

Southside Planning meeting agenda

The Bethlehem Gadfly Southside November 20, 2020

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

What types of new businesses are most appropriate?

The City's Zoning Ordinance allows different types of businesses in different zoning districts. In the commercial areas in this area, offices, day care centers, retail stores, personal services, and restaurants are allowed.

New drive-through restaurants, gas stations, auto repair and auto sales are not allowed.



First Floor Commercial Uses

Currently, commercial uses are required in first floor storefront locations. In these commercial districts, apartments and offices are limited to the upper floors.

In addition to zoning, there also is a question of which types of businesses should be emphasized in marketing. A retail market study was completed last year that found strong demand.



What types of new housing are most appropriate?

There are concerns about providing affordable housing, particularly as housing prices have greatly increased in recent years.

It can be difficult for families to compete for housing with college students.

As seen on the following map, tall buildings are currently allowed in the CB Central Business, which includes 3rd St. west of Polk St.



What heights of buildings are appropriate in different areas?

The Central Business district effectively allows up to 14 stories. This district extends west of Polk Street north of the Greenway, and west of Webster Street south of the Greenway Trail, down to Morton Street.

The portion of the Conservation District south of the Greenway and east of Webster Street is zoned Commercial Limited. That district effectively allows up to 5 stories.



Heights and Densities

There are concerns that some of the western areas that allow up to 14 stories by zoning are inconsistent with the intent of the Historic District.

Historic preservation and height and density limits needs to be balanced with the need for additional housing, for persons of various income levels and for persons with disabilities.

New construction also generates increased tax revenues and results in new residents supporting local businesses.



Compatible Infill Development

There are currently zoning design standards for older commercial areas.

They are designed to make sure new buildings are placed close to the street, with most new parking to the side or rear of the building.

The City also has design standards for the implementation of the Historic District regulations.



Opinions about the Historic Conservation District Regulations?

The existing Ordinance regulates new construction of buildings, building additions, demolition of a building in whole or in part, and major alterations to a building, including removal of architectural features.

The Ordinance addresses exterior architectural features which can be seen from a public street or way.

A Historic Conservation Commission makes recommendations in response to applications, with the final decision made by City Council.

Do people think some aspects are too strict, or not strict enough?

Ordinance and Design Guideline Revisions

This project will result in recommendations to:

- revise the City's Historic Conservation District Ordinance for the South Side;
- revise the City's Zoning Ordinance as it affects the South Side; and
- provide additional Design Standards for new construction and building additions.