

## REZONING REQUEST PETITION

City Council  
Allentown, PA 18101  
TELEPHONE: (610) 437-7556  
FAX: (610) 437-7554  
EMAIL: Michael Hanlon  
Tawanna L. Whitehead

Date 2/7/2025

[michael.hanlon@allentownpa.gov](mailto:michael.hanlon@allentownpa.gov)  
[tawanna.whitehead@allentownpa.gov](mailto:tawanna.whitehead@allentownpa.gov)

### Members of City Council:

We, the undersigned and interested parties, hereby request your honorable body to rezone the following tract of land or amend the zoning code in the following manner. The rezoning request shall be attached to this form in the exact manner the petitioner expects the legislative body to act on and meet all the requirements relating to the legislation.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

from \_\_\_\_\_ zoning classification to N/A zoning classification. A legal description of the property to be rezoned must be included with this application. Attach any necessary additional information.

The reason for this rezoning is: Removal of the meal service limitation contained  
within Section 660-6 of the Ordinance. See attached petition.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>
<u>RCI Village Properties</u>	<u>1539-1551 Chew Street</u>
<u>Lehigh Conference of Churches</u>	<u>457 W. Allen Street</u>

Send or deliver this petition, along with \$1,000 check to cover administrative costs, payable to the "City of Allentown." In addition the petitioner must pay in full all costs incurred in publishing the legally required advertising for the Map or Zoning Code Amendment.

Petitions for zoning map and zoning amendments can be found on the City website or by contacting the City Clerk's Office. A written Petition for a Zoning Map Amendment (Rezoning) may be submitted to City Council by a citizen. It must be notarized and signed by the owners of 50% or more of the land proposed to be rezoned, and it must be submitted together with a check in the amount of \$1,000.00 payable to the City of Allentown, to the City Clerk's Office, 435 Hamilton Street. A written petition for a Zoning amendment may be submitted to City Council by a Citizen and it must be submitted together with a check in the amount of \$1,000.00 payable to the City of Allentown, to the City Clerk's Office, 435 Hamilton Street. In addition, the petitioner must pay in full all costs incurred by the City in publishing the legally required advertising for the Map or Zoning Code Amendment prior to final Council Action. (Ordinance 15503 adopted 12/5/18)

**City Clerk**  
**City Hall**  
**Room 510**  
**435 Hamilton Street**

**BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ALLENTOWN,**  
**LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**PETITION TO AMEND ZONING ORDINANCE**

1. RCI VILLAGE PROPERTIES AND LEHIGH CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (together, “Petitioners”) are owners of certain properties in the City of Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, and for that reason have standing to file this Petition.

2. RCI Village Properties’ property is located at 1539-1551 Chew Street in the City of Allentown, Lehigh County (the “RCI Property”). The RCI Property is known as Lehigh County Tax PIN # 549750404536.

3. Lehigh Conference of Churches’ property is located at 457 W. Allen Street in the City of Allentown, Lehigh County (the “Conference of Churches Property”, together with the RCI Property, the “Properties”). The Conference of Churches Property is known as Lehigh County Tax PIN # 640703996377.

4. A “Community Center” is defined in the City of Allentown Zoning Ordinance (the “Ordinance”) Section 660-6 to be:

A building used for recreational, social, educational and cultural activities owned and/or operated by a public or nonprofit group or agency. The use may also include the nonprofit preparation and provision of meals for senior citizens. Any residential uses or a treatment center shall only be permitted if they also comply with the requirements for such use.

5. Community centers serve a vital function within the City and the Lehigh Valley as a whole, by providing opportunities for social connection for individuals of all ages, which, in turn, addresses certain public health concerns, such as loneliness and social isolation, as identified in the recent City of Allentown’s Community Health Needs Assessment (the “Assessment”). Attached as

Exhibit “A” is a copy of the appropriate portion of the Assessment identifying certain priorities and concerns of the City.

6. With no perceived benefit to the public health, safety and welfare, the Ordinance’s definition of a “community center” restricts the nonprofit preparation and provision of meals to only senior citizens.

