

Sunrise on the SouthSide (5): Long-time Believers

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Festival UnBound

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October 4-13

(Latest in a series of posts about Lehigh University and the Southside)

Sunrise on the Southside

Chapter 3: *Long-time Believers*

We continue to look at the Southside through Lehigh University's promotional "Sunrise" video. Their project came to Gadfly's attention just as we have been spending a lot of time on the Southside, a focus especially stimulated by the moving letter from the [South Bethlehem Historical Society](#) and the formation of [Bethlehem Residents for Responsible Development](#).

- *John Saraceno is among a core group of business owners and lifelong residents who have long believed in South Bethlehem's potential. For decades, Saraceno pushed to make*

city leaders more attentive to the South Side and reached out to university officials to encourage more involvement.

- With the South Side already struggling when he first launched his design business in the 1980s, he helped form a SouthSide Merchants Association and created events to draw people into the community. He renovated the 1929 building that houses his business, the Lit coffee shop and other entities. And before the SouthSide Ambassadors took hold, he picked up trash and swept gutters in front of his property.
- “There’s a lot of good things that have been going on for a long time,” Saraceno says. . . . “There are pieces falling into place. It’s just a progression of steps that were taken over the years.”
- The merchants group that Saraceno helped found has evolved into the SouthSide Arts District, a revitalization program that works to improve economic conditions in the core business district. . . . Among the many events are Spring on the SouthSide, First Friday, the Out to Lunch Concert Series and the Screen on the Green community movie night at the Zoellner Arts Center’s gardens.
- Each year, the non-profit SouthSide Film Institute also hosts the SouthSide Film Festival, which celebrates independent films from around the world. And the Bethlehem Farmers’ Market at Farrington Square brings in locally grown foods Thursdays from May through October.
- The district’s design committee promotes the physical art visible on the streets (brightly painted murals, lively flower pots, funky bike racks).
- As the SouthSide Arts District moves forward with its initiatives, South Bethlehem’s history looms large. “With everything that we’re trying to do to advance into the future,” Missy Hartney says, “we still have a big respect for the past and making sure that ... we’re not tearing down our history.”

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