



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

DR. CHRISTOPHER R. AMATO
Chair

CHRISTINA V. MORGAN
Vice Chair

ARMANDO MORITZ-CHAPELLIQUEN
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, June 24, 2025, 12:00 noon

AGENDA

THE MEETING CAN BE ACCESSED AT <http://www.tinyurl.com/LVPC2025> OR VIA PHONE
610-477-5793 Conf ID: 651 626 091#.

Roll Call

Courtesy of the Floor

1. Staff Introduction:
 - a. Vincent "Enzo" Fantozzi, Planning Intern
 - b. Giovanna "Gio" Rizkalla, Data and Analytics Planning Intern
 - c. Jacob Engbert, GIS Planning Intern

Committee Business

1. *ACTION ITEM*: City of Bethlehem – Comprehensive Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance Update (JS)
2. *ACTION ITEM*: Palmer Township – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Data Centers (JD)
3. *ACTION ITEM*: Palmer Township – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Fuel Cell Generation and On-Site Energy Generation (JD)
4. *ACTION ITEM*: Palmer Township – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Various (JD)
5. *INFORMATION ITEM*: Housing Supply and Attainability Strategy Event Recap (JS)

Next Comprehensive Planning Committee Meeting:

July 22, 2025, at 12:00 pm



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BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

June xx, 2025

Tad J. Miller, City Clerk
City of Bethlehem
10 East Church Street
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018

**RE: Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance – Comprehensive Update
City of Bethlehem
Lehigh County and Northampton County**

Dear Mr. Miller:

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) will consider the proposed comprehensive update of the City of Bethlehem's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance at its Comprehensive Planning Committee and Full Commission meetings, pursuant to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Discussion on items largely happens during the Committee meeting, and community participation is welcome and encouraged. The LVPC will send a follow-up letter if the Commissioners have any additional comments. The meetings are held on:

- LVPC Comprehensive Planning Committee Meeting
 - June 24, 2025, at 12:00 PM
 - <https://lvpc.org/lvpc-meetings>
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The application proposes a comprehensive update to the City of Bethlehem Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). The purpose of the proposed SALDO, as specified in Article 1341.03, is to 'create conditions favorable to the health, safety, and general welfare of the citizens'.

Administration

The General Procedures of the proposed Ordinance (Article 1343) align with the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), which grants powers to municipalities to regulate subdivision and land development and outlines the contents of subdivision and land development ordinances (MPC Article V). The proposed definitions for 'Land Development' and 'Subdivision' are written to align with the definitions provided in the MPC and are best practices in managing varieties of development (*FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, of Policy 1.4). The ordinance also includes a separate definition for "Development", which the LVPC recommends removing or clarifying to eliminate conflicts, redundancies and the possibility of confusion for applicants.

The LVPC recommends adding definitions for “On-Lot Sewage Disposal Systems”, “Sewage Enforcement Officer” and “Sewage” to further increase ordinance usability and clarity.

Plan Review Procedures / Applications

The LVPC commends the City for incorporating the LVPC in sketch plan review procedures (Article 1344.03) which ensures projects receive a regional perspective early in the planning process, helps ‘coordinate land use decisions across municipal boundaries’ and enables the LVPC to better support the City through discussions or negotiations with the developer and (of Policy 1.4).

The proposed ordinance outlines plan submission procedures for preliminary and final ‘Major Subdivisions and Land Developments’ (Article 1345) with separate simplified requirements and review procedures for ‘Minor Subdivisions, Land Developments and Lot Line Adjustments’ (Article 1346). Section 1345.02.E.1. (Review by Planning & Zoning Bureau) specifies that ‘the applicant is responsible for submission to LVPC at the same time as City submission’. The LVPC strongly recommends this statement be included within Article 1346 as well, to ensure that all submissions align with plan review procedures and timeframes outline in the MPC. While Article 1346 references LVPC review, providing the same procedural language will improve clarity for ordinance users navigating the submission process.

The LVPC commends the inclusion of a Plan Submission Checklist (Appendix B) which is a best practice that helps streamline the submission process for applicants and the plan intake process for the City (of *FutureLV* Policy 1.4).

The LVPC recommends including procedures for emergency service providers in the plan review process to provide opportunities for comment and to ‘enhance planning and emergency response efforts among emergency management personnel’ (of Policy 5.1).

Design Standards

Article 1349 of the proposed Ordinance identifies design standards that provide a basis of the City’s considerations that ensure proposals promote public health, safety and welfare through the review process (of Policy 3.2). The Ordinance includes cross-references to the City’s zoning ordinance requirements, which supports users in navigating both ordinances and encourages an efficient development process (of Policy 1.4).

