

# **BRIEF ANALYSIS OF LANCASTER PLANNING POLICY RE: UPMC 210 COLLEGE AVE. REZONING**

December 16, 2019

The City of Lancaster's Planning Bureau conducted an analysis of five major Lancaster City planning documents in regards to UPMC's request to amend the City's zoning map, changing 210 College Ave. from Hospital Complex (HC) to Mixed Use (MU): Lancaster City Zoning Ordinance, Lancaster City Comprehensive Plan (1993), Building On Strength (2015), Growing Together (2007), and Places 2040 (2018).

Overall, these guiding policy documents support the petitioner's rezoning request, as detailed below. Yellow highlights indicate policy objectives that are particularly supportive of a rezoning.

## **LANCASTER CITY ZONING ORDINANCE**

It is a best practice and a legal requirement of the Municipalities Planning Code that zoning ordinances reflect the policy goals of the municipality and specifically the Community Development Objectives in the Zoning Ordinance. Below, is a list of objectives from the Zoning Ordinance, which were developed to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan (1993) and readopted by City Council on April 10, 2007.

- (1) To protect and enhance Lancaster City's physical attractiveness and historic quality while allowing for reasonable growth and development.
- (2) To strengthen neighborhoods and to make all neighborhoods desirable, safe places to live.
- (4) To encourage the conversion, rehabilitation, reuse and redevelopment of existing vacant and underutilized structures in a manner consistent with community goals and objectives.
- (7) To increase the quantity and quality of job opportunities through the creation of an environment which promotes and supports business and industry and attracts new investment.
- (17) To implement land use strategies which protect and enhance the built environment and contribute to the economic and aesthetic well-being of the community.

## **LANCASTER CITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (1993)**

The plan presented no strategies specific to 210 College Ave., its surrounding neighborhood, or hospital infrastructure in general. The plan is a high-level policy plan and not geographically specific, although there are many policies advocating for infill, adaptive reuse, and mixed-use neighborhoods, which generally support a rezoning and redevelopment of the UPMC site.

The rezoning of 210 College Ave. as commercial space is supported by the one of the plan's primary policy goals: "protect and enhance Lancaster City's physical attractiveness and historic quality while allowing for reasonable growth and development." The plan advocates for easing zoning ordinances that can be restrictive to development and lead to underutilization of space. "The City's zoning provisions, particularly those regulating permitted uses...should be revised, if necessary, to allow commercial enterprises that are neighborhood oriented...to be located in existing storefronts or nonresidential structures (page 12)." The plan notes that neighborhood input should be involved in determining appropriate reuses.

Redevelopment of 210 College Ave. as housing is supported by the plan's goal "to encourage the conversion, rehabilitation, and re-use and development of existing vacant and underutilized structures suitable for residential use (page 22)."

### BUILDING ON STRENGTH (2015)

The 210 College Ave. site is outside the boundary of this plan. No recommendations are made regarding the property immediately adjacent neighborhood. In general, the plan strongly advocates infill, adaptive reuse, and mixed uses.

The plan advocates for the development of new commercial hubs within neighborhoods (Recommendation 4A) to build a sense of belonging and place. Commercial use within the 210 College Ave. site would fit within this vision. The 210 College Ave. site is also consistent with the plan's vision for accessible commercial development because of its proximity to a major corridor for cars and transit as well as bicycles.

### GROWING TOGETHER (2007)

The plan presents several strategies that are consistent with the proposed rezoning of 210 College Ave. from Hospital Complex to Mixed Use.

#### *Land Use – Growth Management (LU-GM) Strategy (page 6.45)*

##### *LU-CC.1.A Encourage conversion of vacant or underutilized nonresidential buildings, such as warehouses, to apartments.*

By encouraging residential adaptive reuse through more flexible zoning regulations, municipalities can generate more housing, diversify housing stock, offer more live-work opportunities, preserve historic character, and restore underutilized or deteriorating buildings to a useful purpose. Many different kinds of buildings can be converted to residential use, including old school buildings, hotels, hospitals, warehouses, and factories. Reuse of abandoned or underutilized buildings can augment local tax rolls. Historic preservation tax credits and programs can sometimes be used to fund conversions of historically or architecturally significant buildings.

##### *LU-GM.4 – Strengthen and revitalize existing developed areas (page 6.24)*

By focusing attention and resources in areas that are already developed, municipalities can reinvigorate declining cores and create more livable communities. Promoting mixed uses, higher densities, and infill development can enhance livability and spark renewed private investment in locations where key infrastructure already exists.

Land Use – Redevelopment and Infill (LU-RI) Strategy (page 6.27)

*LU-RI.1.A Inventory existing zoning ordinances to identify obstacles to the creation of mixed use districts, and techniques to create such districts.* Conventional zoning ordinances that strictly regulate zoning districts and seek to keep uses completely separate set up a number of barriers to mixed use development. Inflexible density and bulk regulations can also create barriers for mixed use. Municipalities should inventory existing ordinances to identify where zoning regulations may be unnecessarily rigid and where amendments can be made to encourage varied development.

Housing (H) (page 7.11)

*H.4.A Expand nonresidential zoning district regulations to allow for residential adaptive reuse.*

By encouraging residential adaptive reuse through more flexible zoning regulations, municipalities can generate more housing, diversify housing stock, offer more live-work opportunities, preserve historic character, and restore underutilized or deteriorating buildings to a useful purpose. Many different kinds of buildings can be converted to residential use, including old school buildings, hotels, hospitals, warehouses, and factories. Reuse of abandoned or underutilized buildings can augment local tax rolls. Historic preservation tax credits and programs can sometimes be used to help fund conversions of historically or architecturally significant buildings. Lancaster County is fortunate to have numerous examples of adaptive reuse projects, including, among others, the Umbrella Works, Clock Towers, King Theatre Apartments, North Shippen Place Condominiums, Hager Condominiums, and Stevens School Apartments.

## PLACES 2040 (2018)

The rezoning of 210 College Ave. to Mixed Use is supported by two of the Big Ideas and related strategies.

### BIG IDEA – CREATING GREAT PLACES

One of the recommended strategies is to “Create a mix of uses in our communities and corridors,” which a rezoning from Hospital Complex to Mixed Use zoning district would help accomplish in the vicinity of 210 College Ave. The rezoning would support reaching the plan’s target of increasing the amount of new development that is mixed-use. The plan notes that high-density development in the City relieves development pressure on farmland.

### BIG IDEA - GROWING RESPONSIBLY

One of the recommended strategies is to “Prioritize redevelopment and infill in Urban Growth Areas.” The plan goes on to suggest “[leveraging] previous investment by building in areas already served by sewer, water, and transportation” and to “create incentives for developers to convert underutilized properties...”

When addressing the development of large tracts of land in Urban Growth Areas, the plan suggests reserving these plots for mixed-use and non-residential needs (p. 53). The plan identifies a higher number of mixed-use plans as an indicator of successful development. (p 56)

**BIG IDEA – CONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACE & OPPORTUNITY**

The plan’s targets include increased population density, housing, and job opportunities within connected neighborhoods to establish cities and boroughs as Urban Growth Areas. Mixed-use zoning allows for the 210 College Ave. site to contribute to meeting these targets.