7. It is Petitioners’ position that such a provision is unduly restrictive, as it limits the demographic for which meal preparation and provision can be made and creates an enforcement issue where a community center serves several demographics of individuals.

8. At a minimum, the aforementioned meal service limitation is ambiguous as it is unclear whether this limitation needs to be affirmatively addressed by an applicant proposing a community center.

9. “Senior citizens” is also not defined within the Ordinance and there are no specific criteria applicable to community centers within the Ordinance which would serve to clarify this meal service limitation.

10. As a matter of public policy, to aid and support the mission and goals of the City, as identified in the Assessment, removing such a limitation would allow for more individuals to be served within community centers, regardless of age.

11. Pursuant to Ordinance Section 660-10, a landowner may initiate a petition to the City to amend or change the Ordinance.

12. Section 609 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (hereinafter “MPC”), 53 P.S. §10609, authorizes the City Council to amend the Ordinance pursuant to a landowner’s request.

13. Petitioners are requesting that the meal service limitation, contained within Section 660-6 of the Ordinance, be removed from the Ordinance's community center use definition, which shall hereinafter read as follows:

A building used for recreational, social, educational and cultural activities owned and/or operated by a public or nonprofit group or agency. The use may also include the nonprofit preparation and provision of meals for all individuals utilizing the services of the community center. Any residential uses or a treatment center shall only be permitted if they also comply with the requirements for such use.

14. The proposed Ordinance amendment will not be detrimental to the City. The proposed Ordinance amendment will not have an adverse impact on slopes, soils, woodlands, wetlands or flood plains nor will it cause any adverse environmental impacts.

15. The proposed Ordinance amendment will have no adverse effect on adjoining properties. The Ordinance amendment will not create any adverse traffic impacts, and no different infrastructure or services would be necessitated.

16. The proposed Ordinance amendment will not place any unreasonable demands on City services.

17. The proposed Ordinance change will allow for uniformity regarding meal service within community centers, which will promote the social connection mission and public health goals of all community centers within the City.

18. The proposed Ordinance change is consistent with sound community planning and will promote the orderly development of the City.

19. The RCI Property is currently developed with a building that for many years has been used as a place of worship and is zoned to permit a community center. The Conference of

Churches Property is currently developed with a building that has been operating as a community center since 2015. Attached as Exhibit "B" is a copy of the portion of the City Zoning Map with the Properties labeled.


20. Petitioners request that the Petition be circulated to City staff and the Planning Commission with a public hearing on this request to be conducted by City Council.

21. A proposed Ordinance Amendment is attached hereto as Exhibit "C."


22. Petitioners reserve the right to supplement this Petition and to introduce such other information to City Council as is necessary to support its Ordinance amendment request.

WHEREFORE, Petitioners request that City Council amend Section 660-6 of the Ordinance to remove the meal service limitation from the definition of a community center use.

#### RCI VILLAGE PROPERTIES

By:   
Name: Sherri Brokopp Binder  
Title: Executive Director

#### CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

By:   
Name: Abigail Goldfarb  
Title: Executive Director

**Exhibit “A”**

## Executive Summary

The 2023-2024 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) is the initial effort of the City of Allentown, Pennsylvania, and their Allentown Health Bureau to conduct a community-wide health improvement effort compliant with Professional Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) mandates. The MAPP or Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships framework was used, with the project initiated in May of 2023, prior to the introduction of the MAPP 2.0 framework. This report, however, is based on the MAPP 2.0 framework, with components like the Local Public Health Status Assessment from the MAPP 1.0 framework.

The project tenure for the Community Health Needs Assessment was from late May 2023 to January 2024 (nine months), with oversight provided by a Community Health Assessment Leadership Team (CHALT) of approximately 20 representatives. The Allentown Health Bureau conducted a stakeholder analysis to review the necessary representatives of Allentown including those from disproportionately impacted communities.

Broader community input occurred for the four MAPP assessments with an average input of 50 individuals.

