

parking provisions have been met for any development. Mr. Brown responded to Ms. Swann's comments regarding the use of the building and stated that they can't influence the use of the building because there are certain uses that are permitted by right for this developer.

Christian Pungo, who resides at 1838 W Chew St., Allentown, PA expressed his concerns about the loading space in the back of the building and whether or not it will be able to accommodate all of the different types of trucks that may come in for the different retail spaces that will rent the space. Mr. Pungo noted that he feels the patio will be underutilized and recommended wrapping the patio along the South Side as well and how that flexibility may boost more commerce growth and ensure efficient utilization. Mr. Handzo addresses the loading zone concerns stating that it depends on the uses that do come into the space and that will be determined on a tenant by tenant basis. Mr. DiLorenzo addresses the loading concerns by acknowledging that the loading can also happen in the parking area that is designated at the back by the loading zone just in case additional space is needed.

Action: Craig Beavers made a motion to grant conditional preliminary final land development approval based on the staff report and letters and their respective dates. Erich Hornung seconded that motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ZONE Allentown Public Meeting

Item #4. The Allentown City Planning Commission will hold a public meeting to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on a proposed new zoning ordinance. Upon completion of its work, the planning agency shall present to the governing body the proposed zoning ordinance along with any recommendations. Copies of the proposed ordinance can be examined at the planning office on the 4th floor of City Hall.

Item #5. The Allentown City Planning Commission will hold a public meeting to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on a proposed new zoning map. Upon completion of its work, the planning agency shall present to the governing body the proposed zoning map along with any recommendations. Copies of the proposed zoning map can be examined at the planning office on the 4th floor of City Hall.

Item #6. The Allentown City Planning Commission will hold a public meeting to provide the public with an opportunity to comment on a proposed new subdivision and land development ordinance. Upon completion of its work, the planning agency shall present to the governing body the proposed subdivision and land development ordinance along with any recommendations. Copies of the proposed ordinance can be examined at the planning office on the 4th floor of City Hall.

Presentation/Discussion: Jennifer Gomez, Melissa Velez, Trevor Tormann, and Micheal Handzo presented the first public meeting on ZONE Allentown, Forming Tomorrow's City Today. The presentation included an introduction to the team, the process, and the core concepts within ZONE Allentown and both the zoning ordinance and the Saldo, as well as a discussion of how the zones were placed on the map, and the adoption process of the code. Ms. Gomez noted that this project has been the culmination of 5 years of effort and revisions.

The presentation goes into detail about the basics of Planning and Zoning, its definitions and how they are implemented. Ms. Gomez highlighted the outline of the project timeline. It started with an assessment of the various plans and documents that have been prepared by the city to identify key goals and policies. The process began with a detailed building type study and a classification of building types and the existing characteristics of

properties in the city. This formulated in the initial draft of the zoning ordinance which was reviewed through advisory committees and then a public review draft which was released the summer of 2024. Throughout the first public review draft, hundreds of emails were received, three community meetings were hosted, two days of open houses, and countless of presentations were made to the Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Historic Board, etc. Additionally meetings were held with the Environmental Advisory Committee, the Greater Realtors Association, as well as anyone from the public, private, and nonprofit developers who may have reached out with specific issues and suggestions for improvement. All of that feedback was then evaluated to review how that feedback could be considered and potentially amend the code according to the needs of the community, while still staying true to the core vision for this project. The Second Public Review Draft was also released earlier this year. At this final stage of the project, the first step of which is approval from the planning commission and then will move along the steps of the code amendment process.

The presentation categorized the changes into core concepts and key goals that will attempt to be implemented through the zoning code. Ms. Velez introduced the first core concept as “context sensitive” meaning that the ordinance intends to respect Allentown's traditional character and compact, walkable urban form and encourages the preservation and reuse of high quality, adaptable buildings. This concept utilizes the comprehensive building type study and attaches regulations associated with them. The second core concept was introduced by Ms. Gomez as “green and healthy” emphasizing this new ordinance’s emphasis on resource protection, sustainability, and public health. This is supported through specific landscape ordinance, sustainable development practices, and Vision Zero complete streets and transit has also been incorporated into the SALDO. Reduced, and more flexible motor vehicle parking has been implemented after a review of where they could be reasonably placed. The third core concept was introduced by Mike Handzo as “predictable and transparent” emphasizing the importance of being able to clearly communicate the code and for residents to understand the code. Mr. Handzo stated that the new code is much easier to understand and administer, by creating greater certainty and removing some of the interpretive work require by the zoning office, and clearer guidance. Mr. Handzo highlights the new codes’ utilization of tables, illustrations, and charts that make it easier for the user to understand the code. Mr. Handzo also emphasized that the code will be evaluated for effectiveness once it has been implemented in order to ensure feasibility and quality of impact. The fourth core concept presented by Ms. Gomez pertains to “major and minor land development” by defining clearly what is designated a major vs a minor land development eliminating the subjective nature of the current process. The fifth core concept also presented by Ms. Gomez pertains to “amendments to approve final plans” and “updated final plan expirations.”

