

Key Southside grocery site will live on

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Southside](#) May 1, 2021

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

Kudos to the Mayor, the Administration, Council members, and residents who sprang into action when Ahart's folded.

selections from [Christina Tatu](#), "[Ahart's Market in Bethlehem sold for \\$2.3 million with plan to keep it a grocery store.](#)" *Morning Call*, April 30, 2021.

A buyer has closed on the former Ahart's Market in south Bethlehem, paying for \$2.3 million for the property with the intent of keeping it a grocery store, a listing agent and Bethlehem officials confirmed Friday evening.

The market, long considered a staple in south Bethlehem at 410 Montclair Ave., closed after 20 years last month. Steve Clipman, a real estate broker with TRUE Commercial in Lancaster, which listed Ahart's, said a new buyer closed on the property Thursday, buying it for \$2.3 million. It will take about six months before a grocery store is opened there again.

The Bethlehem location was critical, however, for an area that is considered a food desert, without ready access to fresh fruit and vegetables. City officials sprang into action working to identify a buyer for the property who would keep it a grocery store.

The 24,535-square-foot-building will undergo extensive renovations.

The property was only listed for two months before Thursday's sale and attracted plenty of attention, he said.

Mayor Robert Donchez confirmed the sale Friday evening, though he also declined to identify the buyer. City officials have been in contact with the buyer for several weeks and they hope to make an official announcement soon, he said.

“I impressed upon this individual that it was very important to keep the facility as a full-fledged grocery store that serves a large clientele in Southside Bethlehem and Fountain Hill,” Donchez said. “He was very receptive. Over the last three weeks, our conversations were always positive and we knew they were getting very close to finalizing.”

Friday evening, Donchez said he was elated the deal finally went through and he looks forward to making an announcement.

“I grew up on the Southside and my mother shopped at that store until the day she died,” he said. “It’s one of the anchors of the Southside community.”

In the meantime, as residents await the re-opening of the market, the nonprofit Kellyn Foundation, based out of Tatamy, will operate a “Real Food Mobile Market” in Ahart’s parking lot every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The first mobile market is planned for this Saturday and will likely operate until the store re-opens, said Eric Ruth, head of the Tatamy-based Kellyn Foundation.

The nonprofit has a mission of bringing fresh and nutritious food to areas lacking reliable access. The mobile market will be filled with locally grown produce as well as healthy prepared foods, like plant-based cuisine, salads and breads.

City officials also partnered with Kellyn, providing \$55,000 in Community Development Block Grant COVID funds to start a coupon program for eligible residents. Under that program, qualifying residents of the city can fill out an application to get a \$20 coupon they can use weekly at the mobile market, explained Alicia Miller Karner, Bethlehem’s Director of Community and Economic Development.

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