

“Affordable housing, as we all know, is a challenge throughout the Lehigh Valley and we are making an investment”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, Serious Issues, Southside, Uncategorized July 2, 2019

(The latest in a series of posts on the Southside and Neighborhoods)

Tip o’ the hat, CW N, that’s the article I was looking for! I don’t see the project called “Neighborhood Works” but “City Lights,” the project CM Callahan was unsuccessfully seeking info about at the last Council meeting. Same thing, I guess.

Gadfly:

That was not the mayor’s work but CACLV:

<https://www.mcall.com/news/local/bethlehem/mc-nws-south-bethlehem-affordable-housing-20190408-4x6q3gcyerhb5hpt7fywmq4zuu-story.html>

Councilwoman Olga Negrón

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Nicole Radzievich, “South Bethlehem lands \$1 million investment in affordable housing.” Morning Call, April 8, 2019.

The affordable housing proposal envisioned at the so-called “zombie tract” — a grassy slope in south Bethlehem where some streets were cut more than a dozen years ago but nothing was ever built — is now

officially dead. But the spirit behind the “City Lights” project will live on as the \$1 million in grants awarded for the development now will be spent on five weathered houses scattered across the South Side.

Standing in front of one of those homes at 735 Hayes St., Mayor Robert Donchez announced Monday that the grants and city contributions will be diverted so the Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley can bring those homes up to code for sale to first-time homebuyers. The homes will remain affordable for 99 years.

“The goal of this program is really to increase homeownership among people who have been excluded from the housing market,” said Donchez, who grew up just blocks from Hayes Street. “Affordable housing, as we all know, is a challenge throughout the Lehigh Valley and we are making an investment.”

Bethlehem’s affordable housing project comes after recent years of community investment on Hayes Street. CACLV and the city have helped rehabilitate the facades of 13 homes, rehab three homes, plant 39 trees, paint a mural and develop a pocket park.

During the five years that those improvements were made, the Hayes Street corridor has experienced a 9% increase in homeownership.

[Council-goers will recognize that CM Callahan consistently points to Hayes Street as a sign of valuable City activity in improving affordable housing.]

City Lights had been billed as a \$6 million residential project that would attract people of all incomes to the 1200 blocks of Sixth and Seventh streets. CACLV held neighborhood meetings last summer, but ultimately decided the project was “financially untenable, illustrating the market challenges of developing housing for low- to moderate-income

homeowners.” Plans for the property date back to 2003 under a previous developer.