

Garage project shows lack of strategic parking in Bethlehem | Letter



This rendering, distributed by developer Dennis Benner in November 2013, shows his two buildings planned near South New Street in South Bethlehem with a planned parking garage in the middle where the Bethlehem Parking Authority is looking to build a garage. (Courtesy image | Howard Kulp Architects) (Courtesy image | Howard Kulp Architects)

By **Express-Times Letters to the Editor**
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The **proposed parking garage** to be built along with the Third and New streets Benner development in Bethlehem is an example of site-specific, uncoordinated planning. The South Side of Bethlehem has a surplus of parking; it's simply not in the most convenient locations.

Joseph Hoffmeier Jr., chairman of the Bethlehem Parking Authority stated, "There's actually a lot of parking in the South Side; it's just not in the right spot."

So why is the city rushing to construct a \$17.7 million, 626-car garage, before first utilizing its existing assets? If the city's primary concern is facilitating parking for Benner's approved Third and New streets development and his proposed Fourth and Vine streets development, then the construction of this parking garage is an absolute home run. However, if the city is concerned with creating a strategic parking plan with the best interests of the entire South Side in mind, this garage falls short.

This parking structure will add to an already congested New Street, encourage more driving in the central business district, and disproportionately benefit certain businesses while disadvantaging others. A comprehensive neighborhood parking strategy has the potential to promote a more walkable downtown with less cars and in turn less traffic. The city must re-examine its existing parking assets, which have already been paid for, and act with the entire South Side, and not just Benner, in mind.

Chester Toye
Lehigh University, Class of 2017

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