



# SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW

MASTER PLAN 2021-2027



**BETHLEHEM  
DEVELOPMENT**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** Master Plan 2021-2027 is a comprehensive strategy to provide housing revitalization, improved public and green spaces, and communication and connectivity through an Equitable Community Development approach in south Bethlehem. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Equitable Development is “an approach for meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant.” Equitable Community Development is grounded in community engagement, guided by the voices that live and work in south Bethlehem, and driven by the vision and needs of those who are most affected by the changing landscape of the district. Equitable Community Development recognizes the need to complement the growing development of south Bethlehem in pragmatic and unique ways that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant.

By ensuring the Equitable Community Development approach is grounded in community engagement, it is the goal that this plan, and the subsequent projects and activities which follow, be guided by the voices that live and work in south Bethlehem and driven by the vision and needs of those who are most affected by the changing landscape of the district. This is an initiative of the Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem (CADCB), a subsidiary of Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV) and is administered in partnership with several community organizations and the City of Bethlehem.

**SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** Master Plan 2021-2027 will begin with the approval of a Neighborhood Partnership Program through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) in 2021. **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** leverages this

funding to engage corporate, public, and private resources so that the community's vision of an equitable, inclusive, and diverse community can be actualized. The goals described in this plan will be accomplished through strategic partnerships among community organizations, residents, state and local governments, educational and healthcare institutions, and the private sector.

Through a comprehensive public input process, **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** has identified three areas in which to focus its resources over the next six years. **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** consists of three interconnected areas: housing affordability and quality, public and green spaces, and communication and connectivity. While the goals and strategies in this plan are listed by category, efforts in each of the three areas overlap and integrate with one another, strengthening and advancing the entire initiative.





South Bethlehem has a large population of renters which is accompanied by a high poverty rate, cost-burdened residents, and substandard housing. As housing costs continue to increase, residents increasingly feel as if they do not have a voice in the changing landscape of the district and worry they may become priced out of their neighborhoods. Opportunities that provide avenues for engagement and empowerment, such as a tenant rental association, will provide south Bethlehem's residents with the tools necessary to embolden and foster feelings of self-efficacy so that they are able to have a voice in the decisions affecting their lives. This effort, in combination with façade improvements and leveraged funding from ACLV's Community Action Better Homes (CABH) program to provide housing rehabilitation, will galvanize a comprehensive approach to encouraging housing affordability and quality throughout south Bethlehem.



In order to fully actualize and achieve Equitable Community Development in south Bethlehem, it will be necessary to engage the community. While community engagement is woven throughout all three priority areas, this section presents citizenship as the cornerstone which will drive all community-engagement-related efforts throughout the aforementioned priority areas. CADCB will identify contemporary social networking avenues and reinvigorate the "Southside Proud!" campaign to promote activities and ensure members of the community are continually connected with one another. In order to spur further community engagement, self-efficacy, and pride, CADCB will work with local residents to host/sponsor community building events, such as block parties, cultural celebration, and potlucks that bring neighborhoods and the larger community together. Finally, in an effort to ensure there is connectivity amongst all ages of the community, a Youth Advisory Council will be established that will act as a voice in the decisions being made on the youth's behalf and create programming, driven by south Bethlehem youth, that aligns with their interests. All of these efforts will facilitate a culture of community collaboration, engagement and empowerment that will achieve Equitable community development.



As development in south Bethlehem increases, it is necessary to ensure efforts are taken to sustain and enhance public and green spaces to achieve a healthy balance of built and natural environments. Public and green spaces offer a greater quality of life and act as cornerstones for intermingling of the community and places of reprieve, close to home. Food insecurity and quality of parks and playgrounds are chief concerns in south Bethlehem, identified through the community input process and data gathered. Efforts such as the Greenway Farmers Market will increase the availability and accessibility of fresh foods. Additionally, the Adopt-A-Park/Greenway programs will maintain and enhance public and green spaces. Both of these efforts will simultaneously act as vehicles that bring the community together and empower residents to become involved in meaningful ways and, themselves, enhance aspects of the community that were once disinvested in.



**PART 1:**  
**HISTORY  
AND PLAN  
DEVELOPMENT**

## SOUTH BETHLEHEM: A HISTORY OF MULTI-CULTURALISM

South Bethlehem, a subset of the City of Bethlehem, has a rich, culturally diverse history dating back prior to its incorporation in May 1865. To this day, despite struggles, south Bethlehem has retained its cultural diversity, distinct identity, and sense of place while, concurrently, making progress to revitalize and increase opportunity throughout its community. To better understand why south Bethlehem's residents are so invested in and have such strong ties to south Bethlehem, it is pertinent to understand how this collective voice, advocating for its community, is nothing new to south Bethlehem; rather, it is seen consistently over the past 150+ years. In the south Bethlehem community – one with a poverty rate of 27.5% and a population that is 65.1% Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino/Latina residents – there is an extensive history that has led to where it is today, one rooted in multi-culturalism, hope, and hard work.

Bethlehem was founded in 1741 at the juncture of the Lehigh River and the Monocacy Creek by immigrant Moravian missionaries. The location proved ideal for creating one of North America's first industrial complexes, which included a saw mill, tannery, blacksmith shop, and a brass foundry. This spirit of industrialism foreshadowed what was to come. By the late 1800s, the City had become an industrial powerhouse with the formation of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and Bethlehem Iron Company, which became Bethlehem Steel in 1902,

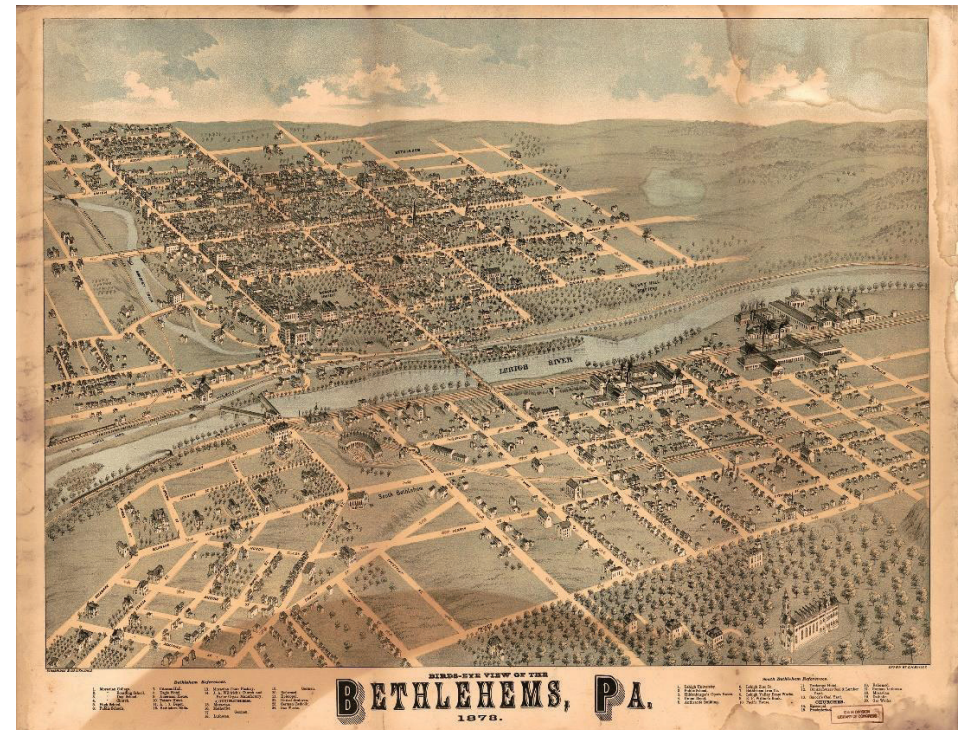
ultimately becoming the second largest steel producer in the United States. Due, much in part, to the growth of Bethlehem Iron Company, came a need for more workers. Bringing blast furnaces, factories, railroads, foreigners, various religions, and much else to city required Bethlehem to expand, despite the Moravian leaders wanting to preserve the old way of life. Bethlehem had now become caught up in the financial-industrial complex of the big Eastern cities. In 1845, the Moravians abandoned the policy of exclusivity and permitted others to buy property in Bethlehem, leading to the development of the area now known as south Bethlehem, neighboring Bethlehem Steel. Bethlehem Steel drew immigrants from all over not only to America, but specifically south Bethlehem. By 1865, the population of south Bethlehem was probably between 1,500 and 2,000, which led citizens to petition for incorporation of the community as a borough of Bethlehem and the subsequent incorporation in May of 1865. The economic opportunity that the Bethlehem Iron Company (later Bethlehem Steel) offered, led to south Bethlehem transforming into a cultural hub for working-class families seeking a better life with greater opportunities.

Bethlehem Steel workers lived within walking distance of the plant. While they did not live in want, they were poor and without social standing. Thus, south Bethlehem took on the contradictory symbol: possibly the

richest spot in the Lehigh Valley in terms of industrial capital, it was perhaps also the poorest in terms of prestige. In 1862, results from a local census extrapolated that, of the 178 families living in south Bethlehem, many were Roman Catholics and Protestants of Belgian, Irish, and German descent. In addition to these permanent residents, south Bethlehem found itself with a floating population which consisted primarily of destitute immigrants who moved through the valley. Due to this growing "floating population," a Station House was established to provide temporary

lodging and an occasional meal to these unemployed workers who found their way from Europe to south Bethlehem with the promise of being fed and lodged at the borough's expense. At this time, while there was not much intermingling within south Bethlehem, it is understood that nationalities lived side by side in relative peace.

Due to the Lehigh Valley Railroad providing a means of transportation within the North East and the economic opportunity offered by Bethlehem Steel, south Bethlehem's population increased ten-fold from 947 in 1861



to 10,302 in 1890. The majority of growth at this time was that of the middle class, which at any given time during the period comprised around ninety percent of the inhabitants. In the 1870s, south Bethlehem began to see immigration from Central and Southern Europe, such as Slovaks and Hungarians. Due the Bethlehem Steel's encouragement of in-migration to fill the need for unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Ukrainians and those of Polish descent, including a few Jews, appeared in south Bethlehem in the late 1880s. In 1895, from forty to fifty Italians arrived, having come to the U.S. from the central and northern provinces of the peninsula. In the early 1900s, immigrants arrived from Russia, Greece, Croatia, and Lithuania as well as a few other nations. The rapid increase of numbers in the working-class lead to a nearly constant housing shortage with houses intended for one family often housing two or even three families. The Daily Times stated in January 1870, "we hope capitalists will cast their eyes South Bethlehem-ward as the demand for houses is steadily on the increase." By 1893, 168 houses were built, and Third Street, which was to become the core of the borough's business district, was especially busy. Workers and their families - primarily at this time, Germans, Pennsylvania-Germans and the Irish - were the people who ultimately spelled success or failure for various enterprises. They made the market house on Third Street an important part of borough life. Later, when Old Bethlehem (what is now known as north Bethlehem) obtained a market house, the enterprise

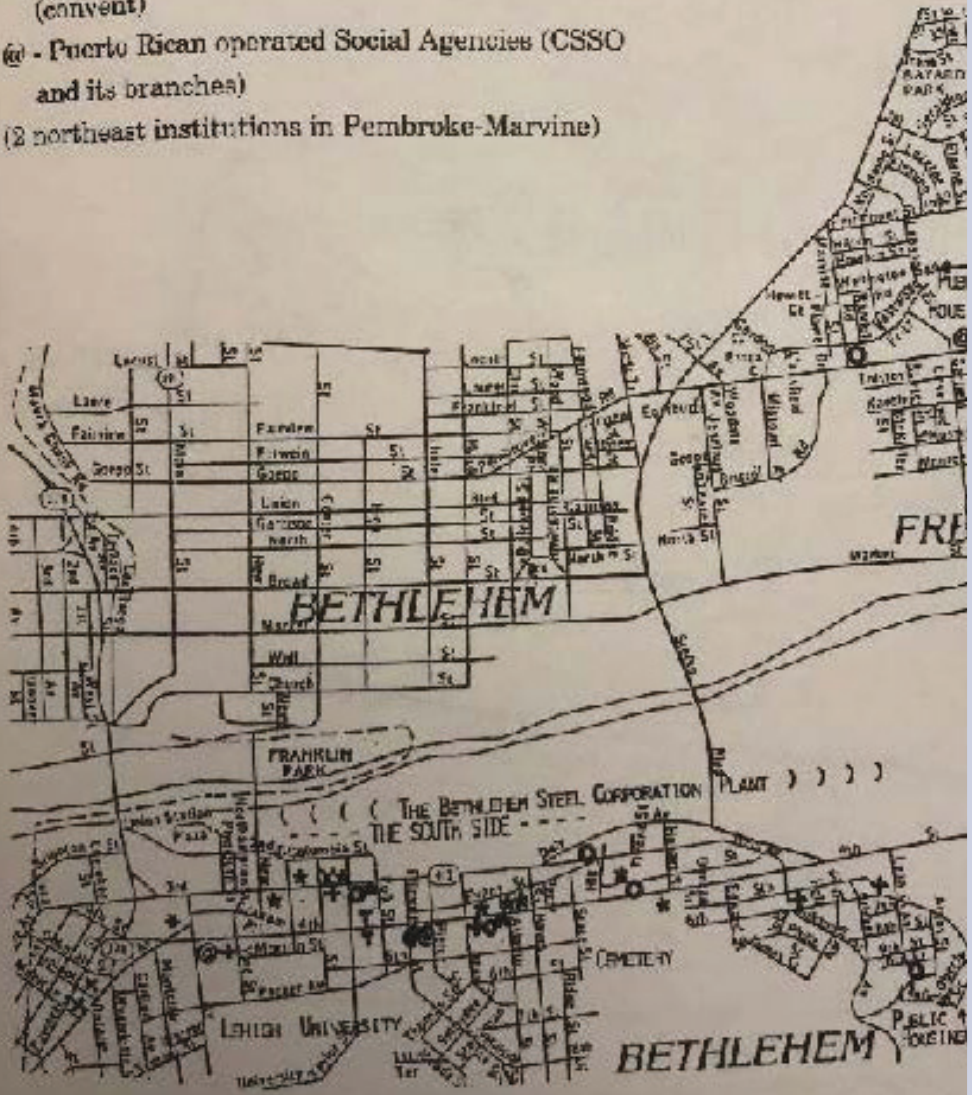
never flourished to the extent that its counterpart did in south Bethlehem. While much of the immigration to south Bethlehem that occurred in the mid- to late-nineteenth century was by Europeans, the Census of 1910 identified 128 Black/African American individuals in south Bethlehem, which later grew to 344 in 1920, though an unofficial estimate puts the number at about 1,000. From the 1890s, Bethlehem's Black/African American population began forming their own institutions, particularly churches, much like the European immigrants who came before them. Despite being natural born Americans, Black/African American individuals enjoyed few more civil rights than did the laboring classes immigrating from Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. It was not until 1917, as immigration from Europe dwindled, that many Black/African Americans were able to find employment at the Bethlehem Steel. In 1942, a chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) opened in Bethlehem.

As the twentieth century progressed, with it came more migration to south Bethlehem, but of a largely different nationality, which we continue to see today. Puerto Ricans began arriving in the late 1940s with a second wave arriving in the mid-1970s. The first wave of Puerto Ricans came to south Bethlehem for many of the same reasons European immigrants came before them - due to the attraction of employment opportunities in the area textile and steel mills that far



MAP 1: BETHLEHEM'S PUERTO RICAN INSTITUTIONS - 1992

- O - Puerto Rican owned bodegas (grocery stores)
- \* - Other Puerto Rican owned businesses
- X - Puerto Rican Beneficial Society (PRBS)
- + - Puerto Rican Protestant Churches (Pentecostal and Baptist)
- T - Holy Infancy Spanish Apostolate and Casa Beléu (convent)
- @ - Puerto Rican operated Social Agencies (CSSO and its branches)
- (2 northeast institutions in Pembroke-Marvine)



outweighed employment opportunities in disadvantaged rural farming areas of Puerto Rico. The employment opportunities granted by area textile and steel mills allowed Puerto Ricans to obtain moderate upward social and economic mobility as a result of their ability to earn stable incomes as blue-collar workers. Furthermore, Puerto Ricans were attracted to south Bethlehem due to its relative proximity to Puerto Rico. In 1970, a trip to Puerto Rico from Bethlehem required only an hour and a half drive to Newark Airport and a relatively low fare of just under \$50. The ability to easily return to one's country of origin provided for the Puerto Rican community a reinforcement of culture that European immigrants lacked.

The growth of the Puerto Rican community in south Bethlehem followed patterns of previous immigrants before them who clustered in their own neighborhoods filled with their own businesses and social clubs. By the 1950s, the Puerto Rican community in south Bethlehem had begun to fully take form with the Puerto Rican Beneficial Society; the first Latino/Latina churches, such as Holy Infancy's Spanish Apostolate and the First Spanish Baptist Church; as well as the first bodega, La Famosa, serving the growing community. The function of each ethnicity's grocery stores and other businesses was similar for most immigrant communities. South Bethlehem's bodegas functioned for many as a home away from home. The small size of these businesses, the offerings of typical Puerto Rican foods,

as well as the fact that they were owned and operated by community residents, added to the familiar and friendly atmosphere of south Bethlehem. The opening of many of these businesses was a key part in the process of building institutions that defined a community, which remains true to this day.

By 1970, south Bethlehem was home to an even greater mix of ethnic groups including those of the following descents: Puerto Rican, Hungarian, Slovak, Polish, Italian, Irish, Portuguese, native English-speaking residents and Lehigh University students. By 1990, south Bethlehem was 28.2% Hispanic/Latino/Latina with Puerto Ricans comprising the largest single ethnic group. The Puerto Rican community stretched from the very east end of south Bethlehem all the way to the west end, with concentrations of individuals varying from block to block between 20-100%.

Largely due to the variety of nationalities and cultures, south Bethlehem became known for its rich and varied culture. It became a mix of each nationality's culture from the "Old Country" but also that of American culture. There was nothing like it that had already been established in Bethlehem or, for that matter, in the European countries in which so many of the immigrants came from. The immigrants were influenced not only by American ways but also by the different manners, customs and dialects which existed amongst themselves. Even within the membership of a group,



such as that of the Polish, there was a blurring of cultural differences which in Poland would have remained distinct. This created a hybrid way of life which engendered even more cultural vibrancy.

The foreign populations provided the City of Bethlehem with an element which longstanding families in north Bethlehem failed to understand. These longstanding families in north Bethlehem allowed themselves to be clouded with an oversimplification and false image of south Bethlehem, also known as the "South Side." This image included an idea of Bethlehem Steel with its noise, fire and smoke and its multi-lingual crew which fed the furnaces, tended the molten metal and worked the hammers and presses. This image also embraced a number of negative stereotypes. According to the image, south Bethlehem was a world of foreign workers, priests, politicians, small shop keepers and hoodlums – one which consisted of blight to be hidden from public view. The only principal speaker at the Semi-Centennial Celebration of South

Bethlehem to take the immigrant residents seriously was the Reverend A. D. Thaeler when he said: "There are few towns in all the length and breadth of the United States that present as large a co-mingling of men and women who, having crossed the ocean to find a home in the New World, we still call 'foreign.' Nevertheless, they are eager to align themselves with American Institutions... South Bethlehem has peculiarly before it the huge task of transmuting these streams of human life and impulse into the solid elements which constitute a strong republic and which lay hold upon the best that is possible for human striving." In 1943, at the height of World War II, Bethlehem Steel employed over 31,000 people in the City and nearly 300,000 nationwide. Today, many south Bethlehem families, as well as families throughout the Lehigh Valley, still have ties to Bethlehem Steel, as many of their ancestors were employed by Bethlehem Steel or found their way to south Bethlehem with the promise of greater employment opportunity. South Bethlehem was a key commercial destination; throughout the 1900s the

streets were bustling with shoppers. When the company ceased production in 1995 (and declared bankruptcy in 2001), it left a community in crisis as high-paying manufacturing jobs were replaced by low-paying retail and service jobs, particularly in south Bethlehem.

Today, south Bethlehem remains a community of diverse income and ethnicity. Residents and visitors alike value its diversity in people, offerings, culture and history. However, there has been an uptick in new development to south Bethlehem starting around 2012, with a large uptick in projects being concentrated post-2016, the majority of which are luxury apartments. In May 2019, the board of the South Bethlehem Historical Society wrote an open letter to Mayor Donchez and city council members stating, "We implore you to consider the economic impacts that progress has on the residents of South Bethlehem, and the changes to the character of the neighborhoods, which are still as vibrant, and diverse, as they were when many of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

made their homes here. A developer once said at a council meeting '...in 10 years you will not recognize South Bethlehem...' This statement is rapidly becoming reality."

With housing costs and development rising in south Bethlehem, along with a decrease in the availability of affordable housing options, this has caused increased strain on low- to moderate-income residents who worry that they may no longer be able to afford their housing costs or have the proper amenities that correspond with their wants and needs. This furthers the concern that the interconnectedness of the community may be lost if there is not a focus and emphasis placed upon Equitable Community Development, which is grounded in community engagement, guided by the voices that live and work in south Bethlehem, and driven by the vision and needs of those who are most affected by the changing landscape of the district.



## SOUTHSIDE VISION: THE FIRST 20 YEARS

### PROJECT HISTORY

In 2001 and then again in 2014, Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem (CADCB) applied for, and was recognized as, a Neighborhood Partnership Program through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development. The most recent six-year program implemented the "Southside Vision Master Plan 2014-2024" which was developed by CADCB in partnership with the City of Bethlehem, members of the community, the CADCB board of directors, and the Southside Vision Steering Committee.

The preparation of that Plan was grounded in various community development planning initiatives at the time. Those efforts, while still ongoing, helped provide the framework for this initiative. They were informed by the review of existing plans at the time; a written survey, available in both English and Spanish, which was completed by 186 residents and 53 small business owners; key informant interviews conducted with 40 residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders; input from Southside Vision's existing standing committees; and five public meetings that were organized in local parks and attended by 83 south Bethlehem residents and 32 non-residents who work or go to school in south Bethlehem. The plan identified goals and strategies in five areas: economic sustainability, housing, public spaces, safety and wellbeing, and community engagement and communication.

To implement Southside Vision 20/20, a steering committee and five subcommittees were created in 2014. Each subcommittee was charted by at least one steering committee member and received staff support from CADCB. All of the committees included residents, funders, and representatives from business and community-based organizations.



# PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Through strategic partnerships, Southside Vision has made a lot of progress toward transforming the south Bethlehem community since 2001. In addition to \$3,042,602 contributed by corporate partners, Southside Vision has leveraged over \$15,192,121 in private and public funds. These resources were used to impact the community in the following ways:

EDUCATED OVER  
**495**  
ENTREPRENEURS



CREATING OVER  
**161**  
JOBS



RETAINING OVER  
**148**  
MORE JOBS



& RESULTING IN  
THE OPENING OF  
**106**  
NEW BUSINESSES  
IN SOUTH BETHLEHEM  
AND **63** IN OTHER  
AREAS OF BETHLEHEM

HELD  
**8**

BUSINESS  
NETWORKING  
EVENTS

to help develop relationships  
between south Bethlehem's  
small businesses



Led a neighborhood visioning process to brand the business district in the 500-800 blocks of East 4th Street, now known as **FOUR BLOCKS INTERNATIONAL**. Southside Vision developed marketing initiatives including creating a website, a video, street festivals, and a commercial signage program



Invested over **\$304,440** in commercial façade improvements, creating 10 new storefronts in Four Blocks International. More than 70% of this investment came from building owners; the vacancy rate in this neighborhood dropped from 41% to 14% between 2002 and 2013

DEVELOPED MASTER PLANS FOR  
**REVITALIZATION**

of the **FOUR BLOCKS INTERNATIONAL** neighborhood and the **EASTERN GATEWAY** have been completed and implemented

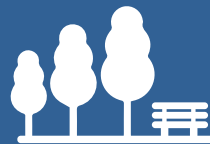


Co-sponsored the design of the linear park known as **SOUTH BETHLEHEM GREENWAY**; public artwork; native plants and a playground was installed. Later, under Southside Vision 2014, new signage was completed for the South Bethlehem Greenway and connecting smaller pathways on or leading to the Southside



BUILT THE WORLD-CLASS  
**BETHLEHEM SKATEPLAZA**

in part, with \$167,210 from Southside Vision 2014



Installed a splash park at Yosko Park, improved ball fields at Saucon Park, and created a new pocket park - Tranquility Park - on East Fourth Street

CREATED THE  
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR AN  
**INTERACTIVE  
COMMUNITY  
PERFORMANCE**

designed to explore the history and continuing impact of the steel industry in south Bethlehem

Transformed a busy corner that had once been a dumping ground into Lopes International Park, which includes the installation of

**24**   
PLANTERS

and have since continued its ensuing maintenance

HELD  
**12**

YOUTH,  
FAMILY-FRIENDLY,  
FESTIVALS  
AND EVENTS

Over **4,200 SOUTH BETHLEHEM YOUTH** participated in more than

**50**

RECREATIONAL,  
EDUCATION  
AND/OR ENRICHMENT  
PROGRAMS

COMPLETED CONSTRUCTION OF A



**COMMUNITY  
GARDEN**

at Lynfield Community Center, which is now utilized by the 4-H Club



Installed a **SEED LIBRARY** at Bethlehem Public Library Southside Branch and created the Southside Garden Alliance

**KEEP GOING, THERE'S MORE**

EXPANDED AND IMPROVED



## 2 COMMUNITY GARDENS

in south Bethlehem

HELD AT LEAST



### WORKSHOPS

to educate community residents on healthy eating, sustainability and growing fresh food

IMPROVEMENTS WERE MADE TO

# 259

OWNER-OCCUPIED SOUTH BETHLEHEM HOMES

EDUCATED **552**

## PROSPECTIVE HOMEBUYERS

through homeownership counseling programming

HELD



LANDLORD TRAINING SEMINARS

HELD



HOME MAINTENANCE WORKSHOPS

REFERRED

# 50



residents to appropriate programs to address specific housing challenges



DEAD & DYING TREES REMOVED ON HAYES STREET



STREET TREES PRUNED



TREE WALLS ENLARGED



TREES PLANTED ON HAYES STREET

COMPLETED **4 MURALS**

on busy thoroughways, including the Paul B. Wood commercial building and the Bethlehem Skateplaza in the Eastern Gateway neighborhood



FUNDED & INSTALLED **PUBLIC BENCHES** IN THE EASTERN GATEWAY

CONSTRUCTED A

## PAVILION

linking the South Bethlehem Greenway to the Bethlehem Skateplaza which includes **SEATING, RESTROOMS, AND A CONCESSION STAND**

INSTALLED



### ACORN-STYLE STREETLIGHTS

along East Fourth Street between Hayes and William Streets. In addition, partnered with the City of Bethlehem and other key stakeholders on a lighting plan, which is in progress

IMPLEMENTED AND EXPANDED THE

## SOUTHSIDE AMBASSADOR'S PROGRAM

to along the Greenway and East Fourth Street (Four Blocks International commercial corridor) to Hayes Street

DEVELOPED AND IMPLEMENTED THE

## SOUTHSIDE PROUD!

marketing strategy during Southside Vision 20/20

HELD



### PUBLIC MEETINGS

to keep people informed about Southside Vision 20/20 in which neighborhood issues were discussed and opportunities were provided for participation in the community revitalization process

ORGANIZED



### EVENTS TO HELP CONNECT SOUTH BETHLEHEM RESIDENTS

across generations to build positive relationships



Provided the public with communications through **EMAIL NEWSLETTERS, MONTHLY SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATES AND TRADITIONAL STORIES** to inform them about south Bethlehem assets, events, activities, and accomplishments

## PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: THE NEXT SIX YEARS

Due much in part to the progress made since the inception of Southside Vision 20 years ago, south Bethlehem has recently seen an influx of development occurring in its community. This is a critical time to both maintain the progress that has been made, such as south Bethlehem's mix of uses, and build upon the momentum of the initiative's successes. By creating a community that serves everyone's needs and interests, this will ensure that both long-time residents are able to remain in south Bethlehem while harmonizing with new residents brought to the community through the construction of new development. This plan was developed by staff from CACLV, CADCB, and the City of Bethlehem in cooperation with members of the community, the CADCB board of directors, and the Southside Vision Steering Committee. Several steps were taken to collect and analyze data from the community to ensure that this plan reflected the needs and priorities of those who live and work in south Bethlehem.

### REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS AND RESEARCH

The following plans and studies were reviewed in order to collect important, relevant information that was incorporated into the development of this plan:

- South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway Vision Plan (2011)
- City of Bethlehem Consolidated Plan (2020-2024)
- City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan (2021)
- Northampton County Consolidated Plan (2019-2023)
- Comprehensive Plan: The Lehigh Valley (2020-2030)
- Bethlehem Student Housing Zoning Ordinance (2021)
- South Side Bethlehem Historic Conservation District Study (2021)
- Bethlehem Blight Betterment Initiative (2018)
- Resident-Identified Housing Assets and Challenges in South Bethlehem (2018)
- St. Luke's Community Health Needs Assessment (2019)
- Festival UnBound, a summary (2020)
- Preservation Plan for The City of Bethlehem Pennsylvania (2011)
- Beth Connects: A Trail Study for the Bethlehem Area (2016)
- The City Livable: Modest Proposals for a More Walkable Downtown (2009)
- South Bethlehem Greenway Master Plan (2005)



## **IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

On March 19, 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pennsylvania Governor Wolf issued a “Stay at Home” order directing all state residents to shelter at home and limit movements outside of their homes beyond essential needs. A year later, residents were still largely sheltering at home and limiting movements outside of their homes. During the development of this plan, continued Telework was strongly encouraged; large gatherings of more than 250 was prohibited; and Restaurants and Bars, Personal Care Services, and Indoor Recreation facilities were open at 50% capacity.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, as of April 6, 2021, there have been 29,529 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Northampton County, 681 of which resulted in death. Of these 29,529 confirmed cases, 3,710 were in zip code 18015, where south Bethlehem is situated. This data portrays that, in the past year, nearly a fifth (18%) of south Bethlehem’s population contracted COVID-19. While COVID-19 vaccinations are increasingly becoming available, at this time, the vaccinations are specifically reserved for those individuals who are at highest risk of contracting COVID-19. As of April 6, 2021, in Northampton County, 108,807 partial vaccinations were administered (vaccine one of two) and 55,607 full vaccinations were administered (zip code-level data is not available at this time). As a result of the continuing COVID-19

pandemic, much of traditional plan development was altered and input previously received by in-person communication, such as stakeholder interviews and public meetings, were conducted over “Zoom” video conferencing.

## **SURVEYS**

A digital survey and written survey, both available in English and Spanish, were distributed to residents and small business owners throughout south Bethlehem in early 2021. This survey collected similar information that was gathered six years ago so that progress and continued needs were evaluated, as well as to better understand emerging needs of the community in context to the past six years. The survey also asked questions related to perceptions of safety, gaps in amenities, respondents’ sense of improvement of the community and their sense of hope for the community’s future. Surveys were completed by 41 residents and small business owners in all five census tracts. Respondents were diverse in terms of age, gender, level of education, income and ethnicity.

## **KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

Ten (10) key informant interviews were conducted by active community residents, leaders of nonprofit organizations and educational institutions, and local business owners through “Zoom” meetings, over phone and in-person. Interviewees were asked to identify what they value most about the south Bethlehem community; what could be changed, enhanced or added

to this community to make it better; to describe three important challenges that the south Bethlehem community faces and what issue might become a big problem if not addressed soon; to describe three opportunities for the south Bethlehem community in the next 5 to 10 years; and to propose specific steps the new neighborhood plan could take to improve the community in the next year.

## **SOUTHSIDE VISION COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT**

Each of Southside Vision 20/20’s existing standing committees discussed its vision for south Bethlehem in the next six years during at least one regularly-scheduled committee meeting. The committees identified current and anticipated challenges as well as anticipated opportunities for the next six years.

## **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

A series of two community conversations were organized over “Zoom,” due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in early 2021. A total of 21 south Bethlehem residents participated in these meetings; 18 non-residents who work in south Bethlehem also participated. At these community conversations, a facilitator asked participants in small groups to identify aspects they value most about south Bethlehem, identify current challenges being faced by south Bethlehem, and to describe their vision for how to improve south Bethlehem in the next six years. Each small group facilitator was assisted by a transcriber who

recorded all comments shared by the public. At least one bilingual representative was available at each of the community conversations to engage Spanish-speaking residents.

## **INTEGRATION OF DATA**

Quantitative and qualitative data from existing plans, the community-wide survey, public meetings, key informant interviews, and current Southside Vision committees were systemically reviewed and analyzed to identify the community’s priorities and needs as well as opportunities for development. An overarching theme and specific strategies were extracted from the pool of data. The goals and objectives identified in this plan capture both the most pressing needs of the community as well as those that can be most feasibly addressed.

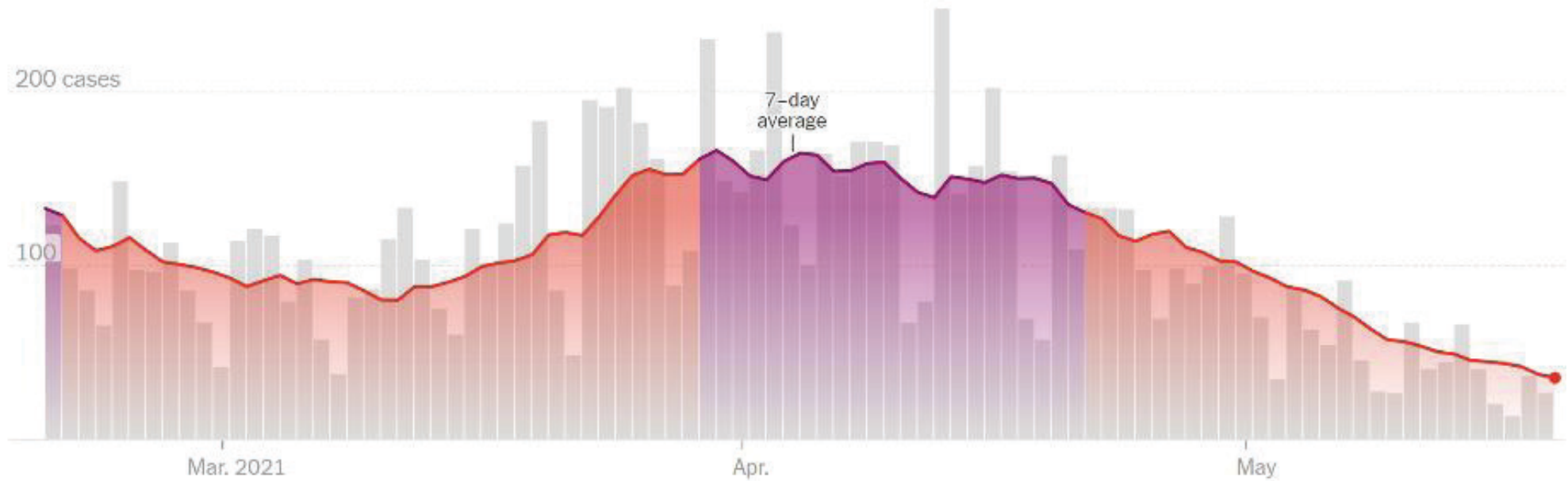
## **PLAN REVIEW, APPROVAL, AND ADOPTION**

The plan was reviewed through a three-phase process. The community reviewed the preliminary plan at the aforementioned public meeting on April 27, 2021. After the community had an opportunity to approve the theme, strategies and subsequent goals and objectives of the plan, it was shared with the newly formed **SOUTHSIDE’S TOMORROW** steering committee and the board of directors of CADCB. When those entities approved the plan at meetings in Spring 2021, it was considered to be adopted.

# The New York Times

## New reported cases by day

TOTAL ON MAY 19 **26** 14-DAY CHANGE **-57%**



### Hospitalized

14-DAY CHANGE

**-30%**



Feb. 18

May 19

### Deaths

LAST TWO WEEKS

**9**



Feb. 18

May 19

### Test positivity


14-DAY AVG.

**5%**



Feb. 18

May 19



**PART 2:**  
**COMMUNITY  
CONDITIONS,  
CONCERNS  
AND ASSETS**



# COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

The target area for **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** consists of census tracts 109, 110, 111, 112, and 113. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, these census tracts have high concentrations of both low-income and minority residents. Census tract 111 is unique in that Lehigh University is located in the center of it and, as a result, has a lower population and higher levels of income and educational attainment.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

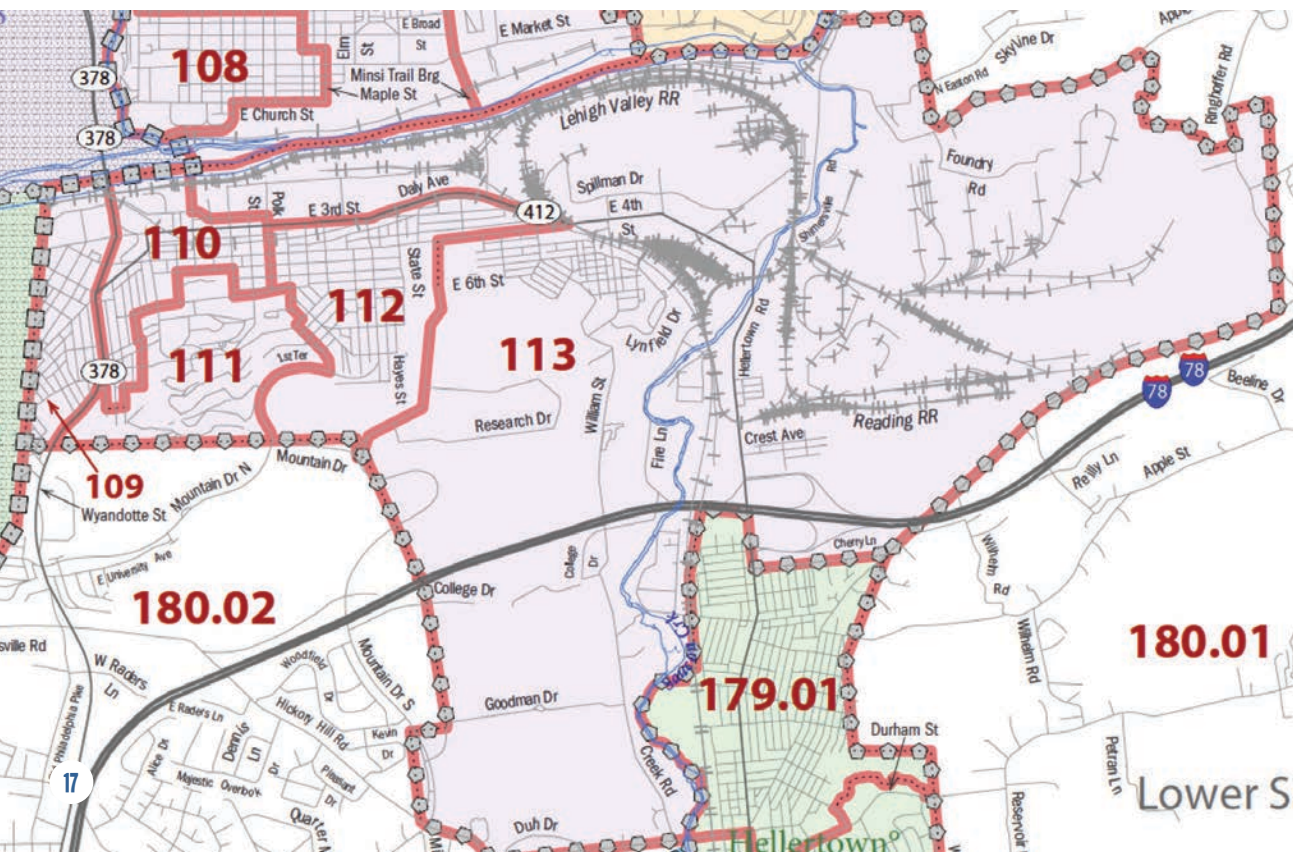
According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019), there are 75,461 residents in the

City of Bethlehem. In the past twenty years, the City has seen a steady increase in residents identifying as Hispanic/Latino/Latina and Black/African American. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic/Latino/Latina population increased from 18% of residents to just over 24% and the Black/African American population grew from 4% to nearly 7%. Between 2010 and 2020, the Hispanic/Latino/Latina population increased again from just over 24% to 30.2% and the Black/African American population grew from nearly 7% to 12.1%. These percentages exceed Lehigh Valley averages and are

even more pronounced within south Bethlehem.

The total population in the five census tracts that make up south Bethlehem is 20,577, of which 12,494 (or 60.7%) are minorities. Over 42% of south Bethlehem residents are Hispanic/Latino/Latina (with three of the five census tracts having a Hispanic/Latino/Latina population over 50%). This is a drastic shift in demographics from Pennsylvania, Northampton County, and the City of Bethlehem; all of which have Hispanic/Latino/Latina populations under 30% of

their total population (Pennsylvania's total Hispanic/Latino/Latina population is a mere 7.3% and Northampton County is only slightly higher at 13.2%). An area of minority concentration is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as a census tract with "a population of any race or ethnicity that is two times or more the presence in the State as a whole." All south Bethlehem census tracts except 111 (where Lehigh University is located) have minority concentrations.



**75,461**

CITY OF BETHLEHEM RESIDENTS

**42%**

OF SOUTH BETHLEHEM RESIDENTS ARE HISPANIC/LATINO/LATINA

**20,577**

SOUTH BETHLEHEM RESIDENTS

**7.3%**

OF PENNSYLVANIA RESIDENTS ARE HISPANIC/LATINO/LATINA



**30.2%**

HISPANIC/LATINO/LATINA POPULATION IN LEHIGH VALLEY

**12.1%**

BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION IN LEHIGH VALLEY

**13.2%**

OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY RESIDENTS ARE HISPANIC/LATINO/LATINA

|   | PA         | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109   | 110   | 111   | 112   | 113   |
|---|------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>                 | 12,791,531 | 302,809            | 75,461            | 20,577          | 3,627 | 3,159 | 3,487 | 5,792 | 4,512 |
| <b>HISPANIC/LATINO/LATINA</b>           | 7.3%       | 13.2%              | 30.2%             | 42.2%           | 51.3% | 30.3% | 10.6% | 55.5% | 50.5% |
| <b>WHITE</b>                            | 82.7%      | 88.8%              | 82%               | 75.8%           | 79.9% | 69.5% | 75.3% | 76.7% | 76.2% |
| <b>BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>           | 12.7%      | 7.8%               | 12.1%             | 15.3%           | 27.1% | 18.6% | 9.1%  | 17.7% | 5.1%  |
| <b>NATIVE AMERICAN</b>                  | .7%        | .7%                | .9%               | 2.1%            | 8.1%  | 0%    | 1.1%  | 1.8%  | 0%    |
| <b>ASIAN</b>                            | 4%         | 3.5%               | 3.6%              | 6.8%            | 1.5%  | 10.7% | 16.1% | 1.5%  | 8%    |
| <b>HAWAIIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER</b>        | .1%        | .1%                | .1%               | 0%              | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    | 0%    |
| <b>SOME OTHER RACES</b>                 | 2.5%       | 2.8%               | 7.1%              | 9.4%            | 5.7%  | 9.1%  | 2.5%  | 12.2% | 14.3% |
| <b>MEDIAN AGE</b>                       | 40.8       | 42.2               | 35.5              | 27.8            | 30    | 25.2  | 19.7  | 30.9  | 30.3  |
| <b>POPULATION OVER 18 YEARS OF AGE</b>  | 20.8%      | 20.1%              | 18.4%             | 18.3%           | 866   | 438   | 71    | 1,409 | 975   |
| <b>POPULATION UNDER 64 YEARS OF AGE</b> | 17.9%      | 18.6%              | 16.5%             | 7.7%            | 308   | 218   | 17    | 637   | 410   |

**SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)**

The map below illustrates the exceedingly high Hispanic/Latino/Latina population situated in south Bethlehem (south of the Lehigh River, which separates north Bethlehem from south Bethlehem). South Bethlehem has always been, and continues to be, a microcosm of the colossal shift in nation-wide demographics. The Pew Research Center reports that Americans are more racially and ethnically diverse than in the past and the U.S. is projected to diversify further in the coming decades. "By 2055, the U.S. will not have a single racial or ethnic majority... today, a near-record 14% of the country's

population is foreign born compared with just 5% in 1965. Over the next five decades, the majority of U.S. population growth is projected to be linked to new Asian and Hispanic immigration (Pew Research Center, "10 demographic trends shaping the U.S. and the world in 2016," 2016).

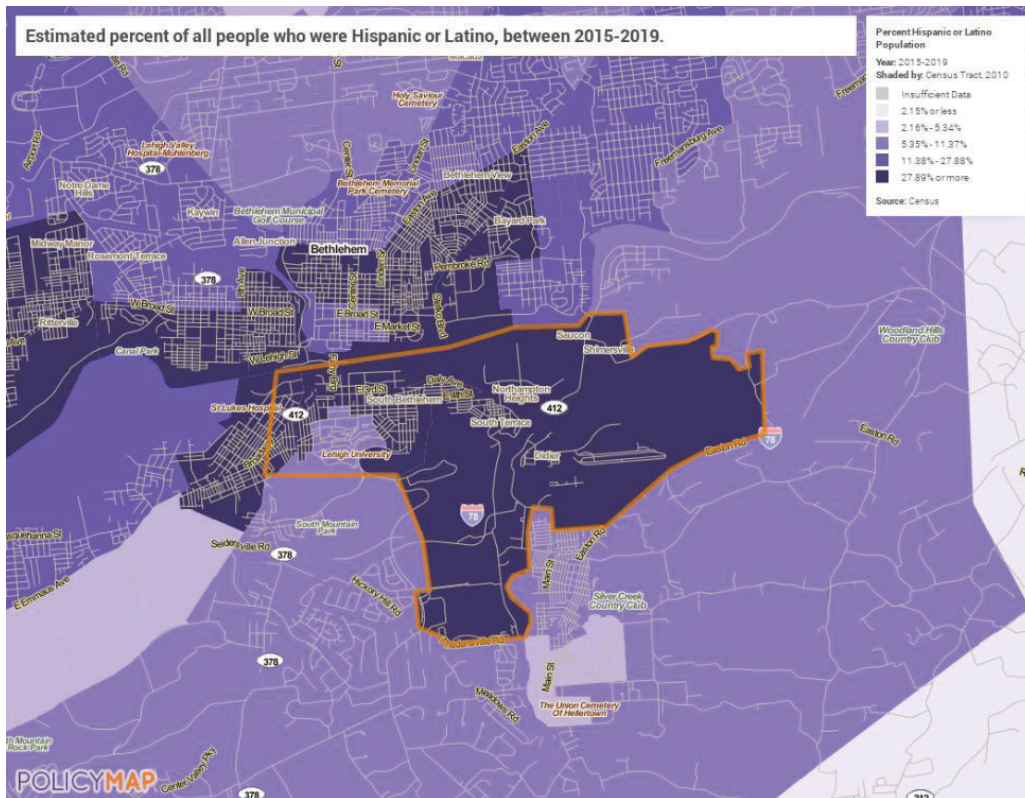
The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019) indicated that 35.5% of south Bethlehem residents age five years and older speak a language other than English at home; that number is 25.1% in the City, 13.3% in Northampton County, and 11.4% in Pennsylvania.

The median age in the City of Bethlehem is 35.5, far below the Northampton County average of 42.2 and state average of 40.8. The median age is even younger in the five census tracts that make up south Bethlehem: 30 (109), 25.2 (110), 19.7 (111 - Lehigh University), 30.9 (112), and 30.3 (113).

### EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

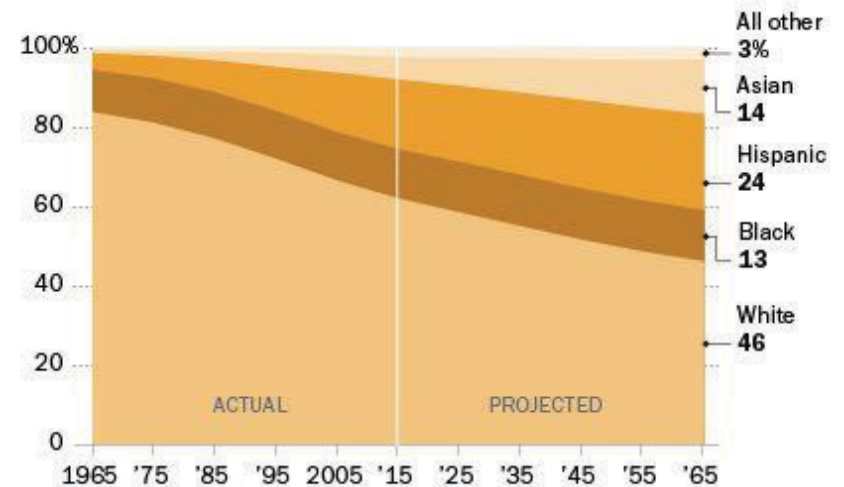
The income of the City of Bethlehem residents is lower than the state median; this is even more pronounced in south Bethlehem. According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019), the median household income of \$39,674 for

south Bethlehem considerably lags behind that of the City (\$55,809), Northampton County (\$70,471), and the state (\$61,744). The median income is as low as \$28,056 in census tract 111 (however, it should be noted that Lehigh University is in this census tract, which likely impacted this number), \$33,903 in census tract 112 and \$35,223 in census tract 110. While census tract 113 has a higher median income, in comparison to the rest of south Bethlehem, it should be noted that a portion of census tract 113 extends into the more affluent area of Saucon Valley, likely offsetting and increasing the median income in this census tract to \$50,938.



### The changing face of America, 1965-2065

% of the total population



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only single-race non-Hispanics; Asians include Pacific Islanders. Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center 2015 report, "Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to US, Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

| PA        | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109      | 110      | 111      | 112      | 113      |
|-----------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| \$61,7144 | \$70,471           | \$55,809          | \$39,674        | \$37,917 | \$35,223 | \$28,056 | \$33,903 | \$50,938 |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

Nearly a third (30%) of south Bethlehem residents live below the poverty level (that number increases to 37.6% for children and youth under 18), which is exceedingly high compared to the

City (15.4%), Northampton County (8.6%) and the state (12.4%). Nearly all census tracts in south Bethlehem are considered by the U.S. Census Bureau as “poverty areas,” which are defined as

“census tracts or block numbering areas (BNA’s) where at least 20 percent of residents were below the poverty level.” It should be noted, however, that census tract 111 is largely populated by

students of Lehigh University, which could impact their level of income despite high levels of educational attainment (see below).

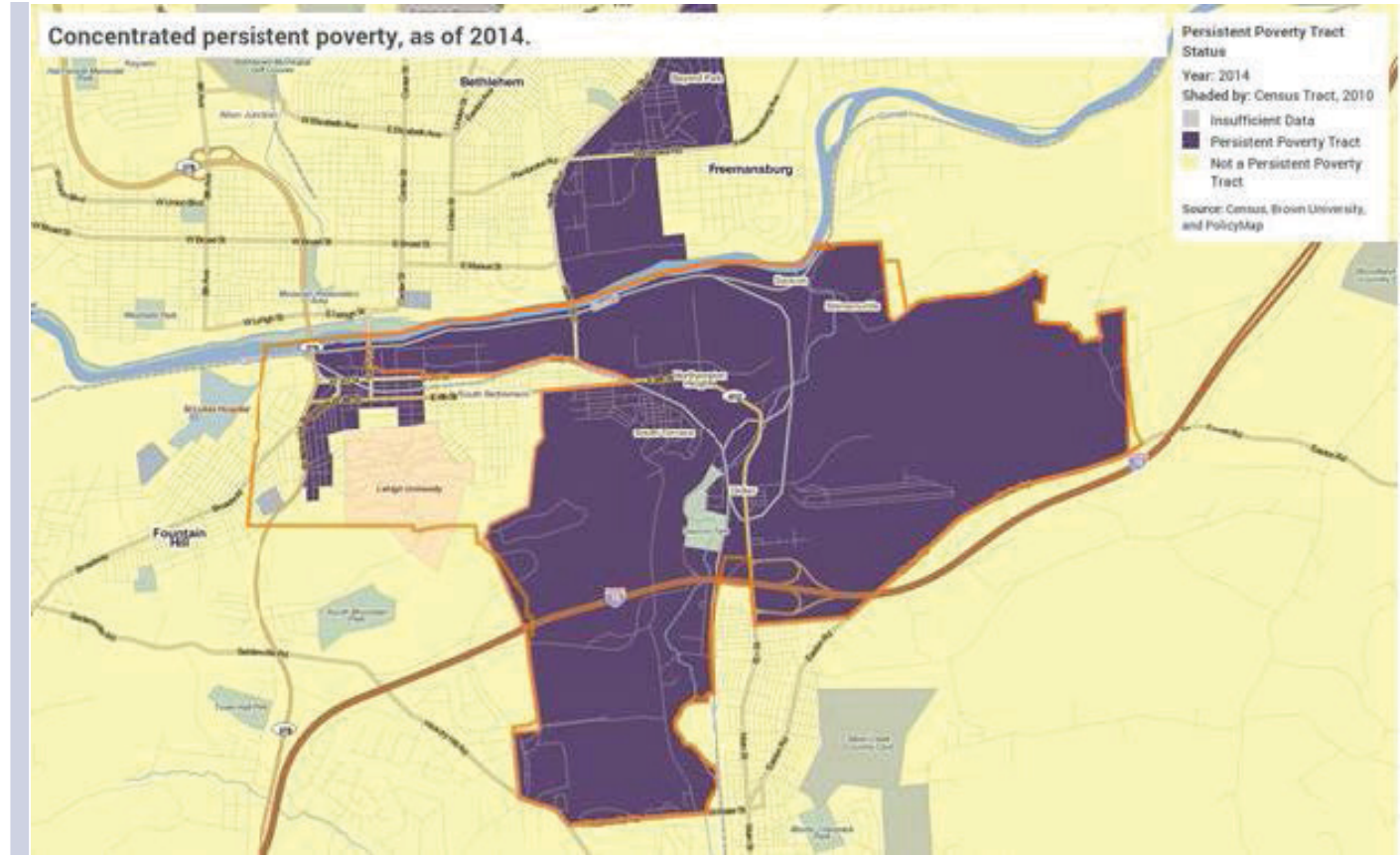
## POVERTY RATE BY CENSUS TRACK

| PA    | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109   | 110   | 111   | 112   | 113   |
|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 12.4% | 8.6%               | 15.4%             | 27.6%           | 17.5% | 33.4% | 54.5% | 33.5% | 22.7% |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

Research conducted by Brown University's Longitudinal Tract Database indicated that a large section of south Bethlehem had experienced "persistent poverty," which is defined as an area that has "20 percent or more of its population living in poverty over the past 30 years."

According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019), Northampton County and the City of Bethlehem's unemployment rates of 4.8% and 5.2%, respectively, are comparable to the state (5.3%). However, the unemployment rate in south Bethlehem (8.3%) is three percent higher than that of the state (5.3%) and is as high as 11.5% in census tract 112.

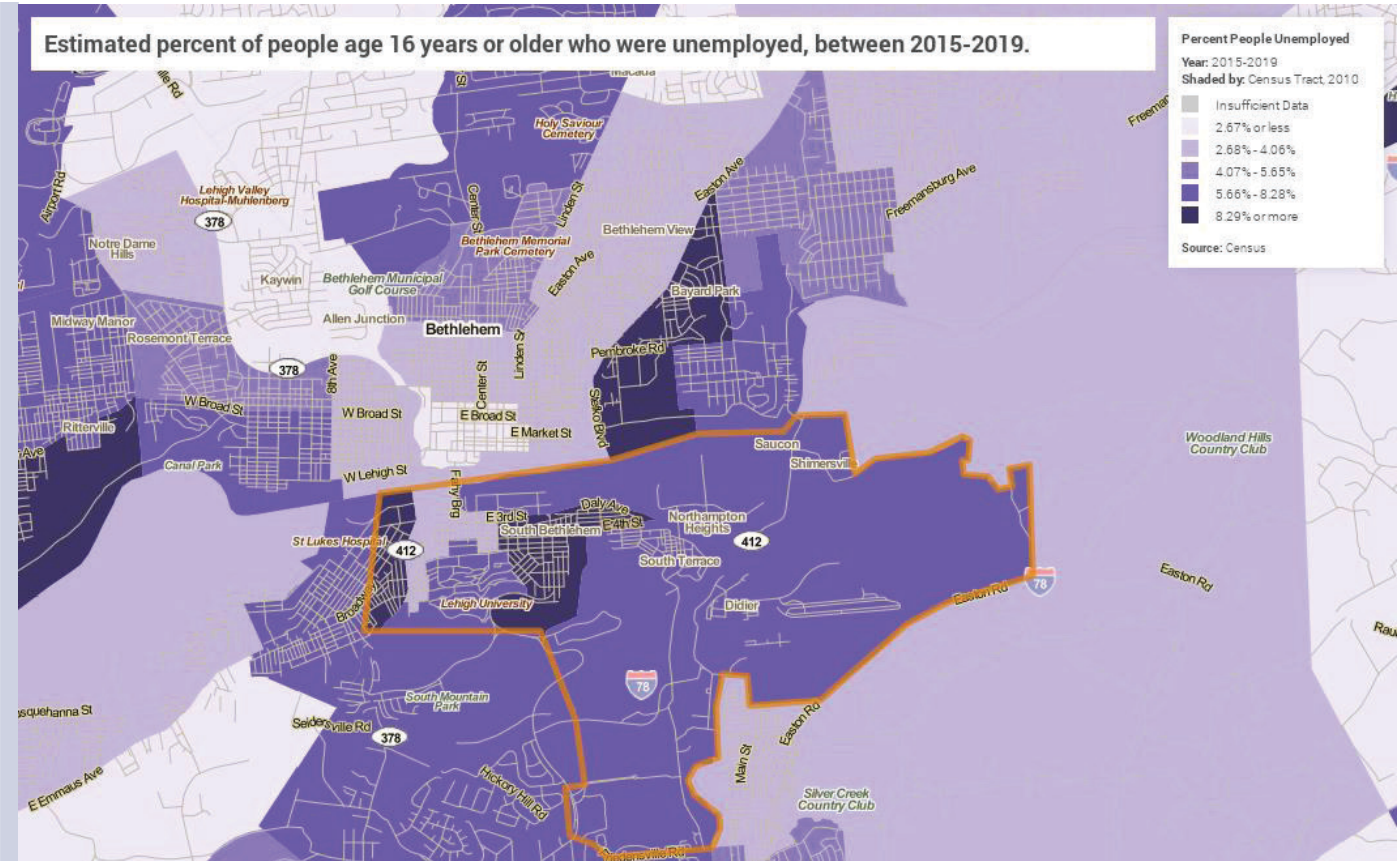


## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

| PA   | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109 | 110  | 111  | 112   | 113  |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----|------|------|-------|------|
| 5.3% | 4.8%               | 5.2%              | 8.3%            | 10% | 2.8% | 6.2% | 11.5% | 7.2% |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

In addition to the unemployment rate, a recent study conducted in February 2021 by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, in partnership with The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, indicates that south Bethlehem residents are much more likely to be at risk of job loss, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to the rest of the city. All south Bethlehem census tracts (except 111- in which Lehigh University resides) have at least 28% of residents who are at risk of job loss, and this percentage increases to 30-32% in census tract 12. The graph below demonstrates those industries in the Lehigh Valley in which jobs are most at risk, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the map below illustrates the significant discrepancy in risk of job loss between south Bethlehem residents and the rest of the City of Bethlehem.



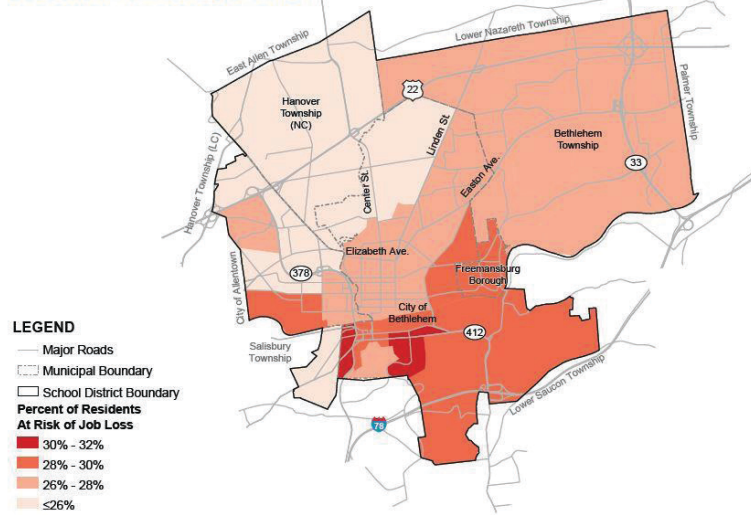
According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019), there has not been much change from a year ago in households receiving SSI, cash public assistance, and/or SNAP benefits for the state, Northampton County, and the City of Bethlehem. However, what is notable is that each of south Bethlehem's census tracts, which already had sizable populations receiving public assistance of some sort, have seen growth in the percentage of households receiving SSI, cash public assistance, as well as SNAP benefits.

While the percentage of households receiving SSI is 4.5% for Northampton County and 6.3% for the City of Bethlehem, that percentage increases to at least 9.9% (census tract 113) and as high as 17.7% (census tract 112) in south Bethlehem. The difference is even more pronounced between those receiving cash public assistance in south Bethlehem compared to the City and County than for SSI. While the percentage of households receiving cash public assistance is 3.7% for Northampton County and 8.5% for the City of Bethlehem, that percentage

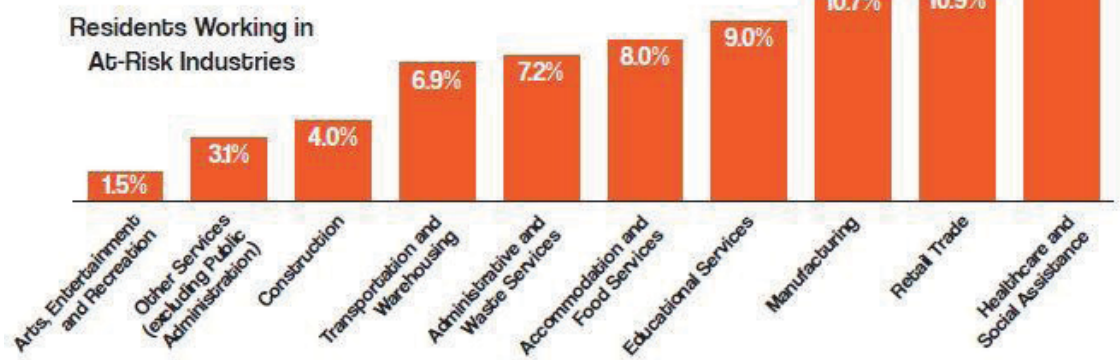
increases to at least 10% (census tract 113) and as high as 25.2% (census tract 112) in south Bethlehem. This indicates that in some areas of south Bethlehem at least a quarter of households are receiving cash public assistance. When analyzing households receiving SNAP benefits, 10.1% of Northampton County and 19.7% of the City of Bethlehem receive SNAP benefits. In south Bethlehem that percentage increases to at least 19.2% (census tract 111) and is as high as 47.2% (census tract 112). Households in census tract 112 are five times as likely to receive SNAP

benefits than the County as a whole, with nearly one in every two people receiving SNAP benefits and throughout all of south Bethlehem's census tracts (excluding census tract 111, where Lehigh University resides), more than a quarter, and often more than a third, of households receive SNAP benefits. This emphasizes the increased economic hardship south Bethlehem residents are facing.

**Residents At Risk of Job Loss due to COVID-19 in the Bethlehem Area School District**



**COVID-19 RELATED JOBS AT RISK in the Lehigh Valley**



**UNEMPLOYMENT RATE**

|                           | % RECEIVING SSI | % RECEIVING CASH PUBLIC ASSISTANCE | % RECEIVING SNAP |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>       | 5.8             | 3.2                                | 13.3             |
| <b>NORTHAMPTON COUNTY</b> | 4.5             | 3.7                                | 10.1             |
| <b>CITY OF BETHLEHEM</b>  | 6.3             | 8.5                                | 17.9             |
| <b>CENSUS TRACK 109</b>   | 10              | 22.5                               | 35.3             |
| <b>CENSUS TRACK 110</b>   | 12.4            | 21.4                               | 30.9             |
| <b>CENSUS TRACK 111</b>   | 0               | 15.4                               | 19.2             |
| <b>CENSUS TRACK 112</b>   | 17.7            | 25.2                               | 47.2             |
| <b>CENSUS TRACK 113</b>   | 9.9             | 10                                 | 27.6             |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

While unemployment rates, as well as the number of households utilizing SSI, cash assistance, and/or SNAP benefits, assist in better understanding the economic health of a community or geographic location, this data fails to represent a larger subset of residents who are equally financially burdened, as they do not qualify for government assistance: the underemployed. Underemployment includes three common categories: skilled workers in low-income jobs, skilled workers in jobs that do not fully utilize their skills, and part-time workers who would rather work full-time.

Underemployment has become a more chronic concern in recent years due to the influx of corporations (many of

which do not have unions) employing large subsets of the workforce, decreasing employees' hours by increasing their supply of workers, and underpaying staff. Additionally, as the U.S. population becomes more formally educated, there is a lack of supply of jobs that correspond with higher education levels and those that are available require previous experience, which is often hard to obtain. This leaves many to take jobs that do not utilize their skills – such as a financial analyst working as a waiter/waitress in a restaurant. While rates of underemployment are more difficult to capture than the unemployment rate and the number of households utilizing SSI, cash assistance, and/or SNAP benefits, the low median income

in south Bethlehem's five census tracts (discussed above) may assist in representing this sector of equally financially-burdened individuals and households.

**HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Homeownership and high-quality affordable renter- and owner-occupied housing are critical in building generational wealth, financial security, and ensuring a healthy mixed-income, mixed-use community. As south Bethlehem families increasingly struggle to find and maintain affordable housing, it is important to understand the current housing challenges and their impact on families and the community.

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019) indicate that all of the census tracts in south Bethlehem have more renters than homeowners by a substantial margin (71.7% of units are renter-occupied in south Bethlehem) when compared to the state (31.1%), Northampton County (28.6%), and the rest of the City (49.3%). South Bethlehem is ahead of the curve, in comparison to the rest of the Lehigh Valley, regarding trends leading to heightened renter-occupied housing. In December 2020, The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission cited that since 2005, the proportion of renters [in the Lehigh Valley] has increased by 5% to 32% of the overall housing market.

**OWNERS vs. RENTERS**

|               | PA    | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | 109   | 110   | 111   | 112   | 113   |
|---------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>OWNER</b>  | 68.9% | 71.4%              | 50.7%             | 41.8% | 12.7% | 27.9% | 31.8% | 24.7% |
| <b>RENTER</b> | 31.1% | 28.6%              | 49.3%             | 58.2% | 87.3% | 72.1% | 68.2% | 75.3% |

**SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)**



The trend away from homeownership and toward renting is not subjective to the Lehigh Valley or, more specifically, south Bethlehem. The Urban Institute predicts that by 2040, the United States will experience modest homeownership declines. However, what is of particular importance is that this impact will be the most dramatic for Black/African American households. The homeownership gap between Black/African American families and white families is wider today than it was in the 1960s, both because of structural barriers to homeownership and because the Great Recession, natural disasters, and COVID-19 have hit Black/African American households particularly hard. “Younger Black millennials, who will reach ages 45 to 54 in 2040, will have a homeownership rate of 41 percent, compared with the 50 percent homeownership rate among younger Black boomers at the same age – a 9 percentage-point difference. Meanwhile, younger White millennials who reach ages 45 to 54 in 2040 will have a homeownership rate that is only about 4 percentage points lower than it was for younger White boomers when they were the same age” (Urban Institute,

“By 2040, the US will Experience Modest Homeownership Declines. But for Black Households, the Impact Will Be Dramatic,” January 2021).

What is cause for further concern regarding the decline in homeownership rates, particularly for minority residents, is that the Urban Institute predicts that between 2020 and 2040, “16.1 million net new households will form: 8.6 million more Hispanic households, 4.8 million more Asian and other households, 3.3 million more Black households, and 600,000 fewer white households” (Urban Institute, “The Future of Headship and Homeownership,” January 2021). Therefore, in years to come, not only will we see a decrease in homeownership, specifically for minority households, but we will also see an increase in minority households, overall. This means that while the majority of households will be minority households, these households will not have the same rate of homeownership as their white counterparts, furthering racial inequities. This will have particularly negative effects on the residents of south Bethlehem, in which south

Bethlehem's demographics clearly highlight large Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino/Latina populations, which will undoubtedly be most negatively impacted by the increasing trend toward renter-occupied housing and have future implications for Black/African American wealth building and the community's economic health as a whole.

Despite the larger shift in renter-occupied housing seen within south Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley, it is worth noting the past efforts, and subsequent success, CADCB has made to stabilize homeownership in south Bethlehem, specifically on Hayes Street. Over the past seven years, CADCB completed over 22 facades in priority areas of Hayes Street, Wynadotte, Filmore, and East Fourth Street. The façade work CADCB has completed on Hayes Street was coordinated with the installation of new trees and the care of existing ones, the creation of a park, painting of a mural, installation of new garbage bins, and assistance to new businesses. As a result of these neighborhood revitalization efforts, according to the Census, the

homeownership rate in the Hayes Street area (block group 112-02) is currently 40.12% and has increased 14.72% over a five-year period (American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates 2015-2019 and 2010-2014). What is even more significant is that the percent of Black/African American households who own a home in the Hayes Street area (block group 112-02) is 55.93%; whereas just five years ago, 0% of Black/African American households owned a home in this area. Comparatively, during the same period, the City as a whole experienced a decrease in homeownership rates of 0.1% and a decrease in homeownership rates of Black/African American households of 8.16%. Prior to this work, the homeownership rate in the Hayes Street neighborhood had been declining since 2000 and hit its lowest level in 2010 – this is a major shift in the other direction. This data supports evidence that investment in façade improvements has a stabilizing impact on a neighborhood by restoring its historic architecture and enhancing property values of homes that have façade work and those that surround it.



Despite the successful increase in homeownership rates in the Hayes Street neighborhood of south Bethlehem, Valley-wide housing trends will continue to place pressure on the availability and accessibility of purchasing a home for potential home buyers. The Lehigh Valley (and, specifically south Bethlehem) has seen a growth and diversification in residential development. Housing sales volumes and median sales prices are up and the diversity of housing types built in recent years has reduced the dominance of single-family detached homes. Despite this increase in the housing stock, much of the construction in recent years has been on the higher-end of the market for both single-family housing and apartments, and many middle-cost housing units have seen their prices increase.

Home prices have steadily been on the rise since 2017, and between 2019 and

2020, the City of Bethlehem saw a drastic increase of \$20,000 in housing sales prices. Of the 53 zip codes in the Lehigh Valley, 18015, where south Bethlehem is situated, was ranked eleventh amongst the top twenty Lehigh Valley zip codes seeing the biggest jumps in home prices. South Bethlehem has seen a 16.73% increase in median sales price, with the median sales price now hovering at \$187,650 (Lehigh Valley Planning Commission).