1. Community Health Status Assessment (CHSA): September 2023
2. Forces of Change Assessment (FOCA): October 2023
3. Local Public Health Status Assessment (LPHSA): November 2023
4. Community Themes and Strengths Assessment (CTSA): January 2024

In February 2024, three priorities were identified for the Community Health Improvement Plan with CHIP teams formed to address these strategies. This process will be completed by May 31, 2024. The three priorities are:

1. Upward Economic Mobility and Health
2. Housing and Health
3. Loneliness and Social Isolation and Health

## Overview of the City of Allentown

The City of Allentown, located in eastern Pennsylvania, is the third largest city in the Commonwealth with a population of 127,804. Allentown is the largest municipality in the eastern region of Pennsylvania known as the Lehigh Valley. The Lehigh Valley, which comprises Lehigh and Northampton Counties, is one of the fastest-growing regions in Pennsylvania and includes the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton.

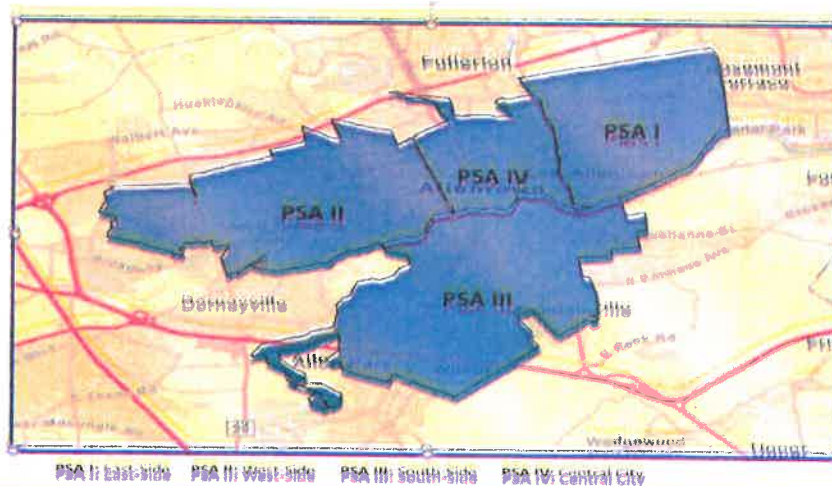
Amidst an economic resurgence, many communities within the City of Allentown are burdened by persistent economic distress. Across the City, the poverty rate is 23.3%, and the median household income is \$47,700. Compared to the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton metropolitan area, Allentown has a poverty rate twice as high, and a median household income that is lower by one-third. Economic disparity illustrates the reality and the persistence of a citywide prime-age employment gap of 6.1%. The gains of a growing, prosperous regional economy are not being shared by all, especially here in the City of Allentown. Regionwide, there is a noticeable disparity in access to opportunity between different racial and ethnic groups. White individuals are twice as likely to live in an area with very high opportunity compared to Non-Whites. Just 38% of the Hispanic/Latino community in our region have



high access to opportunity, 40-points less than white individuals. This disparity is especially pronounced within the City of Allentown, a now majority-minority city following the 2020 Census.

Allentown is a diverse city with 54.5% identifying as Hispanic/Latino and 47.5% identifying as non-native English speaking. Skills and education gaps are the fundamental barriers to employment for Allentown residents. Among this subset of the city, 25% of prime-age residents are not high school graduates. Language barriers accentuate this gap: individuals who do not speak English at home are over three times less likely to graduate from high school compared to those who do. Low educational attainment and proficient skills render many of the higher paying local jobs inaccessible to many within this area. A consequence of this incompatibility is the challenge many residents face arranging transportation to work. Despite 90% of residents traveling to work outside of their neighborhood, one in every three households in this area are without a personal vehicle.

