



# Allentown

435 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, Pa. 18101

## Minutes - Final

### City Council

---

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

6:00 PM

Council Chambers

---

#### Public Hearing

#### Roll Call

**Present:** 10 - Candida Affa, Candida Affa, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Natalie Santos, Santo Napoli, and Santo Napoli

#### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that the Allentown City Council will consider for possible adoption an Ordinance to Amend the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Allentown to add a new section that would establish a new “Mixed Use Overlay” Zoning District that would (i) apply to approximately 195 acres of land formerly occupied by the Allentown State Hospital that is South of Hanover Ave., South of E. Allen St., South of Wahneta St. extended, generally East of Maxwell St. extended, North of River Dr., and West of the City of Bethlehem border as shown in more detail on the map that accompanies the proposed Ordinance, (ii) allow a variety of uses, including residential, commercial, recreational and institutional uses, as well as selected industrial uses on a portion of the tract, and (iii) add certain definitions to the Zoning Ordinance.

City Council will consider the foregoing at a Public Hearing on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, 435 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101. Copies of the full text of this Ordinance are available to any interested party for examination and copying at cost at the City Clerk’s Office or for inspection during regular business hours at the offices of this newspaper and the Lehigh County Department of Law. City Council may adopt this amendment to the Zoning Ordinance at the regularly scheduled City Council Meeting at 6:30 PM on December 6, 2023 immediately following this Public Hearing.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that the purpose of this meeting is to take public testimony on the possible adoption of an Ordinance amending the Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance of the City of Allentown by adding a new section that would establish a new “Mixed Use Overlay” Zoning District that would (i) apply to approximately 195 acres of land formerly occupied by the Allentown State Hospital that is South of Hanover Ave., South of E. Allen St., South of Wahneta St. extended, generally East of Maxwell St. extended, North of River Dr., and West of the City of Bethlehem border as shown in more detail on the map that accompanies

the proposed Ordinance, (ii) allow a variety of uses, including residential, commercial, recreational and institutional uses, as well as selected industrial uses on a portion of the tract, and (iii) add certain definitions to the Zoning Ordinance. The Public Hearing was advertised in the Morning Call on November 12 and 19, 2023. Zoning posted the property. The purpose of the meeting is for comments from the public on the proposal. Members of the public may come up to the podium and give statements in support or opposition to the proposal, as you do, please state your name and address. He asked is there anybody that wishes to address this issue.

Ms. Barbara Redmond, NAACP - Allentown, 1701 Sequoia Court, stated that the questions she has is related to the proposal of the green building. She asked is it going to be energy efficient, renewable energy, water efficiency, the environment and help waste reduction, toxic reduction, indoor air quality and smart growth of substantial development. They would like to know if all of it going to be involved when they start building the facility. Basically, is it going to be building smart. She stated that those are the questions they would like to know. That is about it for now.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked is there anybody else that wishes to address Council.

Attorney Dennis McCarthy representing City Center. They are prepared to do a presentation in support of the proposed amendment, if Council would like it at this point.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he has gotten no other responses from the public and stated that it is appropriate for him to do so at this time.

Ms. Vicky Kistler asked can they start as the administration just explaining a bit of the process. They were just waiting for the public comment to end.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he gotten no other responses.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that the purpose of tonight's Public Hearing is to discuss land use only and other permitted use. Right now, the State Hospital is currently zoned Instructional and Governmental use only. That zoning class prevents housing, recreation, education, and any type of other use. They are coming before them tonight with this applicant who has worked extensively with the city's planning group to discuss potential uses in a zoning overlay with a text amendment. She stated that at this point she would like Jenn Gomez, Planning and Zoning Director to just briefly explain what the process will be for this property as it gets developed through the process once an overlay is created. She would also like to state that they have met with citizens in an engagement opportunity. They have met one

on one with stakeholders. They have worked extensively with city staff, and gone to the Planning Commission and they have also responded to requests to the detail of a nursing group who wants the site recognized as the State Hospital and the clients it served by agreeing to commemorative plaques. This group has paid attention to detail and has worked cooperatively with staff at this point to reach this overlay district agreement that the staff fully supports. She stated that Jenn is going to explain a little bit about question on what could go there. What it could look like. What they will follow. If Jenn Gomez explains that process, she thinks this vote will make more sense.

