

Southside developer blows some smoke

The Bethlehem Gadfly 319-327 S. New, Development, Southside February 23, 2021

🌀 *Latest in a series of posts on 319-327 S. New St.* 🌀



Proposed streetscape February 15 — HCC meeting February 22

ref: **Another developer thinking big . . . er, tall**

ref: **The HCC discusses the proposal for 319-327 S. New**

ref: **“The current proposal for a 12-story structure is inappropriate”**

ref: **“What we have in front of us is going to be a big stretch for us”**

ref: **“Going to 5-6 stories definitely wouldn’t work”**

You are wondering how last night’s meeting at the Historical Conservation Commission on the proposed development of 319-327 S. New turned out.

Gadfly was rather astonished at what occurred.

Remember that the ball was in the developer’s court.

The upshot of the January 25 HCC meeting on this project was the identification of several issues for the developer to address last night — especially the 12-story height of the building.

On January 25, Chair Gary Lader had called the 12-story height a “big stretch” for the HCC.

To a person, the Commissioners who spoke January 25, while recognizing appropriate stylistic elements in the facade design and

positive aspects in the concept (apartments plus Food Court), had substantial concern about the height.

Commissioner Seth Cornish, for example, laid down a marker: a 5-story limit for the new project.

You will share Gadfly's astonishment when you hear that the developer came back last night with the 13-story design that you can see in the rendering of the streetscape above.

13 stories. One more than last time.

WTH!

Without mentioning the height issue, the developer proposed dividing the issues. His desire for last night's meeting was solely that HCC vote to approve demolition of the 3+ buildings (they would save the facade at the 4th building 321-323 S. New, as HCC had requested) with the understanding that the developer would not "pull the permit" for demolition nor actually perform the demolition till the issue of the size of the building was decided.

Gadfly likes to give you the flavor, the drama of the meetings he covers, not just the bottom line, so he invites you to listen to the developer make his pitch. You will recognize that, like on January 25, he again heaps up positive aspects of the project to obscure the height issue.

Audio Player not available in this archive

However true and good in what the developer says, it is all off-point, off the main point. He's blowing smoke.

Commissioner Seth Cornish has a good smoke filter, though, for he **immediately** responded to the developer's peroration with "I want to cut through, you know, to the elephant in the room, which is the height."

to be continued . . .