In addition to the increase in housing sales prices, south Bethlehem has begun to see a spike in new development, specifically in the form of new luxury apartments. According to plans presented to various city commissions and newspaper articles confirming project details, there has been an uptick in new development to south Bethlehem starting around 2012, including a large increase in projects being concentrated

post-2016, with approximately nine (9) new development projects introduced to south Bethlehem. These nine (9) new development projects consist of 479 apartments; 219 of which are luxury apartments and 167 of which are luxury student apartments; all of which are in various stages of completion, varying from “awaiting Council decision” to “completed and occupied.” Of the 479 apartments introduced to south Bethlehem, 232 are in the stage of having been approved and 247 are either under construction or completed and occupied. With 386 (80.6%) of the 479 apartments being introduced to south Bethlehem as luxury apartments or luxury student apartments, this leaves only 93 apartments (19.4%) as potentially either market rate or affordable to south Bethlehem residents. This is concerning as prior to this new development, there were already increasing pressures on affordability in south Bethlehem, with

a population whose median household income is \$39,674 and 27.6% of residents living in poverty. While there has been a heightened increase in new development, there has been minimal redevelopment, in comparison. In addition to new development, there have been five (5) redevelopment projects; three (3) of which are currently occupied, one (1) under construction, and one (1) in planning stages.

Increasing home prices combined with lower-than-average housing development, specifically affordable housing development, in the last decade and consistent regional population growth, signify that prices are expected to continue to rise, which will likely further increase the percentage of cost-burdened individuals and decrease the percentage of owner-occupied housing units.

## HOUSING SALES DATA FIVE-YEAR TREND

| MUNICIPALITY      | 2016     | 2017     | 2018      | 2019      | 2020      |
|-------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| CITY OF BETHLEHEM | \$185,00 | \$162,00 | \$168,500 | \$172,500 | \$192,000 |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019), the vacancy rate in Pennsylvania for owner-occupied-homes is 1.6 and 5.4 for rental housing. In Northampton County, the owner-occupied vacancy rate is 1.0 and 5.3 for rentals. The vacancy rate for owner-occupied housing units in the City of Bethlehem is 2.0 and for rental units is 6.8. In south Bethlehem's five census tracts, the vacancy rates are quite variable depending on the location; the vacancy rate of rental housing is as high as 12.2 in census tract 112 and in census tract 111, where Lehigh University is located, there is no vacancy, which speaks to the pressures of student housing on the community.

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019) indicate that 27.9% of the housing stock in Northampton County was built prior to 1940 and 52.6% was built prior to 1970. Statewide, 26.2% was built in 1939 or earlier and 57.2% was constructed before 1970. In Bethlehem, 32.1% of housing was constructed prior to 1940 and 68.7% was built prior to 1970. South Bethlehem's housing stock is significantly older than the state, Northampton County, and the City of Bethlehem, with 50.9% of the housing stock having been constructed before 1940 and over 70% of the housing stock being built before 1970. In four of south Bethlehem's five census tracts,

the percentage of housing constructed prior to 1970 was 50% or higher: 109 (96.3%), 110 (69.2%), 111 (63.5%) and 112 (87.7%).

In the City of Bethlehem, 0.4% of occupied housing units lacks complete plumbing facilities; in Northampton County that percentage is 0.3% and in the state it is 0.4%. South Bethlehem has a slightly higher percentage of occupied housing units lacking complete plumbing facilities (0.7%). When comparing the five census tracts that make up south Bethlehem to the rest of the city, county, and state, one of the five tracts has significantly more housing that lacks complete plumbing

facilities: 112 (1.2).

When comparing the presence of complete kitchen facilities between south Bethlehem's five census tracts and the rest of the city (.9%), county (1.4%), and state (1%), south Bethlehem has a higher percentage of occupied housing units lacking complete kitchen facilities (2%). Three of the five census tracts making up south Bethlehem have a higher rate of occupied housing units lacking complete kitchen facilities than the state (1%), county (1.4%) and the city (0.9%): 109 (1.5%), 110 (3.4%), and 112 (2.9%).

## VACANCY RATES

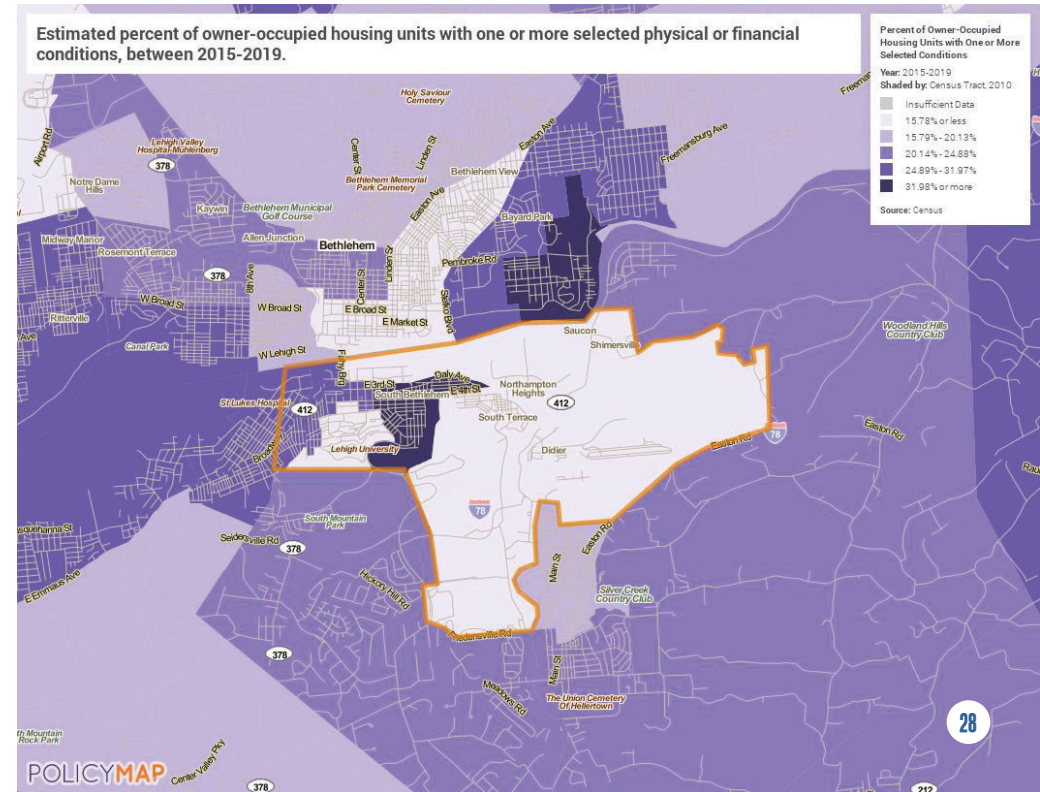
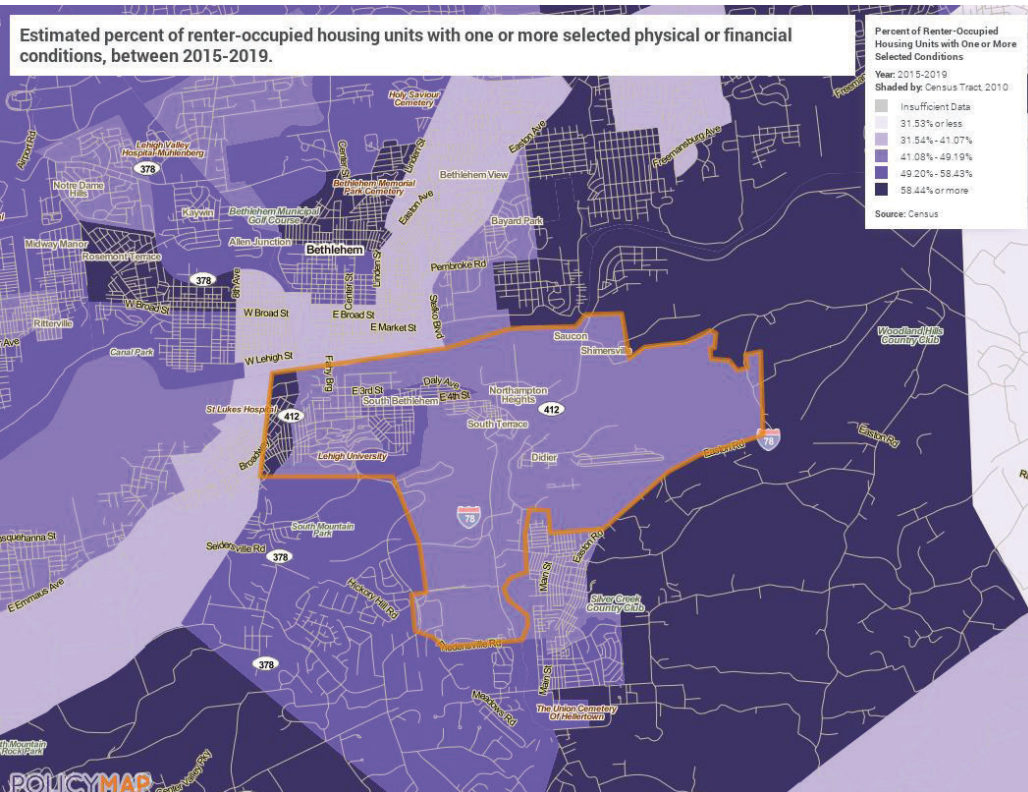
|                       | PA  | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | 109 | 110 | 111 | 112  | 113 |
|-----------------------|-----|--------------------|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| <b>OWNER OCCUPIED</b> | 1.6 | 1.0                | 2.0               | 7.4 | 0   | 0   | 3.2  | 0   |
| <b>RENTAL</b>         | 5.4 | 5.3                | 6.8               | 2.9 | 8.8 | 0   | 12.2 | 7.5 |

**SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)**

# QUALITY OF HOUSING

|   | PA    | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109   | 110   | 111   | 112   | 113   |
|---|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>BUILT PRIOR TO 1940</b>                  | 26.2% | 27.9%              | 32.1%             | 50.9%           | 67.6% | 47.4% | 40.4% | 64%   | 26.4% |
| <b>BUILT PRIOR TO 1970</b>                  | 57.2% | 52.6%              | 68.7%             | 72.1%           | 96.3% | 69.2% | 63.5% | 87.7% | 39.4% |
| <b>LACKING COMPLETE PLUMBING FACILITIES</b> | 0.4%  | 0.3%               | 0.4%              | 0.7%            | 0%    | 0.6%  | 0%    | 1.2%  | 0.8%  |
| <b>LACKING COMPLETE KITCHEN FACILITIES</b>  | 1.0%  | 1.4%               | 0.9%              | 2%              | 1.5%  | 3.4%  | 0%    | 2.9%  | 0.8%  |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)



Being cost-burdened is a significant factor in whether a homeowner or landlord can afford to keep housing up to code and aesthetically-pleasing. In fact, research shows that lower income individuals and families face significant challenges in regard to housing opportunity and choice, which often makes it difficult to acquire and maintain affordable, safe, and appropriate housing. Whether housing is affordable, safe, and appropriate can be determined by a variety of factors that include incomplete plumbing and kitchen facilities, the percentage of household income that contributes to owner costs or gross rent, and age of structure. As demonstrated above, south Bethlehem

faces challenges in all of these areas. For example, a lack of proper plumbing and kitchen facilities creates health and safety concerns, as do older (and possibly poorly maintained) homes. The South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway Market Study: Real Estate Analysis states that the rate at which older homes become obsolete (obsolescence rate) ranges between 0.5% for homes which are well cared for to as high as 2% for homes that have not had regular preventative maintenance over the years.

In south Bethlehem, more renters are cost-burdened (52.1%) than in Pennsylvania (47.7%), Northampton

County (49.9%) and the City of Bethlehem (50%). The percentage of cost-burdened renters in south Bethlehem is highest in census tract 109, where nearly two-thirds (63%) of renters pay more than 30% of their income on housing.

The struggle to afford housing is not surprising given that owner-occupied and rental markets remain in high demand across the Lehigh Valley. The number of available units have declined nearly to the level last seen in 2005, despite the amount of new construction in recent years and increase in population. This increasing demand for housing is contributing to

rising costs in the region (Lehigh Valley Planning Commission). The struggle to afford housing is not surprising given that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) listed the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Metropolitan Statistical Area (ABE MSA) in 2021 as \$1,139 for a 2-bedroom rental unit, \$113 more than 2020. This means that an individual would need to make an hourly wage of \$21.26 to afford a 2-bedroom unit. In other words, an individual receiving the minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour would need to work 120 hours per week to be able to afford a 2-bedroom rental unit, which is simply not feasible.

## COST-BURDENED HOMEOWNERS WITH A MORTGAGE

| PA  | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109   | 110   | 111   | 112   | 113   |
|-----|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 25% | 27.5%              | 12.8%             | 28.4%           | 31.8% | 32.9% | 33.3% | 29.3% | 20.6% |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

## COST-BURDENED RENTERS

| PA    | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109 | 110   | 111   | 112   | 113   |
|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 47.7% | 49.9%              | 50%               | 52.1%           | 63% | 45.7% | 50.7% | 59.8% | 42.7% |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

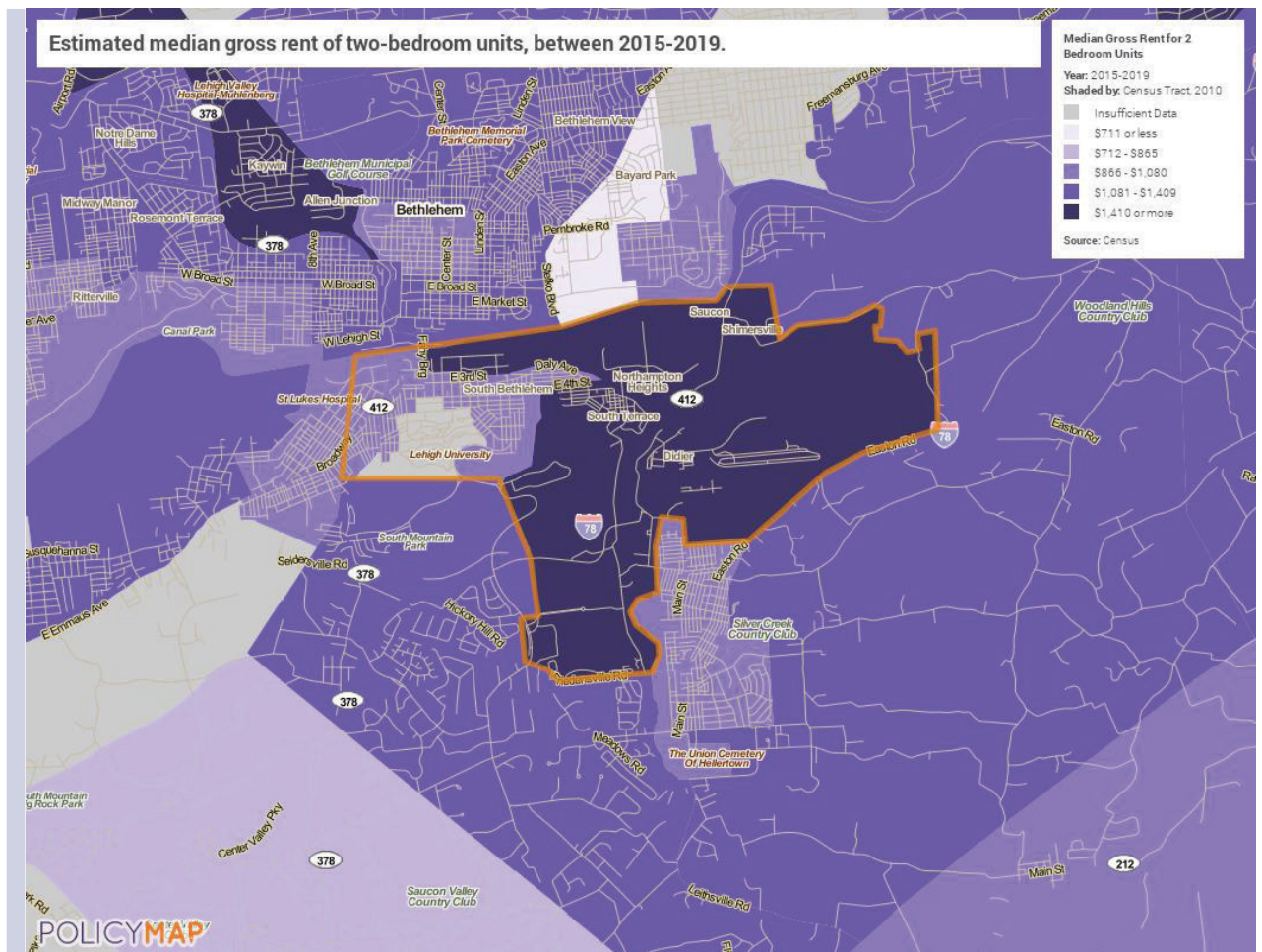
# HOUSING RENTAL DATA FIVE-YEAR TREND (BY MEDIAN GROSS RENT)

| MUNICIPALITY                          | 2019 RENTAL UNITS | 2015  | 2016  | 2017  | 2018    | 2019    |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| CITY OF BETHLEHEM, NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | 11,286            | \$940 | \$838 | \$700 | \$1,017 | \$1,037 |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

The chart above illustrates the rise in rent throughout the area of the City of Bethlehem situated in Northampton County (which includes south Bethlehem). What is most significant is the drastic 31.2% increase in rent from 2017 and 2018, and the subsequent increase in the year following.

The map to the right illustrates the drastic difference in cost of rent for a two-bedroom unit between south Bethlehem and the rest of the city, with south Bethlehem's costs exceeding that of the rest of the city. It is not surprising then to see high eviction rates in many of south Bethlehem's census tracts. Eviction is both the result of and a cause of poverty. Matthew Desmond, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, described eviction as the "human wreckage of the affordable housing crisis."



# EVICTON RATES

|                | PA     | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | 109   | 110  | 111   | 112   | 113  |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|-------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|
| # OF EVICTIONS | 29,257 | 473                | 222               | 22    | 8    | 2     | 37    | 10   |
| % OF EVICTIONS | 1.77%  | 1.4%               | 1.51%             | 2.94% | .68% | 4.17% | 2.85% | .91% |

SOURCE: THE EVICTION LAB (2016), [HTTP://EVICTIONLAB.ORG/](http://evictionlab.org/)

Homeowners also face challenges. RealtyTrac, the leading provider of comprehensive housing data and analytics nationwide, reported that in April 2020, 16 properties in the 18015-zip code (which is made up of all of south Bethlehem's five census tracts and parts of Fountain Hill Borough) were in some stage of foreclosure. The site also reported that the foreclosure rate in April 2020 was 25% lower than the same time last year. The median list price of a non-distressed home is \$182,400, a 14% increase since May 2019.

While there is not more recent eviction data available since 2016 and foreclosure data available since April 2020, eviction and foreclosure rates, as of April 2021, would likely be low due to the current eviction and foreclosure moratorium. As of March 18, 2020, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court announced that all non-essential functions would be halted until at least April 3, 2020. As a result, no eviction, ejection, or other displacement from a residence based on failure to make payment can be made (Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania). Due to the unwavering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, under President Biden, the

eviction and foreclosure moratorium has been extended through June 30, 2021. It is likely that following the moratorium, while households are still financially insecure and struggling to make up the loss of income, they will be faced with the looming threat of eviction or foreclosure. A year after the Pennsylvania Supreme Court announced that all non-essential functions would be halted, The Household Pulse data show that millions are still not caught up on their rent or mortgage payments. "An estimated 13.5 million adults living in rental housing – nearly 1 in 5 adult renters – were not caught up on rent, according to data collected February 17, 2021 through March 1, 2021. Here, too, renters of color were more likely to report that their household was not caught up on rent: 33 percent of Black renters, 20 percent of Latino renters, and 16 percent of Asian renters said they were not caught up on rent, compared to 13 percent of white renters" (The Household Pulse). Housing advocates and housing policy analysts are preparing for a rise in eviction and foreclosure rates, given the ending of the eviction and foreclosure moratorium on March 31, 2021.



## DEMOGRAPHICS OF SCHOOLS THAT SERVE SOUTH BETHLEHEM

### EDUCATION

The Bethlehem Area School District (BASD) is the second largest district in the Lehigh Valley, with 13,620 students. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2019-2020), 57.4% of those enrolled are students of color.

The schools that serve youth from the Southside have high concentrations of Hispanic/Latino/Latina students. Donegan Elementary and Broughal Middle School, the two schools located in south Bethlehem, have among the highest concentrations of Hispanic/Latino/Latina students in the school district. The percentage of Hispanic/Latino/Latina students in the Bethlehem Area School District is 40.7%.

| SCHOOL                          | AMERICAN INDIAN/<br>ALASKAN NATIVE | ASIAN | BLACK/<br>AFRICAN AMERICAN | HISPANIC/<br>LATINO/<br>LATINA (ANY RACE) | NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OPI | TWO OR MORE RACES | WHITE |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|---|------------------------|-------------------|-------|
| <b>DONEGAN ELEMENTARY</b>       | 0%                                 | 1.2%  | 12.1%                      | 78.4%                                     | 0%                     | 1%                | 7.4%  |
| <b>FREEMANSBURG ELEMENTARY</b>  | 0%                                 | 1.6%  | 9.6%                       | 61.1%                                     | 0%                     | 1.3%              | 26.4% |
| <b>FOUNTAIN HILL ELEMENTARY</b> | 0.4%                               | 1%    | 13%                        | 64.5%                                     | 0%                     | 6.8%              | 14.4% |
| <b>BROUGHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL</b>   | 0%                                 | 1.4%  | 11.7%                      | 68.5%                                     | 0.2%                   | 4.1%              | 14.1% |
| <b>EAST HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL</b> | 0.2%                               | 6.1%  | 8.7%                       | 25.5%                                     | 0.2%                   | 2.4%              | 56.9% |
| <b>FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL</b>      | 0.1%                               | 4.2%  | 11.5%                      | 34.2%                                     | 0.2%                   | 0.9%              | 48.9% |
| <b>LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL</b>      | 0.2%                               | 3.2%  | 12.3%                      | 40.4%                                     | 0.1%                   | 1.3%              | 42.5% |

SOURCE: CIVIL RIGHTS DATA COLLECTION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (2017)





## PENNSYLVANIA STATE SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT (PSSA) SCORES, GRADE 6-8, 2019

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2020-2021), the majority of students in the district come from low-income families (58%). Only the Allentown School District has more students from low-income families (76.5%) in the Lehigh Valley. The two schools located in south Bethlehem have among the highest concentration of low-income students in the school district: Donegan Elementary (91.9%), and Broughal Middle School (86.4%). The percentage of students who receive free or reduced cost lunch at the elementary and middle schools that serve Southside children is higher than the rest of the district (except for Marvine Elementary in north Bethlehem): Donegan (87.4%); Freemansburg (79.5%); Fountain Hill (82.3%) and Broughal (82.5%).

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) test scores are widely regarded as an imperfect measure of student achievement; however, state emphasis on standardized testing has required BASD schools to dedicate significant resources toward the improvement of test scores. In 2019, at the Southside's Broughal Middle School, 67.7% of students scored Basic or Below Basic in math, and a district-low of only 6.4% of students tested at an advanced or proficient level.

### ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS

| BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT | ADVANCED | PROFICIENT | BASIC | BELOW BASIC | TOTAL STUDENTS TESTED |
|--------------------------------|----------|------------|-------|-------------|-----------------------|
| BROUGHAL (SOUTHSIDE)           | 3.0      | 28.1       | 54.0  | 14.9        | 437                   |
| NITSCHMANN                     | 15.1     | 53.1       | 29.2  | 2.6         | 757                   |
| EAST HILL (SOUTHSIDE STUDENTS) | 14.0     | 42.4       | 37.8  | 5.8         | 986                   |
| NORTHEAST                      | 13.4     | 43.3       | 36.0  | 7.3         | 686                   |

### MATH

| BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT | ADVANCED | PROFICIENT | BASIC | BELOW BASIC | TOTAL STUDENTS TESTED |
|--------------------------------|----------|------------|-------|-------------|-----------------------|
| BROUGHAL (SOUTHSIDE)           | .9       | 5.5        | 25.9  | 67.7        | 433                   |
| NITSCHMANN                     | 12.4     | 21.5       | 35.9  | 30.2        | 758                   |
| EAST HILL (SOUTHSIDE STUDENTS) | 9.3      | 19.7       | 32.7  | 38.3        | 976                   |
| NORTHEAST                      | 10.0     | 19.5       | 31.3  | 39.2        | 681                   |

SOURCE: PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 2019

Educational attainment, a key indicator for earning potential, is a matter of concern in south Bethlehem. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reveal that, in 2019, median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers aged 25 and older with less than a high school diploma were \$592 a week, \$746 for a high school diploma only, and \$1,248 with at least a bachelor's degree. It is clear that differences in educational attainment will result in differences in income and poverty status. According to the American Community Survey 5-Year

Estimates (2015-2019), in Pennsylvania, 9.5% of the population 25 and over did not have a high school diploma or equivalent; in Northampton County that number was 9.2% and in the City of Bethlehem that number was 11.6%. That number was higher in four of the five census tracts in south Bethlehem: 18.1% (109), 17.7% (110), 22.7% (112), and 17.2% (113). Census tract 111, where Leigh University is located, had a much lower percent (0%), which was likely due to the high concentration of student housing.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate in 2018-2019 for the Liberty High School was 83.7%; at Freedom High School it was 82.5%. The Department of Education defines a cohort as, "students who together entered high school (defined by 9th grade) for the first time during the same school year." The 4-Year Cohort is the official graduation rate according to school district data. The graduation rate for students defined as "economically disadvantaged" at Liberty was 75.5%; that number was 69.7% at Freedom.

According to the PA Department of Education, each school district defines what qualifies as "economically disadvantaged," and data sources such as TANF or Medicaid cases or free/reduced price lunch may be used. In 2018-2019, 42 students dropped out of Freedom High School (30 males and 12 females); at Liberty High School, that number jumped to 74 students (47 males and 27 females). Graduation rates for Hispanic/Latino/Latina and Black/African American students also lagged considerably behind their white counterparts.

## GRADUATION RATE BY RACE/ETHNICITY

| HIGH SCHOOL         | ALL   | WHITE | HISPANIC/LATINO/<br>LATINA | BLACK/AFRICAN<br>AMERICAN | ECONOMICALLY<br>DISADVANTAGED |
|---------------------|-------|-------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| LIBERTY HIGH SCHOOL | 83.7% | 92.2% | 77.1%                      | 74.7%                     | 75.5%                         |
| FREEDOM HIGH SCHOOL | 82.5% | 92.2% | 66.5%                      | 86.4%                     | 69.7%                         |

(PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE IN 2018-2019)

## SAFETY AND WELLBEING

South Bethlehem faces challenges in relation to safety and wellbeing, including crime, limited access to healthy food, health challenges due to lifestyle and lack of green space, and lack of health insurance.

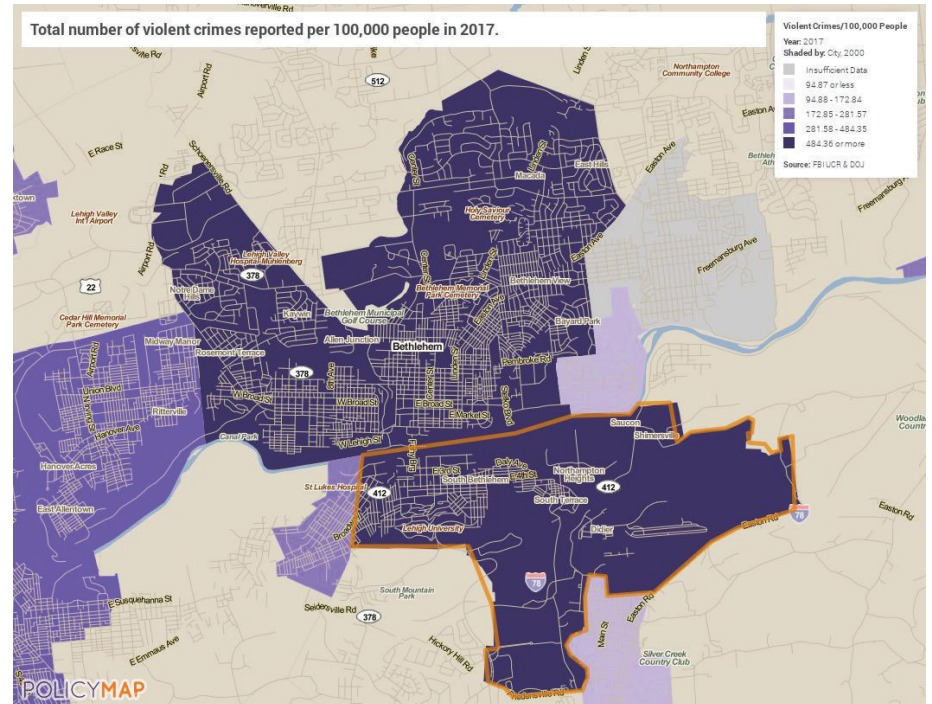
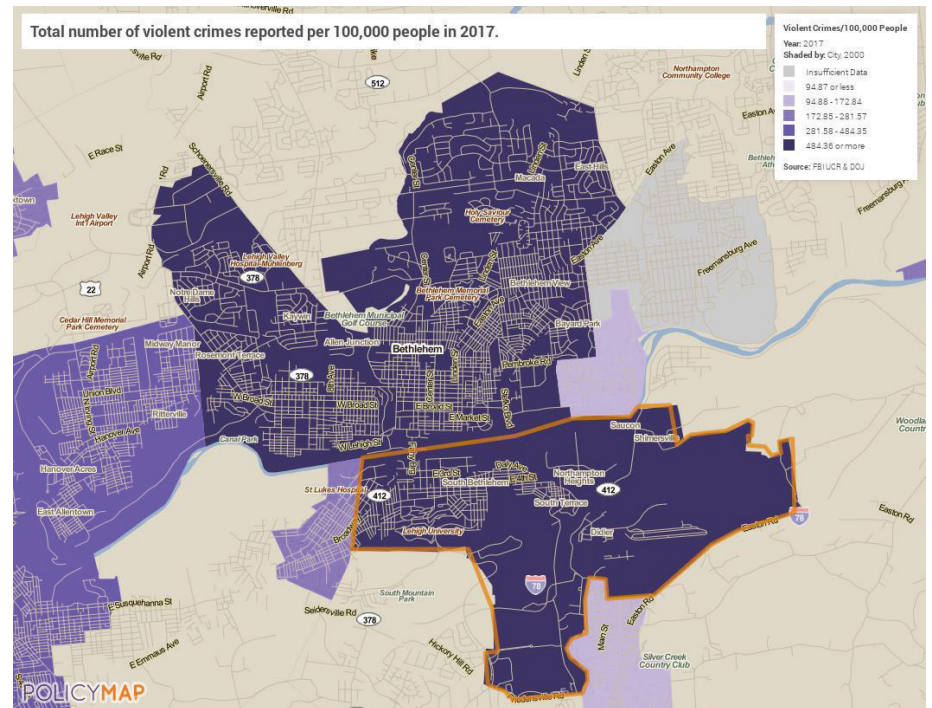
## CRIME

According to the Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR), in 2016, 2017, and 2018 the City of Bethlehem saw a total of only 25, 23, and 5 incidents of aggravated assault by firearm, respectively. In comparison, the City of Allentown saw a total of 33 (2018), 56 (2017) and 83 (2016) incidents of aggravated assault by firearm. Aggravated assault by firearm is defined by the UCR system as an unlawful attack or attempted attack with a firearm with the intent to inflict great bodily injury. The category includes attempted murders. This data represents an 80% decrease in aggravated assault by firearm in the City of Bethlehem from 2016 to 2018.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation uses the Uniform Crime Reporting

(UCR) Program, which tracks crime by dividing offenses into “Violent Crime” and “Property Crime” to track crime across the country.

The maps above indicate that the rate of crime is relatively consistent across the City. Bethlehem’s mayor cited a 4.2% decrease in crime across the City in his 2019 State of the City Address. Two years later, in the mayor’s 2021 State of the City Address, Mayor Donchez cited Bethlehem as being considered one of the safest third-class cities in the Commonwealth. In September 2020, Mayor Donchez announced Chief Michelle Kott as the new police chief to serve the citizens of Bethlehem. Since September 2020, Chief Michelle Kott has led the department progressively into the future with her strong advocacy related to community policing, community partnerships, and additional training in the areas of mental health, cultural awareness, de-escalation tactics, implicit bias, and crisis intervention.



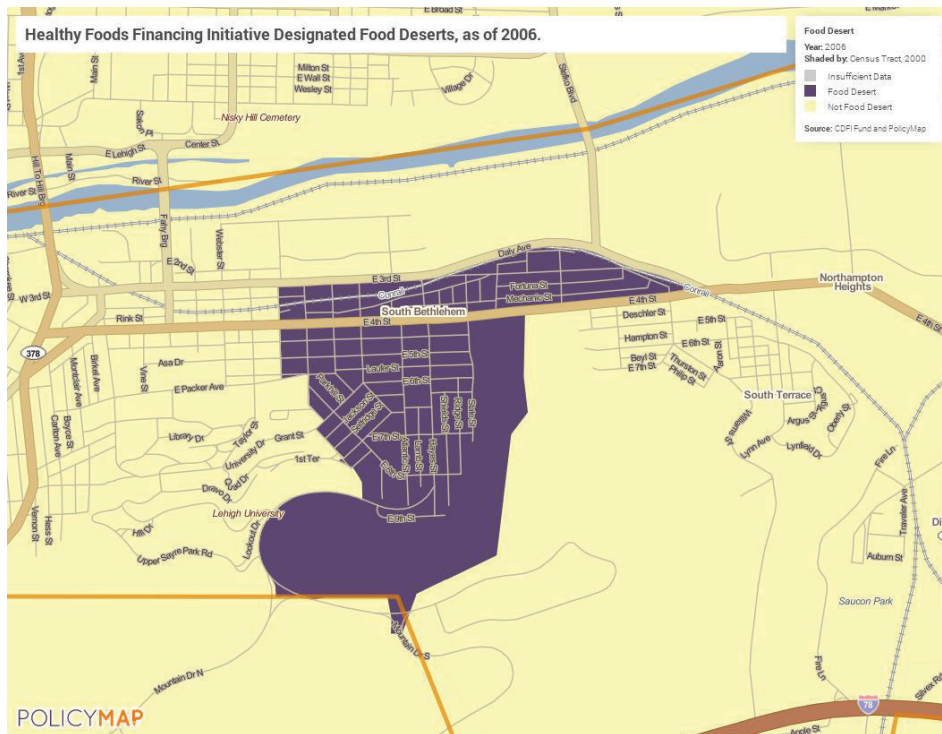
## CRIME IN THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM

| YEAR | VIOLENT CRIME | PROPERTY CRIME |
|------|---------------|----------------|
| 2018 | 20            | 1,308          |
| 2017 | 207           | 1,281          |
| 2016 | 564           | 1,487          |
| 2010 | 234           | 2,069          |

SOURCE: FBI CRIME DATA EXPLORER

Yet, despite evidence that Bethlehem is considered one of the safest third-class cities in the Commonwealth and Chief Michelle Kott's progressive new leadership, the perception that south Bethlehem is dangerous remains pervasive. The Urban Dictionary definition of south Bethlehem calls the community "Sketchlehem," "methlehem," and "deathlehem" and warns Lehigh University students to, "Feel free to take a walk down east 3rd street, but don't forget your pepper spray..." Furthermore, through

community input received in early 2021, for use in the creation of this plan, 60.9% of individual survey respondents identified that they felt "neither safe or unsafe/Unsafe/Very Unsafe on the Southside, in general, after dark" and 46.4% of respondents felt "neither safe nor unsafe/Unsafe/Very Unsafe in their neighborhood after dark." The data do not bear out this characterization and illustrate the need for further, and more frequent, marketing, communication, and engagement with the community.



## FOOD ACCESS AND NUTRITION CHALLENGES

Indicators related to food access and health also illustrate challenges faced by the community. As aforementioned, all five of the census tracts that make up south Bethlehem had a higher incidence of residents who had relied on SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps) in the previous 12 months than the city, county, or state. Access to healthy food was also a consideration. The U.S. Department of Agriculture lists parts of south Bethlehem as a food desert, which is defined as "vapid of fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods, usually found in impoverished areas. This is largely

due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, and healthy food providers." South Bethlehem qualified under the status of a "food desert" when it had two grocery stores. However, the economic hardship posed by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in one of south Bethlehem's two grocery stores, Ahart's Market, having to close its doors in early 2021. Currently, south Bethlehem has only one grocery store, which is located on Third Street, further disadvantaging the south Bethlehem community in regard to its access to fresh food. The maps below illustrate portions of south Bethlehem as residing in a food desert and household that are both low-income and have low access to fresh food.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a high percentage of Southside residents in three of the five census tracts reported eating less than one serving of fruits and vegetables per day. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends at least five to nine servings per day, depending on age and gender. According to St. Luke's Community Health Needs Assessment 2019, only 10% of Bethlehem service area respondents consumed the recommended amount of five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. Data demonstrates that healthy diet is linked to income; 12% of respondents with over \$60,000 income consumed five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day compared to only 6% of those with less than \$15,000 income.

Access to healthier food is crucial to the future health of the community. According to the Centers for Disease Control, between 37.3-41.5% of residents 18 years and older in census tracts 109 and 113 are obese; that number rises to 41.6-46.4% in census tract 112. St. Luke's Community Health Needs Assessment 2019 found that 73% of Bethlehem survey respondents were overweight or obese according to BMI calculations (33% overweight and 40% obese). The highest rate of obesity (48%) was found for lower-income people earning less than \$25,000 annually while the lowest rate of obesity (38%) was found for those earning more than \$60,000 annually.

As has been demonstrated, even prior to one of south Bethlehem's two grocery stores, Ahart's Market, having to close its doors in April 2021, south Bethlehem was already struggling with its access to fresh foods, with a high percentage of south Bethlehem residents reportedly eating less than one serving of fruits and vegetables per day. For this reason, a survey was conducted in early 2021 to better understand and advocate for the community's needs and wants surrounding

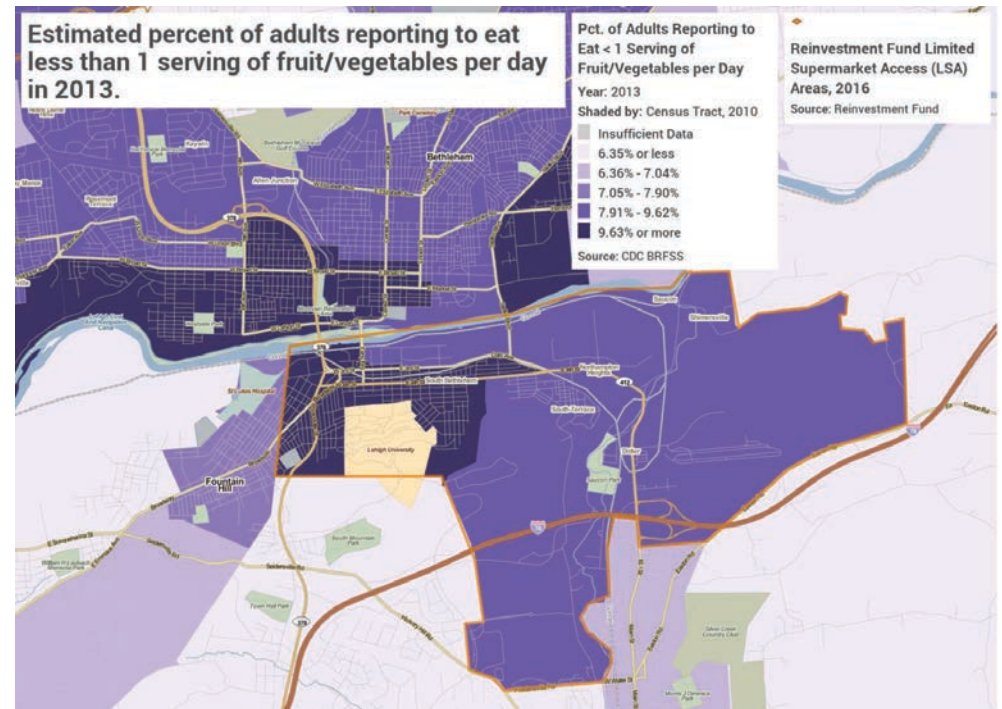
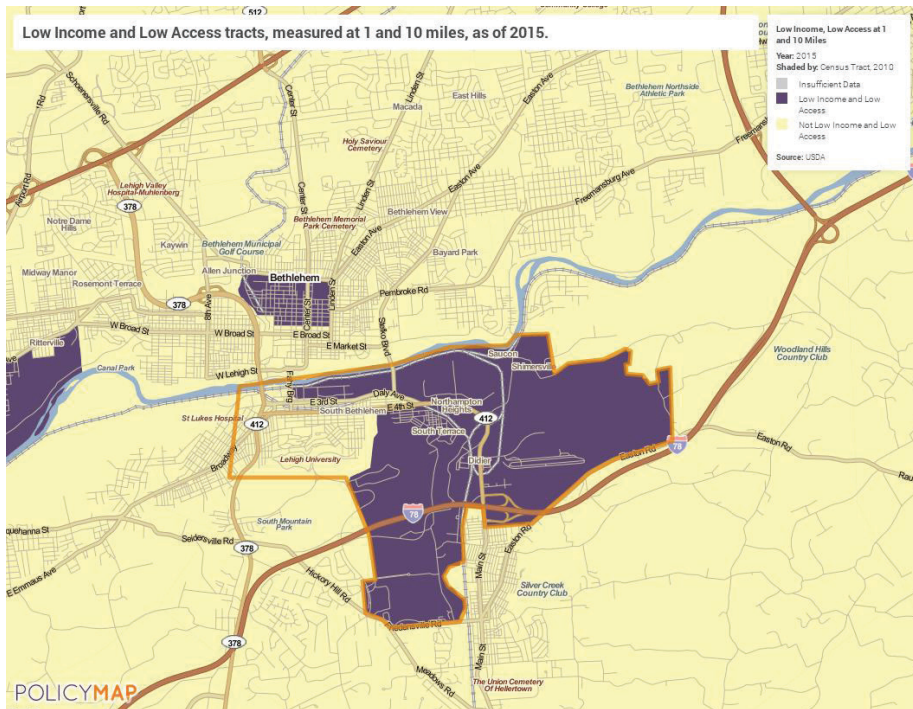


fresh food, amidst the impending closure of Ahart's Market. A total of 308 responses were collected from residents and Lehigh University students. When asked what kind of grocery store residents and students would like to see replace Ahart's, 66.2% of respondents indicated they would like to see a full-service supermarket with deli, bakery, etc. Furthermore, when asked what is most important in a new store, the overwhelming majority of residents (280) indicated that fresh fruits and vegetables were

most important, followed by fresh meat (241). Due to the lack of fresh food and grocery stores in south Bethlehem, when asked what options will you have to buy groceries when Ahart's closes on April 30, the majority of respondents (64.3%) indicated they will need to drive elsewhere to do their grocery shopping, followed by walk to another grocery store (26.2%) and ask a friend or family member for a ride (25.6%). All three of these responses pose concerns for the community. The increase in driving points to the decrease in access of fresh

foods, lack of necessary amenities in the community, and may also cause further traffic concerns in the area. Although over a quarter of respondents indicated they will still be able to walk to the grocery store, it is likely that the walk to the only available grocery store in south Bethlehem, C-Town, will be more onerous and time-consuming for residents living toward the western end of south Bethlehem. Finally, for those 25.6% of respondents without access to a car, and in need of a friend or family member to give them a ride, this poses

unnecessary pressures and stress on both the individual without a car and the friend or family member giving them a ride. With nearly half (42.3%) of survey respondents indicating they use an EBT card to purchase their groceries and 19.2% (census tract 111 – where Lehigh University is located) to 47.2% (census tract 112) of residents using SNAP benefits, the community is in dire need of accessible, affordable, fresh food options (American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019).



## GREEN SPACE AND EXERCISING CHALLENGES

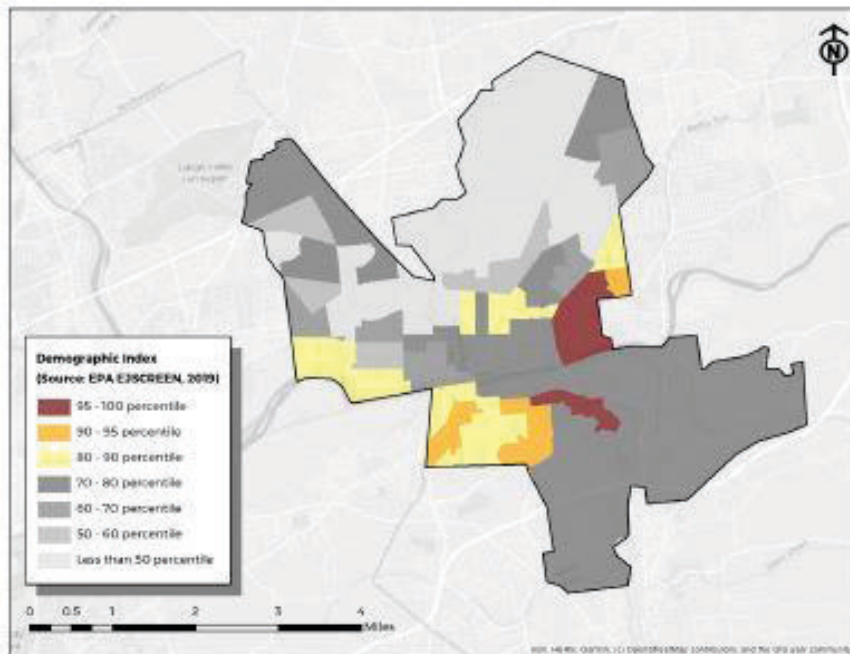
South Bethlehem residents lack access to green space and the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJScreen) identifies south Bethlehem as one of two of the City of Bethlehem's frontline communities. Frontline communities are defined as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, low-income communities, and linguistically isolated communities that face disparate amounts of pollution and will experience climate change's worst effects (Bethlehem Climate Action

Plan 2021). South Bethlehem coincides with some of the hottest parts of the city. Highly developed areas lacking vegetation and green space tend to have much higher temperatures due to the urban heat island effect. These hot spots will experience even greater climate change extremes, significant health hazards, and environmental justice concerns.

South Bethlehem's status as a frontline community, in the context of climate change, is not surprising given its minority-majority neighborhoods and high concentration of low- to moderate-income

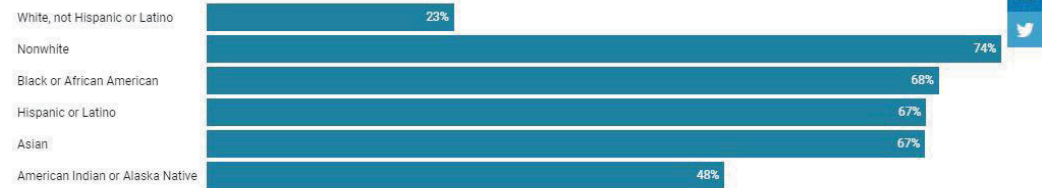
households. The Center for American Progress outlines the racial and economic disparities in access to nature or green space. The graphs below represent these inequities and depict that 74% of non-white individuals live in a nature-deprived area, while only 23% of white, non-Hispanic/Latino individuals live in a nature-deprived area. What is of further concern is that while 70% of low-income communities are nature-deprived, this increases to 76% for low-income non-white communities, indicating that both race and socio-economic status affect whether one has access to green

space. In City of Bethlehem Mayor Donchez's 2021 State of the City Address on April 16, 2021, he reiterated the need for a heightened emphasis on green space, parks and recreational facilities. "As our world evolves from the pandemic, and with more people increasingly spending time outdoors, the presence and upkeep of our streetscapes, paths, parks and recreational facilities, become even more important. It is vital people have outdoor greenspace to relax, trails to explore, safe streets to walk, and parks to keep children engaged" (Mayor's 2021 State of the City Address).



