

Mr. Unger inquired as to the city comment and wanted direction on Façade appearance versus screening aspects. He stated whether it was more important for aesthetics of the building versus perceived buffers or landscaping from the building and visual elements from Riverside Drive or the Lehigh River. He stated his desire to build proper infill development to get it right. He stated a desire to work with the City on that condition. Kate Hartney opined that their desire would be to see some sort of mural reflecting the industrial past or green walls might be a worthwhile pursuit. Mr. Unger stated that he wasn't opposed to murals, but that they could have a legacy cost to maintain.

Mr. Hornung indicated his approval for the developer's commitment to the proposed green roof. He inquired as to if the applicant had considered greywater or solar energy considerations. Mr. Unger stated that a green roof and a solar roof would not necessarily be complimentary of each other due to the growth of the green roof and the sunlight required of solar installations. He stated that the analysis revealed that the green roof would be more beneficial, especially with infiltration, and they are committed to the green roof.

Mr. Brown inquired to the treatment of the multi-use pedestrian bike path fronting future Riverside Drive and access across the proposed Driveways. Mr. Unger stated the path would be handled through a concrete apron to delineate the path from the paved driveway portions.

Public Comment: None

Action: Mr. Brown made a motion made a motion to approve conditional preliminary/final approval of the plan with the following conditions:

- Demonstrate how the applicant has considered all the summary of recommendations on page 9 of the city's staff report.
- Walkways must be provided to connect the building to the sidewalk.
- Incorporating elements of the city's architectural and historical past into the final design is encouraged (for example, colors, textures, metals, murals, etc.).
- Applicant must comply with the City Comment Letter dated April 9, 2026

Mx. Hartney seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 5-0 with one abstention.

Zoning Amendment – Public Meeting

Item #4 Description: 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 amendment for part II General Legislation, Chapter 660 Zoning, Article 5 Uses, Table 660-4 Use Table and Section 660-38 Manufacturing & Industry Group, adding the use category Data Center Use; and Article 14 Measurements and Definitions, Section 660-135 Terms beginning with "D" and Section 6610-149 Terms Beginning with "R", adding the definition of Data Center, Data Center Accessory Use, and Renewable Energy. Upon completion of its work, the planning agency shall present to the governing body the proposed zoning ordinance amendment along with any recommendations.

File: Bill 20-2026

Presentation:

Ms. Gomez provided an overview of Bill 20-2026 as a proposed amendment to the City Zoning ordinance to provide regulations for Data Centers. She opined that Data Centers are emerging use across the Valley and Country. She stated that the City did not have specific definitions for Data Centers or specific regulations and amending the ordinance would help mitigate any negative potential impacts to the City and community.

Ms. Gomez stated that the LVPC had recently been reviewing 16 other zoning amendments for municipality across the Lehigh Valley with some municipalities already enacting legalization. She stated that the City planners had used some of the enacted ordinances as reference for the City's proposed amendment. She also highlighted other guidance documents that staff incorporated into the amendment including from the Penn Future Data Model ordinance as well as the LVPC Industrial Land Use Guide.

Ms. Gomez also stated that the amendment had reviewed by many departments and bureaus, including CED, Public Works, Fire, Health, Sustainability was key to the Allentown Environmental Advisory Council/ she noted comments received at various steps out the way and incorporated that feedback and had sent the final draft to the solicitor's office for review on March 4th. That bill had been introduced and forwarded to the Planning Commission and LVPC for review and comment.

Ms. Gomez stated that the ordinance amendment review by the ACPC would be incorporated with reviews by the LVPC and any public comments. She indicated then the proposed amendment would go to the CED Committee at which a determination would be made to advertise the amendment for adoption by City Council as a pending Zoning doctrine.

Ms. Gomez highlighted the proposed updated Use Table which stated that a Data Center is permitted by special exception through Zoning Hearing Board approval. She also stated that a Data center would not be permitted by right and would be limited to the IG and IM Industrial Districts. She then highlighted the associated Zoning map detailing the locations where a Data Center would be allowed through special exception. She also stated that the new use category under the manufacturing and industry group which would include a description of the use supplemental regulations.

Ms. Gomez reviewed proposed setbacks from the right away from other uses like residential schools, those types of sensitive uses and for anything over 50,000 square feet. Which is considered large scale then will be limited to the larger lots. She noted that it would be defined within the IG as a 5 acre minimum and then within the IM as an 8 acre minimum.

Ms. Gomez informed the commission of the proposed required landscape buffers, including a narrative description of the use, an environmental impact, noise and vibration, study, water and sewer utilization report, power supply and energy management report, electronic waste, Thermal impact mitigation plan, emergency response plan, some light requirements for building aesthetics.

Ms. Gomez reviewed the approval process proposed and the various city reviewing agencies that would still be required, like any special exception that involved a change of site plan would come before the Planning Commission for recommendation to Zoning Hearing Board and then Planning Commission as well as the Environmental Advisory Committee and any applicable reviewing agency or department.

Mr. Brown applauded the staff for the review and for the comprehensive detail given to the amendment. He also requested some clarity to the path of the special exception and whether it would be required to come to the planning commission. Mr. Handzo stated given the industrial building stock of the city in some of these sites where a data center could be proposed without requiring some level of site improvement substantial enough to trigger land development.

Mr. Handzo opined that in most cases, if an applicant attempted to come in through zoning at minimum, It would be at the discretion of the City Director of Planning and Zoning to determine when a project has triggered the definition of land development under MPC at minimum. Mr. Handzo opined that there could be a hypothetical scenario where there might be some kind of white elephant building or something similar that could be retrofitted, although highly unlikely. Ms. Gomez stated that the Planning Commission would minimally get consulted before any special exception use, and through that process that the City would look at land development as well and whether that would need to be required

Mr. Brown opined that perhaps a registered landscape architect should be involved in the land preparation process. Ms. Gomez commented that the staff would look into that when they receive any feedback from the LVPC and how many changes would need to be made without changing the approval path. Mr. Handzo stated the core language of the Zoning ordinance had language would enable the Zoning review to require certain aspects of a landscape plan and professional licensure.

Public Comment: None

Action: Mr. Beavers made a motion favorably recommend the proposed Zoning amendment to City Council, and to consider a requirement of a landscape architect in the design, Mr. Hornung seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously 6-0

Other Matters

None

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:33 pm