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MONROE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

March 31, 2026

Jacob Pride, Chairman
Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors
1155 Red Fox Road
East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

Re: High Density Residential Development Option
Zoning Ordinance Amendments
Smithfield Township
MCPC Review #41-26

Dear Mr. Pride:

The above cited amendments were reviewed by Eric Koopman, Lead Senior Planner, on behalf of the Monroe County Planning Commission. You will find the comments enclosed.

All comments are preliminary and will be acted upon by the Planning Commission at its regular meeting on April 14, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. at the Monroe County Planning Commission office. This action is in keeping with the Planning Commission's review policy and allows the municipalities and other interested parties to respond to the review comments before the Planning Commission's public meeting.

If these comments are not amended and are found to be acceptable by the Board at the next meeting, they should be considered to be approved as enclosed.

If you have any questions, or if we can be of further service to you, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Christine Meinhart-Fritz
Director

CMF/ek
Cc: Julia Heilakka, Township Manager

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MONROE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

TO: Christine Meinhart-Fritz, Director

FROM: Eric Koopman, Lead Senior Planner

DATE: March 31, 2026

SUBJECT: High Density Residential Development Option
Zoning Ordinance Amendments
Smithfield Township
MCPC Review #41-26

The Township of Smithfield is proposing amendments to its zoning ordinance concerning a high-density residential development option in the Economic Development (ED) district. Specifically, applicants will be permitted to develop high-density residential projects on properties within the ED district if certain criteria is met. This criteria includes a minimum of five acres, adequate access requirements, and the availability of centralized sewer and water. Additional standards for conversion incentives, parking, and density bonuses for projects that meet additional design standards are proposed. Related definitions and amendments to the schedule of uses are also proposed along with other associated changes.

The above mentioned amendments have been reviewed on the basis of generally accepted planning principles and the provisions set forth by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PMPC), as amended. The following comments are offered:

1. The proposed ordinance amendment is generally consistent with the PMPC, Act 247 of 1968, as amended, in terms of following required procedures.

2. A density bonus is available if there is a non-residential component to a high-density residential development. Our office advocates for mixed-use development in order to better control sprawl, promote economic stability, and address attainable/affordable housing within the county. The proposed amendments would facilitate reaching these goals as well as providing for a greater selection of housing options through such high-density residential and mixed-use development. This is to be encouraged.

3. Permitting multi-family development options within the ED zoned commercial corridors would allow for an increase in housing supply which could support local business and encourage pedestrian friendly accommodations and walkability. While this is encouraged, the Township should carefully consider associated impacts to local services and infrastructure as well.

4. While density bonuses are to be available for this design option for incorporating commercial businesses on the ground floor, it is unknown in considerations were made concerning density bonuses for projects that would include required affordable housing units. Inclusive housing developments are encouraged to increase the variety of housing stock within the county.

5. It is recommended that projects that feature a non-residential use to gain a density bonus be specifically required to have commercial uses located on the ground floor of a proposed structure.

6. §27-310.4.c contains provisions to encourage the conversion or redevelopment of existing nonconforming lodging or multi-family facilities into conforming high density residential developments. It should be noted that hotels and motels are considered a principal permitted use in the ED district, and would likely not be considered a non-conforming use to begin with.

7. It should be noted that this development option would be subject to SALDO §22-1204 which would require the applicant to dedicate a specified amount of common open space, or the payment of recreation fees in lieu of such land dedication. It is unknown if the Township has an open space and recreation capital improvements plan in which such fees would be allocated to specific projects.

8. While specifications for access requirements are included with the proposed amendments, the Township should consider additional controls and standards for high-density residential development to would improve overall character and design. This could include sidewalks and pedestrian improvements, required community spaces, additional landscaping, parking in the side or rear, etc.

9. Required parking per dwelling unit appears to be generally consistent with parking demand estimates for multi-family dwellings as per the ITE Parking Demand Manual, 4th edition (Land Use 221, Page 59).

10. After performing a preliminary analysis of parcels that would likely qualify for the proposed development option, it appears there are roughly 50 properties that may be eligible. While many of these properties are already developed, the Township is encouraged to discuss the appropriateness of this number of potential high-density residential developments.

11. The proposed definitions are generally consistent with those found in other county resources.

12. The proposed project is generally consistent with the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan, December 2014, with respect to encouraging expanded housing options and mixed use development.

13. If any revisions are made to the proposed zoning ordinance amendments, they must be resubmitted to the MCPC for review prior to adoption. This requirement was affirmed by the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court in Hanover Healthcare Plus, Inc. v. Zoning Hearing Board of Penn Township 875 A.2d 1255 (Pa. Cmwlth 2005). It is recommended that the Township discuss this with their solicitor.

14. The Staff has reviewed the proposed amendments and recommends that adoption be subject to the above noted comments being satisfactorily addressed.

In an attempt to maintain a library of municipal ordinances, we request that any adopted ordinance amendments (Zoning, Zoning Map and SALDO) be sent to the MCPC within 30 days of enactment as specified in the PMPC.

This review is subject to the approval of the Monroe County Planning Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting.