

# Reflections on Southside Bethlehem, Part 3: An Alternative Approach to Development

The Bethlehem Gadfly Affordable Housing, Neighborhoods, Serious Issues, Southside June 14, 2019

*(Third in a 5-part series of posts on the Southside by Anna Smith)*

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Gadfly:

Instead of starting with nothing, why don't we start with *something*? Community-driven, asset-based development is an alternative approach that some community organizations have taken in south Bethlehem, and that can be applied to any potential development project. Working with residents and other stakeholders to identify a neighborhood's strengths and assets and then creating a plan for development that builds off those strengths ensures that development adds to a neighborhood's character without erasing the elements that attracted development in the first place.

A classic example is the South Bethlehem Greenway—a defunct rail line was converted into a community park that connects south Bethlehem commercial districts, improving walkability in an already walkable community.

On Hayes Street, the historic architecture of St. Stanislaus church was adapted into a multi-purpose space for the Southside Lofts affordable apartment community.

In both examples, a community need or challenge was identified and a strategy was developed to address that challenge by building off existing assets.

This approach brings its own challenges, and no development project will ever be supported by everyone. However, making an effort to engage community members tends to make for a better project in the end.

Anna