

## Bethlehem historic board says it would consider 7-story building with changes

Dennis Benner Third and New building April 2015

A South Bethlehem historic board indicated Monday it would likely allow this 7-story building at Third and New streets but members want some changes. *(Courtesy image | Howard Kulp Architects)*

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on April 27, 2015 at 9:46 PM, updated April 27, 2015 at 10:09 PM

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A South Side **Bethlehem** historic board indicated Monday it would likely allow **a 7-story building at Third and New streets** but members want some changes.

Another view of the proposed 7-story building at Third and New streets in Bethlehem.

*Courtesy image | Howard Kulp Architects*

South Bethlehem Historic Conservation District board members said they'd like developer Dennis Benner to consider fully recessing the building's top two floors to reduce appearance of the building's height.

Several members said they especially didn't like the corner tower, which one likened to a "flying saucer."

The building overall, however, was slightly better received by both the board and the public than **a 9-story building Benner received approval for at Fourth and Vine streets last year**. Several people said they appreciated that Benner tried to mimic the design of nearby buildings on his building's lower floors.

But some residents said they didn't see the point of having historic regulations in the neighborhood when the board continues to ignore them.

"Rules change based on who is before the board," said Stephen Barron Jr., president of the South Bethlehem Historical Society, **which has a lawsuit pending over the city's approval of Benner's 9-story building**. "A better model for South Bethlehem is economic development with an eye to the historic district that makes South Bethlehem unique."

Several residents who previously opposed Benner's 9-story urged the board to press for the highest quality design if they were going to approve the 7-story building.

"This is a really critical gateway to the South Side," resident Kim Carrell-Smith said. "It may determine how people view our historic South Side."

The proposed 7-story building will be the first building South Bethlehem visitors see coming over the Fahy Bridge, meeting attendees said. **The corner has been a vacant lot following a 2009 fire** and several attendees said they were grateful to see it being redeveloped even if they didn't agree with the height of the building.

Benner is proposing six stores on the first floor, 18 apartments on the upper two floors and four floors of offices. The building has an interested office tenant and the entire building is expected to bring 500 people into the business district, architect Howard Kulp said.

Historic board members said they needed to see renderings for all sides of the building; Benner only submitted renderings for the two sides that will face New and Third streets.

"It's just a little distressing we have an incomplete submission," said Craig Evans, who said he'd prefer a 5-story building.

Members Gary Lader and Philip Roeder said they would consider a 7-story building and members Seth Cornish and Beth Starbuck said it would depend on the design, especially on the upper floors.

"The top of it would be seen from everywhere," Cornish said.

Kulp said he would be back before the board with revised plans. The plans would then go before Bethlehem City Council for consideration.

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