## People of color are more likely than white people to live in an area that is nature deprived

Percent of people living in a nature-deprived area by census tract demographics in the United States, 2017



Note: Communities are considered nature deprived if their census tract has a higher proportion of natural area lost to human activities than the state-level median.

Chart: Center for American Progress

Source: Vincent A. Landau, Meredith L. McClure, and Brett G. Dickson, "Analysis of the Disparities in Nature Loss and Access to Nature. Technical Report." (Truckee, CA: Conservation Science Partners, 2020), available at [https://www.csp-inc.org/public/CSP-CAP\\_Disparities\\_in\\_Nature\\_Loss\\_FINAL\\_Report\\_060120.pdf](https://www.csp-inc.org/public/CSP-CAP_Disparities_in_Nature_Loss_FINAL_Report_060120.pdf).

## Low-income communities are more likely to experience nature deprivation

Percent of people living in a nature-deprived area by census tract demographics in the United States, 2017



Note: Communities are considered nature deprived if their census tract has a higher proportion of natural area lost to human activities than the state-level median. Low income is defined as a median household income less than or equal to the 10th percentile of median income at the census tract level across the state. High income is greater than or equal to the 90th percentile. Moderate income falls between the 10th and 90th percentile.

Chart: Center for American Progress

Source: Vincent A. Landau, Meredith L. McClure, and Brett G. Dickson, "Analysis of the Disparities in Nature Loss and Access to Nature. Technical Report." (Truckee, CA: Conservation Science Partners, 2020), available at [https://www.csp-inc.org/public/CSP-CAP\\_Disparities\\_in\\_Nature\\_Loss\\_FINAL\\_Report\\_060120.pdf](https://www.csp-inc.org/public/CSP-CAP_Disparities_in_Nature_Loss_FINAL_Report_060120.pdf).

Access to green space encourages exercise and positively benefits mental health. Unfortunately, south Bethlehem is underserved when it comes to parks and recreation, compared the larger city. According to American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019, nearly a quarter (24.5%) of Bethlehem's youth (age 18 and under) live in south Bethlehem. South Bethlehem contains nine parks with playgrounds and three pocket parks without playgrounds compared to the City as a whole, which has 26 parks with playgrounds (including parks in south Bethlehem). What is of further concern is that these nine playgrounds in south Bethlehem are not always well-maintained and some pose safety concerns.

Furthermore, the only south Bethlehem sports leagues are the Southside Little League and the Bethlehem Saints Football and Cheerleading programs at Saucon Park. Unfortunately, Saucon Park is not easily accessible for many south Bethlehem families due to the need for access to transportation as the park is not in walking distance of south Bethlehem's neighborhoods. This poses further challenges for families whose children wish to take part in sports programming but are unable to access them.

Aside from formal sports leagues, informal basketball clinics are held at Madison Park and McNamara Park and some tournaments have been held at Sand Island (outside of south Bethlehem) for older youth. However, the only funding sources for the basketball clinics and tournaments

have been from prior Neighborhood Partnership Program and Community Development Block Grant funding. While there are formal baseball, football and cheerleading programs in south Bethlehem, these offerings are significantly less, compared to other communities within the City of Bethlehem and the greater Lehigh Valley. Finally, because of the lack of indoor sports facilities, there is the burden that in addition to the small number of sports offerings for youth, these sports are only able to be played during the warmer months, leaving youth without healthy outlets to express themselves and exercise during the colder months.

While formal middle school interscholastic sports begin in seventh grade, there is a lack of sports programming for children prior to this age, during highly developmental stages in life. In a 2014 study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, researchers found that afterschool physical activity programs would reduce obesity the most – 1.8% among children ages 6 to 12. By the time south Bethlehem youth reach seventh grade, they are already disadvantaged compared to school districts they compete against that have community sports programming in place from the time children reach kindergarten. This has lasting impacts on youth's mental, as well as physical, health. Organized sports participation aids in the development of physical skills, such as hand-eye coordination, functional movement skills and strength; academic;





self-regulatory; and general life skills. It also has positive social benefits, leading to both improved social identity and social adjustment.

Sports participation is a significant predictor of participation in physical fitness activities and health later in life. "Three in four (77%) of adults aged 30+ who play sports today played

sports as school-aged children. Only 3% of adults who play sports currently did not play when they were young" (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard University/NPR, 2015). St. Luke's Community Health Needs Assessment 2019 found that only 15% of Bethlehem service area respondents reported regularly exercising five or more days per week and 27% of

Bethlehem respondents reported no days of exercise per week. Furthermore, 37% of survey respondents reported having missed one or more days of normal activity due to poor mental health within the last month. According to the 2017 PA Youth Survey, over 40.5% of all students in Northampton County felt depressed or sad most days in the past 12 months. A 2019 study found that

children who reported no exercise were twice as likely to have mental health problems, particularly related to anxiety and depression, compared with those who met the recommendation of an hour a day, and a 2020 study suggested that the more physical activity teenagers participated in, the less likely they were to report depression as 18-year-olds (The New York Times, 2020).

### HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2015-2019), 9.4% of south Bethlehem's civilian non-

institutionalized population have no health insurance (but this percentage was likely skewed due to census tract 111, where Lehigh University is located). South

Bethlehem has a rate of persons with no health insurance coverage nearly 2% higher than the City (7.1%), 5% higher than Northampton County (4.6%) and 4% higher

than that state (5.7%). In south Bethlehem's census tracts, the percentage of persons with no health insurance coverage reaches as high as 12% in census tract 109.

## PERCENT OF PERSONS WITH NO HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE

| PA   | NORTHAMPTON COUNTY | CITY OF BETHLEHEM | SOUTH BETHLEHEM | 109 | 110   | 111  | 112   | 113 |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----|-------|------|-------|-----|
| 5.7% | 4.6%               | 7.1%              | 9.4%            | 12% | 10.1% | 3.5% | 11.4% | 9%  |

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATES (2015-2019)

# EXISTING PLANS AND EVALUATIONS

## CITY OF BETHLEHEM CONSOLIDATED PLAN (2020-2024)

In November 2020, the City of Bethlehem released the City of Bethlehem Consolidated Plan 2020-2024. The process included input from lead and responsible agencies and community meetings as well as data gathered from a needs assessment and housing market analysis. Input received by the City of Bethlehem was exceedingly similar to that in which CADCB received during its community input for this neighborhood plan. Input resulted in the City of Bethlehem identifying the following activities to focus its attention over the next five years:

### Housing Needs

- Increase home ownership opportunities
- Improve existing housing stock, both rental and owner-occupied
- Support neighborhood stabilization efforts and blight elimination initiatives through increased code enforcement and property clearance or rehab programs

The City identified that the most common housing problem was the cost of housing in Bethlehem with 4,840 households paying more than 50% of household income on housing and a total of 9,491 households paying more than 30% of their income on housing. Paying more than 30% of one's income on housing is considered a cost-burden and paying more than 50% is considered extremely cost-burdened. Of those cost-burdened households, it is renters who are most affected with 72.2% of renters paying more than 50% of their income on housing and 71.1% of renters paying more than 30% of their income on housing. These concerns were both echoed through CADCB's community input process as well as south Bethlehem data, the geographic area most impacted by housing insecurity in the City.

Furthermore, the City of Bethlehem identified the south Bethlehem neighborhoods as rapidly transitioning – a concern consistently expressed during CADCB's community input process. The City identified that new commercial enterprises are opening

up along East Third Street, south Bethlehem's major retail. These new local entrepreneurial ventures reside in some of the historic buildings that exist in the neighborhood. The City identified the opportunity for redevelopment in the upper floors of those structures to provide new affordable rental housing and encourage mixed-use development projects that have the potential for "live where you work" housing to accommodate the growing number of casino, hospitality, or educational workers. This strategy mirrors those that CADCB intends to implement through this neighborhood plan.

While housing-related goals and strategies were overwhelmingly the focus of the City of Bethlehem's Consolidated Plan 2020-2024, the City also identified other areas in need of community development including:

- Improve public spaces, including parks, streets and other infrastructure
- Enhance public safety through services and environmental improvements, such as lighting

- Support economic development, including infrastructure improvements to commercial areas serving nearby residential neighborhoods and through support for commercial façade improvements
- Support a wide range of eligible public services and facilities, including affordable childcare, before- and after-school programming, job readiness services, mental health services, child nutrition services, financial literacy programs (including foreclosure prevention) and food pantries and homeless shelters

The areas identified above as in need of community development and prioritization largely correspond with that identified by CADCB through its community input process and will be addressed through the implementation of this neighborhood plan.



## CITY OF BETHLEHEM CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (2021)

Beginning in 2006, the City of Bethlehem began making significant advancements on its commitment to climate action. In 2006, Bethlehem Mayor John B. Callahan joined the mayoral administrations of Easton and Allentown in signing the Three-City Proclamation, which endorsed the US Conference of Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement. More recently, Mayor Robert J. Donchez and the city council have committed Bethlehem to the global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the We Are Still In initiative, the Sierra Club's Mayors for 100% Clean Energy, and the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda. During that time, the city government has implemented numerous greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction initiatives, ranging from energy efficiency to renewable energy purchasing, which have reduced municipal GHG emissions 38% from 2005 to 2017.

In February 2017, further its commitment to climate action with Bethlehem City Council unanimously passing a resolution endorsing the creation of a Climate Action Plan (CAP). The resolution established a Climate Action Group of stakeholders to help advance the city toward developing a plan. WSP, a global engineering and design firm, and science-based community center Nurture Nature Center were selected as consultants to manage the development of the CAP with input from Bethlehem's public and stakeholders.

The City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan was adopted April 2021 by city council and includes the vision to "implement just and equitable solutions to reduce the

city's emissions contributing to global climate change and prepare for the local impacts of increasing temperatures and precipitation." Through the plan, the City of Bethlehem identified the need for environmental justice and equity, specifically for front-line communities, which are predominantly composed of low-income populations and black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) that face disparate amounts of pollution and will experience climate change's worst effects. The map to the right demonstrates south Bethlehem (located toward the bottom of the map, south of the Lehigh River) as coinciding with some of the hottest parts of the city. Highly developed areas lacking vegetation and green space tend to have much higher temperatures due to the urban heat island effect. These hot spots, which include south Bethlehem, will experience even greater climate change extremes, significant health hazards, and environmental justice concerns.

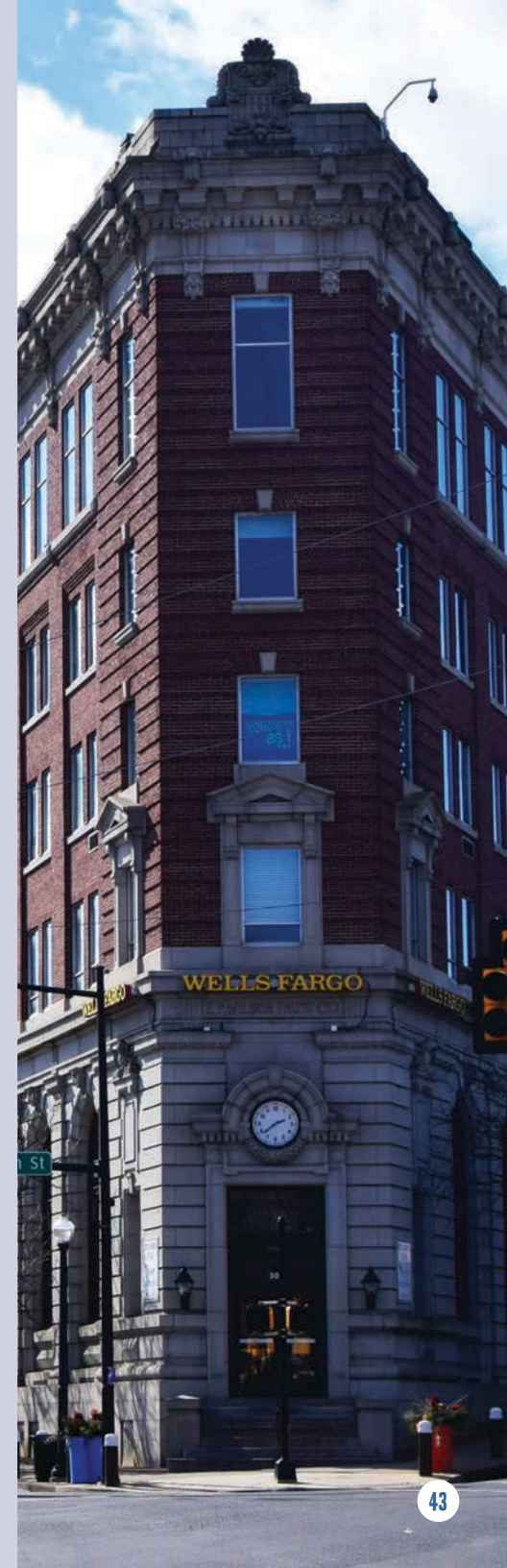
Due to climate change's disproportionate impact on front-line communities, which includes south Bethlehem, and the city's vision of just and equitable climate action, the city will make a concerted effort in:

- Establishing a just and ethical long-term framework for climate action supporting equity for all Bethlehem residents; and
- Ensuring 40% of overall benefits resulting from city spending on implementing this CAP goes to frontline communities.
- In order to establish a just and ethical long-term framework for climate action supporting equity

for all Bethlehem residents, the City of Bethlehem is proposing multiple strategies, including:

- codify environmental justice considerations into city ordinances and planning/zoning decisions;
- review and update land use ordinance and zoning to encourage land-use patterns that mitigate climate change impacts;
- integrate land use and transportation to reduce trip lengths and promote multiple modes of travel, including public transit;
- review new developments through the lens of sustainability via a recommending body; and
- encourage and prioritize preservation, reuse, repurpose, and retrofit of existing structures.

These strategies are specifically advantageous for south Bethlehem, as the community has seen a recent influx of development efforts and traffic congestion increases in the commercial corridors of Third and Fourth streets. By ensuring that development meets environmental justice and sustainability considerations, as well as promoting mixed-uses to reduce trip lengths and emphasizing public transit, the City is working with and for the community. This ensures the community is protected from any ill harm development and increased transportation may pose to climate change and its resulting health hazards on the community.



Two of the eight sectors the City of Bethlehem CAP intends to address in its mitigation strategies – land use and green space as well as local food and waste – coincide with three of **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW's** focus areas: public spaces, urban agriculture, and community engagement. The City of Bethlehem CAP intends to “maximize Bethlehem’s urban green space and tree canopy to promote carbon sequestration, increase residents’ access to active and passive open space, help reduce urban heat island effects, improve the urban ecosystem and stormwater management, and add aesthetic beauty to the city.” Further support of maximizing Bethlehem’s urban green space includes the benefits green spaces provide including recreation, supply of cleaner air, and improvement of public health outcomes. The City of Bethlehem CAP identified the South Bethlehem Greenway as a model of how a greenspace concept became a successful reality. Maximization of Bethlehem’s urban green space will be achieved through the CAP’s strategies to:

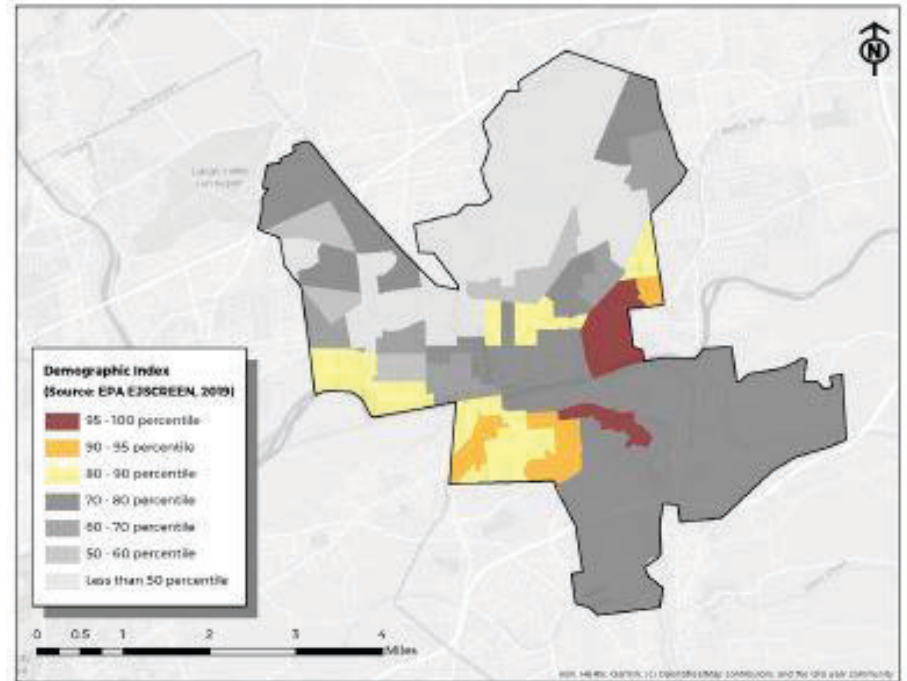
- prioritize green space development in underserved areas;
- expand and create new greenways;
- partner with community organizations to promote tree planting efforts;
- promote green roofs;
- develop a plan to improve access to diverse recreational opportunities for all residents; and

- support sustainability in park design, development, maintenance, and management

### **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW**

intends to build on these strategies, identified by the City of Bethlehem CAP, through the plan’s emphasis on both public spaces and community engagement. Through **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW**, CADCB will work with the community to expand utilization of the South Bethlehem Greenway and other public spaces, plant additional trees, enhance development through the addition/expansion of community and rooftop gardens, and improve and maintain parks and playgrounds. As mentioned, the City of Bethlehem CAP also intends to address local food and waste through its mitigation strategies; another area of the CAP that coincides with two of **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** focus areas: urban agriculture and community engagement. In order to achieve the goal of enhancing the local food system, the City of Bethlehem CAP identified the following strategies:

- work with schools to promote healthy eating;
- support local gardens and urban farms;
- expand education on local and low-impact food options; and
- eliminate food insecurity and inequity in food access.



**SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** intends to build on these strategies, identified by the City of Bethlehem CAP, through the plan's emphasis on both green spaces and community engagement. **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** will increase the presence and expansion of a local farmers' market on the Southside Greenway; youth educational programming to connect local youth with learning and vocational opportunities related to environmental engagement and agriculture; expanding and maintaining community and rooftop gardens; and partnering with other local organizations to address and remediate food insecurity.

Because the City of Bethlehem has set the goal of zero waste by 2040, it is imperative to have community engagement when meeting this goal so that everyone involved has a better understanding of the food system and the entire lifecycle of a product. As mentioned in the CAP, product lifecycle extends beyond simply recycling or composting and begins with product design and envisioning the use and management of materials in ways that preserve value, minimize environmental impacts, and conserve natural resources. This plan's intent to provide the programming mentioned above will assist in educating the community on the food system and the entire lifecycle of a product. By providing residents with access to healthier options and the empowerment provided by education to make more informed decisions relating to the food they purchase and nourish themselves with, this will, as a result, assist in reaching the city's goal of zero waste by 2040.

The City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan, the first of its kind in the city, is an ambitious and forward-thinking approach to climate action in the context of the urban environment. It is **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW's** intent to build on the strategies posed in the City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan to stimulate purposeful action and assist in curbing the effects of climate change in south Bethlehem, a front-line community.

### **BETHLEHEM STUDENT HOUSING ZONING ORDINANCE (2021)**

In 2018, community members and City staff identified a series of data points and resident anecdotes that indicated a major shift in the student housing market in south Bethlehem. In a single year, residential property sales were up 34% near Lehigh University's campus, sales prices were up 18%, and the percentage of new owner-occupiers was extremely low. Realtors were emphasizing news of Lehigh University's expansion and encouraging investors to look beyond the traditional boundaries of student housing. Although student housing has long been a part of the community, and always will be, the events of the last few years have shifted the balance and left long-time residents concerned about losing their family-oriented neighborhoods completely.

A group of concerned Southside residents got together to discuss the future of south Bethlehem's neighborhoods, and with support from the City and CADCB's Southside Vision 20/20, hired an expert on housing policy from the University



of Pennsylvania to analyze policies and practices that other college communities have used to preserve mixed-income neighborhoods while providing for the necessary amount of off-campus housing. Over a two-year period, City staff collected data, researched best practices, and met with stakeholders across south Bethlehem's neighborhoods, including residents, landlords, and university officials. As a result, the City of Bethlehem proposed amendments to the zoning ordinance that were adopted by city council in February 2021.

The amendment to the City's zoning ordinance, which establishes a student home overlay zoning district, revises certain dimensional requirements for the residential and neighborhood commercial districts.

The zoning amendment includes the following regulations:

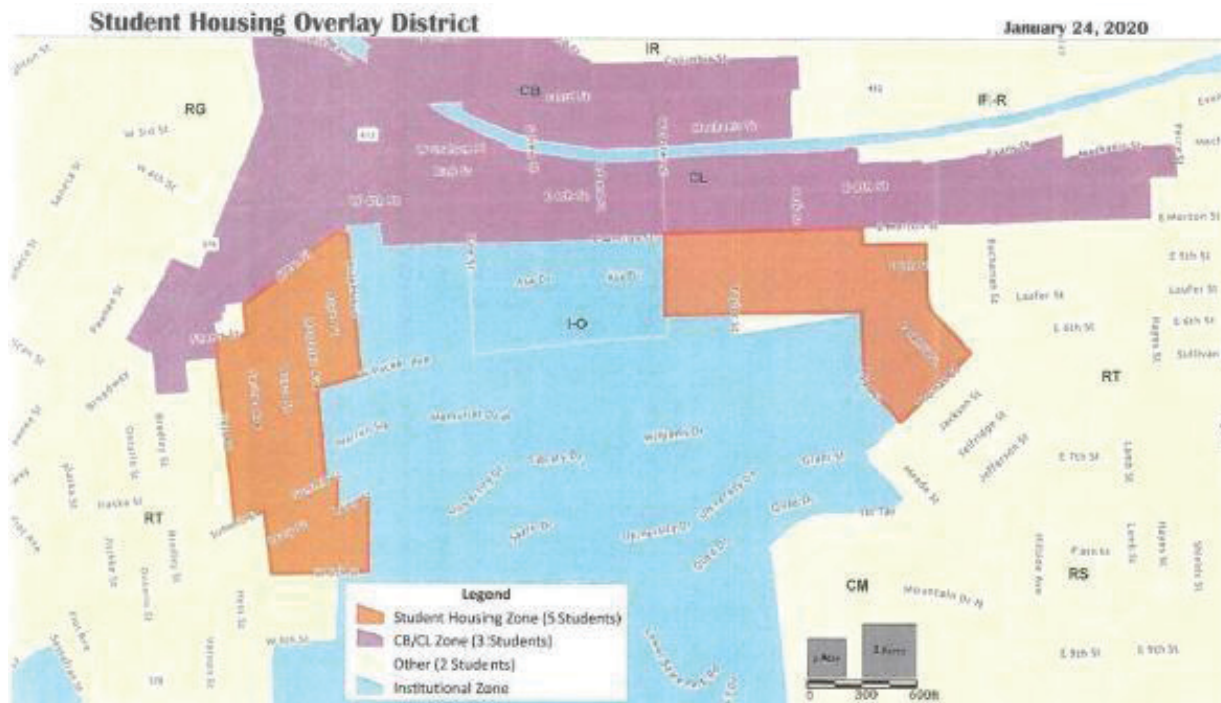
- All existing student homes (3-5 students per house) will be allowed to remain student homes, regardless of location, as long as they continue to be inspected and licensed annually.
- Any new student home (3-5

students per house) must comply with the following regulations:

- Any new student home must be located within the designated Student Housing Zone established by the City, and must be inspected and licensed annually
- All new student homes in residential neighborhoods must provide three off-street parking spaces
- The existing house may not be altered to create additional bedrooms in order to house

students (e.g. living room converted to a bedroom)

- Any houses outside of the designated Student Housing Zone that are not currently student homes may house a maximum of two college students
- Any new construction of multi-family buildings in residential neighborhoods will be capped at 3.5 stories or 40 feet (previously 5 stories or 60 feet), with the exception of developments on lots that are a minimum of two acres.



