

# Still wrestling with Wind Creek

The Bethlehem Gadfly Neighborhoods, Serious Issues, Wind Creek Casino December 20, 2019

 *Latest post in a series about Wind Creek Casino* 

There are some people with whom you just don't argue.

One is your barber.

While you are in the chair. Especially for your holiday haircut.

Somehow Wind Creek came up.

And Gadfly stupidly said — as he has said several times in these pages — that the Wind Creek desire to make Bethlehem “the #1 destination in the Northeast” with a waterpark troubles him greatly.

Call him “Mohawk Gadfly” now.

Gadfly has taken somewhat of a beating in circles other than that surrounding the barber pole for holding the negative feeling about Wind Creek's plan, making remarks about it here, and refusing to automatically genuflect to the Economic Deity.

(After all, he hasn't even seen any plans or heard any details of the Wind Creek project, so how fair is that feeling?)

And he hasn't quite been able to articulate why he feels that way. But he's getting there.

Gadfly has the kind of mind where particles float around looking for a point of coalescence.

Particles like Wind Creek's #1 destination quote, the goal of Festival UnBound, Dan Church's line "the city has no jurisdiction over architectural style" (except in the historical districts), the "blending" architecture promoted by the Smith women, a line from one of the Festival UnBound panel members that "it matters who is at the table," multiple posts and conversations about residents trying to control the quality of life in their neighborhoods, and the "imploring" letter from the South Bethlehem Historical Society (remember that one?).

Coalescence occurred when a follower recently used the term "creative placemaking," a term Gadfly had never heard, and a practice fairly new but apparently well known by people who work to shape public spaces, neighborhoods, cities, regions.

Gadfly did some quick google searches. So he's no expert on "creative placemaking." But he liked what he was able to glean from some surface reading.

If Gadfly understands "creative placemaking" correctly, artists are instrumental, catalytic in design processes. And design comes bottom up, design grows out of the community, design is community-led.

Here's one description of "creative placemaking":

*Creative placemaking refers to the process in which "partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities." Creative placemaking advocates believe that community development projects benefit from the participation of artists at the onset of projects, and on the planning and design teams that shape our communities. . . . Forget the traditional, staid public meeting format and instead imagine artists engaging community members using multiple languages to generate meaningful dialogues, capturing their creativity and local knowledge to better inform the ultimate design of the project.*

Or, again:

*Creative placemaking is a process where community member, artists, arts and culture organizations, community developers, and other stakeholders use arts and cultural strategies to implement community-led change.*

Wind Creek has bought some space in “our” town and is now going to give “us” a new identity of its own choosing.

(Or at least so it seems. Maybe there was more interactive discussion behind the scenes.)

Gadfly, as your self-appointed and — ha! — maybe self-serving representative resident, feels forced on his back, forearms at right angles, palms facing up, resisting the overpowering and unquestioned weight of economic argument.

Gadfly is soooo dramatic.

Simply put, Wind Creek is telling us what’s good for us.

Gadfly’s having a hard time with that.

It’s not like we are without an identity now.

Steeple and stacks.

It’s not like we cannot evolve a new identity.

That’s what Festival UnBound was all about.

But steeple and stacks and slides?

Gadfly’s learned there was a different way.

What if Wind Creek had engaged in a collaborative process with us of creative placemaking for that several acres in the southeast end of town instead of decreeing our destiny?

When it comes to creating identity, Gadfly would like to participate.

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*Gadfly's quick google search on creative placemaking:*

*[American Planning Association](#)*

*[Defining Creative Placemaking \(NEA\)](#)*

*[Approaches to Creative Placemaking](#)*

*[What is creative placemaking?](#)*