Transportation

Article 1349.15 of the proposed Ordinance supports the intent of *FutureLV* to ‘establish mixed-transportation corridors’ and enhances walk/roll facilities along Corridors (of Policies 2.1 and 2.3). The inclusion of required Americans with Disabilities Act compliant sidewalks and pathway assists people of all abilities and provide alternative transportation options (of Policy 2.3).

The proposed Ordinance provisions also serve to ‘maintain and enhance existing transportation infrastructure’ (of *FutureLV* Policy 2.6) and promote an interconnected street network (of *FutureLV* Policy 2.2). The LVPC commends the requirements for

Transportation Impact Studies (Section 1349.04.M) which serve to ‘improve the efficiency of infrastructure and avoid traffic incidents’ (of *FutureLV* Policy 2.2).

Environment

The proposed ordinance includes provisions for Green Stormwater Design standards (Section 1349.8.c) and directs applicants to consider opportunities to incorporate planting and infiltration areas along street rights-of-way, such as tree trenches under street trees and plantings for bulb-out curb extensions. The proposed Streets design criteria also strongly encourages applicants to consider porous surfaces or suitable alternative surfaces that allow infiltration (Section 1349.04.K.15). These green infrastructure considerations help minimize environmental impacts of development and protect the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater (of *FutureLV* Policy 3.2).

Bethlehem has established a Bureau of Urban Forestry within its Public Works Department and has a City Forester on staff. Species selection is subject to approval by the City Forester or other designated City staff. Additionally, Bethlehem has a Shade Tree Ordinance (Article 910) which covers aspects of permitting, tree protection, maintenance, and responsibilities of both the city and private property landowners. The City also provides numerous technical and guidance documents including clear and detailed landscape plan requirements, tree resources, guidance in choosing and planting trees – including an approved list of tree species. These activities ‘conserve and manage natural lands and water resources for environmental and recreational benefits’ of Policy 3.1 of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* as well as support environmental conservation strategies outlined in the City’s 2008 Comprehensive Plan and community wide objectives described its 2021 Climate Action Plan.

Overall, the City’s updated Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance is clear, concise, and supports current-day best practices for regulating subdivision and land development design and submission processes.

Municipalities, when considering ordinance and map amendments, should reasonably attempt to be consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) [Article 1§105, Article III§303, §304 & §306(a), Article VI§603(j)]. Please send a copy of any final amendments that are adopted, per the requirements of the MPC.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,



Jillian Seitz
Chief Community Planner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Myerov". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Susan" and last name "Myerov" clearly distinguishable.

Susan Myerov
Director of Environmental Planning

CC: Cathy Fletcher, Director of Planning and Zoning; Craig Peiffer, Assistant Director of Planning and Zoning.



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Chair

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ARMANDO MORITZ-CHAPELLIQUEN
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

June xx, 2025

Craig Beavers, Assistant Planning Director
Palmer Township
3 Weller Place
Palmer, PA 18045

**Re: Data Centers – Zoning Ordinance Amendment
Palmer Township
Northampton County**

Dear Mr. Beavers:

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) will consider the proposed ordinance amendment at its Comprehensive Planning Committee and Full Commission meetings, pursuant to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Discussion on items largely happens during the Committee meeting, and community participation is welcome and encouraged. The LVPC will send a follow-up letter if the Commissioners have any additional comments. The meetings are held on:

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The proposal amends the Township Zoning Ordinance by adding definitions and regulations for Data Center land uses. The LVPC's review of the proposed ordinance evaluates alignment with goals and policies of *FutureLV: The Reigonal Plan* as well as alignment with best practices outlined in the Urban Land Institute *Local Guidelines for Data Center Development* whitepaper. Data Centers have been expanding across Pennsylvania and are an emerging land use in the Lehigh Valley, and when sited appropriately, support the region's technological evolution, economic base and overall sustainability (of *FutureLV* Policy 4.1).

The amendment adds definitions to Chapter 190, Article 2, Section 202 for *Data Center*, *Data Center Accessory Uses/Structures*, *Data Center Campus*, *Data Center Equipment* and *Data Center Campus Master Plan*. Data Center developments will be permitted by right in the North End Business District (NEB), identified on the Township Zoning Map

as the area north/west of Route 33 where there are existing and emerging industrial land uses, and by special exception in the Industrial/Office/Commercial District (IOC).

There are several best practices that this proposal demonstrates that align with the goals of *FutureLV*:

- **Definitions:** Providing clear definitions encourages an efficient land development process and minimizes impacts of regionally significant land uses (of Policy 1.4).
- **Noise:** The ordinance adopts decibel-based thresholds with quantifiable and enforceable noise limits and acknowledges daytime/nighttime sensitivity, which protects the public health and safety (of Policy 5.3).
- **Phased/Campus Development:** Data centers often cluster in large campus developments, and the included provisions for phased development provide flexibility for large campuses with long-term horizons and supports quality sustainable design and construction (of Policy 1.2).
- **Utilities:** Encouraging underground utility lines is a visual and safety best practice and maximizes existing infrastructure use (of Policies 1.1 and 4.6). A utility review assessment is an effective way to mitigate system constraints and enhances the long-term viability of assets (of Policy 1.3).
- **Height:** The proposed height restriction of 70 feet is consistent with national best practices in Urban Land Institute's *Local Guidelines for Data Center Development* whitepaper.
- **Emergency Services:** The added provision regarding sufficient emergency access aligns with *FutureLV* by enhancing planning and emergency response capabilities (of Policy 5.1).
- **Energy Generation:** Fuel cell power stations are an emerging and efficient method of producing power to data centers and demonstrate a commitment to optimizing the Township's utility infrastructure (Policy 1.1)

As the Township moves forward to consider design standards and criteria that further mitigate data center land use impacts, the LVPC encourages the Township to consider the following ways to ensure proposals align with local and regional goals:

- **Buffering:** It is recommended landscape buffering of native species be included between a data center and adjacent properties. Screening or fencing can also be utilized to reduce noise levels or screen the data center development from potential nearby residential properties. Referring to §190-805 Landscaping of Palmer Township's Zoning Ordinance is recommended.
- **Sustainability:** The LVPC encourages the Township to add optional or incentive-based provisions for on-site solar readiness, geothermal energy systems and energy storage or microgrid integration to promote renewable energy sources and sustainability (of Policy 3.4).
- **Parking:** The LVPC recommends adding a parking requirement to a contextual standard, such as one space per on-site employee. Adding a specific parking regulation to a low requirement can potentially reduce impervious cover (of Policy 3.3).

Overall, the LVPC is supportive of the Township in proactively and comprehensively regulating data center land uses in ways that support the public health, safety and welfare (of Policy 3.2).

Municipalities, when considering Zoning Ordinance Amendments, should reasonably attempt to be consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) [Article 1§105, Article III§303, §304 & §306(a), Article VI§603(j)].

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Dotta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a stylized "J" and "D".

Joseph Dotta
Regional Planner



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Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

June xx, 2025

Craig Beavers, Assistant Planning Director
Palmer Township
3 Weller Place
Palmer, PA 18045

**Re: Fuel Cell/On-Site Energy Generation – Zoning Ordinance Amendment
Palmer Township
Northampton County**

Dear Mr. Beavers:

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) will consider the proposed ordinance amendment at its Comprehensive Planning Committee and Full Commission meetings, pursuant to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Discussion on items largely happens during the Committee meeting, and community participation is welcome and encouraged. The LVPC will send a follow-up letter if the Commissioners have any additional comments. The meetings are held on:

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The proposal amends the Township Zoning Ordinance by adding definitions and regulations for Fuel Cell Power Systems.

Fuel Cell Power Systems are one form on on-site energy generation alongside geothermal, solar photovoltaics and wind power energy types. According to the Fuel Cell and Hydrogen Energy Association (FCHEA), fuel cells generate electricity through an electrochemical reaction (often using hydrogen gas, not combustion), providing an efficient source of energy for primary and backup uses. Power is generated on-site and does not require traditional grid transmission. The U.S. Department of Energy notes that fuel cells have energy efficiency and emissions benefits over conventional combustion-based technologies used in power plants and vehicles, whereas their drawbacks include costs to install and maintain systems and longer-term durability (<https://www.energy.gov/eere/fuelcells/fuel-cells>).

Fuel Cell Power Systems are a viable option for evolving technology land uses such as data centers, which are highly energy-consumptive. The LVPC commends the Township for proactively regulating fuel cell energy systems alongside its proposed regulations for data center land uses. Aspects of the Township's proposed ordinance align with *FutureLV: The*

Regional Plan, and the LVPC offers additional recommendations to improve upon the proposal to support public health, safety and welfare.