The City of Allentown is located in Lehigh County, with porous zip-code boundaries that cross beyond the city and even Lehigh County. The resolution to this dilemma is to use ESRI (Environmental System Research Institute Inc.), an American geographic information system (GIS) software company best known for its ArcGIS product. ESRI divides the City of Allentown into four quadrants by the Police Service Area (PSA), ensuring that data collected represents Allentown only. These four quadrants are further defined as:



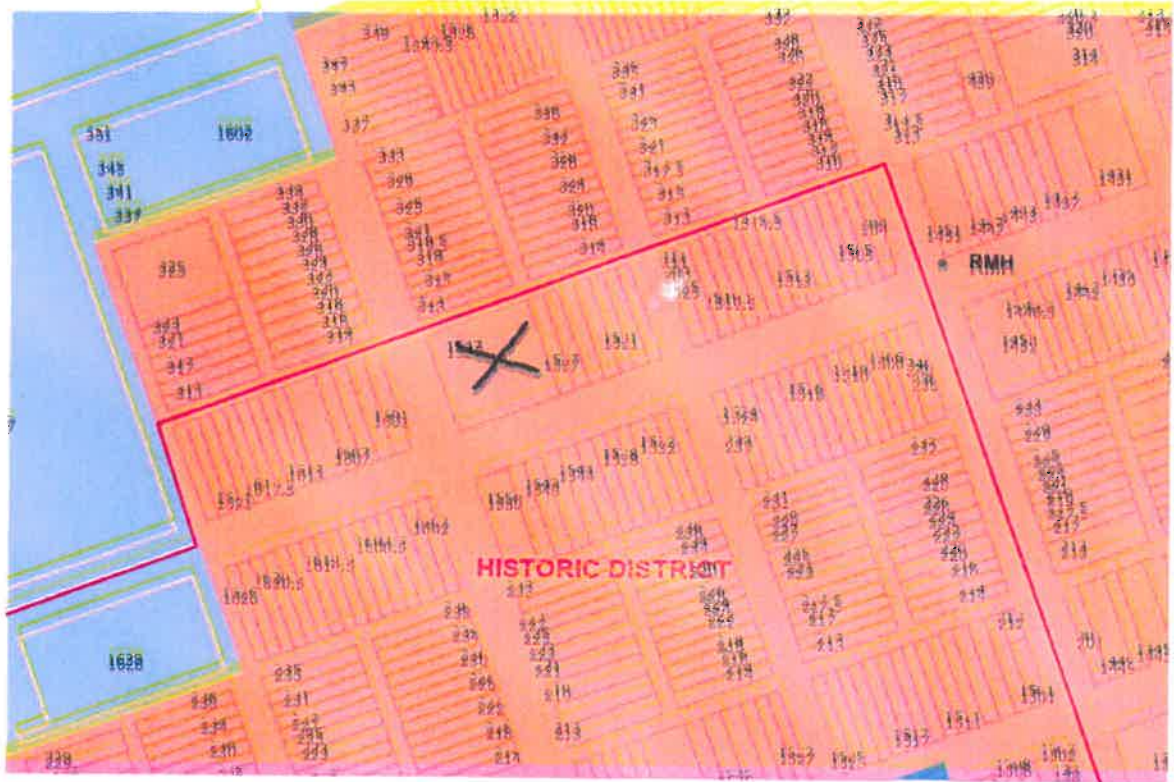
City & Quadrant	Total Population	Median Household Income	Bachelor's Degree or Higher	Total Households	No Health Care Insurance	English not Prime Language
City of Allentown	127,804	\$47,703	17.2%	46,465	18,914	15.8%
PSA I: East Side	16,851	\$47,932	22.7%	6,341	5,343	37%
PSA II: West End	43,415	\$52,238	33.6%	16,077	6,425	12%
PSA III: South Side	31,431	\$51,676	20.5%	11,781	4,652	20%
PSA IV: Center City	16,105	\$34,912	11.1%	12,266	5,343	29%