## **SOUTHSIDE BETHLEHEM HISTORIC CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY (2021)**

Under the direction of the City of Bethlehem Planning and Zoning Bureau, the Urban Research & Development Corporation (URDC) and Artefact, Inc, both of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, partnered to conduct a study of the Southside Bethlehem Historic Conservation District, which was made available to the public in April 2021. The study primarily addressed portions of south Bethlehem that are within the Historic Conservation District, including much of the western portions of the Third and Fourth street corridors, as shown below. The Southside Bethlehem Historic Conservation District Study included public input, analysis of the City's existing Zoning Ordinance, analysis of the City's Historic District Regulations, and proposed Zoning Ordinance and Design Guideline revisions.

When the public was asked which goal is most important to the future of the Historic Conservation District, 56% indicated emphasis on preservation of older buildings and features, while 44% indicated the promotion of a variety of architectural styles, including modern and artistic. Furthermore, the large majority (78%) of respondents felt it was either extremely important or moderately important to control building heights, 89% felt it was either very important or moderately important to control the exterior appearance of new buildings, and 89% felt it was either very important or moderately important to control the exterior appearance of changes to existing buildings. Finally,

82% of respondents felt it was either very important or moderately important to control the demolition of older buildings in the Historic District. These responses indicate that not only are south Bethlehem's residents engaged in their city and its future, but they also value the "sense of place" that south Bethlehem provides them and visitors, alike. This is further exemplified through the most common responses when asked what people like most about the Historic District and what they like least about the Historic District. The most common responses to what people liked most about the Historic District included: walkability, community, South Bethlehem Greenway, variety of styles, cultural diversity, older charm, and historic character. The most common responses to what people liked least about the Historic District are not surprising: traffic congestion, new development that does not fit in, disrepair of buildings, and empty storefronts. All of these responses directly coincided with those which were most commonly expressed throughout CADCB's public input process and what the **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** vision is and where emphasis is placed.

Due to various public concerns, it became apparent within the study that there is a need to balance various public concerns. This includes balancing historic preservation and height, and density limits needs with the need for additional housing, for persons of various income levels and persons with disabilities. The study echoed the findings of many prior studies, research, and plans in that there are serious concerns about providing affordable housing, particularly as rental

and sale housing prices have greatly increased in recent years. It is difficult for families to compete for housing with college students, as identified and addressed through the Bethlehem Student Housing Zoning Ordinance passed in early 2021 (and discussed above). The study pointed to the City of Bethlehem as recognizing concerns about providing affordable housing and various incentives they are investigating to curb some of these concerns.

The study also analyzed the allowed business uses within the City of Bethlehem's Zoning Ordinance. The City of Bethlehem's strict Zoning Ordinance has, in part, likely contributed to what people value most about the Historic District, and south Bethlehem in general. The Historic District Regulations regulate new construction of buildings, building additions, demolition of a building, and major alternations to a building, including removal of architectural features. Furthermore, it addresses architectural features, which can be seen from a public street or sidewalk. Because drive-through restaurants, gas stations, auto repair, and auto sales are not allowed in the area within the south Bethlehem Historic District, this allows emphasis to be placed on more personalized, small businesses in the commercial district. Furthermore, new buildings are required to be built close to the sidewalk, encouraging walkability and smart land-use planning, which deters sprawl and encourages density. All of these facets of the south Bethlehem Historic District result in tasteful architectural features; personalized, small businesses; and walkability – are represented and highly

valued by residents and visitors, alike.

Because the large majority (78%) of respondents felt it was either extremely important or moderately important to control building heights and 89% felt it was either very important or moderately important to control the exterior appearance of new buildings as well as existing buildings, the Urban Research & Development Corporation (URDC) and Artefact, Inc reviewed the City's existing Zoning Ordinance in reference to 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 Southside Greenway, and west of Webster Street, south of the Southside Greenway, down to Morton Street. Additionally, the portion of the Historic District, south of the South Bethlehem Greenway and east of Webster Street, is zoned Commercial Limited. That district effectively allows up to five (5) stories. The study provided examples of step back of top floors, and compared these to examples of buildings with little articulation and no variation in setbacks.

As a result of the study and public input from the study, the Urban Research & Development Corporation (URDC) and Artefact, Inc have prepared draft revisions to the City's Historic Conservation District Ordinance for south Bethlehem; to the City's Zoning Ordinance, as it affects south Bethlehem, such as adjusting allowed building heights in certain areas; and to provide additional Design Standards for new construction and building additions.

## BETHLEHEM BLIGHT BETTERMENT INITIATIVE (2018)

In September 2017, the City of Bethlehem partnered with the Reinvestment Fund, Atria Planning, and May 8 Consulting, along with nonprofit and private community organizations to tackle blight and disinvestment in Bethlehem through the Bethlehem Blight Betterment Initiative (B3). The objective was to take a data-driven approach to mitigate blight and improve the city's housing stock, using market value analysis of the city's diverse neighborhoods.

The Bethlehem Blight Betterment Initiative Study identified south Bethlehem as a "stressed market." The study analyzed housing values and sales-related characteristics, such as owner-occupied versus renter-occupied homes, rentals with a subsidy, housing density, investor purchases, and the percentage of code violations and blighted properties. The Study concluded that south Bethlehem is mostly a rental market, and it has the lowest median sales price, at roughly \$69,047, in the City of Bethlehem. However, it should be noted that, as of recently, the sales prices in south Bethlehem have risen due to an increase in demand and decrease in supply of housing seen throughout the entire Lehigh Valley but most notably in the 18015 zip code, in which south Bethlehem resides. The map below depicts south Bethlehem (located in the southern portion of the map) as having both a large concentration of blighted properties and an area which contains the lowest median sales prices within the City of Bethlehem.







## RESIDENT-IDENTIFIED HOUSING ASSETS AND CHALLENGES IN SOUTH BETHLEHEM

In 2018, in response to the increasing housing stresses imposed on the south Bethlehem community, CADCB's community fellow conducted an in-depth study of Resident-Identified Housing Assets and Challenges in South Bethlehem. A total of 40 interviews with key stakeholders were conducted along with three community meetings and 100 resident surveys, offered in both English and Spanish. The following assets of south Bethlehem were identified: community cohesion, walkability, and Southside Ambassadors and Block Watch Groups. South Bethlehem residents pride themselves in their tight-knit community in which people know one another and look out for each other. On Hayes Street, residents spoke of a longstanding communal practice whereby neighbors share newspapers with one another. The diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued. Many residents said they are proud to be Southsiders. The exact phrase, "I am Southside Proud!", was often used and this slogan has been effective in encouraging people to come to terms with diversity and differences by promoting an all-embracing identity and sense of belonging for all south Bethlehem residents and business-owners alike.

Despite these assets, which have much potential to be built upon, challenges persist in south Bethlehem's community. Many south Bethlehem residents do not have plans to move

and relocate elsewhere. Most consider their neighborhood as "home," and not a junction, but many fear that rent affordability will force them out of their neighborhoods. Among the challenges identified, the following challenges were most pronounced: unaffordable housing/cost-burdened, turnover of neighbors and fear of eviction, lack of housing quality, inefficiency of complaint-driven code enforcement, and lack of cleanliness.

There is a limited supply and lack of diversity in the housing stock. Consequently, there is a higher demand for rental units, which leads to higher rental prices. Due to high rental costs, families are often forced to settle for dilapidated housing or housing that does not adequately accommodate them. One resident shared, "I had to make my son a room in the hallway inside our home, so he can have his own space. I feel horrible, and he does not feel safe." When the alternative is becoming homeless, residents would rather settle for substandard housing, knowing at least they have a roof over their head. This increase in housing cost has also contributed to residential transiency. In response to "what has been one of the biggest challenges for you and in your neighborhood", one resident stated, "Just not knowing who the new neighbors are and how long they will stay. Seems like every other month there is a new tenant." Residential transiency is not only a consequence of economic hardship, it also fuels a vicious cycle of financial insecurity and weaker social ties, at both the familial and neighborhood level.



## ST. LUKE'S COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT (2019)

The Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) was published by St. Luke's University Health Network in June 2019. Through this process, key informant interviews were conducted with stakeholders, community forums were convened at each campus community, and approximately 10,234 voluntary community health surveys were administered in St. Luke's eleven campus geographic regions.

Information regarding demographics, healthy factors and behaviors, physical environment, clinical care, and health outcomes (including general, dental

and mental health) was collected for both Lehigh and Northampton Counties and was compared to the City of Bethlehem. The survey indicated that two of south Bethlehem census tracts (112 and 111) are amongst the ten lowest income tracts in St. Luke's region with the following median family incomes: \$27,548 (112) and \$29,375 (111), in comparison to the national median family income (\$55,322) and state median family income (\$54,895). Furthermore, these same two census tracts in south Bethlehem (112 and 111) are also amongst the ten lowest income census tracts that have the highest cost burdened households (where 30% or more of household income goes toward housing cost)

with 59.2% of cost-burdened residents in census tract 112 and 46% in census tract 111 compared nationally (34.2%) and state-wide (31.3%). Regarding housing quality, census tract 111 and 112 have the highest percentage of housing units lacking complete kitchen facilities: census tract 111 (19.4%) and census tract 112 (5.5%). The St. Luke's CHNA furthered the community-wide sentiment that there is an area-wide need to address housing conditions and affordability, specifically in census tracts that include south Bethlehem two census tracts: 111 and 112. One informant stated, "We have one of the worst relationships between housing cost and income levels in the country."



## FESTIVAL UNBOUND, A SUMMARY (2020)

In 2019, a local south Bethlehem non-profit, Touchstone Theatre, carried out a ten-day festival, Festival UnBound. The purpose of Festival UnBound was to bring the community together (in particular the Bethlehem community and the Southside Arts District, but also the Lehigh Valley in general) to envision our future, together, through art – theatre, music, movement, poetry, visual art – as well as conversations, community meals, panel discussions, and social media posts and blogs. In response to the administration of Festival UnBound, Touchstone Theatre conducted a study/final report to better understand the impact of such a festival

on the community.

Findings from this study indicated the success of the festival and the evident community's want and need for further festivals and events centered around the various cultures to which south Bethlehem is home. The festival brought together the community from across its entire, diverse spectrum of citizens – children, youth, adults, Black/African American, White, Hispanic/Latino/Latina, LGBTQ, those with disabilities, rich and poor. Touchstone Theatre administered both before and after surveys to gauge Festival UnBound's impact on the community. There were approximately 5,500 attendees or participants, of which



1,000 included fourth graders from the Bethlehem Area School District. The following answers saw a change, on average, of 8.4% improved -

- Bethlehem is a healthy community 10% improved
- Bethlehem is an environmentally-minded community 15% improved
- Bethlehem is a place where minority voices are heard and respected 11.5% improved
- Bethlehem is a caring and compassionate community 6.5% improved
- Bethlehem is a great place to live 8.5% improved
- Bethlehem is a unified community 7.8% improved
- I would recommend Bethlehem as a great place for young people to move or settle down 8.7% improved

Because the purpose of Festival UnBound was to bring the community together to help envision the future, community members offered their suggestions to improve south Bethlehem. The top responses mirrored those found in various other plans and studies conducted on south Bethlehem including: improve accessibility to affordable housing and transportation; equitable, livable, income and housing; equity of resources for the community; raise the profile of the Southside as a historical, safe and vibrant community, and focus energy on our assets and enhancing them. We have a lot of visual resources here in our architecture and murals, in our artistic community, as well as in our rich ethnic and racial mix of residents, and those who work here every day (and that diversity contributes to our many international restaurants, among other things!).



## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Throughout the public input process, south Bethlehem residents, community leaders, business owners and other stakeholders shared many community concerns. Throughout the process, the majority of responses were seen from the following census tracts in south Bethlehem, in order from most input received to least input received: census tract 113, 112, 110 and 109. The community input included overwhelming concerns for how continued development (residential and commercial) will impact the fabric of Southside's unique identity in addition to the community's role in having a voice in the decisions that affect this continued development. The community identified quality/affordability of housing, improved communication, connectivity, and representation, as well as increase utilization/enhancement of public and green spaces, as the main focus areas they believed should be improved upon. Consequently, youth engagement, cleanliness, quality of life, and environmental concerns from the community also factor into the formulation of the next six-year plan and its projected activities.



## HOUSING QUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY

The community input process resulted in the following feedback and suggestions regarding housing quality and affordability:



### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

When prompted "what you would change, enhance, or add to this community to make it better?" the key stakeholders identified improving the housing quality of Southside, housing affordability, as well as the responsible development of residential and commercial spaces. Key informants shared that they would like to see developers building apartments that south Bethlehem residents can afford, the further development of affordable housing, and the potential to develop unused spaces, such as that in which the former Bethlehem Steel is situated on.



### PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meeting attendees heavily identified gentrification as a major challenge currently facing Southside, insofar as current development activity is increasing costs of housing/living with the rising costs of new high-end apartment buildings coupled with the existing poor quality housing stock. Meeting attendees also identified concerns for how local developers purchase buildings but do not begin construction on those properties for prolonged periods of time.



### COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Survey respondents identified affordable housing/improvement of quality of housing options within the top quartile of the areas to which they believed the new south Bethlehem Neighborhood Plan should dedicate effort. Thirty-one percent of survey respondents rated affordability of housing options as "okay to poor" while 38% rated variety of housing options as "okay to poor".

These community concerns are echoed in the City of Bethlehem Consolidated Plan 2020-2024 in which the City identifies the following as overall needs:

**"IMPROVE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK, BOTH RENTAL AND OWNER-OCCUPIED AND SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD STABILIZATION EFFORTS AND BLIGHT ELIMINATION INITIATIVES THROUGH INCREASED CODE ENFORCEMENT AND PROPERTY CLEARANCE OR REHAB PROGRAMS."**

Additionally, the City identified that the most common housing problem was the cost of housing in Bethlehem with 4,840 households paying more than 50% of household income on housing and a total of 9,491 households paying more than 30% of their income on housing. Of those cost-burdened households, it is renters who are most affected, with 72.2% of renters paying more than 50% of their income on housing and 71.1% of renters paying more than 30% of their income on housing.

In the City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan (2021), the City is proposing multiple strategies as they relate to housing and development including:

- codify environmental justice considerations into city ordinances and planning/zoning decisions;
- review and update land use ordinance and zoning to encourage land-use patterns that mitigate climate change impacts;
- review new developments through the lens of sustainability via a recommending body; and
- encourage and prioritize preservation, reuse, repurpose, and retrofit of existing structures.





## PUBLIC AND GREEN SPACES

The community input process resulted in the following feedback and suggestions regarding public and green spaces:



### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

When prompted “what you would change, enhance, or add to this community to make it better?” the key stakeholders identified several concerns related to improved community infrastructure, such as streets, parks, and green spaces, as well as outdoor activities and programming for youth. Proposed steps identified for the new neighborhood plan to improve the community included neighborhood revitalization, improved lighting and pedestrian/walkability of Southside, utilizing public spaces for community events, increasing access to fresh, quality and affordable food, developing vacant lots for public use, continuation of Southside Proud Campaign, and increasing programming/utilization of Greenway for community events.



### PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meeting attendees heavily identified several priority areas within the focus area of public and green spaces and emphasized the need for youth involvement throughout these priority areas. These priorities included enhancements and improvements to the Greenway, including increasing programming and maximizing the Greenway’s potential for bringing the community together; environmental initiatives such as native tree planting, retention/expansion of the Southside Ambassador program, investment of solar panels on non-residential buildings, expansion of Greenway’s Farmers Market, and coordinating with the City’s new environmental sustainability plan. Youth opportunities also ranked high and included enhancing places for recreation, as well as community gardens and parks that encompass greenery and foliage, not just concrete.



### COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Respondents scored cleanliness/overall appearance (2.4%), access to fresh food (0%), and youth programs (0%) on a list of what they like best about living in Southside. Parks/green spaces and playgrounds scored over 61% as the most important aspects of what make a neighborhood a nice place to live. Improvement of parks and green spaces (74.5%) and improvement of community gardens and urban farms (71.5%) were among the top responses to what areas the new neighborhood plan dedicate the most effort to. Grocery stores/access to fresh food scored 95% on a list of what the Southside needs more of.

The need for effort placed on public and green spaces as well as food insecurity/ access to fresh food are echoed in the City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan (2021). The City of Bethlehem Climate Action Plan (CAP) intends to:

**“MAXIMIZE BETHLEHEM’S URBAN GREEN SPACE AND TREE CANOPY TO PROMOTE CARBON SEQUESTRATION, INCREASE RESIDENTS’ ACCESS TO ACTIVE AND PASSIVE OPEN SPACE, HELP REDUCE URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECTS, IMPROVE THE URBAN ECOSYSTEM AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, AND ADD AESTHETIC BEAUTY TO THE CITY.”**

Further support of maximizing Bethlehem’s urban green space includes the benefits green spaces provide including recreation, supply of cleaner air, and improvement of public health outcomes. CAP identified the Southside Greenway as a model of how a greenspace concept becomes a successful reality. Specifically, maximization of Bethlehem’s urban green space will be achieved through the CAP’s strategies to:

- prioritize green space development in underserved areas;
- expand and create new greenways;

- partner with community organizations to promote tree planting efforts;
- promote green roofs;
- develop a plan to improve access to diverse recreational opportunities for all residents; and
- support sustainability in park design, development, maintenance, and management
- The CAP also intends to address local food and waste through its mitigation strategies, which is another area of the CAP that coincides with community concerns identified in this plan. In order to achieve the goal of enhancing the local food system, the City of Bethlehem CAP identified the following strategies:
  - work with schools to promote healthy eating;
  - support local gardens and urban farms;
  - expand education on local and low-impact food options; and
  - eliminate food insecurity and inequity in food access.





## COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIVITY

The community input process resulted in the following feedback and suggestions regarding communication and connectivity:



### KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

When prompted “what you would change, enhance, or add to this community to make it better?” the key stakeholders identified several concerns related to communication and connectivity including improved communication/relationships between the community and community institutions (such as Lehigh University, City of Bethlehem, ArtsQuest), and improved community representation and pride. Community relationships, between organizations and developers, were identified as issues that may become a bigger problem if not addressed. When asked what steps the new neighborhood plan could take to improve the community, key informants suggested programming that engages community input and brings the community together, along with community events that foster connectivity and pride.



### PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public meeting attendees identified communication and connectivity as a challenge currently facing the Southside, including the relationship between Southside and existing organizations and surrounding communities. Attendees also identified the importance of providing more opportunities for youth of all ages, especially teenagers, in order to foster connectedness to the community as well as the importance of affordable, family-friendly events and activities to foster neighborhood inclusiveness. Concerns for modernizing communication efforts to accommodate 21st century methods.



### COMMUNITY SURVEYS

Survey respondents identified community engagement, community events/festivals, and youth programming within the top 80% of areas they believed to which the new south Bethlehem Neighborhood Plan should dedicate effort to. When asked what they think Southside can do to make the community a better place to live, the majority of responses included focusing on community connections, activities, and collaborations, as well as increased advocacy/communications within the community, and youth programs.



**TAKEAWAY FROM  
COMMUNITY CONCERNS**

After carefully analyzing data from the community input process, as well as incorporating feedback from the Steering Committee, CADCB will launch an initiative that centers Equitable Community Development as an overarching theme that

incorporates the community's vision for the future as well as the existing strengths derived from previous Neighborhood Partnership Programs. As the community has collectively identified inclusivity, diversity, economic vibrance and "small-town closeness with big-city energy" as its core strengths, **SOUTHSIDE'S**

**TOMORROW** will build from and preserve these qualities while facilitating new avenues for community empowerment. As South Bethlehem continues to flourish, it is necessary to incorporate the vibrant voices of the community in the decisions being made about its collective vision. Empowering the community with strategic and

creative placemaking that impacts future development is key to ensuring a vibrant, equitable place to live for all residents – those who have lived here for generations and those who join the community in the future.



## COMMUNITY ASSETS

South Bethlehem is a diverse and inclusive community rich with natural, social, and organizational resources.

Southside Vision's prior two plans, which were first developed in 2001 and built upon in 2014, listed the following community assets:



CLOSE PROXIMITY TO  
**LEHIGH UNIVERSITY**  
a world-class research institution



DIVERSE TOPOGRAPHY  
AND GREAT VIEWS



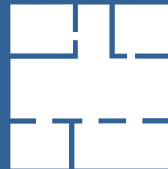
DIVERSE AND GENERALLY GOOD  
QUALITY HOUSING STOCK



DIVERSE POPULATION, BOTH  
CULTURALLY AND ECONOMICALLY



GOOD LOCAL SCHOOLS



GREAT URBAN DENSITY,  
STRONG STREET GRID AND  
VIEW CORRIDORS

## 130-ACRE

CITY REVITALIZATION AND  
IMPROVEMENT ZONE (CRIZ),  
WHICH WILL HELP TO FUND  
\$350 MILLION OF DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECTS



STRONG COMMUNITY ACTIVISM



CLOSE PROXIMITY TO  
**PHILADELPHIA**  
(60 miles)  
**NEW YORK CITY**  
(85 miles)



THE SOUTH BETHLEHEM  
GREENWAY, A TWO-MILE LINEAR  
PARK THAT WAS DEVELOPED ON  
ABANDONED RAILROAD TRACKS



## BETHLEHEM SKATEPLAZA

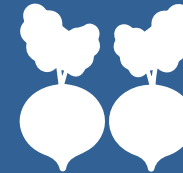
A WORLD CLASS VENUE  
UNRIVALED IN ITS PROGRESSIVE  
DESIGN AND IMMENSE SIZE

## FOUR BLOCKS INTERNATIONAL

COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR LOCATED  
IN THE 500 TO 800 BLOCK OF EAST  
FOURTH STREET

## EASTERN GATEWAY

A NEIGHBORHOOD-ORIENTED  
MIXED-USE DISTRICT BOUND BY  
DALY AVENUE, WILLIAM, HAYES,  
AND FIFTH STREETS



A WEEKLY FARMERS MARKET THAT  
OFFERS FRESH, LOCAL FOOD TO  
SOUTH BETHLEHEM RESIDENTS



TWO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:  
DONEGAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
AND BROUGHAL MIDDLE SCHOOL



GREAT LANDMARK/TOURISM  
POTENTIAL WITH BETHLEHEM STEEL;  
THE NEIGHBORHOOD CHURCHES;  
THE WIND CREEK CASINO-  
RESORT; AND STEEL STACKS, A  
TEN-ACRE COMMUNITY ARTS AND  
ENTERTAINMENT CENTER THAT OFFERS  
MEETING SPACE, MOVIES AND EVENTS



RELOCATION OF THE LEHIGH  
VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL FOR  
THE ARTS TO SOUTH BETHLEHEM  
- A \$27 MILLION INVESTMENT  
RESULTING IN AN 88,000-ACRE  
FOOT SCHOOL THAT IS SERVING  
650 STUDENTS

NORTHAMPTON  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## FOWLER FAMILY SOUTHSIDE CENTER

A COMMUNITY HUB THAT  
INCLUDES CLASSROOMS, ART  
STUDIOS, A 3-D FABRICATION  
STUDIO, A COPS 'N' KIDS READING  
ROOM, AND A ST. LUKE'S  
UNIVERSITY HEALTH NETWORK  
MEDICAL AND DENTAL CENTER

Seven years later, these assets remain and more have been added. Through surveys, key informant interviews, and public meetings the following additional assets were identified and long-standing assets were strongly-reiterated:

- Diversity of people, entertainment offerings, art, culture and history
- Incredible opportunity as south Bethlehem includes all the amenities necessary to make it a place where families are able to live, work and play all in one community
- Inclusive community in which people feel welcome and there is a sense of community and mutual care and regard for the betterment of all community members
- Registered Historic District

RESIDENTS OF THE COMMUNITY SHARED SOME OF THE FOLLOWING REMARKS REGARDING WHAT THEY VALUE MOST ABOUT SOUTH BETHLEHEM:

**“[I] TRULY APPRECIATE THE DIVERSITY AND MELTING POT NATURE OF THE AREA. THE FACT THAT IT WAS THE EPICENTER OF BETHLEHEM, HISTORICALLY, IS A PLUS SOUTHSIDERS HAVE A PASSION TO MAKE THEIR CITY BETTER”**

**“SOUTHSIDE IS GREAT WITH ARTS AND DIVERSITY. [I] SEE IT AS A GROWTH CENTER, EVEN MORE THAN ALLENTOWN AND EASTON AT THIS POINT. SOUTHSIDE IS BECOMING MORE A FOCAL POINT THAN MAIN STREET IS AT THIS POINT.”**

**“ECLECTIC NATURE OF THE SOUTHSIDE”**

**“URBAN ENVIRONMENT WITH A COMMUNITY FEEL”**

**“CLOSE KNIT COMMUNITY”**

**“IDEAL PLACE TO LIVE AND HAVE A FAMILY”**




## PARTNERSHIPS

The following organizations will provide a valuable role in the execution and sustainability of **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW**:

- 4-H of Northampton County
- ACCESSibility
- Albarell Electric Inc.
- Amerihealth Caritas
- ArtsQuest
- Bethlehem Area Public Library
- Bethlehem Area School District
- Bethlehem Fine Arts Commission
- Boys & Girls Club
- Bethlehem Press
- Café the Lodge
- City of Bethlehem
- Fifth Street Capital Partners
- Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic American League of Artists
- Hispanic Center of the Lehigh Valley
- Kellyn Foundation
- Keystone Consulting Engineers, Inc.
- Lehigh Conference of Churches
- Lehigh University
- Lehigh University Southside Initiative
- Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts
- Lehigh Valley Health Network
- Lehigh Valley Sierra Club
- Lynfield Community Center
- National Museum of Industrial History
- New Bethany Ministries
- Northampton Community College
- Penn State Extension of Northampton County
- Shooting Stars of the Lehigh Valley
- Southside Arts District
- Southside Children's Festival
- St. Luke's University Health Network
- Taggart and Associates
- Touchstone Theatre
- Woodward Rusnock Consulting, LLC





**PART 3:**  
**VISION,  
GOALS AND  
STRATEGIES**

## BACKGROUND

**SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** is a unifying, Equitable Community Development initiative that will enhance the quality of life, change the power dynamic, and build a meaningful relationship between the community and south Bethlehem's continued development.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Equitable Development is "an approach for meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant." Equitable Community Development is grounded in community engagement, guided by the voices that live and work in south Bethlehem, and driven by the vision and needs of those who are most affected by changing landscape of the district. Equitable Community Development recognizes the need to complement the growing development of south Bethlehem in pragmatic and unique ways; this approach centers housing revitalization, green and public spaces, as well as communication and connectivity to provide avenues that engage residents to participate in the flourishing of their community.

