

# Historical preservation pays, part 4

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 Latest in a series of posts on new development 

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ref: [Historical preservation pays, part 1](#)

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ref: [Historical preservation pays, part 3](#)

## part 4 Conclusion

So as we march into the future in Bethlehem, could we look to the value of the past? Could we more intentionally blend our new buildings and development to harmonize with, and enhance what is good for our economy — that which we already possess in Bethlehem and other cities may not? We have three centuries of historical architecture and building stock composed of diverse historical materials; we have great old storefronts, historical vistas, and a compelling industrial/urban vibe, thanks to the presence of the blast furnaces and older industrial buildings.

Why use our mistakes of urban renewal —e.g., the Rooney Building or Brodhead House complexes on the Southside, or the City Hall or One Broad Street Plaza complexes on the Northside — as measuring sticks (literally and figuratively), when making choices for new design and construction? Why not embrace the ideas in “Older, Smaller, Better” and so many other studies? Upgrade, paint, and tweak the exteriors of older structures to enhance the historical vibe, emphasize adaptive reuse, and build new infill that is “context-sensitive.”

With every development proposal, ask city planners, historic district boards and developers to answer the question: does it honor and

complement the historical value that its proposed setting may already possess? How might they *blend in* the new with the old,

- *through compatible scale and massing*
- *by creating a complementary aesthetic*
- *using compatible materials*
- *and thinking strategically about infill rather than demolishing whole blocks at a time.*

We don't want to create copies of existing buildings or even keep every old building. But we definitely need to find ways that the new may peacefully and **profitably** coexist with the old, while maintaining Bethlehem's historical vibe. **SO MANY studies show that it's worth a try!**

*Fourth and final in a series*