

Township of Bethlehem, PA
Thursday, January 16, 2025

Chapter 275. Zoning

Article IX. GC General Commercial District

§ 275-70. Purpose.

The purpose of this district is to:

- A. Provide for a wide range of needed commercial uses in locations that are less likely to involve conflicts with existing residences.
- B. Use special care and control on access onto arterial and connector streets to avoid traffic hazards.

§ 275-71. Permitted-by-right uses.

Only the following uses are permitted by right in the GC District, provided that the requirements for specific uses in Article XX are met:

A. The following uses as principal or accessory uses:

- (1) Auto service station.^[1]

[1] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

- (2) Financial institution with or without drive-through service.^[2]

[2] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

- (3) Car wash.^[3]

[3] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

- (4) Bus station or taxi terminal.

- (5) Hotel or motel.^[4]

[4] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

- (6) Convenience store.

- (7) Drive-through service or delivery service as an accessory use.

- (8) Supermarket.

- (9) General merchandise store.

- (10) Funeral home.^[5]

[5] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

- (11) Commercial indoor^[6] or outdoor recreation,^[7] including mini-golf course, bowling alley, exercise club, indoor or outdoor movie theater or skating rink.

[6] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

[7] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

(12) Animal hospital, small.^[8]

[8] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

(13) Building contractor's office and storage.

(14) Home occupation, major or minor or no-impact home-based business.^[9]

[Amended 12-20-2004 by Ord. No. 10-04]

[9] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-190.*

(15) Retail store similar in character to uses listed as permitted by right, except for uses listed as special exception uses or prohibited.

(16) Standard restaurant with or without drive-through service.

(17) Personal services.^[10]

[10] *Editor's Note: The examples of personal services in this subsection were removed at the direction of the Township.*

(18) Printing and bookbinding.

(19) Trade school.

(20) Flea market.

(21) Nursing home.^[11]

[11] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

(22) Indoor storage as an accessory use.

(23) Self-storage development.^[12]

[12] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

(24) (Reserved)^[13]

[13] *Editor's Note: Former Subsection A(24), Beverage distributor, was removed at the Township's direction.*

(25) Personal care center.^[14]

[14] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

(26) Essential services.^[15]

[15] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-190.*

(27) Wholesale sales or warehousing, not including a trucking company terminal^[16] as a principal use.

[16] *Editor's Note: The phrase "truck terminal" was revised to "trucking company terminal" at the direction of the Township.*

(28) Lumber yard.

(29) Crafts or artisan's studio.

(30) Kennel.^[17]

[17] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

(31) Campground.^[18]

[18] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

- (32) U.S. Postal Service facility.
- (33) Auditorium, commercial.^[19]
 - [19] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (34) Plant nursery.^[20]
 - [20] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (35) Nursery school/day-care center.^[21]
 - [21] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (36) Recycling collection center.^[22]
 - [22] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (37) Adult day-care center.^[23]
 - [23] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (38) Business, professional, medical, dental or governmental offices.
- (39) Bakery.
- (40) Laundromat.
- (41) Membership club.
- (42) Group home.^[24]
 - [24] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (43) Public or private primary or secondary school.^[25]
 - [25] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (44) Cultural/community center.^[26]
 - [26] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (45) Crop farming.
- (46) Golf course.^[27]
 - [27] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (47) Swimming pool, public.
- (48) Publicly owned recreation.
- (49) Wildlife sanctuary.
- (50) Place of worship,^[28] but not including any dwelling.
 - [28] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (51) Cemetery.^[29]
 - [29] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*
- (52) (Reserved)^[30]
 - [30] *Editor's Note: Former Subsection A(52), Township-owned use, was removed at the direction of the Township.*
- (53) Accessory use or structure clearly customary and incidental to a permitted by right, approved special exception or conditional use.^[31]
 - [31] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-190.*
- (54) Accessory use or structure permitted under § 275-190C.

(55) Co-located commercial communications antenna.^[32]

[Added 3-19-2001 by Ord. No. 03-01]

[32] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*(56) Check-cashing business.^[33]

[Added 3-5-2007 by Ord. No. 01-07]

[33] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*(57) Pawn shop.^[34]

[Added 3-5-2007 by Ord. No. 01-07]

[34] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

§ 275-72. Special exception uses.

