

Bethlehem parking garage plan raises questions



Developer Dennis Benner proposes to build a 626-space parking garage that connects to a planned six-story office building at S. New and Third streets in south Bethlehem. (HOWARD KULP ARCHITECTS / CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

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I join residents of south Bethlehem in their protest of the construction of a huge parking deck adjacent to a proposed office-retail building planned by a local developer. The garage, in addition to being unsightly, would contribute nothing to the aesthetic value of the area.

Why should the Bethlehem Parking Authority have to assume the cost of construction and estimated annual maintenance costs? Why should visitors to Bethlehem and those who use the parking spaces and other decks in Bethlehem pay more for parking to help cover the costs of this "special" project? What will the impact be on businesses in Bethlehem that are already struggling to keep their doors open? Why doesn't the city pass on a portion of the cost to the developer who is receiving preferential treatment to erect a building for significant personal gain? Why should such a project be funded through \$5 million by way of state grant funding, representing our hard-earned tax dollars while other needs in our community go unmet?

This is setting a dangerous precedent for many years to come. It will be interesting to see how long the proposed tenants remain.

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