Ms. Jennifer Gomez stated good evening, the application before you is a Zoning Amendment. The Zoning Amendment will establish the permitted uses and the use intensities and also establish the process for which to review future development. This will be developed as a planned residential development known as a PRD and with that the development will come in three steps. The first step of the process is following the adoption of the Zoning Ordinances, if in fact that it is adopted tonight will entail the submittal of a Master Plan. The Master Plan will be evaluated and reviewed by both city staff and the city's Planning Commission as well as the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Following the Master Plan and upon receiving all of the general feedback that is received, the next stage is the Tentative Plan. The Tentative Plan will include a really thorough evaluation of all the development impacts proposed through the development and that is thorough detailed in the text amendments, including a detailed evaluation of the traffic. Finally, that stage will be reviewed by both city staff as well as the Allentown Planning Commission and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Finally, after all the elements of the overall projects have been planned for, the applicant will then come in with a Final Plan and the individual buildout of each parcel as it gets ready for development. She stated that this concludes her comments and she is available for questions. She stated that they did receive questions regarding the energy efficiency of the structure. She stated that is a development question that would likely be addressed later on down the road. The applicant has provided conceptual drawings. They are illustrations. They are not being adopted tonight, but if there are questions regarding their visions or goals, she is sure they will be happy to discuss it.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks thanked Ms. Gomez. He stated that they do have one and if they would allow the young lady to go first.

Ms. Meagan Schaffer, 1039 E. Hamilton Street, stated that her concern with a mixed usage property such as this 195 acres is that the spectrum is so broad. You are talking about residential, commercial space, institutional space. She asked would there be any way to subdivide or portion it out so

this part on E. Hamilton Street is strictly residential. This part is strictly institutional. This part is strictly commercial. She stated that she is afraid if they give a general mixed usage approval, that means it could be everything and anything put into this space next to for instance her residential space. She stated that she would not want per se a nursing home or institutional development building if you would next to her space. She stated that is the question she had.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that they will allow Attorney McCarthy to answer that question as he explains a little bit about it. He thanked Ms. Schaffer for her question.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that they can actually address that from a Zoning and Planning perspective.

Ms. Jennifer Gomez stated that the current Zoning is actually Institutional. By doing the Zoning Amendment, they will be introducing new commercial uses and residential uses to the project. The text amendment considers the adjacent residential districts by adjusting heights and uses surrounding the edges. They are not approving a Master Plan tonight. That is not before the Council. That said, the applicant has a Master Plan or some general conceptual plans which she imagines they will be willing to go over with you so that you can see the ultimate high level vision for this property.

Ms. Meagan Schaffer thanked Ms. Gomez and stated that she appreciates it.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked if there is anybody else before he allows,

Mr. Tino Babayan, S. Filbert Street - East Allentown, asked if they go ahead approve this tonight, what are you doing about public safety. He stated that they are already short cops in Allentown. They don't have enough cops here to add this project. He stated that they are going to have to hire at least 50 more cops, minimum. Public Safety, Public Safety, Public Safety. This is now a public safety issue. Again, we are short on cops. He stated that the Chief could attend to that. What are we doing if you guys approve this project, are we getting more cops. We cannot hire more cops. That is the problem too. Nobody is interested anymore. What are you going to do about the public safety in that area. He stated that they already have high traffic there. Today, a kid almost got killed coming out of Mosser there. Right around the corner, people are speeding. You have to add more people moving there and it is going to be more hectic. He stated please think about that.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that your concerns are something that Council

will take up in the future.

Attorney Dennis McCarthy, representing City Center Development, introduced who is here tonight on the City Center team. He stated that they have J B Reilly, and Robert DeLorenzo from City Center. Charlies Schmehl from Urban Research and Development and Paul MacNemar from Rettew Engineering. Any question that comes up, they should be able to answer. He stated that it was a great summary by Ms. Kistler and Ms. Gomez about where they are and how they got here. One thing he wants to point out that it was mentioned. This is an Overlay District. The IG District is going to continue to exist and this is an overlay for that. Similar to what is at the Waterfront so that a developer would have a choice between IG or the Overlay. From a process perspective, you might remember this Ordinance initially was before Council as Bill 81. It was then referred to the Planning Commission where they did a lot of revisions. At their suggestion, they had great comments, great observations so it was reintroduced as Bill 93 which was what is before Council now. Bill 93 has been recommended for approval by the Allentown Planning Commission, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, and last week by the Community and Economic Development Committee of Council. Again, they are here tonight for the Ordinance and the Map Amendment. They have a Concept Plan that will go over and some of them will be familiar with, but that is just an illustration of what this Ordinance could create. That is not what's before Council tonight. He thinks that the main point of the Ordinance that Ms. Gomez raised is that there is a three step approval process under the PRD which is different from most approvals. Usually, there is a Preliminary Final, but here you have the Master Plan for the whole site. You have a Tentative Plan for the whole site and you have Final Plans for each Phase. So there are lots of opportunities for comments and feedback and analysis which he thinks is one of the strengths of this type of Ordinance. He stated with that, let him turn the microphone over to Charlie Schmehl to go through some of the other highlights in the Ordinance.

