

Sunrise on the SouthSide (6): Neighborhood Revitalization

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

Sunrise on the Southside

Chapter 4: Neighborhood Revitalization

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](#).

- Just steps from the university, on streets that are predominantly to the east and west of campus, are row homes,

apartments and small homes that juniors and seniors and graduate students opt to rent. About a third of undergraduates live off campus.

- With the neighborhood in transition, university and city leaders grew concerned about rental property conditions. In response, with financial support from Lehigh, the city now designates two of its city code enforcement officers to regularly inspect South Side rental properties, including off-campus houses where students reside.
- “We want to make sure that the housing stock continues to be strong, safe and stable,” says Bethlehem Mayor Donchez, who acknowledges a number of “very good landlords.”
- Lehigh also purchased a number of properties near the west end of campus that were blighted, in poor condition or had earned a reputation of bad student rentals. . . . The university renovated those properties in an effort to improve the housing stock, making them available to faculty, staff and graduate students.
- The goal is to make sure that we feel that the neighborhood has stabilized to a certain extent, that you don’t have a great level of turnover . . . The goal [is] to have more people, even not associated with the university, have homeownership so that it becomes much more of the family neighborhood that it once was.
- Those strolling the Greenway pass Esperanza Garden, a community garden that grew out of a collaboration among Lehigh, its students and the city, and the Harmony Pavilion, part of the Lehigh Chinese Bridge Project.
- Neighborhood revitalization is happening on a bunch of different fronts.
- The kids are so important—just as important as the tourists coming in from New York [for the Wind Creek casino]. . . . The amount of money they spend on the South Side is a tremendous boon for the economy.

- Now there's a lot of pride in ownership, and people have reinvested in their own investments. The South Side has some tremendous projects that have gone up recently. We're definitely the jewel of the Lehigh Valley.

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