Only the following are permitted by special exception in the GC District, provided that the requirements for specific uses in Article XX are met:

A. Auto repair garage.^[1][1] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*B. Auto, boat or mobile/manufactured home sales.^[2][2] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*C. Fast-food restaurant,^[3] with or without drive-through service.[3] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

D. Tavern or nightclub.

E. Commercial outdoor storage or display,^[4] not including an auto sales use or plant nursery/greenhouse.[4] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-190.*

F. Dormitory, serving a lawful college, university or primary or secondary school that is located within Bethlehem Township, provided such building is set back a minimum of 60 feet from the lot line of any existing dwelling or residential district.

§ 275-73. Conditional uses.

Only the following use is a permitted conditional use in the GC District, provided that the requirements for this use in Article XX are met:

A. Emergency services station.^[1][1] *Note: See additional requirements in § 275-189.*

B. Dispensary facility.

[Added 3-20-2017 by Ord. No. 02-17]

C. Medical marijuana delivery vehicle office.

[Added 3-20-2017 by Ord. No. 02-17]

§ 275-74. Specifically prohibited uses.

All uses not specifically permitted are prohibited, unless their allowance is clearly implied in the determination of the Zoning Hearing Board by a very closely similar use. The following uses are very

specifically prohibited in the GC District as principal and accessory uses:

- A. Motor vehicle race track.
- B. Trucking company terminal.
- C. Manufacturing, except printing and bookbinding.
- D. Junkyard.
- E. Adult bookstore, cabaret, adult movie theater or massage parlor.

§ 275-75. Lot and setback regulations.

The following lot and setback regulations shall apply to uses in the GC District, unless a more restrictive requirement is stated in Article **XX** (for a particular use) or elsewhere in this chapter.

- A. Number of uses. A lot in the GC District shall include a maximum of 10 principal uses and/or establishments, whichever is more restrictive.
- B. Lot area: 65,000 square feet minimum, for the first principal land use and/or establishment, plus 5,000 square feet minimum for each additional principal land use and/or establishment.
- C. Minimum lot width: 200 feet, except 250 feet along the existing right-of-way of any arterial or connector street which the use or uses will have a driveway or accessory entering onto. If two lots share one and only one access point on to an arterial or connector street, each lot may have a minimum 150 feet lot width along that street.
- D. Minimum lot depth: 200 feet.
- E. Maximum lot coverage: 40% for buildings, 70% for total impervious surfaces. The remaining 30% shall be covered by landscaping and an all-season ground cover.
- F. Minimum front yard setback.
 - (1) Thirty feet from the future street right-of-way.
 - (2) Auto service station canopy. The front yard setback shall be reduced to a minimum of 20 feet from the future street right-of-way for an auto service station canopy. Such a structure may be attached to the principal building. An auto service station canopy shall only include an unenclosed structure that serves only to cover gasoline pumps from inclement weather. No advertising sign shall be attached to such a canopy.
- G. Minimum side yard setback: 15 feet minimum for each of two side yards, except 60 feet minimum for side yards along the lot line of an abutting existing dwelling or residential district.
- H. Minimum rear yard setback: 30 feet minimum, except 60 feet minimum for a rear yard along the lot line of an abutting existing dwelling or residential district.
- I. Maximum height: two stories or 35 feet, whichever is less.
- J. Shared parking and driveways. Sharing of off-street parking and driveways by adjoining uses is strongly encouraged. See § **275-142B** for possible reduction of off-street parking requirements.

§ 275-76. Additional requirements.

- A. Off-street parking. See Article **XVII**.
- B. Signs. See Article **XVIII**.

- C. Site plan review. See § **275-178A**, which requires site plan review by the Planning Commission for nonresidential principal buildings.
- D. Off-street parking and paving setback. See § **275-144**.
- E. Buffer yard and evergreen screening. See § **275-171**.
- F. Utilities. All commercial, industrial and institutional uses shall be served by both public water and public sewer service.