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August 17, 2023

The Honorable Daryl Hendricks
President, Allentown City Council
435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, PA 18101

THRU: Michael Hanlon (michael.hanlon@allentownpa.gov)
Clerk of City Council

RE: Re-Zoning and Text Amendment to the Zoning Code (Riverfront Properties)
Bill #70 - Amending the Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance of the City of Allentown by (i) rezoning certain parcels to B-5 Urban Commercial District, and (ii) providing for a repealer clause, a severability clause, and an effective date.

Dear Mr Hendricks:

At the monthly meeting of the Allentown City Planning Commission held on August 8, 2023, the Commission reviewed the proposed re-zoning and text amendment petitioned by Urban Residential Properties and endorsed the same to City Council for further consideration.

I have attached, for reference, a copy of the Planning Staff report to the ACPC.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Gomez".

Jennifer Gomez
/jfs

ec: [carlos tovar](mailto:carlos.tovar@allentownpa.gov); [jpalumbo](mailto:jpalumbo@allentownpa.gov)
City of Allentown (Mark Hartney, Melissa Velez)
ACPC (cbrown@browndesigncorp.com)



City of Allentown
Staff Report

All comments in the report are advisory

To: Allentown City Planning Commission
From: Bureau of Planning & Zoning
• Jennifer Gomez, Planning Director, jennifer.gomez@allentownpa.gov
• Melissa Velez, Zoning Supervisor, melissa.velez@allentownpa.gov
• Jesus Sadiua, Planner, jesus.sadiua@allentownpa.gov
Meeting Date: August 8, 2023

Location: 51 N. Front Street and 115 Riverside Drive
Proposal: Rezone from B /LI to B5 and text amendment for B-5 riverfront properties
Case Number: 23-03 (Z)
Property Owner: Lehigh Landing 1 and Lehigh Landing 2
Applicant: Urban Residential Properties (John Palumbo)

Description

1. The applicant -- with the consent and support of the owner – previously submitted a request to change the zoning designation of two properties (labelled Parcels A and B in Fig-1) at the Riverfront NIZ from B/LI to B-5.

	Parcel ID	Address	Current Zoning	Proposed Zoning
A	6407 5215 1002	51 N. Front St.	B /LI (Business /Light Industrial)	B5 (Business, Urban Commercial)
B	6407 5219 1198	115 Riverside Dr.	B /LI (Business /Light Industrial)	B5 (Business, Urban Commercial)

2. Section 660, Attachment 10 *Table of Area and Yard Requirements in Nonresidential Districts* currently includes "Note T" which states " (T) = Within the B-5 District, lots which abut Riverside Drive, and lots located east of Riverside Drive and west of the Lehigh River, shall instead be bound by the applicable area and yard requirements as applied to lots in the B-2 District." Please note, the B-2 Central Business District does not contain any Setback, Height or Building Coverage requirements.
3. This original B-5 rezoning request is now being supplemented by a Text Amendment that provides additional requirements for B-5 properties that are subject to Note T.
4. The petition is accompanied by a draft legislation (Bill 70) to enable the proposed changes with repealer and severability clauses.

Background

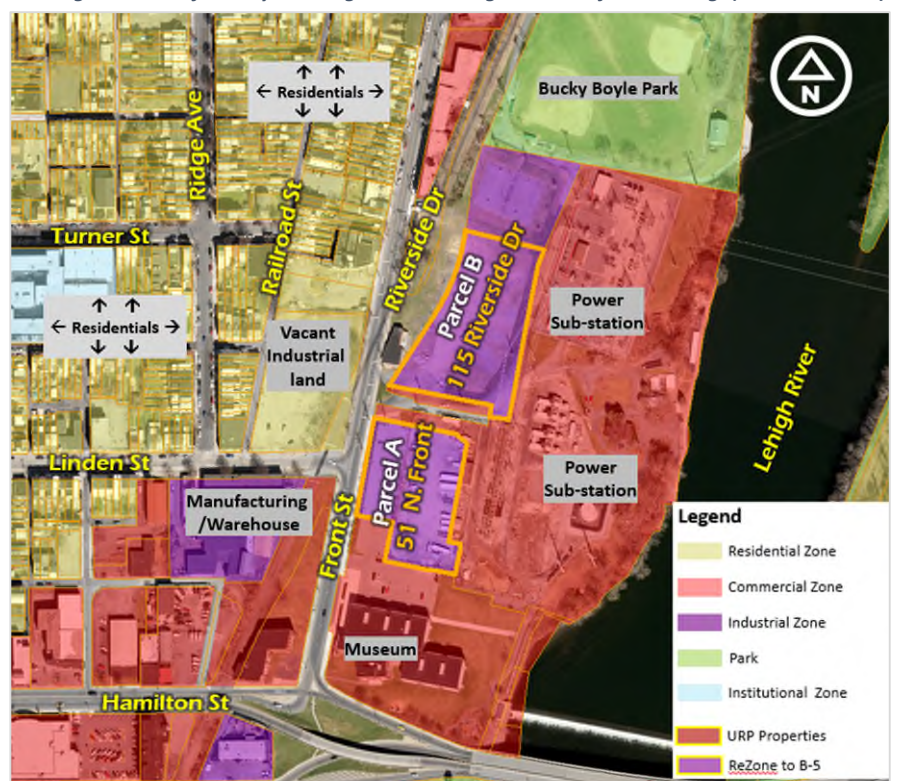
5. At the March 2023 meeting of the ACPC, the Commission considered the re-zoning petition for these same parcels. That initial petition sought to obtain zoning standards as those applied to properties in the downtown area.
6. Planning Staff did not object to re-zoning to B5, but were not in favor of extending those downtown zoning standards (i.e., B-2 zoning standards for area and yards requirements) for several reasons, foremost of which is the promotion of a better planned riverfront development than a downtown urban form. Staff's position was that any further re-zoning at the riverfront should be supported by a master plan by the petitioner.
7. After deliberations, the ACPC endorsed to City Council the petition as requested.

