

The Planners speak up about the design of the 548

The Bethlehem Gadfly 548 N. New St., Neighborhoods, Northside, Serious Issues September 14, 2019

(6th in a series of posts about 548 N. New St.)

Who's in charge of beauty in Bethlehem?

Gadfly

*"How do you justify changing the streetscape there,
the historic streetscape, so dramatically?"*

Bill Scheier

*"I just ask, does this building fit into the character
of that neighborhood?"*

Kim Carrell-Smith

In their final comments, the three Planning Commission members did address the issue of the design for the 548 raised by residents Scheier, Carrell-Smith, and the Gadfly.

Which responses we will consider in the next post in this series (probably) as Gadfly begins to reflect on this entire process.



But, first, give a listen to the Planning Commission viewpoints:

<https://youtu.be/qeLD3lUBGIU>

PC member 1:

- “Mr. Gallagher used the words ‘moving’ and ‘growing’ and ‘moving forward’.”
- “And, yes, even though the rendering does not show what’s currently there, and, yes, I would concur that I would like to see that as well, but moving and growing 10, 15, 20 years from now, I’m not sure if that picture was there of what is currently there, I can’t predict those buildings will still be there 10, 20 years from now.”
- “And moving and growing and moving forward, I think the fact that it’s not in the historical district something like that would

increase foot traffic in our downtown, would draw in the type of clientele that we're trying to have within our City."

- "It's going to improve our overall outlook and image in terms of where we're going and moving toward, so, even though it's not in the historical district . . . I would like to make a motion."

PC member 2:

- "The architectural design doesn't bother me as much as the fact that this is a new development and hopefully the rest will follow, and I agree with [PC member 1] with what he's trying to confer there . . . my biggest concern about the project right now is [one lane of traffic]."

PC member 3:

- "I actually applaud the architectural design."
- "I think the design is going to elevate the architecture in the surrounding 70s-designed buildings in the future."
- "Moving forward I think this will infuse a lot of excitement into the area."
- "Architecture is very subjective, and, if nothing else, people who visit Bethlehem will have something more to talk about."

Now we can see the elements of the Planning Commission affirmative position: 548 is not in the historical district, which means that it's not tied to the past but can be a catalyst for elevating and exciting and even

beneficially controversial change, an indication of our commitment to modern progress that will benefit the City economically by attracting urban dwellers who, in the developer's language, want to "live free" and who will spend money in the downtown.

Does that seem a fair reading of the PC position? It's risky to try to meld other people's ideas together.

Chew on this.

to be continued . . .