

The Value of Neighborhood Associations (2)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Neighborhoods, Serious Issues October 18, 2018

(2nd in a series of posts on neighborhoods – see also Northside)

Barbara Diamond enjoys retirement as Lehigh University Director of Foundation Relations by engaging in various activities and organizations hopefully for the betterment of the community. Her particular interests at the moment are preventing gun violence, local government ethics reform, and Bethlehem Democratic Committee work.

Thank you Gadfly. You mention the Airbnb issue, and that is all about the threat they pose to neighborhoods. Commercial operations (whole house rentals with absentee owners) are popping up in Bethlehem's neighborhoods, not just the historic district. We are fighting to protect Bethlehem's neighborhoods. Thanks for creating a thread about the Airbnb issue.

As a resident of the historic district, I can say that it is not so much the age of the houses that makes us a cohesive neighborhood; it is the existence of our neighborhood association (BHDA) that makes it possible to know and interact with our neighbors. (BTW – BHDA is not just an organization of home owners; anyone can belong. We even have members who don't live in the district.) As you have noted with Mt. Airy and their terrific work with the Rose Garden proposal and Armory issue, the benefit of an association is its ability to be a vehicle for community engagement and action. Perhaps identifying neighborhoods could lead to the development of more neighborhood associations. That would contribute a lot to maintaining the small-town feeling of our large city.