Attorney Dennis McCarthy, representing City Center Development, stated

Mr. Charlie Schmehl stated good evening. He stated that he will make this brief. The draft amendment is intended to provide for development that recreates some of the best features in older neighborhoods. It promotes neighborhoods with sidewalks, with street trees, with buildings relatively close to the street, pedestrian entrances close to the street. A lot of emphasis on making the development transit friendly, bicycle friendly, and pedestrian friendly. The mix of uses that is proposed in all likelihood, there is not a strong market for a large amount of commercial. That is most likely to happen closer to Hanover Avenue and mainly will be for local needs. There is a proposal in the draft Ordinance to allow for some flex space,

food processing and things of that nature, but that is limited to a maximum of five percent of the property and the way it is written that would only really occur on River Drive, pretty much completely separate from the rest of the project. At least 35 percent of the tract would have to be preserved as an open space with trails and there is work with the Wildlands Conservancy to work on how to properly design and manage those areas. The project is likely to take at least 10 years to buildout. There is time to workout any issues as far as the services. The project is estimated to generate substantial tax revenue to the city and school district which should offset any additional services that are needed. He stated that is an overview of the main points. He stated that he is going to turn it over to Robert now.

Mr. Robert DiLorenzo, City Center, stated good evening and he believes they may have a presentation shared on the monitor. Just in case, he will do a handout for them as well. he briefly took them through the Conceptual Plan. Again, just to reiterate, this Conceptual Plan that is really an interpretation of how the frame work of the Ordinance, a vision of how it can come together. This plan is really a result of a year long process of working collaboration with the city of Allentown staff as well as eastside Allentown community stakeholders. This plan that is before you is first actually shared at the Eastside Youth Center back in August of this year where City Center hosted an Open House Event to solicit feedback from the surrounding communities to hear their ideas, create an atmosphere to ask questions, and really hear what the community is looking for in this development. He stated that what he will start with is the first slide is really an overview of giving context where the property sits within the city. The property is less than a 10 minute drive from downtown Allentown, to downtown Bethlehem. It is located along the Hanover Avenue corridor and sits on the north bank of the Lehigh River. It is in a great location for easy access to transit with LANTA and a high speed line that runs on Hanover Avenue. Another great positive thing about this site is that it is the largest undeveloped site in the city of Allentown. When they talk about urban infill, it surely is an infill site which there is a lot of environmental benefits that come from not having to develop much parcel in create more urban sprawl. The next slide depicts the existing land uses that surround the property. They have a large residential neighborhood to the western side of the property, strong retail corridor along Hanover Avenue to the north as well as another residential neighborhood over on to the eastside of the property. There are a few civic uses that are close adjacency of the property. The Eastside Youth Center as well as the Community Services for Children. When starting to think about some of the uses, they take the existing neighborhoods and existing land uses and context to make sure that whatever is proposed on this site is going to be complimentary to those land uses around them. He is thinking about a residential neighborhood and they want to make sure whatever is proposed is adjacent to that neighborhood is complimentary

and something that would be seen as a positive addition to the neighborhood. He stated that the next slide is just an overview of some of the typography on the site to show some of the natural characteristics of the existing site. The site is on top of a ridge along the Lehigh River. There is quite a variety of slopes on the property. This image depicts in red all of the slopes that are in excess of 35 percent. In developing a property when you are dealing with steep slopes is a challenge and constraints that they have to work with and in some way dictate what they are capable of doing on this site. That can dictate locations of buildings, location of roadways that gets put in. That is just something to take into account and they are on top of a ridge so another thing to think about is shallow bedrock. It is just another constraint that they will work through in the development process. Some of those things help dictate the Plan, the Conceptual Plan that you see on the fourth slide. On this slide, this is the layout of the overall Conceptual Master Plan. As far as overall uses, there are a variety of healthcare, education, neighborhood retail, senior living, a variety of housing types that really encompasses everything from a single family home, townhome, to garden style walkup apartments, to multi-family apartments. They are really at the point where they are exploring all housing options. They are really trying to target what they are calling and referring to is the missing middle. Housing for the middle income part of the demographic and options for both potentially ownership as well as rental options. They look at eastside Allentown and refer to a lot of documents and they know the city of Allentown is currently in the process of their Community Health Assessment. It is going to be concluded next year. They are working on a Housing Strategy that will be concluded next year. There was a Real Estate Market Analysis that was done back in 2020, conducted by Michael Baker that had a lot of great information that they used. Data in there that they used to help guide some of our thinking on the Concepts here. All those documents as they become available, they are going to use those to help guide their planning, their thinking, and what the community is looking for. They think that this Plan here, they got a lot of great feedback when they had their open house event on this Plan from the surrounding community. Some of the things like healthcare for example, they see a need in eastside Allentown for healthcare options there aren't any convenient healthcare options in close proximity in the community, especially when thinking about outpatient care so they have some of that built into here. Education is an important aspect that the eastside is working through. There are options for educational uses here as well. They really think the importance of preservation of open space, recreation, opportunity for walkability. Those are all the things that have been baked into this Plan. The next slide is just an overview, starting to think about traffic distribution. They think there could be an opportunity to extend Wahneta Street through the site. This will allow them to have two really primary thoroughfares coming and going from the site. One currently