City & Quadrant	WHITE	BLACK	MULTI RACE	OTHER RACE	HISPANIC
City of Allentown	37.6%	13.3%	15.7%	30.5%	54.5%
PSA I: East Side	42.4%	11.6%	15.1%	28.2%	45.1%
PSA II: West End	43.6%	13.1%	13.6%	26.1%	45.1%
PSA III: South Side	39.3%	11.0%	17.1%	29.6%	55.1%
PSA IV: Center City	26.7%	11.6%	15.1%	28.2%	53.0%

**Exhibit “B”**

1539-1551 W. Chew Street, Allentown, PA



457 W. Allen Street, Allentown, PA



**Exhibit “C”**

**CITY OF ALLENTOWN  
LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_  
(Duly Adopted \_\_\_\_\_)**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 660 (ZONING) OF THE CITY  
OF ALLENTOWN ZONING ORDINANCE BY AMENDING SECTION 660-  
6 TO REMOVE THE LIMITATION ON PREPARATION AND  
PROVISION OF MEALS FOR ONLY SENIOR CITIZENS WITHIN THE  
COMMUNITY CENTER DEFINITION.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Allentown (the “City”) Council (the “City Council”) adopted a Zoning Ordinance written, “2010 Zoning Ordinance of The City of Allentown, Pennsylvania (the “Zoning Ordinance”).

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Section 609 of the MPC, 53 P.S. 10609, the City Council is authorized and empowered to enact amendments to the Zoning Ordinance after public hearing thereon pursuant to public notice, and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council has conducted a public hearing pursuant to public notice concerning the following amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, and

**WHEREAS**, after public hearing pursuant to public notice, the City Council desires to ordain and enact the amendment to the Zoning Ordinance as set forth hereinafter (this “Amendment”).

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED**, by the City Council and it is hereby ordained and enacted by the authority of the same, to wit:

**SECTION 1. AMENDMENT TO ZONING ORDINANCE**

1. Section 660-6 of the Zoning Ordinance is hereby amended to remove the meal preparation and provision to only senior citizens limitation within the community center definition and shall hereinafter read as follows:

A building used for recreational, social, educational and cultural activities owned and/or operated by a public or nonprofit group or agency. Any residential uses or a treatment center shall only be permitted if they also comply with the requirements for such use.

2. The foregoing Legislative Findings are incorporated herein by reference and made a part hereof.



## **SECTION 2. SEVERABILITY**

The provisions of this Amendment are declared to be severable. If any sentence, clause, section, term, phrase or part of this Amendment is for any reason found to be unconstitutional, illegal or invalid, such unconstitutionality, illegality or invalidity shall not affect or impair any of the remaining provisions, sentences, clauses, sections, terms, provisions, or parts of this Amendment. It is hereby declared the intent of the Board of Commissioners for City of Allentown that this Amendment would have been adopted had such an unconstitutional, illegal, or invalid sentence, clause, section, or part thereof not been included herein.

## **SECTION 3. FAILURE TO ENFORCE NOT A WAIVER**

The failure of the City to enforce any provision of the Zoning Ordinance shall not constitute a waiver by the City of its rights of future enforcement hereunder.

## **SECTION 4. REPEALER**

Any ordinance, resolution and/or other regulation of the City, or any parts of ordinances, resolutions and/or other regulations of the City, including but not limited to all prior zoning ordinances and amendments or parts of prior zoning ordinances and amendments, including prior zoning maps, which are inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed. All other provisions of the ordinances, resolutions and/or other regulations of the City of Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania shall remain in full force and effect.

## **SECTION 5. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This Ordinance shall become effective on the day after the date of adoption by the City Council.

*[Signatures follow on next page]*

**DULY ORDAINED AND ENACTED** this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, **2025** by a majority of the Council of the City of Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, at a duly advertised meeting of the City Council at which a quorum was present. As part of this Amendment, the Board of Commissioners has directed that the President, or Vice-President in the absence of the President, execute this Ordinance on behalf of the City Council.

**CITY OF ALLENTOWN**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**President of Council**

**ATTEST:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Secretary**

**Approved this** \_\_\_\_\_ **day of** \_\_\_\_\_, **2025.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Mayor**