As the community has collectively identified inclusivity, diversity, economic vibrance and "small-town closeness with big-city energy" as its core strengths, **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** will build on and preserve these qualities while facilitating new

avenues for community empowerment. As south Bethlehem continues to flourish, it is necessary to incorporate the vibrant voices of the community in the decisions being made about its collective vision. Empowering the community with strategic and creative placemaking that impacts future development is key to ensuring a vibrant, equitable place to live for all residents – those who have lived here for generations and those who join the community in the future.

As Jane Jacobs stated nearly six decades ago, "In our American cities, we need all kinds of diversity, intricately mingled in mutual support. We need this so city life can work decently and constructively, and so the people of cities can sustain (and further develop) their society and civilization." South Bethlehem is a community rich with natural, social, and organization resources. Since its incorporation as a borough in 1865, it has retained and grown its diverse population of largely Hispanic/Latino/Latina residents, which is unmatched in other neighborhoods and communities throughout the City of Bethlehem.

According to the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research, people of color are disproportionately economically disadvantaged, boys of color achieve the poorest educational outcomes and Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino men experience the highest rates of unemployment and underemployment. The odds of success for children of color are currently roughly half those for white children. The Annie E Casey Foundation's Face for Results Index combines 12 predictors of future success, including birth weight, preschool participation,

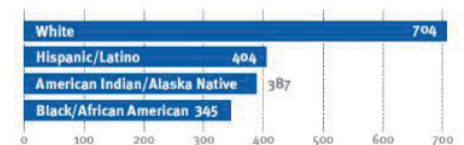
academic proficiency score, graduation rates, and family poverty levels, and creates a single composite score between 0 and 1,000 for each racial or ethnic group – the higher the score, the greater the likelihood of success. In 2016, the composite score was 704 out of 1,000 for white children while the score was 404 for Hispanic/Latino/Latina children, 387 for Native American children, and 345 for Black/African American children.

As individuals and developers invest in building renovations, infrastructure and new construction previously not seen in south Bethlehem, these changes begin to result in an influx of new residents and business owners who are better resourced and are often white. Increased development also result in higher property values, taxes, rental prices, and leasing costs, which poses increasing pressures on the housing affordability of existing residents. Less financially advantaged residents may become increasingly unable to afford to live in the neighborhood, giving them no choice but to move out.

Policies and programs that emphasize Equitable Community Development and revitalize the duties, functions, and roles of community residents, increase self-efficacy and one's feelings of ownership within their community. This ensures that residents are not just present and participating in spaces where decisions are made that affect the fabric of their community, but that their collective power is affirmed and respected. After all, sustainable development depends on the existence of a capable civic body, whose determined involvement in the social life requires community

empowerment. By launching an initiative that centers Equitable Community Development and is grounded in community engagement through housing affordability and quality, public and green spaces, and communication and connectivity, it is the goal of **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** to enhance the progress made in the last twenty years through Southside Vision; through the various plans, research, and studies conducted; and through ordinances passed decades ago, as well as recently. This will require CADCB to be a key actor in creating opportunities and spaces that promote a culture which encourages and welcomes residents to feel safe. This will, consequently, allow individuals to be honest about their hopes and fears while participating in the decisions that affect their lives and community. By ensuring that Equitable Community Development is central in improving housing affordability and quality, public and green spaces, and communication and connectivity, it is this plan's hope that south Bethlehem is able to maintain and build on its unique assets of inclusivity and diversity to modernize and preserve the integrity of the south Bethlehem community in an equitable manner.

Race for Results Composite Index of Opportunity (out of 1,000)

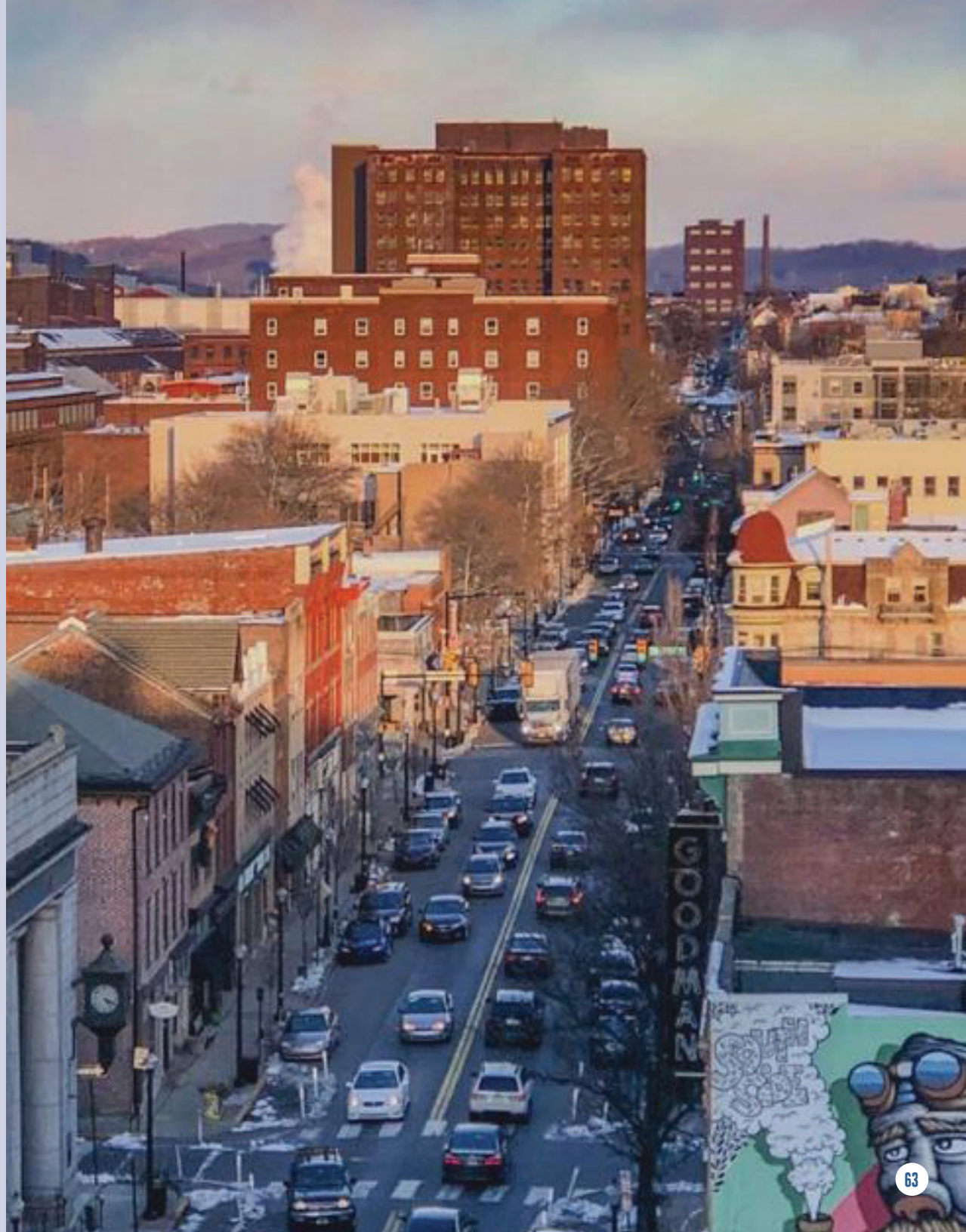


## VISION

South Bethlehem's residents are empowered with a renewed sense of self-efficacy and belonging which bolsters collective action to ensure neighborhoods reflect the mixed-use, mixed-income identity that has shaped the community and builds on the community's core strengths of inclusivity, diversity, economic vibrance, and "small-town closeness with big-city energy." South Bethlehem's community development is equitable and its neighborhoods have the resources to ensure all residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, have the opportunity to thrive and become successful, productive, and engaged citizens.

### **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** is:

- An effort to support residents, both current and new, in recognizing and utilizing the power of their voice and collective action;
- A sustainable, equitable effort that unites residents, both current and new, across all socio-economic boundaries;
- A continual, emergent process for energizing and realizing the dreams of community stakeholders;
- An advocate with and for south Bethlehem and its residents;
- A united, thriving community where all people are viewed as valuable assets to the community's future; and
- A means of facilitating effective cross-sector collaboration that mobilizes and integrates social, political, institutional, intellectual, environmental, cultural, and financial resources to achieve community goals.



# GOALS AND STRATEGIES



## GOAL:

South Bethlehem will have a variety of quality, affordable renter- and owner-occupied housing options and encourage development that meet the needs and wants of current and new residents, alike.

### STRATEGY:

Provide opportunities to engage and empower the community to have a voice in the decisions regarding new development and accessibility of affordable housing.

### ACTIVITIES:

Advocate for quality affordable housing in south Bethlehem;

Organize a community-wide association for renters of south Bethlehem;

Build partnerships with local developers to invest a certain percentage of development to a fund of money that can assist in owner-occupied rehab for low- to moderate-income homeowners and other community housing needs;

Support neighborhood community development by working to expand residents' capacity to collectively represent themselves as they seek incentives and resources to strengthen their neighborhoods;

### STRATEGY:

Provide opportunities for mixed-use, adaptive reuse development to increase quality, affordable rental housing.

### ACTIVITIES:

Establish partnerships to purchase buildings and create local landlords who are invested in preserving south Bethlehem's neighborhoods;

Partner with Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley's (CACLV) Community Action Better Homes program (CABH) to rehabilitate empty second floor apartments over commercial storefronts for low- to moderate-income renters.

### STRATEGY:

Provide opportunities for adaptive reuse development and rehabilitation to increase and maintain quality, affordable owner-occupied housing.

### ACTIVITIES:

Partner with CACLV's CABH program to acquire, rehabilitate, and resell homes to low- to moderate-income homebuyers;

Partner with CACLV's CABH program to rehabilitate low- to moderate-income owner-occupied housing;

Complete façade improvements on prioritized south Bethlehem residential properties.

### STRATEGY:

Invest in data collection initiatives that expands an understanding of how past, present, and future development in south Bethlehem impacts its residents.

### ACTIVITIES:

Analyze existing data while collecting new data to better understand the impact of the community's housing concerns.





# GOALS AND STRATEGIES



## GOAL:

Preserve the integrity of existing public and green spaces while investing in practical and creative utilization of those spaces to foster community engagement while addresses community concerns.

### STRATEGY:

Implement neighborhood programs that connect residents with opportunities that build a sense of creative placemaking and community pride with communal spaces.

### ACTIVITIES:

Provide avenues and resources for residents to adopt a local park and/or segment of the Greenway to maintain beautification and maintenance;

Identify areas that would benefit from beautification methods, such as native tree and flower planting and collaborate with local farms and residents to maintain beautification of those areas;

### STRATEGY:

Utilize green spaces to address concerns of food insecurity and neighborhood access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

### ACTIVITIES:

Support, expand, and promote the Farmers Market along the South Bethlehem Greenway;

Partner and collaborate with local

organizations to provide educational opportunities for residents to learn more about agriculture and nutrition;

Establish and/or maintain community vegetable and flower gardens in neighborhoods without walkable access to markets that provide fresh produce;

Explore the concept of establishing rooftop gardens on new and existing buildings, in collaboration with developers and building managers; hire/recruit local residents to care for and maintain said gardens.moderate-income renters.

### STRATEGY:

Address community concerns for youth engagement by expanding opportunities that connect youth with public/green spaces.

### ACTIVITIES:

Engage local students with opportunities to participate in environmental activities within their community, such as South Bethlehem Greenway programming, park enhancements, and urban farming/gardening activities;

Explore programming and opportunities that connect youth with local artists to create urban projects that enhance and build on the existing artistic characteristics of the south Bethlehem community such as murals, graffiti walls, sculpture gardens, youth art galleries, etc.

### STRATEGY:

Invest in community image by improving upon avenues for cleanliness and appearance.

### ACTIVITIES:

Expand territory of the Southside Ambassadors program to neighborhoods;

Increase authority of Southside Ambassadors to issue citations for properties that are persistent sources of litter;

Improve streetscaping by planting of native trees and flowers along pedestrian routes;

Improve and increase walkability and lighting of pedestrian routes, such as the South Bethlehem Greenway.



# GOALS AND STRATEGIES



## GOAL:

Build a sense of collective community identity through modernized initiatives that enhance residents' belonging, pride, and fellowship.

### STRATEGY:

Create, maintain, and build on existing initiatives that enhance community connectivity and unification.

### ACTIVITIES:

Evolve marketing campaign that builds on the success of "Southside Proud!" to build a collective, empowered community identity by identifying and unifying different Southside neighborhoods;

Explore and implement modernized forms of communication through social media that brings neighborhood connectivity into the 21st century;

Create opportunities for community forums for truth telling and restorative listening to foster deeper understanding of neighbors' lived experiences and impacts of the changes occurring within the community;

Partner with residents, local organizations, and businesses to design neighborhood tours guided by residents, themselves, that showcase history, culture, local businesses and restaurants, and community projects;

Establish a Youth Advisory Council within CADCB's Neighborhood Partnership Program committees where youth have a voice in the decisions being made on their behalf and create programming that aligns with their interests;

Provide programming and financial support to local youth groups and organizations whose goals align with the vision of CADCB's Neighborhood Partnership Program.

### STRATEGY:

Foster neighborhood connectedness through community building events and celebratory gatherings.

### ACTIVITIES:

Work with local residents and organizations to organize/sponsor events such as block parties, cultural celebrations, potlucks, etc. to promote unity among residents and attract visitors to south Bethlehem.

### STRATEGY:

Continue and enhance community input

process to further garner ongoing community feedback.

### ACTIVITIES:

Offer opportunities for community to provide feedback at community events regarding their likes/dislikes and how CADCB can improve their efforts to better reflect the community's vision;

Host public meetings for south Bethlehem residents to stay informed about the progress of **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** and to obtain input on its development and implementation;

Survey neighborhoods to determine what kinds of family-friendly, free community events best align with their community vision;

Create volunteer and leadership opportunities for south Bethlehem residents;

Further understanding of impact of COVID-19 on south Bethlehem community through increased surveying of educational, health, employment, housing, and quality of life data collection.



## ADMINISTRATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

### LEADERSHIP

**SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** will be led by a diverse steering committee composed of neighborhood residents, service providers, government officials, funders and other local representatives. The steering committee will be co-chaired by the Mayor of Bethlehem and a resident of south Bethlehem. The steering committee will meet every over month to review the initiative's progress, prioritize community needs and projects, and leverage the collaborative relationships among its members to achieve results.

The steering committee will establish subcommittees to assist with more detailed project planning and implementation. Each subcommittee will include two members of the steering committee and will be

composed of community residents, small business owners, representatives from the community, funders, and representatives from nonprofit organizations. One employee from CADCB will provide staff support to each subcommittee. Every steering committee member will serve on one subcommittee.

### COORDINATION OF EFFORT

**SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** will create partnerships and build consensus, promote cooperation, and facilitate open communication among neighborhood residents, businesses, service providers, government officials, volunteers, the private sector, and other partners and stakeholders. Stakeholders will be provided with regular opportunities to provide input about revitalization ideas, programs,

and projects. Representatives will review updated data about existing neighborhood conditions to ensure that **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** is wisely using its resources to meet the most pressing community needs and have the greatest impact.

### ANNUAL ACTION PLANS

Each year, the steering committee will review project proposals from each subcommittee. The steering committee will determine the priorities for spending based on the objectives of this plan, community conditions, input of community residents and other stakeholders, and the resources that are available. Program accomplishments and successes will be recorded, documented, and reported on. **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** will comply with all Neighborhood

Partnership Program (NPP) requirements and keep the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and all stakeholders well-informed about neighborhood accomplishments, success stories, and program implementation.

### FUNDING

Funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development will be leveraged to attract additional local, state, federal, and private funding to maximize the financial resources available for implementation. Staff will keep abreast of available grants and other funding opportunities and periodically meet with funding providers to discuss **SOUTHSIDE'S TOMORROW** projects and grant possibilities.



# PROJECT TIMELINE

## HOUSING QUALITY/AFFORDABILITY

**P**  
PLANNING

**I**  
IMPLEMENTATION

**O**  
OUTGOING

| ACTIVITY   | YEAR 1<br>2021-2022 | YEAR 1<br>2022-2023 | YEAR 3<br>2023-2024 | YEAR 4<br>2024-2025 | YEAR 5<br>2025-2026 | YEAR 6<br>2026-2027 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Advocate for quality affordable housing in South Bethlehem.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Organize a community-wide association for renters of Southside.  | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Build partnerships with local developers to invest a certain percentage of development toward a fund of money that can assist in owner-occupied rehab for low- to moderate-income homeowners and other community housing needs.    | P                   | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Support neighborhood community development by working to expand residents' capacity to collectively represent themselves as they seek incentives and resources to strengthen their neighborhoods.                                  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Establish partnerships to purchase buildings and create local landlords who are invested in preserving south Bethlehem's neighborhoods.  | P                   | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Partner with Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley's (CACLV) Community Action Better Homes program (CABH) to rehabilitate empty second floor apartments over commercial storefronts for low- to moderate-income renters. | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Partner with CACLV's CABH program to acquire, rehabilitate, and resell homes to low- to moderate-income potential homebuyers.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Partner with CACLV's CABH program to rehabilitate low- to moderate-income owner-occupied housing.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Complete façade improvements on prioritized south Bethlehem residential properties.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Analyze existing data while collecting new data to understand the impact of the community's housing concerns.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |

# PROJECT TIMELINE

## PUBLIC/GREEN SPACES



PLANNING



IMPLEMENTATION



OUTGOING

| ACTIVITY   | YEAR 1<br>2021-2022 | YEAR 1<br>2022-2023 | YEAR 3<br>2023-2024 | YEAR 4<br>2024-2025 | YEAR 5<br>2025-2026 | YEAR 6<br>2026-2027 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Provide avenues and resources for residents to adopt a local park or segment of the Greenway to maintain beautification and maintenance.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Identify areas that would benefit from beautification methods such as native tree and flower planting and collaborate with local farms and residents to maintain beautification of those areas.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Support, expand, and promote the Greenway Farmer's Market.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Partner and collaborate with local organizations to provide educational opportunities for residents to learn more about agriculture and nutrition.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Establish and/or maintain community vegetable and flower gardens in neighborhoods without walkable access to markets that provide fresh produce.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Explore the concept of establishing rooftop gardens on new and existing buildings, in collaboration with developers and building managers; hire/recruit local residents to care and maintain said gardens.   | P                   | P I                 | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Engage local students with opportunities to participate in environmental activities within their community, such as South Bethlehem Greenway programming, park enhancements, and urban farming/gardening activities.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Explore programming and opportunities that connect youth with local artists to create urban projects that enhance and build on the existing artistic characteristics of the south Bethlehem community such as murals, graffiti walls, sculpture gardens, youth art galleries, etc. | P                   | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Expand territory of the Southside Ambassadors program into new neighborhoods.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Increase authority of Southside Ambassadors to issue citations for properties that are persistent sources of litter.   | P                   | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Improve streetscaping by planting of native trees and flowers along pedestrian routes.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Improve and increase walkability and lighting of pedestrian routes, such as the South Bethlehem Greenway.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |

# PROJECT TIMELINE

## COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIVITY



| ACTIVITY  | YEAR 1<br>2021-2022 | YEAR 1<br>2022-2023 | YEAR 3<br>2023-2024 | YEAR 4<br>2024-2025 | YEAR 5<br>2025-2026 | YEAR 6<br>2026-2027 |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Evolve marketing campaign that builds on the success of “Southside Proud!” to build a collective, empowered community identity by identifying and unifying different Southside neighborhoods.                     | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Explore and implement modernized forms of communication through social media that brings neighborhood connectivity into the 21st century.   | P                   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Create opportunities for community forums for truth telling and restorative listening to foster deeper understanding of neighbors’ lived experiences and impacts of the changes occurring within the community.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Partner with residents, local organizations, and businesses to design neighborhood tours guided by residents themselves that showcase history, culture, local businesses and restaurants, and community projects. | P                   | P                   | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Establish youth advisory council of the NPP where youth can have a voice in the decisions being made on their behalf and create programming that aligns with their interests.                                     | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Provide programming and financial support to local youth groups and organizations whose goals align with the vision of CADCB’s Neighborhood Partnership Program.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Work with local residents and organizations to host/sponsor events such as block parties, cultural celebrations, potlucks, etc. to promote unity among residents and attract visitors to South Bethlehem.         | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Offer opportunities for community to provide feedback at community events regarding their likes/dislikes and how CADCB can improve their efforts to better reflect the community’s vision.                        | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Host public meetings for Southside Bethlehem residents to stay informed about the progress of the new plan and to obtain input on its development and implementation.   | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Survey neighborhoods to determine what kinds of family-friendly, free community events best align with their community vision.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Create volunteer and leadership opportunities for Southside Bethlehem residents.  | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               | P I O               |
| Further understanding of impact of COVID-19 on south Bethlehem community through increased surveying of educational, health, employment, housing, and quality of life data collection.                            | P                   | P                   | P I                 | P I                 | P I O               | P I O               |