

Improve Northside neighborhood: make Linden and Center Streets two-way again

The Bethlehem Gadfly Neighborhoods, Northside 2027, Serious Issues April 9, 2019

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(the latest in a series of posts on Northside 2027 and Neighborhoods)

“There is no reason why good cannot triumph as often as evil.

The triumph of anything is a matter of organization.”

(Kurt Vonnegut)

Bill Scheirer is an economist who grew up in Bethlehem, spent 40 years in DC, and retired here in 2003. He is a life member of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City and was on the Mayor’s Task Force for the City of Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Zoning Map.

Northside 2027 meeting Wednesday April 11, 5:30, William Penn School

Gadfly:

On Thursday, October 11, the City of Bethlehem, with their consultants, held a planning meeting in Liberty High School to gather ideas for a vision entitled North Side 2027, defined as the area bounded by Elizabeth Avenue, and Main, Broad, and Maple Streets. One of the announced goals was to create a greater sense of neighborhood identity and unity.

Possibly the most important thing the city can do to improve neighborhood identity and unity is make Linden and Center Streets two-way again. For example, Center Street is one-way northbound from Church Street to Elizabeth Avenue, with two lanes of traffic, plus one lane of parking on each side. At Elizabeth Avenue the left traffic lane must turn left into Elizabeth Avenue, leaving only one lane to continue northbound. There always seems to be one or two or three cars that do not want to get in line to go northbound, so they get in the left lane and drive faster, looking for a spot to cut into the line of cars waiting their turn to go northbound. Some of the cars in the proper lane also increase their speed, to avoid being cut off. This creates almost a wall of traffic splitting the neighborhood in half. When one wishes to cross Center

Street on foot, or even in a car, it is necessary to look carefully to the south to make sure that the next pack of cars is not bearing down. I have been told that it would cost a million dollars to make Center and Linden Streets two-way again. It is difficult to imagine what could cost so much. But if the City is really serious about improving neighborhood identity and unity, it will find a way to do this. Perhaps some grant money will be available, since the goal is a neighborhood more tied together.

This traffic pattern was established to quickly get the steelworkers in and out of the city. I haven't seen many of those lately.

- Bill

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