

# The 548 developers give Gadfly a headache

The Bethlehem Gadfly 548 N. New St., Neighborhoods, Northside, Serious Issues September 16, 2019

*(8th in a series of posts about 548 N. New St.)*

Gadfly began this thread on 548 N. New on September 10 by saying he “found himself very reflective after the Planning Commission meeting of August 26. And — to tell the truth — sad.”

Now that we have a complete overview of the players and the process, let’s put a foundation under those feelings, starting with a closer analysis of the developer rationale for the design.

Gadfly doesn’t feel the developer was prepared for the Planning Commission member’s question about the design.

And his answer was totally inadequate and, Gadfly thinks, insulting and dishonest.

Scheirer and Carrell-Smith deserved better. “We” deserved better.

The developers:

*“We understand that [the 548 design] is modern, but when modern design is actually done right we feel it not only enhances it, not only complements it, but also enhances the historic architecture. So I mean, we feel that, we understand that people may not like this in the historic downtown, but this is invigorating type design . . . people want to live downtown, be downtown, live free, and spend money downtown. We feel this is, this is the way things are headed. We love design, we love*

*Bethlehem, and we want to invest in Bethlehem . . . continue enhancing the downtown.”*

- *We understand that it is modern, but when modern design is actually done right we feel it not only enhances it, not only complements it, but also enhances the historic architecture.* To Gadfly, who has no architectural savvy, this is an astounding claim made totally without example or evidence or data, so it's meaningless.
- *We understand that people may not like this in the historic downtown, but this is invigorating type design.* Gadfly does not understand the relation between the first part of the sentence and the second. This is a type of non sequitur. Precisely what will be the nature of the invigoration, and how will it enhance the surrounding historic architecture? If the second part of the sentence is meant to mollify the antipathy of the people in the first part of the sentence, it is not clear how.
- *People want to live downtown, be downtown, live free, and spend money downtown.* What does “live free” mean? Is the assumption here that a differently designed building would not attract such people? If so, no basis is provided for believing so. And Kim Carrell-Smith offered to provide data that historical architecture is an economic driver.
- *We feel this is, this is the way things are headed.* To what does this refer? To directions in City planning? Or to trends in urban architecture? Or to what? Not clear. This statement is meaningless.
- *We love design, we love Bethlehem, and we want to invest in Bethlehem.* Ends with a love feast. Kumbaya, my Planning Commission, kumbaya. Smoke screen hiding empty argument.
- *We try to be sensitive to the surrounding area [quote by the developer the night of the meeting].* Please. Pu-leeze.

For Gadfly, the developer response to the design question is non-sense.

Yet the Planning Commission did not blink.

The irony is that the developers could have made a good case on each point. Gadfly could write it for them. But there was no effort to do so. Their answer is manifestly skimpy.

And thus we find a rightfully “baffled” Kim Carrell-Smith, “baffled by the developer’s characterization that this modern building fits into the historic downtown and complements it.”

Gadfly feels justified in feeling the developers were insulting in treating “us” as empty heads.

But why does he feel they were dishonest as well?

Because, Gadfly feels, they must have known they should have been making the exact opposite case for their modern design but didn’t feel it would fly.

That modern design is so obviously different from the surrounding area that, if they were honest, they should have been “selling” its difference as a needed and necessary positive change agent in a section of the City that needed a boost.

For, after all, that’s what the Planning Commission did!

Yes, oh yes, my good followers, the Planning Commission made a case for the design 180-degrees from the creators of the design.

O, my aching head, says Gadfly.

*to be continued . . .*