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February 27, 2025

Mr. Dwayne Tillman, Director of Planning and Codes
City of Easton
123 South Third Street, Second Floor
Easton, PA 18042

Re: Proposed Zoning Ordinance and Map Amendments
City of Easton
Northampton County

Dear Mr. Tillman,

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) considered the subject application at its Comprehensive Planning Committee and Full Commission meetings, per requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). The meetings are on:

- LVPC Comprehensive Planning Committee Meeting
 - February 25, 2025, at 12:00 PM
 - <https://lvpc.org/meetings.html>
- LVPC Full Commission Meeting
 - February 27, 2025, at 7:00 PM
 - <https://lvpc.org/meetings.html>

The proposal makes amendments to various sections throughout the City of Easton Zoning Code, and amends the City Zoning Map by expanding the Adaptive Reuse Zoning District and Business Entertainment Zoning District. The purpose of the Zoning Ordinance, as specified in Section 27-102, is for the “promotion and protection of the public health, safety, morals, comfort, convenience and the general welfare of the people.” This purpose, as well as the proposed ordinance amendments, supports and aligns with numerous goals and policies of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Overall, the proposed revisions to the general language and definitions modernize the City’s land use regulations, limit redundancy by adding clarity and improve readability.

Housing

The City is taking a proactive approach in addressing the regionwide housing shortage by including accessory dwelling units (ADUs) as a permitted by right use in the College Hill, South Side, and West Ward areas. Identifying opportunities for density that complements the existing neighborhood supports several goals in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Primarily, these amendments prioritize a wide variety of housing (Policy 4.5) and helps build a sustainable and economically vibrant community (Density Special

Section, page 71). Short-term rentals are prohibited uses in ADUs, demonstrating a commitment to diversifying price points and types of available housing in the City of Easton (of Policy 4.5).

Sustainability

There are provisions to add accessory electric vehicle charging as a permitted use in several districts, recognizing the rapidly expanding need for renewable energy sources and the advancement of autonomous and electric vehicle technologies (of Policies 2.5 and 3.2).

Neighborhood-Complimenting Development

The proposal includes revisions to permitted uses in the City's zoning districts. Proposed changes in the Downtown District protect the natural transition from downtown to the residential neighborhood west of 5th street, promoting context-specific land uses and development (of Policy 5.4). The proposed changes to the Adaptive Reuse District remove freight depot, parking lots, and parking structures as permitted uses and move warehouse and storage from a permitted use to a special exception use. This amendment facilitates land use compatibility, protecting residential and mixed-use commercial development in centers, and encourages reuse and redevelopment within urban areas (of Policy 1.2 and 5.4). The historic Downtown District of Easton is further strengthened by these proposed amendments and align with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* for demonstrating adaptability of government (of Policy 1.1).

Zoning Map Amendments

The proposal expands the Business & Entertainment (BE) District along 3rd Street and Northampton Street. The purpose of the BE District is to 'encourage active uses and storefronts that enhance Easton's Downtown as a place to visit, do business, and stay for evening dining and entertainment' (Section 595-21 A.(1)). 3rd Street and Northampton Street are identified as Major Corridors in the *FutureLV* Centers and Corridors Plan, where linear mixed-use districts connect centers with multimodal transportation options. Expanding the BE District along these core roadways facilitates flexible business opportunities that enable the City to continue its growth and evolution as both a destination and a livable community with a high quality of life (of Policies 4.2, 4.6 and 5.4).

The proposal also expands the Adaptive Reuse (AR) Zoning District located along Canal Street south of the Lehigh River. The purpose of the AR District is to promote redevelopment and revitalization with a mix of land uses (Section 595-22 A). The area to be rezoned is currently in the South Side (SS) Zoning District, and the proposal closes a gap between two AR Zoning District Areas, increasing opportunities for a mix of residential types and commercial land uses (of Policies 4.3 and 4.5).

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



Mary Grace Collins
Community Fellow