

My Story



A Hub of Urban Activity

South Bethlehem Greenway

By Darlene Heller, Director of Planning and Zoning

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The South Bethlehem Greenway has been a significant component of the overall economic revitalization and cultural growth of south Bethlehem. This corridor originally supported both a passenger and industrial freight line running through the very core of the south Bethlehem.

With the demise of passenger rail and the abandonment of industrial rail use (following the closure of the nearby Bethlehem Steel plant) the land quickly became blighted and a complete eyesore for the downtown.

Bethlehem completed a master plan for the corridor in 2005 and purchased it in 2008. Development of the trail occurred in several phases. The most recent phase of this trail was completed in 2016, bringing its length to 3 miles, turning more than 20 acres of previously blighted land in Bethlehem's urban core into a transformative urban trail.



Keystone Fund Investment: \$2.25 million

Total Public/Private Investment: \$5 million

The South Bethlehem Greenway creates greenspace and a vibrant rail trail in the core of the most densely developed area of Bethlehem and the area of the city most lacking in recreation

opportunities and open space. However, the Greenway is much more than recreation space, creating a hub of urban activity for a variety of residents and visitors.

The Greenway is the location for several local festivals, including VegFest which brings in upwards of 10,000 people in a single day. Touchstone Theatre abuts the Greenway and has been able to host several outdoor performances on the Greenway. The eastern end of the Greenway is where the City was able to develop a skateplaza that has

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been well received by skateboarders, BMXers, and the surrounding neighborhood. Restaurants have created a direct connection to and outdoor dining opportunities facing the Greenway. Residential development has occurred along the Greenway where homes are sited to front on the Greenway and allow the trail to be their front door. Additional residential projects are under construction that abut the Greenway and take direct advantage of the new amenity in South Bethlehem.

The development of the South Bethlehem Greenway is definitely one of the most inclusive projects that Bethlehem has completed in recent years. It is not uncommon to see local residents walking to work on the Greenway or local students walking to school on the Greenway. Many local residents say they prefer to walk across town on the greenway rather than on the streets because it allows them to experience some quiet and some greenspace even in the urban core. And the city continues to work with resident groups and abutting property owners to create additional amenities that serve the community. For instance, in the coming year Bethlehem will be able to create some active play area on the Greenway immediately abutting Holy Infancy School and the Boys and Girls Club.

The South Bethlehem Greenway also has significant potential for expansion in the future as the city connects it to other nearby trails. A trail feasibility study was recently completed to analyze in more detail how the Greenway can ultimately be connected to the Saucon Rail Trail, the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, and Monocacy Way, which are all nearby.

The South Bethlehem Greenway is already a transformative amenity in South Bethlehem, but its potential and use will continue to grow in the future with additional amenities and trail connections.

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