The amendment adds two new sections to Chapter 190, Article 1. Section 987 is entitled *Fuel Cell Power System, Stationary* and Section 988 is entitled *Electrical Energy Storage System, Stationary*. Fuel Cell Power and Electrical Energy Storage systems will be permitted as a conditional accessory use to the following principle uses: warehouses/logistics, light and heavy manufacturing, governmental and emergency services facilities, and hospitals. The amendment also establishes conditional use criteria and adds fire prevention provisions and safety plan requirements for stationary fuel cell power systems (Chapter 81, Article 2, Section 37).

The definitions and requirements included in the proposed ordinance are comprehensive and align with best practices in regulating land uses and development impacts (of Policy 1.4). The Township's proposed fuel cell power system regulations serve to 'integrate efficiency measures and emerging technologies' and 'improve the utility and mobility infrastructure of the region' (of Policy 1.1), 'minimize and mitigate the impacts of utility expansion associated with technological advancements, population and business growth' (of Policy 3.2) and 'promote energy conservation and efficiency' (of Policy 3.4). Substantial Fire Prevention Provisions are included (Article II), including a Safety Plans Requirement for approval by the Township Fire Commissioner, which supports safe and secure community design and emergency management (of Policy 5.1).

To further enhance the proposed ordinance, the LVPC encourages the Township to ensure landscaping and buffering requirements are included that visually shield mechanical equipment, and proposals should follow the requirements of the principal use to which the fuel cell is an accessory (such as setbacks, dimension, and noise restrictions). Regulations can also be included (or referenced) for the storage of hydrogen/compressed gas fuel kept on-site. These additional considerations are offered based on the Technical Report issued by a national laboratory of the U.S. Department of Energy: <https://docs.nrel.gov/docs/fy10osti/49165.pdf>.

Municipalities, when considering Zoning Ordinance Amendments, should reasonably attempt to be consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) [Article 1§105, Article III§303, §304 & §306(a), Article VI§603(j)].

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Mary Grace Collins
LVPC Community Fellow



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Vice Chair

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Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

June xx, 2025

Craig Beavers, Assistant Planning Director
Palmer Township
3 Weller Place
Palmer, PA 18045

**Re: Administrative Various – Zoning Ordinance Amendment
Palmer Township
Northampton County**

Dear Mr. Beavers:

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) will consider the proposed ordinance amendment at its Comprehensive Planning Committee and Full Commission meetings, pursuant to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Discussion on items largely happens during the Committee meeting, and community participation is welcome and encouraged. The LVPC will send a follow-up letter if the Commissioners have any additional comments. The meetings are held on:

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The proposal amends Chapter 190 of the Palmer Township Zoning Ordinance in various places to update regulations and modernize Township processes. The following sections are proposed to be amended:

Parking

There are various amendments related to parking including permitting, emergency vehicle parking in all districts and the addition of qualifying electric vehicle charging spaces to count as two spaces for purposes of satisfying minimum parking requirements. Electric Vehicles (EVs) are becoming increasingly common, and this amendment supports the advancement of electric vehicle technologies as outlined in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* (of Policy 2.5). The LVPC recommends the Township ensure an adequate number of parking spaces are still provided for each land use in instances where one EV space counts for two regular spaces.

Administrative and General Provisions/Regulations

Section 190-111 (“Zoning Permits”) is proposed to be amended to modify procedures related to zoning permits and public notices relating to hearings of the Zoning Hearing Board. The revision to §190-117.B demonstrates a best practice and closely aligns with the language in Section 908 of the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

Amendments to area and bulk requirements include increasing setback requirements from residential properties in the Planned Office/Business District (PO/B) and reducing height maximums in the High Density Residential District (HDR).

Floodplain Regulations (§190-506.F) will be revised to appoint the Zoning Officer as the Floodplain Administer.

Other use specific regulations are proposed to be added including Auto Repair Garage use, Auto Sale use and Gasoline Service Station use. Regulations for Food Trucks and Kennels are also proposed to be added.

Signage

Article VII (“Signs”) is amended to revise regulatory language relating to Feather Signs and Inflatable Air Devices/Tubes. Both sign types are to be added to the prohibited list in all districts and language regarding their regulation will be removed throughout Article VII. Additional regulations surrounding temporary signs will be amended.

Definitions

Several definitions in §190-202 are proposed to be amended and a new definition for Emergency Service Vehicle will be added.

Overall, the proposed amendments demonstrate ‘evolution and adaptability of government’ (*FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, Policy 1.1) and add clarification to the Township’s Ordinance.

Municipalities, when considering Zoning Ordinance Amendments, should reasonably attempt to be consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, as required by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) [Article 1§105, Article III§303, §304 & §306(a), Article VI§603(j)].

Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Joseph Dotta
Regional Planner