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# Planning Commission recommends rezoning UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital



TIM STUHLBREHER | Staff Writer

Jan 16, 2020



The vacant UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital, formerly Lancaster Regional Medical Center and St. Joseph Hospital, is seen in a September 2019 file photo.

BLAINE SHAHAN | Staff Photographer



The Lancaster City Planning Commission voted 8-0 Wednesday evening to recommend rezoning the UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital property on College Avenue to mixed-use.

The vote came at the end of a three-hour meeting in City Council chambers. It was attended by a large and vocal audience, the majority of whom opposed the change.

The commission's recommendation moves the issue to City Council, which will make the final decision.

UPMC closed the former St. Joseph hospital about a year ago, less than two years after buying it. It says the current zoning, "hospital complex," is too restrictive for the property to be sold and redeveloped.

### **What's at stake in rezoning UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital [FAQ]**

The commission **tabled the issue in December**. Since then, city staff have met with UPMC and two developers seriously interested in the property, said Chris Delfs, city director of community and planning and economic development.

In a memo to the commission, Delfs said both developers would seek to adapt and reuse the existing hospital buildings.

Both envision a primarily "multi-family residential" use plus offices. One may include assisted living and some neighborhood retail, along with townhouses along the property's west side, Delfs' memo said.

Meanwhile, UPMC has "verbally agreed" to donate its 0.37-acre property at 213 College Ave., which Delfs said is enough space for 24 to 30 affordable housing units.

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## **Photos: Planning Commission recommends rezoning UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital**

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Opponents, led by activists with the Lancaster Healthcare Rights Committee, say UPMC can't be trusted.

Rezoning, they say, will allow UPMC to sell out to a profit-minded developer. The result, they say, will be a high-end gentrification project. Instead, the activists called for building a center to help Lancaster's struggling and needy, with affordable housing, help for the homeless, medical services.

Other communities have them, and it could be done at the existing building without rezoning, they said. At minimum, the city should hold off on the change, they said.

"I'd like to see those things, too," commission member Jon C. Lyons said. But he pushed back vigorously against the notion that it could be done without changing the zoning.

Nor is it reasonable to think the city has the money to acquire and refurbish the building, he said, addressing a suggestion by Matt Beakes, head of the housing nonprofit Impact Missions, that eminent domain be considered as an option.

Commission member Chris Modlin made the motion to recommend rezoning. Modlin incorporated a further recommendation, proposed by Lyons, reflecting the commission's opinion that the property should be used "in a transformational way" to provide low-income housing, help for the homeless and services for children.

More than a dozen members of the public spoke before the vote. Most vehemently opposed the change, but several residents of the neighborhood around the hospital spoke in favor of it, saying it would spur the property's return to active use.





Michelle La Grassa, a real estate professional with Signature Property, suggested holding off. Instead, the potential developers themselves could come forward to seek rezoning, making their agreement of sale with UPMC contingent on receiving it, she said.

Multiple speakers lambasted UPMC, its actions, and the rezoning proposal, frequently to applause and murmurs of agreement from the crowd.

Commission members were clearly torn, with several saying they needed and deserved to know more before making a decision. A vote to make no recommendation one way or the other, however, tied 4-4, and thus failed.

**CITY OF LANCASTER**  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Lancaster City Planning Commission

**FROM:** Chris Sells, Director of Community Planning and Economic Development

**SUBJECT:** 201914046-001 - UPMC Spring Mountaintop Request

**DATE:** January 15, 2020

**RECOMMENDATION**

The City Administration recommends that the Planning Commission approve the petition to amend the zoning of 201914046 from Hospital Complex to Mixed Use. The Mixed Use zoning category is consistent with the master planning and policy documents, consistent with the surrounding neighborhood plan, and accommodates stated community priorities.

The Administration makes the recommendation for approval subject to the following conditions for the Spring Mountaintop site to develop:

1. Maximizing affordable and workforce housing through the redevelopment opportunity, not less than 20% of the site.
2. Additional "amenity" on the site so that pedestrians have accessible public sidewalk that does not solely passively through the site.
3. Superior design to public space that maximizes the enclosure, including setbacks, landscaping, lighting, art, and landscaping parking and loading for the entrance.
4. Further evaluation of commercial use that includes job opportunities with additional housing on site, etc.
5. Further evaluation of stabilizing historic assets and adding green / sustainable design features on site.

The Administration also makes the recommendation in light of the considerations articulated below.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

At the City Planning Commission meeting on December 15, 2019, Commissioners and other attendees heard testimony and made comments that generally fall into three areas of concern:

1. What to expect in a best development site plan for this area if zoning amendment is approved.
2. Potential for health care usage.
3. Potential for affordable housing.

**City Hall on UPMC rezoning request**  
Jan 15, 2020



**Complete coverage: UPMC Pinnacle Lancaster hospital closure**



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