8. The City Council's Committee on CED – reviewed the proposal on May 24, 2023. The CED Committee did not favor the petition as requested and asked, instead, the petitioner to work with city staff to come up with a proposed action "that works for everyone."¹

9. Following the CED meeting, the applicant submitted the enclosed text amendment that creates new standards for B-5 properties along the riverfront in order to protect access to and views of the waterfront and to activate the waterfront.

10. Section 2 of Bill 70 proposes to replace Note T of the Zoning Code's **Table of Area and Yard Requirements in Non-Residential Districts** (§ 660-57):

Fig. 1. Aerial of vicinity showing current zoning and lands for re-zoning. (Parcels 1 and 2)



“(T) Within the B-5 district, lots which abut Riverside Drive, and lots located East of Riverside Drive and West of the Lehigh River, and which comply with the following standards shall instead be bound by the applicable area and yard requirements as applied to lots in the B-2 district. If the B-2 area and yard standards conflict, the following provisions shall apply:

¹ [WFMZ-69 News](https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/allentown-developer-might-drop-the-contract-to-buy-2-lots-if-rezoning-delayed/article_85b7e714-faaf-11ed-b08d-bb81bdad4f18.html) -- https://www.wfmz.com/news/area/lehighvalley/allentown-developer-might-drop-the-contract-to-buy-2-lots-if-rezoning-delayed/article_85b7e714-faaf-11ed-b08d-bb81bdad4f18.html

1. **Block Size.** Block length must be no more than 600 feet, with a maximum perimeter of 1800 feet, except as follows:
 - a. Where blocks are longer than 600 feet, pedestrian access easements, minimum 20 feet in width with minimum 5-foot sidewalks may be provided, effectively reducing the resulting pedestrian blocks to dimensions less than the block sizes defined above.
2. **Emergency Vehicle and Service Access.** The configuration of the lots and blocks must include alleys or service drives to accommodate parking and garage access, refuse and recycling pickup, emergency vehicles and utilities in the rear of lots.
3. **Riverside Drive Streetscape.** The minimum dimension required for streetscapes along ground stories is 20 feet minimum (measured from edge of curb to front of building), with a clear sidewalk and street trees.
4. **Buildings facing Riverside Drive and/or the waterfront:**
 - a. **Building Frontage.** Must be designed to have a prominent frontage along Riverside Drive and the waterfront. Building entrances are encouraged a minimum of one per every 120 ft. of front façade.
 - b. **Commercial Frontage along Riverside Drive and the waterfront.** Buildings must have an active ground floor commercial frontage along Riverside Drive and the waterfront.
5. **Maximum Building Coverage.** 90%
6. **Waterfront Buffer.** The minimum width for the waterfront buffer is 50 feet along all waterfronts. Dedicated waterfront access is required. Within the waterfront buffer, a minimum 10-foot wide pedestrian and bicycle access path must be provided, extending along the waterfront. A continuous publicly accessible 10-foot sidewalk or multi use trail must connect the waterfront to an existing street. The developer shall work with the city to ensure adequate emergency vehicle access is available for properties included within the development as well as the adjacent waterway. This provision may be modified for properties with less than 350 linear feet of waterfront.
7. **Waterfront Views from Riverside Drive:** Properties situated between the waterfront and Riverside Drive must provide waterfront views from Riverside Drive. For every 500 linear feet of lot frontage along Riverside Drive – one unobstructed open sightline, minimum 20 feet in width, must be provided through the lot towards the water from Riverside Drive. An upland connection may be used to meet this requirement, provided the sightline is maintained from Riverside Drive to the waterway. A publicly dedicated street abutting the property may also be used to meet this requirement, provided the sightline is maintained every 500'.
8. **Vistas.** Views down streets that terminate at parcels (referred to as "vistas" in these regulations), including where a street might angle at less than 90 degrees, may be considered when laying out streets and blocks, and locating open space, parking, and buildings.”

Comments and Conclusion

10. While Note T will continue to provide B-2 zoning standards to affected riverfront parcels, the general guidelines will ensure that the development adjacent to the riverfront will be

constructed in a way that will help protect the waterfront and activate the area. Among other desirable expectations, the guidelines will help ensure riverfront projects provide:

- a. Pedestrian-scale street blocks;
- b. Engaging streetscapes to encourage pedestrian activity;
- c. Ground floor uses that activate pedestrian engagement along sidewalks;
- d. Large publicly dedicated waterfront buffers with pedestrian and bicycle access;
- e. Emergency vehicle accessibility; and
- f. Buildings that are oriented in a way that preserve waterfront access and views.

11. Staff recommends endorsement of the petition as requested for City Council consideration and favorable action.