

If we are to have new parking garages, deargod, let them be built with the most modern ideas

The Bethlehem Gadfly Parking, Serious Issues August 6, 2019

(104th in a series of posts on parking)

So, frankly, it looks like we are to have a new Polk Street Garage.

The BPA construction juggernaut is in high gear.

Sign papers August . . . begin construction December . . . open next December.

But — as Gadfly whined on July 11 in [post #88](#) reviewing a white paper with examples of excitingly designed garages contributed by Councilman Callahan — *“If we are to have new parking garages, deargod, let them be built with the most modern ideas.”*

What kind of garage will it be?

Pretty much the only conversation Gadfly has overheard has to do with the number of spaces.

But there is more to a garage than that.

(Can you tell Gadfly has been not only reading Speck but has been influenced by him? A little knowledge outside one's field is dangerous!)

If construction is to begin in December, odds are there are plans already.

Who's doing the design? What is the design?

Are we looking at a ho-hum cookie-cutter design?

As far as I can tell, no design has been shared with the BPA Board nor open to public view.

Gadfly hopes the design will be open to conversation before it is set in stone (damned cliché again).

Influenced by Speck, Gadfly is wondering, for instance, how the garage fits in with any related City goals — like walkability or Climate Action or whatever.

Not just the technical aspects of City codes.

Speck has suggestions about how the garages relate to streetlife and walkability, for instance.

What about beauty? Aesthetics?

How “independent” is the BPA? Are designs coordinated with the City? Does the public get a chance to weigh in?

Gadfly was yet to be Gadfly with the run-up to the New Street Garage, but he remembers some controversy, for instance, over the connecting pedestrian bridge. He will go back and look for details, but what he remembers in detail, for instance, is the criticism that the bridge would not put “feet on the street” — a goal for supporting local business.

In fact, after reading guru Speck, Gadfly's of the opinion that he would have recommended the garage for the 3rd and New building be on the Polk site, a 4-minute walk past a variety of neat shops.

And wasn't there concern about the bridge running over the Greenway?

Gadfly is way out of his league here (and he is cliché-bitten), but would you agree that standard parking garages add nothing and, in fact, are detrimental to streetscape?

Are we making sure that we are getting something inventive, exciting, distinctive, state-of-the art for our \$16.8m?

Gadfly thinks he has heard that the New Street Garage won awards. Or was it the building? Either way, Gadfly is not sure he understands.

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