roughly where the main entrance is the State Hospital where you kind of head up the main drive and a potential for another thoroughfare coming in a little further down Hanover Avenue at the intersection of Wahneta Street. This will allow traffic distribution if you headed towards downtown, west or east to Bethlehem. This will help distribute traffic and they also see opportunities to tie in to some of the existing street grid over along Hamilton, Walnut, Union, and Fairview there coming off Jerome Street. The next slide is just an overview that really projecting that 42 percent of the existing site is a 195 acre site. About 42 percent of that will either be preserved space, recreational space, or open space. That is a really significant thing. They are working on wanting to put together a Conservation Easement with the Wildland's Conservancy to preserve roughly around 70 acres of land along the south ridge of the property. You are looking at opportunities to implement Trailways there. They think that is really important for the success of the project. The next slide just show an overview of the building typology that is current laid out in this Plan. To give them a sense of the different types of building uses and the last slide is just a breakdown, starting to begin to show some of the land uses by acreage and how they will come together. He stated that is a really quick flyby version of this, but he is happy to take any questions and provide more details that Council may like to know. Thank you.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks thanked Mr. DiLorenzo.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach asked should she asked questions now or wait until the regular meeting since this is more for the public.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that will be appropriate.

Ms. Ce Ce Gerlach stated to wait for the regular meeting.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated anybody who has questions from the dais. He asked if there were any other comments the public wishes to make at this time. He stated that again, you will have a second opportunity to do that when it is on Council's Agenda tonight. He stated at this time this matter is now closed. The record is closed and the matter will be deliberated at the regular Council meeting following shortly from now tonight.

[15-6347](#)

Bill 93

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALLENTOWN TO AMEND THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALLENTOWN TO ADD A NEW SECTION THAT WOULD ESTABLISH A NEW "MIXED USE OVERLAY" ZONING DISTRICT, AND THAT WOULD APPLY THIS NEW DISTRICT TO LAND FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY THE ALLENTOWN STATE HOSPITAL THAT IS SOUTH OF HANOVER AV., SOUTH OF E. ALLEN ST., SOUTH OF WAHNETA ST. EXTENDED, GENERALLY EAST OF



MAXWELL ST. EXTENDED, NORTH OF RIVER DR., AND WEST OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM BORDER, AS DEPICTED IN MORE DETAIL ON AN ATTACHED MAP LABELED "EXHIBIT A", AND TO ADD CERTAIN DEFINITIONS.

**Attachments:** [Bill 93 Allentown Mixed Use Overlay Zoning](#)[Legal Description of Proposed Mixed Use Overlay District \(1\)](#)[ACPC ActionTaken Northridge 11.14.23 \(003\)](#)[Letter from Planning Department regarding ACPC Action Taken on Bill #93 Northridge Overlay \(New Bill\)](#)[LVPC Letter Bill 93](#)[Rezoning Request Petition - ESTABLISH A NEW MIXED USE OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICT FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY THE ALLENTOWN STATE HOSPITAL](#)[Redline - Allentown Mixed Use Overlay Zoning Draft 8 2 23 and Allentown Mixed Use Overlay Zoning Draft 10-4-23](#)[Northridge - Allentown State Hospital Rezoning](#)[Northridge - Allentown State Hospital Rezoning](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital I](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Hanover Ave\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(N Que-E Allen\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(N Quebec-E Allen\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(N Que-E All\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Os-E Gor\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Oswego-E Gordon\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Oswg-E Gor\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Owe-E Gor\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Qs-E Gor\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(E Ham 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(E Hamil 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(E Hamilton 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 2 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 3 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 4 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 5 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 6 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 8 002\)](#)[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 9 002\)](#)

[Mixed Use Overlay Zoning District - Allentown State Hospital \(Han 10 002\)](#)  
[Ordinance #15957](#)

Enactment No: 15957

**ADJOURNED: 6:26 PM**