

Dana Grubb: proposed South New St. project “an insult to the people of this community”

The Bethlehem Gadfly 319-327 S. New, Development, Southside February 5, 2021

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

ref: [Another developer thinking big . . . er, tall](#)

Dana Grubb is a **candidate** for mayor. This post on his **Facebook page** yesterday about a proposed new project at New St. and the Greenway drew a substantial number of comments. Right now virtually all of the comments are negative about the project, though Mark Iampietro suggests that 12 stories is an opening gambit and the developer fully expects to scale down.

DG's original FB post:

Proposed for South New Street, a 12 story building where 1-2 story structures currently exist (Pat's Newsstand).

MY THOUGHTS:

Why any developer would propose something of this scale and mass in the South Bethlehem National Register Historic District is an insult to the people of this community. It demonstrates sheer contempt for Bethlehem's history and its ordinances, and is completely defiant of the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines.

Furthermore, the City is currently undertaking a study of what residents want to see happening in this district!

Finally, gutting existing business districts a la our neighbor Allentown has done further erodes quality of life for all residents due to the gentrification it creates.

While the architectural design has some appeal, this 12 story building overwhelms the streetscape and insults the efforts of prior city administrations and councils to preserve the single most marketable asset Bethlehem has, its history.

Two of DG's replies to posters enhance his view of the Southside project:

don't try to paint me as anti-development. I'm for respectful, appropriate scaled development. I also helped write the historic district ordinance that applies to that area working with then Council President Mike Schweder, PHMC's Michele LeFevre, and City Historic Officer Christine Ussler to craft something that would allow for future development at a scale that respects the historic resources and architecture in that area. I understand growth very well, but Bethlehem does not need to become Allentown east where you completely gut a downtown ala 1950s-1970s urban renewal and remove its character.

the South Bethlehem Historic District was created about twenty years ago. Properties like the Rooney Building, Litzenberger House and Flatiron Building are therefore grandfathered into that district because they were built prior to its creation. Their existence is not justification to do the same thing. The parking garage and Zest building were built larger than should have been permitted under the city ordinance and Secretary of the Interior's Standards that apply. There was a lot of politics at work during that process and when several Members of Council (Reynolds, Callahan to name two) and Mayors accept very large campaign contributions from developers, well developers expect results. It's why I won't be accepting those kinds of contribution to my mayoral campaign fund. I'm running to represent the residents of Bethlehem, who far too often have been kicked to the curb. As you drive across the Fahy Bridge notice how the Zest and city garage completely obliterated the stepped up streetscape to the point where you can't even see a hint of the West 4th Street building skyline.