

# City presents draft report on Southside historic core

The Bethlehem Gadfly Southside April 3, 2021

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

Seems like a lot of Southside planning going on these days. Which is good. Your tax dollars at work.

Gadfly has tried to cover all the meetings. Click [Southside](#) on the right-hand sidebar and scroll backwards to come up to speed.

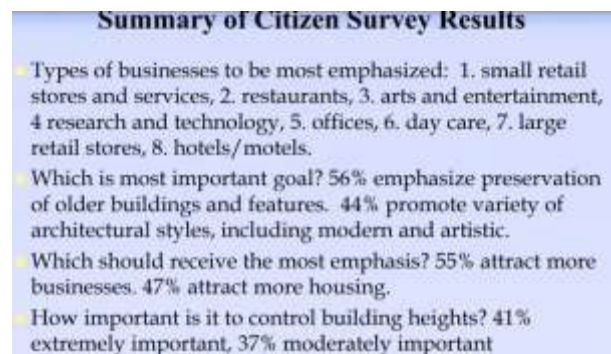
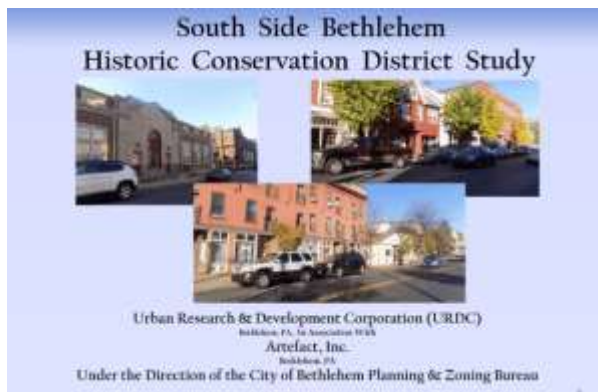
The City held a public meeting Thursday night April 1 to present the draft of a report on the historic core.

The meeting was well attended (c. 50), but, parenthetically, there were complaints about the meeting not being well publicized. Attendees complained of learning about the meeting late or by chance. Maybe some interested parties did not learn of the meeting at all. The City promised to work on better communication.

Here are a few of the slides from the beginning of the City presentation (sorry, bound to cause eye strain, I know): a summary of a resident survey, identifying concerns to balance, and culminating in the ever growing attention to affordable housing.

Gadfly will come back and focus on what he's now hearing referred to at meeting after meeting as "the elephant in the room": building height.

Notice that under consideration in addressing the "serious concerns" about affordable housing is offering the developer the incentive of increased building height.



How important is it to control the exterior appearance of new buildings? 54% very important, 35% moderately important.

How important is it to control the exterior appearance of changes to existing buildings? 50% very important, 39% moderately important

How important is it to control the demolition of older buildings in the Historic District? 55% very important, 27% moderately important.

### Community Survey cont.

- What do you like most about the Historic District? Walkable, community, greenway, variety of styles, cultural diversity, older charm, historic character
- What do you like least about the Historic District? Traffic congestion, new development that does not fit in, disrepair of buildings, empty storefronts.

### Balancing Various Public Concerns

Historic preservation and height and density limits needs to be balanced with the need for additional housing, for persons of various income levels and for persons with disabilities.



New construction also generates increased tax revenues and results in new residents supporting local businesses.



There are serious concerns about providing affordable housing, particularly as rental and sale housing prices have greatly increased in recent years.

It can be difficult for families to compete for housing with college students.

The City is investigating various incentives that could be offered for affordable housing, such as possibly a slightly taller maximum building height, increased densities, reduced parking requirements and more attractive tax incentives.



*to be continued . . .*

The Bethlehem Gadfly