

# Proactive changes regarding student housing around Lehigh approved

The Bethlehem Gadfly Southside December 11, 2020

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

*Selections from Louis Gombocz, “Planners approve changes to regulate off-campus student housing in South Side Bethlehem.” WFMZ, December 10, 2020.*

A zoning amendment to regulate off-campus housing for college students in Bethlehem is one step closer to becoming adopted.

The Bethlehem Planning Commission voted 4-1 on Wednesday afternoon to recommend to city council changes it made regarding the creation of two student housing overlay zoning districts at the edges of Lehigh University’s Asa Packer Campus in South Side Bethlehem.

It grandfathered in existing housing in the zoning areas with a maximum of five students per residence.

Newly-built student housing with a maximum of three occupants per unit would be permitted in most commercial neighborhoods located farther north near the Lehigh River.

“This is not an attempt to create affordable housing or to reduce the number of students on the South Side, but an overall way to manage housing better,” Heller commented.

She explained the changes are “proactive” in regard to the future development of student housing and ensuring it is compatible with the surrounding community.

Casting the only dissenting vote to the changes, planning member Matt Malozzi said the student housing overlay zoning districts are merely an extension of Lehigh’s campus, and the few homeowners still living in the area will be gone eventually.

James Byszewski, managing partner of Fifth Street Properties, said the boundaries proposed in the ordinance are not indicative of where students actually live off campus. He also questioned how the city plans on enforcing who lives where, depending upon whether or not a resident is a student.

South Side resident Anna Smith applauded the city’s three-year-long planning effort to stabilize the area’s housing stock, especially as there are increasingly more developers and property buyers investigating opportunities near the university.

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