

The key voices in the 548 narrative

The Bethlehem Gadfly 548 N. New St., Neighborhoods, Northside, Serious Issues September 16, 2019

(7th in a series of posts about 548 N. New St.)

What good is an English major? What skill do English majors have? One thing Prof Gadfly used to say is that English majors are excellent close readers. They read closely; they listen closely. Gadfly has tried to listen closely and carefully to the case for and agin' 548 N. New. He's structured the key voices in the case in a flowing narrative here. Can you discern the plot?





*It would be worth the while if in each town there were a committee
appointed,*

to see that the beauty of the town received no detriment.

Henry David Thoreau c. 1862

Who's in charge of beauty in Bethlehem?

Gadfly

Was there any thought given to the architectural design?

To fit in to the rest of the neighborhood?

Planning Commission member

We try to be sensitive to the surrounding area.

the developer

When modern design is actually done right we feel it not only

enhances it, not only complements it, but also enhances

the historic architecture.

the developer

This is invigorating type design.

the developer

We feel this is . . . the way things are headed.

the developer

We love design, we love Bethlehem, and we want to invest in Bethlehem.

the developer

Everything we have asked them to do and contribute for

they have agreed to.

City Planning Department staffer

Your project will change the streetscape in that block

that has existed for 100 years.

Bill Scheirer

Other than market demand, and other than you want to build it, how

do you justify changing the streetscape there, the historic

streetscape so dramatically?

Bill Scheirer

I'm kind of baffled by the developer's characterization that this

modern building fits into the historic downtown

and complements it.

Kim Carrell-Smith

*Historical architecture and historical streetscapes are economic
drivers.*

Kim Carrell-Smith

What I would like to see the developers answer specifically is how

does your architect, how do you see this building blending in

with this neighborhood?

Gadfly

And moving and growing and moving forward, I think the fact that it's not in the historical district something like that would increase foot traffic in our downtown, would draw in the type of clientele that we're trying to have within our City.

Planning Commission member

It's going to improve our overall outlook and image in terms of where we're going and moving toward.

Planning Commission member

I think the design is going to elevate the architecture in the surrounding 70s-designed buildings in the future.

Planning Commission member

Moving forward I think this will infuse a lot of excitement into the area.

Planning Commission member

Architecture is very subjective, and, if nothing else, people who visit Bethlehem will have something more to talk about.

Planning Commission member

I don't do context.

Frank Gehry

World-class "starchitect" (star architect) — quoted by Jeff Speck

*One of the things we've learned as new urbanists is that the prime
ingredient*

*of urbanism is really public space and the public realm. So the urban
plan comes*

*first and the building second. It becomes an issue of whether the
building is a*

*monument or a piece of fabric. Then does this building dominate what's
in*

place or does this building add to it or transform it?

New Urbanism architect Stefanos Polyzoides

Maybe the question should be, where and when does the

conversation about Beauty in Bethlehem take place, and

who is there when it does.

Gadfly

to be continued . . .