

# **“How do you justify changing . . . the historic streetscape so dramatically?”**

The Bethlehem Gadfly 548 N. New St., Neighborhoods, Northside, Serious Issues September 13, 2019

*(4th in a series of posts about 548 N. New St.)*

*Who’s in charge of beauty in Bethlehem?*

*Gadfly*

No context needed. Just listen to these two fine resident comments on the proposal for the new building at 548 N. New St.

Bill Scheier: <https://youtu.be/Foyu7b5psMM>

- “People tend to agree that there is a special quality of life in Bethlehem.”
- “One of the components of that quality of life is the streetscape.”
- “Your project will change the streetscape in that block that has existed for 100 years.”
- “It is a dramatic change to the streetscape.”
- “Other than market demand, and other than you want to build it, how do you justify changing the streetscape there, the historic streetscape so dramatically?”

The aforementioned Kim Carrell-Smith:  
[https://youtu.be/\\_vDUioL8XFk](https://youtu.be/_vDUioL8XFk)

- “I think that we are all pretty aware that Bethlehem’s brand, if we had one, would be history.”
- “And I think that eliminating historical pieces of the streetscape bit by bit and replacing them with high-rises may miss that fact.”
- “Historical architecture and historical streetscapes are economic drivers.”
- “Bethlehem’s brand is history and its historical ambience, and that’s why the downtown was redeveloped with a historical feel in the 1970s, thanks to visionary City leaders who were really far ahead of their time in recognizing that historical preservation pays in many ways.”
- “I think the New St. developers’ idea of demolishing this dignified brick twin . . . that was built around 1900 and replacing it with a glass and metal high-rise apartment, although perhaps appropriate for other communities and maybe other places in Bethlehem, is not in keeping with what makes Bethlehem’s downtown area, whether Southside or Northside, unique and appealing.”
- “I’m kind of baffled by the developer’s characterization that this modern building fits into the historic downtown and complements it.”
- “We are probably all in consensus that . . . the bank building . . . is not a great precedent or something to cite for the value of modernism or the scale in this area.”
- “The design clearly [detracts from the historic district a block away].”
- “Could apartments be constructed behind and hidden by a lower building?”

- “Although a lot of people like to cite New Urbanism as a reason for urging density . . . currently most planners would agree that we’re kind of embracing a new New Urbanism these days where it calls for thoughtful density that fits into the character of the neighborhood.”
- “And I just ask does this building fit into the character of that neighborhood?”

Chew on these.

*to be continued . . .*