



Northside 2027 Takes a First Step (3) (4)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Gadfly's posts,
Neighborhoods, Northside 2027, Serious
Issues October 24, 2018

*(3rd in a series of posts on
Northside 2027)*

*(4th in a series of posts on
Neighborhoods)*

Daryl Nerl, "With \$100,000 investment, Friendship Park finds friend in Bethlehem's North Side 2027." *Morning Call*, October 12, 2018.

"This week in Bethlehem history: Tank Park." *Bethlehem Press*, January 17, 2013.

Let's be sure to keep Northside 2027 on our radar. As a first tangible move, Mayor Donchez plunked down \$100,000 for renovating Friendship Park, "the square-block pocket park framed by East Garrison, East North and Penn streets."

I know that some of you will recognize the location better if I say (hem, hem) that it's kinda behind Mach's Gute.

Daryl's story outlines the projected improvements:

"The city will buy new play equipment for young children to slide, swing and climb on; install a spongy ground surface around them; add benches, trees and other landscaping; and reduce the amount of macadam."

Daryl's story also outlines better than Gadfly could last time some of the motivating reasons behind the Northside 2027 project as a whole:

"The neighborhood includes both Thomas Jefferson and William Penn elementary schools, which have both seen an increase in recent years of transient students and more pupils who qualify for free and reduced lunches, school district officials say."

The rate of unemployment in the neighborhood is higher than the city average and there has also been an uptick in the number of homes that have gone up for sheriff's sale for tax delinquency, city officials said. Housing stock in the neighborhood is also generally older and has a lower sale value than other homes in the city.



Fifty-five percent of the houses in the neighborhood contain rental units, 37 percent are owner-occupied and 8 percent are vacant, according to statistics provided by WRT, an urban design and planning firm that is leading an analysis of the neighborhood.”

The Gadfly visited the park on a recent unfortunately pretty dismal afternoon weather-wise. His first impression was how unexpectedly huge the park is as it opened up on the left as he pulled down the narrowish Garrison St.

Who named the park “Friendship” and why? Anybody know? Can you hear kids saying, “I’ll meet you at Friendship”? Nice. (Gadfly hopes that great tree survives reconstruction!)

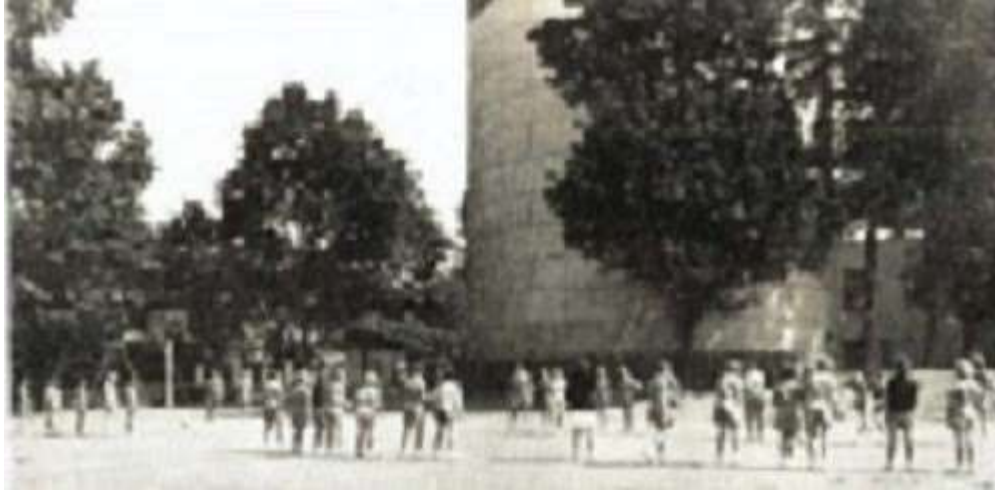
The Friendship Park has found a “friend” in Mayor Donchez, Councilman Reynolds, and other City officials.



Felt like a “Twilight Zone” episode on the dismal day Gadfly visited. Where are the kids? I hope not immobilized by their mobile devices. Gadfly hopes the park is not too late to save their souls from tech-rot.



Huge! Look at that space! Gadfly can just hear a kid cocking a football and yelling, “Go deep!” Macadam? They were tough in the old days. Every playground in America has a net like this. Gadfly couldn’t resist. Grabbed the bb from the back of the car. Wanted to see if the jump shot (now a hop shot) still worked.



“Tanks” to an unnamed writer at the *Bethlehem Press* (see the link above), we know that the park has a history. It was once “Tank Park.” And its roots go back to Bethlehem’s origin! On the site of an original Bethlehem water reservoir, a huge tank – holding 800,000 gallons of water – was erected in 1872, and tanks resided thereon till 1965. (Eerie. What is going on here? Looks like the apes around the monolith in “2001: A Space Odyssey.”)

Great start to a great project. Gadfly looks forward to following the progress.

