

# “It’s a South Side thing. Everyone goes here,” but Ahart’s is closing — it’s time to act!

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Southside](#) March 15, 2021

 *The latest in a series of posts on the Southside* 

Dear Friends of Southside Bethlehem,

As you may have heard, Ahart’s Market will be closing at the end of April. This supermarket is an essential institution on the Southside and provides access to food for 25% of the Southside population that would not otherwise have walkable access to a supermarket.

When Food Lane closed at the same location in 2001, the Bethlehem mayor used every incentive available to attract a new supermarket to the location. Please join us in encouraging Mayor Donchez and City Council to once again do all that they can to secure a new supermarket for the Ahart’s location by doing one or more of the following:

1. [Add your name to a letter](#) from community members to the Mayor and Council
2. Call in during public comment at a City Council Meeting. [Next meeting is Tuesday, March 16 at 7 pm](#)
3. Email the Mayor and City Council at: [rdonchez@bethlehem-pa.gov](mailto:rdonchez@bethlehem-pa.gov) and [cityclerk@bethlehem-pa.gov](mailto:cityclerk@bethlehem-pa.gov)

Questions? Concerns? Ideas? Send me an email and let’s chat!

Please feel free to forward to any friends who might be interested.

In solidarity,

Anna Smith  
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[\*selections from Christina Tatu and Ryan Kneller, “Longtime Bethlehem grocery store closing amid pandemic.” Morning Call, March 10, 2021.\*](#)

The Bethlehem location of Ahart's Market is closing at the end of April, a manager at the store confirmed Wednesday.

The South Side store at 410 Montclair Ave. has been a staple of the neighborhood for 20 years.

It will close April 30 because of slower sales caused by the coronavirus pandemic, manager Luis Morales said. Fewer students have been shopping at the store as Lehigh University switched to remote learning during the pandemic, which also affected sales, Morales said.

Customers at the store Wednesday afternoon were shocked and saddened by the news. The closure of Ahart's leaves South Side residents, many of whom are low income and without transportation, with one major grocery store, C-Town, on Third Street.

"I hope they find someone to buy and keep it open. A lot of older people walk here," said Donna Cardenas, who has been shopping at Ahart's for eight years, ever since she moved to the area from New York.

Cardenas said she will miss the fresh baked bread that's available every Sunday morning.

Jessica Bonilla, who lives one block from the market, said she's been a shopper almost every day for seven years.

"It surprised me when I heard they were closing," she said. "It's a clean store and I like the bread."

Latoya Murry has been shopping at the store since she was a child, when it was still a Food Lane. Now she shops there with her children.

"It's a South Side thing. Everyone goes here," she said. "It's sad to see them close. I do hope someone does something with it. It's just part of the South Side. Everyone kind of knows each other here."

In discussing the imminent arrival of Ahart's in October 2001, then-Bethlehem Mayor Don Cunningham noted that the former Food Lane was the only supermarket in South Bethlehem. It was heavily relied upon by residents and Lehigh University students.

So crucial was the store, Cunningham said, the city was provided low-interest loans and other financial incentives to lure Great Valu to south Bethlehem.

“In that neighborhood, it was critical for us to attract another supermarket,” Cunningham said, “So we created some incentives.”

**The Bethlehem Gadfly**