

Maybe last chance Tuesday to control appropriate building height on the Southside

The Bethlehem Gadfly Southside May 10, 2021

 *The latest in a series of posts on the Southside* 

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ref: **On the Southside, size matters**

ref: **S Beth Historic District Study 5 4 21**

ref: **SBHCC New Construction DG Final 05.04.21**

Dear Southside fans, this is a very last minute plea for you to “attend” the Tuesday 6pm YouTube Community Development meeting, which will review the consultants’ final recommendations for maximum building height in the Southside. As I understand it, the committee may make a recommendation to the full council after this meeting.

<https://www.bethlehem-pa.gov/Calendar/Meetings/2021/Committee-Meetings/186>

Their proposal is to allow for a maximum 60 ft building height in the majority of the “commercial district,” (plus outer edges), with a set aside area in the vicinity of Comfort Suites and the Banana Factory, plus two sections of S. New St., where building heights of 90 ft. would be permitted! (Report and final recommendations both available at the link above)

Please look at the Southside map on page 8: aside from the 90 ft district, look at what could be changed with 60 ft buildings where there are mostly 1-4 stories now.

Think, for example,

*what it would be like to have a series of 60 ft buildings built along Morton Street where Tulum is?

*How about 60 ft buildings in the commercial core on 3rd Street, where there are now buildings that are no more than 40 ft?

**How curious is it that a small area has been cut out on New Street to include the 90 ft building height, where there is a current proposal for a high-rise on New Street?!

*How would the kind of increased traffic and number of cars that come with much taller, more densely packed buildings change quality of life (air quality, traffic congestion, environmental effects of demolition, etc) here?

If enacted, THIS CHANGE TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE, WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY THE MAYOR AND (IT WOULD SEEM), MANY ON CITY COUNCIL, **WILL TAKE AWAY THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S ABILITY TO CONSIDER BUILDING HEIGHT, AND THE IMPACT OF TALL BUILDINGS ON OUR COMMERCIAL CORE.**

The HCC guideline change will be discussed Tuesday, too.

Since building height is probably the number one factor in maintaining the livable scale of a densely packed business area (and the even smaller scale areas that surround it), AS WELL AS a historic district's appeal and integrity, we are pleading with you for support:

*Please attend the meeting on Tuesday

** Please *add your voice* to the already nearly unanimous public comment which has said that the proposed building heights are way too tall.

* Maybe even express your concern for environmental issues that come with demolition, highrises, and many more cars in our tightly packed business district and adjacent residential neighborhoods (and near several schools).

**Please ask our Council representatives to actually *represent these voices* of residents and those who *regularly* work and play on the Southside, and also those who *live* on the Southside

Demand/ask/tell them to reject the consultants' height recommendations.

We get one chance to get this right, or we will be living with high-rises throughout our commercial core for decades to come, not to mention facing development of high-rises on the fringes of that core, which reach all the way west to Five Points, and east to Polk, and from the river up to Morton St.

Thanks for caring, and lifting voices of support for liveably scaled streetscapes and the integrity of our historic district, as well as other environmental aspects of quality of life for our Southside community.

In solidarity,

Kim Carrell-Smith