	1,351,335	916,286	622,763

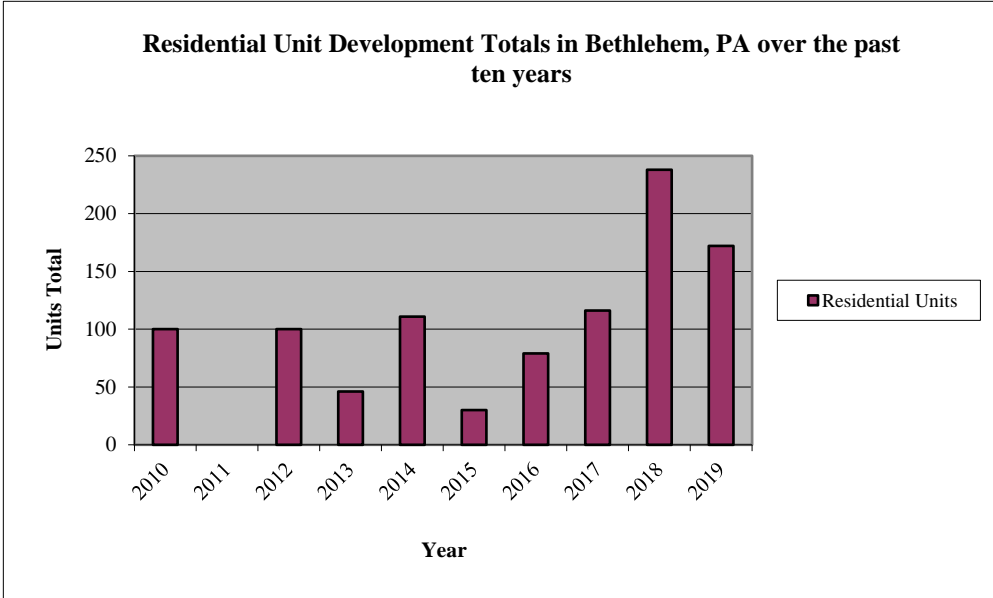


**\*2012 includes the Majestic Bethlehem Center**

Over the last several years, the demand for new housing has transitioned from owner-occupied units to market rate rental apartment units. This trend is confirmed through the recent proposals such as the Armory, Wilbur Mansion and the 546-548 N. New Street Apartment developments.

The following shows the number of residential dwelling units approved by year.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Residential Units	100	0	100	46	111	30	79	116	238	172



The final chart shows the total number of plans submitted by year.

**Total number of subdivision and land development projects**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Land Development	8	4	13	10	11	8	8	9	12	11
Subdivision	3	1	2	1	0	1	5	6	4	6
Minor Land Development	9	2	4	2	0	7	2	3	2	2
Minor Subdivision	9	2	8	7	2	8	7	5	7	5

