

Addendum #1 to Gadfly forum on development: the Armory

The Bethlehem Gadfly Armory, Candidates for election, Election, Gadfly Forum March 24, 2021

 *Latest in a series of posts on the Gadfly Forum* 

It's development week on the Gadfly!

Gadfly started attending City Council meetings on **January 2, 2018**, six months before he officially became a Gadfly. Virtually the first thing he heard at that meeting was Westside resident Christy Roysdon talking about the Armory project during public comment. The resident commentary beat on the Armory continued **January 16** and **February 6** as the discussion moved to the “vacation” of Second Avenue as part of the development. The discussion troubled embryo-Gadfly. He made his first public comment at a City Council meeting the very next meeting, **February 20**. It would not be off-base to say that tension over the proposal to develop the Armory set him on the road to becoming a Gadfly.

Decisions were made, and the Armory developer pretty much got his way. And things were quiet on this front for a while.

But as you can see and scan for yourself, Gadfly-now-Gadfly opened a **file thread** on the Armory April 30, 2019, well into the “history” surrounding this project. as things began to heat up again. In his inimitable way, Gadfly described a “**defibrillator moment**” at one meeting and because of another meeting even floated the need for a City **ombudsman** as trouble with the project approval process morphed into trouble with the construction process.

That's where we are now on this project that keeps on giving — trouble with the construction process.

And this week's Forum topic generated this letter below from some Armory neighbors as a suggested prompt for the candidates, especially the mayoral ones.

The new construction, whose design they were not happy with from the get-go and which secured an inordinate number of variances from the City, some of them now find disrupting the quality of their lives and threatening the very stability of their homes.

And they feel nobody seems to care.

Welcome to the place where the buck stops, candidates — these Armory neighbors invite your comments. However, you have already done your homework on this Forum #2 development topic. If you choose not to comment, at least you (especially new folk Hillary, Kiera, and Rachel) are aware of another example of the devilment of development awaiting your attention.



Dear candidates,

Since the city (including the city council members) authorized the redevelopment of the Armory site, giving green light to 11 variances, making a joke out of the Zoning Ordinances, with the clear opposition of the neighborhood who attended meeting after meeting and expressed their concerns to all the parties involved, we, the adjacent neighbors of this site, have been living under war-like conditions since the beginning of the construction.

view from neighborhood homes

Our physical and mental health are rapidly deteriorating due to the constant, noise, pollution, fumes, construction dust, and temblors inside our old houses, which are more than 100 years old. We cannot even open our windows nor sit on our porches. Since the pandemic, many of us are working at home, a task that has become extremely difficult when you

have the noise and vibrations coming from all the pounding, excavation, and drilling.

We have expressed these concerns to multiple city council members as well as city workers, and they have answered that there is nothing they can do to protect us during these stressful times. We specifically asked them to do follow-up inspections of the surrounding homes, utility pipes, etc., during and after the construction is over. The answer we received was that the city “does not do that.”

— A lot of previous city members have washed their hands after they approved this project. What would be your response to issues like this?

— Do you think that it should be up to the neighbors to spend thousands of dollars to deal with the damage or to hold the developers accountable?

— Is it too much to ask that after placing such a burden on this community that the city takes some steps to protect the homes, mental and physical health of the surrounding neighbors? Shouldn't this be a common practice anyway that when constructions of this size are approved especially in historic neighborhoods, that there is a follow-up with the homes around?

This project is supposed to last at least 18 months. We do not even have the weekends off since the construction takes place even during this time

Are we citizens of Bethlehem and taxpayers supposed to live under these inhumane conditions for the remainder of this time?

What are you planning to do to limit the power of developers and protect the mental, physical health, and the homes of the community who are unfortunate to live surrounded by sites like this?

Neighbors adjacent to the Armory