Mr. Tormann goes over the existing codes, the new zoning code, the overlay zones, and mixed use corridors. Mr. Tormann states that the building type study that was done at the beginning of the project helped inform the development of 18 zoning districts and those districts were organized into 4 zones. The mixed-use zones, neighborhood zones, industrial zones, and the public and institutional zones. Mr. Tormann highlighted that all commercial zones will be permitted as residential and are therefore a mixed-use zone. Mr. Tormann highlighted that the map took on a block by block approach to the zoning designations. He highlighted that the mixed use zoning is mostly concentrated downtown, with the largest concentration of storefront buildings being along Hamilton St. between 10th and 5th St. Mr. Tormann again highlighted that there is no longer any exclusively commercial zoning so mixed-use zoning now extends to every part of the city. Mr. Tormann also emphasized that the zoning map will also include Mixed Use Corridoes and through public feedback it will also tie these corridors to the public transit options that are available.

Ms. Gomez reiterates that appearing before the Allentown City Planning Commission is the first stage of the approval process and that there are many more steps that will be taken before the plan will be adopted and if all goes well the code will be effective beginning January 1.

Christian Brown stated that he believed this zoning code update has been a long time coming and will serve the city well with its adoption. Mr. Brown inquired what the process would be like if an existing building type resides within a newly mapped designation that doesn't provide for that building type how would that be handled? Ms. Gomez stated that there is a section in the code that explains what to do, the first of which would be to find the next best building type that would be allowed within that zoning district and use that as the base regulations.

Craig Beavers commented on the designation of the Mixed-Use corridor as both a zoning district and a street type. Mr. Beavers recommended maybe an alternative naming to the street type so as to avoid confusion. Ms. Gomez responded stating that they would look into that concern and see whether a revision can be implemented feasibly at this stage.

Public Comment: Jennifer Swann, who resides at 1824 W Congress St., Allentown, PA, 18104 expressed her concerns about food deserts and allowed supermarket designations. Staff highlighted where those designations exist in the proposed code.

Ed Murphy, who resides at 902 Hamilton St., Allentown, PA expressed his concerns about the affordability of housing and highlights that the cost of parking is embedded into the rent when parking is required by the zoning code. Mr. Murphy stated that he believes the code prioritized housing for cars instead of people and recommends the elimination of all parking mandates. Ms. Gomez responded stating that this code takes a middle ground, in that the code recommends parking reductions and flexibility where it makes sense, noting that complaints about parking are a difficult topic to navigate. Mr. Glazier states that parking is a limited commodity and that the current code takes a thoughtful and managed approach to amending the parking requirements. Mr. Murphy responds by stating that he believes that off street parking lots often are not full and that the debate around parking often pertains to on street parking.

Kristina Schware, who resides at 118 S. 16th Street, Allentown, PA expressed her concerns about parking availability and the lack of enforcement concerning zoning violations. Mr. Hanzo responds stating that enforcement is dictated by the state and the zoning authority does not have much enforcement authority compared to other city mechanisms. Ms. Schware inquired into how nonconforming uses in the previous code will be viewed under the current code and whether they will be grandfathered in with the new code. Mr. Handzo stated that the property would need to have been legally established for it to be grandfathered and any properties that were illegally established would still need to be reviewed.

James Santos, who resides at 1449 W Turner St. asked if there are any tools or guidance available for first time developers especially those who want to develop affordable housing. Ms. Gomez stated that she would provide him with her card and point Mr. Santos in the correct direction for that information.

Action: Craig Beavers made a motion to forward the proposed zoning ordinance favorably to City Council for consideration. Erich Hornung seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Jeff Glazier made a motion to positively recommend the zoning map to City Council. Kelli Holzman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Christian Brown made the motion to recommend the adoption of the new SALDO to city council. Craig Beavers seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcements: Craig Beavers announced that the Pennsylvania State Planning Conference will be hosted in the Lehigh Valley next year. He shared that any one interested in learning about the conference and the planning conference should join the first conference planning social on Tuesday 7/15/2025.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm