Southside Vision Master Plan
2014 – 2024

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Executive Summary

This Southside Vision Master Plan is a comprehensive strategy to continue the revitalization of south Bethlehem. It is an initiative of Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem (CADC), a subsidiary of Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV), and is administered in partnership with the City of Bethlehem. Southside Vision began with the approval of a Neighborhood Partnership Program through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) in 2001. Southside Vision leverages this funding to engage corporate, public, and private resources so that the community’s vision for a better future can be mobilized and realized. The goals described in this plan will be accomplished through strategic partnerships among community organizations, state and local governments, south Bethlehem residents, educational and healthcare institutions, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector.

Through a comprehensive public input process conducted in 2013 and 2014, Southside Vision has identified five areas in which to focus its resources over the next ten years:

- **Economic Sustainability** -- The economic viability of south Bethlehem will be advanced through business development, job creation, and promotion of south Bethlehem small businesses within and outside the community

- **Housing** -- Through education, advocacy, and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock, south Bethlehem residents will have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing

- **Public Spaces** – South Bethlehem’s public spaces will be continually improved to increase accessibility and utilization

- **Safety and Wellbeing** -- Residents and visitors will feel safe and secure in south Bethlehem with plentiful opportunities for local residents to flourish and thrive

- **Community Engagement and Communication** -- Southside Vision will mobilize, engage, and coordinate the efforts of south Bethlehem residents and other stakeholders through meetings, events, and strategic communications
This Southside Vision Master Plan consists of five interconnected areas: economic sustainability; housing; public spaces; safety and wellbeing; and community engagement and communication. While the goals and strategies in this plan are listed by category, efforts in each of the five areas overlap and integrate with all of the other areas, strengthening and advancing the entire Southside Vision initiative.
Our Community

Our History

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 Bethlehem Iron Works that became Bethlehem Steel in 1902, ultimately becoming the second largest steel producer in the United States. In 1943, at the height of World War II, Bethlehem Steel employed over 31,000 people in the City and nearly 300,000 people nationwide. 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 2003), it left a community in crisis as high-paying manufacturing jobs were replaced by low-paying retail and service jobs, particularly in south Bethlehem.

Since that time, Bethlehem’s government, nonprofit agencies, businesses, and citizens have worked tirelessly to help south Bethlehem recover economically, socially, and culturally. South Bethlehem is now home to one of the most profitable casinos in the state, a world-class arts complex, rejuvenated parks, recreational and green space, and dynamic commercial districts that reflect the diversity and character of the community. Yet, despite these advances, there are still many areas of concern as well as opportunities for further development. Careful planning, effective policy, and thoughtful implementation are crucial to the future of south Bethlehem.
South Bethlehem includes census tracts 109, 110, 111, 112, and 113.
Our Community

Our Vision

“A haven for multicultural working families”

“The most engaged community in the city”

“A place where everyone wants to go and celebrate”

“Unique, thriving neighborhoods with their own flavor”

“A good place to raise a family”

“A lovely place to live”

“A place where people know us for caring about our kids”

“An up and coming town that everyone wants a piece of”

“A national model of creative placemaking where small local businesses thrive”

“A self-sustaining ecosystem where everyone produces and consumes together”

“People using the South Bethlehem Greenway to walk and bike to work; less reliance on cars”

“A place where younger people are excited about living because of diversity and walkability”

“A vital, creative, diverse community that welcomes and validates residents in a creative environment”

“A community that is empowered and has a good spirit”

This is our community’s vision for the future of south Bethlehem.
Our Community

Community Conditions

The target area for Southside Vision 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 because 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 2010 Census, there were 74,982 residents in the City of Bethlehem. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population increased from 18% of residents to just over 24% and the African American population grew from 4% to nearly 7%. The population in south Bethlehem totaled 20,082, an increase from 17,965 persons in 2000. The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012) indicated the population of south Bethlehem was young, with the median age in its five census tracts ranging from 21.7 to 38.4. The median age in the City of Bethlehem was 40.3; in Northampton County it was 44.1, and in Pennsylvania it was 43.5.

The total number of households in the five census tracts that make up south Bethlehem was 6,374, of which 3,132 (or 49.1%) were minority households. 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 have minority concentrations. The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012) indicated that a total of 7,056 south Bethlehem residents age five years and older spoke a language other than English at home. This represented approximately 40% of the total south Bethlehem population.

Employment and Income

According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012), the median household income of $46,052 for the City of Bethlehem lagged considerably behind that of the state at $52,267 and Northampton County at $59,551. Furthermore, the
household median income for south Bethlehem’s five census tracts was only $37,713 (109), $22,828 (110), $54,000 (111), $29,143 (112), and $47,738 (113) respectively. A total of 13,179 persons (or 19.1% of the population) in the City of Bethlehem were below the poverty level. In Pennsylvania, the percent was 13.1 and in Northampton County that percentage was 9.6. South Bethlehem had the highest number of persons (5,804) below the poverty level, nearly 35% of the population. 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 Tract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
<th>Northampton County</th>
<th>City of Bethlehem</th>
<th>Census Tract 109</th>
<th>Census Tract 110</th>
<th>Census Tract 111</th>
<th>Census Tract 112</th>
<th>Census Tract 113</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012)*

According to Pennsylvania CareerLink and the Pennsylvania Lehigh Valley Workforce Investment Board, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Lehigh Valley (Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Metropolitan Statistical Area) was 6.5% in February 2014; in Northampton County that rate was also 6.5%. Unemployment in the Lehigh Valley remained higher than the state (6.2%), but lower than national unemployment (6.7%). Despite the overall improvement in the unemployment rate, Pennsylvania CareerLink estimates that there are still 2.5 unemployed persons available for each new job opening. The report noted that the current unemployment rate does not include “discouraged workers or others who are marginally attached the labor force,” which would significantly raise the rate. Even without considering that factor, unemployment in three of the five census tracts in south Bethlehem was high. According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012), unemployment rates were as follows: 17.8% (109), 16.3% (110), 6% (111), 15.1% (112), and 5.8% (113). In Northampton County that number was 8.2% and in Bethlehem it was 9.3%.

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012) indicated that in the City of Bethlehem, 6.1% of the population received Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which is defined by the Social Security Administration as being “designed to help aged,
blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income; and provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter.” In Northampton County that number was 3.8%. An estimated 4.2% of the population in the City of Bethlehem received cash public assistance and 15.5% received SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, formerly known as Food Stamps, in the previous twelve months. In Northampton County, 2.5% of residents received cash public assistance and 8.4% received SNAP benefits.

For the most part, these numbers are significantly higher in the census tracts that make up south Bethlehem, except in census tract 111 (where Lehigh University is located).

### SSI, Cash Public Assistance, and SNAP by Census Tract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Receiving SSI</th>
<th>% Receiving Cash Public Assistance</th>
<th>% Receiving SNAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton County</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Bethlehem</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 109</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 110</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 111</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 112</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Census Tract 113</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012)*
**Housing**

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012) indicate that, for the most part, south Bethlehem has more renters than homeowners by a substantial margin when compared to the state, Northampton County, and the rest of the City.

### Owners vs. Renters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
<th>Northampton County</th>
<th>City of Bethlehem</th>
<th>Census Tract 109</th>
<th>Census Tract 110</th>
<th>Census Tract 111</th>
<th>Census Tract 112</th>
<th>Census Tract 113</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owners</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renters</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012)*

The vacancy rate in Pennsylvania for owner occupied-homes was 1.8% and 6.3% for rental housing. In Northampton County, the owner occupied vacancy rate was 1.1% and the rate was 6.4% for rentals. The vacancy rate for owner-occupied housing units in the City of Bethlehem was 1.0% and for rental units was 6.3%. In south Bethlehem’s five census tracts, the vacancy rates were quite variable depending on the location.

### Vacancy Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
<th>Northampton County</th>
<th>City of Bethlehem</th>
<th>Census Tract 109</th>
<th>Census Tract 110</th>
<th>Census Tract 111</th>
<th>Census Tract 112</th>
<th>Census Tract 113</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner Occupied</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter Occupied</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012)*

In the City of Bethlehem, 0.9% of occupied housing units lacked complete plumbing facilities; in Northampton County that percentage was 1.5 and in the state it was 0.5. When comparing the five census tracts that make up south Bethlehem to the rest of
the City, county, and state, two of the five tracts have significantly more housing that lacks complete plumbing facilities: 110 (1.7%) and 112 (2.3%).

When comparing the presence of complete kitchen facilities between south Bethlehem’s five census tracts and the rest of the city, county, and state, the results are similar. Statewide, 0.9% of housing lacked complete kitchen facilities. In Northampton County a total of 2% lacked complete kitchen facilities. One percent (1%) of housing in the city lacked complete kitchen facilities and, again, two of south Bethlehem’s census tracts had a greater number of housing units that lacked complete kitchen facilities: 110 (2.2%) and 112 (2.2%).

The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012) indicated that 28.7% of the housing stock in Northampton County was built in 1939 or earlier and 54.7% was built prior to 1970. Statewide, 27.5% was built in 1939 or earlier and 60.1% was constructed before 1970. In Bethlehem, 32.5% of housing was constructed in 1939 or earlier and 70.1% was built prior to 1970. South Bethlehem’s housing stock is old, with approximately 66% of it being built before 1970; nearly 42% was constructed before 1940. In two census tracts, that percentage approaches 60% or higher: 109 (62.4%) and 112 (57.5%).

According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012), 23.9% of Pennsylvania homeowners with a mortgage paid 35% or more of their household income for housing, which made them cost burdened. In Northampton County 26.4% paid 35% or more of their household income for housing, and in Bethlehem that percentage was 25.6%. Three of the five census tracts in south Bethlehem (109, 110, and 112) had a higher percentage of homeowners who struggled to pay their mortgages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pennsylvania County</th>
<th>City of Bethlehem</th>
<th>Census Tract 109</th>
<th>Census Tract 110</th>
<th>Census Tract 111</th>
<th>Census Tract 112</th>
<th>Census Tract 113</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012)
In Pennsylvania, 41% of renters paid more than 35% of their income for rental housing; in Northampton County 42.1% were cost-burdened, and in Bethlehem that percentage was 42.5%. In south Bethlehem, more renters in three of five census tracts (110, 112, and 113) were cost burdened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
<th>Northampton County</th>
<th>City of Bethlehem</th>
<th>Census Tract 109</th>
<th>Census Tract 110</th>
<th>Census Tract 111</th>
<th>Census Tract 112</th>
<th>Census Tract 113</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012)

RealtyTrac, the leading provider of comprehensive housing data and analytics nationwide, reported that in March 2014, 91 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), or one in every 445 homes, were at some stage in the foreclosure process--default, auction or bank-owned. The site also reported that the foreclosure rate in March 2014 was 69% higher than in February and 170% higher than in March 2013. Further, home sales for February 2014 were 52% lower than in January and 50% lower than in February 2013. The difference in median sale price between non-distressed homes ($167,500) and foreclosed homes ($45,750) was $121,750, representing a 73% difference.

Safety and Health

The FBI database for 2012 of “offenses known to law enforcement” in the City of Bethlehem included: 238 violent crimes (murder and non-negligent manslaughter, two; forcible rape, 19; robbery, 121; aggravated assault, 96) and 1,953 property crimes (burglary, 377; larceny-theft, 1,488; motor vehicle theft, 83; arson, five). The Bethlehem Police Department shares its data on Crimemapping.com. According to that site, approximately 260 crimes were reported in south Bethlehem between 1/1/13 and 12/31/13. These included: seven aggravated assaults, 44 simple assaults, one arson, 18 residential burglaries (seven of those with no force), 14 disorderly conducts, 34 drunkenness offenses, 12 DUIs, seven frauds, 12 thefts from vehicles, six retail thefts, four vehicle thefts, 33 other thefts, eight liquor law violations, 14 possessions of illegal substances, six sales/manufacturing of illegal substances, 10 robberies, and 30 acts of vandalism.
According to the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012), 9.7% of the population of Pennsylvania had no health insurance. In Northampton County, 8.3% of all people were without health insurance, and in Bethlehem that percentage was 10.3%. Census tracts 109 and 112 had a particularly large percentage of people who had no health insurance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of Persons with No Health Insurance Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012)

Education

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the school dropout rate for the two high schools in the Bethlehem Area School district in 2011-2012 was 3.3 (Freedom High School) and 3.92 (Liberty High School). Across the entire Bethlehem Area School District, 174 youth dropped out of middle or high school (113 males and 61 females). Statewide, Latino students had the highest dropout rate at 4.79%. The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2008-2012) reported that in the City of Bethlehem, a total of 7,523 persons 18 years and older had no high school diploma and 2,043 of those lived in south Bethlehem. This means that approximately 12.6% of the population of south Bethlehem does not have a high school diploma.
Our Community

Community Assets

South Bethlehem is a community rich with natural, social, and organizational resources. Southside Vision’s original plan, which was developed in 2001, 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
- Strong community activism
- Great landmark/tourism potential with Bethlehem Steel and the neighborhood churches
- Close proximity to Philadelphia (70 miles) and New York City (85 miles)

Twelve years later, these assets remain and more have been added. Through surveys, key informant interviews, and public meetings the following additional assets were identified:

- Sands-Casino resort, a world-class casino complex that includes an outlet mall and 2,500-seat concert venue, which brought 2,400 jobs to south Bethlehem
- SteelStacks, a ten-acre community arts and entertainment center that offers meeting space, movies, and events
- The South Bethlehem Greenway, a two-mile linear park that was developed on abandoned railroad tracks
- The Bethlehem Skateplaza, a world class venue unrivaled in its progressive design and immense size
- The Four Blocks International commercial corridor located in the 500 to 800 block of East Fourth Street
• The 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
• A 130-acre City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ), which will help to fund $350 million of development projects
• The 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
• Relocation of the Lehigh Valley Charter School for the Arts to south Bethlehem – a $27 million investment resulting in an 88,000 square foot school that will serve 650 students
Southside Vision: The First Twelve Years

Project History

In 2001, Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem applied for, and was recognized as, a Neighborhood Partnership Program through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. The services of Sasaki Associates, Inc. were engaged to develop a ten-year plan.

That plan was developed through a seven-month process involving south Bethlehem residents to develop a strategy to address some of the issues and opportunities in the community. This process resulted in a companion document to the Southside Bethlehem Master Plan 2001, the Southside Vision 2012: Southside Bethlehem Residential Master Plan 2002-2012. This plan identified goals and action items in six areas: open space; retail/commercial zones and jobs; housing and density; parking; crime/safety; and youth services.

To implement the Southside Vision plan, a Steering Committee and five subcommittees were created in 2002. Each subcommittee was chaired by at least one Steering Committee member and received staff support from Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem and the City of Bethlehem. All of the committees included residents, funders, and representatives from business and community-based organizations.

Originally, M&T Bank pledged $1 million to Southside Vision over a ten-year period. The project would have expired in 2012, but three corporations pledged additional contributions to extend the project until 2014: Spectrum Health Services of Lehigh Valley Hospital; PPL Corporation; and Just Born, Inc.
**Southside Vision: The First Twelve Years**

**Project Accomplishments**

Through strategic partnerships, Southside Vision has made a lot of progress toward transforming the south Bethlehem community since 2001. In addition to $1,942,602 contributed by corporate partners, Southside Vision has leveraged $12,658,721 in private and public funds. These resources were used to impact the community in the following ways:

- CADCB held 18-week business training seminars twice a year, resulting in the opening of 83 businesses in south Bethlehem and 63 in other areas of Bethlehem
- Southside Vision 2014 helped fund the design of the linear park known as South Bethlehem Greenway; public artwork, native plants, and a playground were installed
- The world-class Bethlehem Skateplaza was built, in part, with $167,210 from Southside Vision 2014
- A splash park at Yosko Park was constructed, ball fields were improved at Saucon Park, and a new pocket park -- Tranquility Park -- was created on East Fourth Street
- Over 3,000 south Bethlehem teens participated in more than 50 recreational, educational and/or enrichment programs
- Improvements were made to 232 owner-occupied south Bethlehem homes
• CADCB 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
• $304,440 in commercial façade improvements were made, 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
• Master plans for revitalization of the Four Blocks International neighborhood and the Eastern Gateway have been completed and implemented
• Murals were painted on the Paul B. Wood commercial building and the Bethlehem Skateplaza in the Eastern Gateway neighborhood
• Public benches were purchased and installed in the Eastern Gateway
• A pavilion linking the South Bethlehem Greenway to the Bethlehem Skateplaza which includes seating, restrooms, and a concession stand is under construction
• Ninety-four (94) acorn-style street lights were installed along East Fourth Street between Hayes and William Streets. According to the Bethlehem Chief of Police, there is a continued downward trend in reported crime and police incidents in the district where the lights were installed
• A 2013 survey of south Bethlehem residents indicates that they feel positive and hopeful about their lives and their community: 70% believe south Bethlehem will continue to be a better place, and 74% believe they will do better each year
Southside Vision: The Next Ten Years

Plan Development Process

Despite the progress made since the inception of Southside Vision, there are still many needs and opportunities to revitalize south Bethlehem. This is a critical time to both maintain the progress that has been made and to build on the momentum of the initiative’s successes. This plan was developed by staff from 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

Plans that have been developed through Southside Vision were reviewed to integrate unfinished items into this new plan: the Southside Vision 2012 Southside Bethlehem Residential Master Plan (2001); the South Bethlehem Greenway Master Plan (2005); the South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway Vision Study (2011); and the Four Blocks International Conceptual Streetscape Design Plan (2011). Staff also performed a careful review of community plans to dovetail Southside Vision’s efforts into those organized by other entities from throughout the Lehigh Valley. The plans that were analyzed include: South Side Master Plan (2001); Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan (2009); City of Bethlehem Zoning Ordinance (revised, 2012); The City Livable: Modest Proposals for a More Walkable Downtown (2009); City of Bethlehem CRIZ Tax Zone Designation (2013); Envision Lehigh Valley Public Outreach Analysis (2013); South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway Market Study (2014); A Blueprint for Success: An Economic Development Strategy for Sustainable Growth in the Lehigh Valley (2014); Comprehensive Plan: The Lehigh Valley...2030 (2005); and Assessment Report: Lehigh Valley Local Food Economy (2013).
**Survey**

A written survey, which was available in both English and Spanish, was distributed to residents and small business owners throughout south Bethlehem in fall 2013. This survey collected the same information that was gathered ten years ago so that progress and continued needs could be evaluated. Respondents were asked to rate 16 aspects of community life using a four-point scale to demonstrate their importance as well as their current status in south Bethlehem. The survey also asked respondents questions related to activities for youth, perceptions of crime, shopping habits, gaps in amenities, and their sense of hope for the community’s future. Surveys were completed by 186 residents and 53 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**

Forty (40) key informant interviews were conducted with residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders both over the phone and in person. Interviewees were asked to identify the three greatest needs for south Bethlehem, describe their vision for south Bethlehem in ten years, and propose specific steps that Southside Vision could take to improve the community in the next year as well as the next ten years. People who were interviewed included active community residents, leaders of nonprofit organizations and educational institutions, and local business owners.

**Southside Vision Committee Involvement**

Each of Southside Vision 2012’s existing standing committees discussed its vision for the next ten years of the initiative during at least one regular committee meeting. The committees identified projects in process that they would like to see continued as well as new projects to build upon what has been accomplished during the first 12 years of Southside Vision. At its spring 2014 Steering Committee meeting, four broad areas were identified as in need of future investment based on survey data and group discussion: housing; public improvements; crime and safety; and jobs and economic development.
**Public meetings**

A series of five community conversations were organized in local parks throughout south Bethlehem. A total of 83 south Bethlehem residents participated in these meetings; 32 non-residents who work or go to school in south Bethlehem also participated. At these community conversations, which were held in spring 2014, a facilitator asked participants in small groups to identify the three greatest needs for south Bethlehem and to describe their vision for south Bethlehem in 2024. Participants were also asked to prioritize a list of issues to collect quantitative data. The facilitator was assisted by a greeter, who invited people to join the conversation, as well as a transcriber who recorded all comments shared by the public. At least one bilingual representative was available at each of the five park meetings to engage Spanish-speaking residents.

A more formal public meeting was held at Broughal Middle School in south Bethlehem on May 27, 2014; 31 people participated. At this meeting, representatives from CADC and the City of Bethlehem did a presentation to demonstrate the impact that Southside Vision has had in the community since its inception in 2001. Following this presentation, a preliminary plan which integrated suggestions from the survey, community conversations, key informant interviews, Southside Vision committees, and existing plans for the community was shared with the group. Staff then facilitated a discussion in small groups to ensure that the plan reflected the needs and priorities of the community and represent their vision for south Bethlehem in 2024. Bilingual staff and volunteers were on site to engage Spanish-speaking residents in this conversation. Suggestions received at this public meeting were integrated into the plan.

In addition to the meetings collaboratively organized by CADC and the City of Bethlehem, two other public meetings were organized by the City of Bethlehem during the planning timeframe to better understand the needs of residents. Mayor Robert Donchez held a town hall meeting at Northampton Community College on April 30th. The City’s chief code officer, Michael V. Palos, held a meeting at Donegan Elementary School to respond to renters’ concerns about housing quality. A total of 39 people attended these meetings. A representative from CADC attended both meetings to carefully document the concerns and ideas of local residents; these suggestions were integrated into this ten-year plan.
Integration of Data

Quantitative and qualitative data from existing plans, the community-wide survey, public meetings, key informant interviews, and Southside Vision committees were systematically reviewed to identify the community’s priorities and needs as well as opportunities for development. Both overarching themes 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

This plan was reviewed through a three-phase process. The community reviewed the preliminary plan at the aforementioned public meeting. After the community had the opportunity to approve the goals and objectives in this plan, it was shared with the board of directors of CADCB and the Southside Vision Steering Committee. When those entities approved the plan at meetings in spring 2014, it was considered to be adopted.
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Community Concerns

Throughout the public input process, south Bethlehem residents, community leaders, business owners, and other stakeholders shared many community concerns. This process resulted in five priority areas: economic sustainability; housing; public spaces; safety and wellbeing; and community engagement and communication. In addition, existing plans that have been developed for the south Bethlehem community as well as research yielded supplementary support for these five areas.

Economic Sustainability

The following specific suggestions and ideas were offered during key informant and public meeting interviews in regard to economic sustainability:

- **Employment** – more access to jobs for south Bethlehem residents, particularly those with special needs; better paying jobs in the neighborhood; more jobs for youth

- **Small Business Development** – reduce turnover of small businesses; new businesses and restaurants to meet community needs; funding for signs and façades; encourage people to think local; connect Lehigh students to small businesses throughout south Bethlehem; create destinations in the neighborhoods

- **Industry** – recruit major employers to south Bethlehem; use a tax credit to attract more manufacturing, high tech, research and development firms; recruit the right businesses into commercial districts

- **Transportation** – more frequent bus routes are needed to access jobs outside of the neighborhood; make more parking available; offer free parking to support local businesses

In the community survey, residents and small business owners rated the availability of jobs in south Bethlehem as lower than what they would expect to find in an ideal neighborhood. Out of sixteen items, availability of jobs was the lowest rated community feature.
The *South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway Market Study* (4ward Planning LLC) states that there is little economic rationale for the development of “big box” stores in the Eastern Gateway and immediate area, but that there is “potential market support for convenience and specialty uses, particularly if catered to nearby residents.” There is also potential for additional dining establishments.

In *Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania*, The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy cited several areas in which the older cities of the Lehigh Valley are in a state of decline: dramatic population growth in rural or formerly rural areas; decentralization of employment into the suburbs; the loss of high-value manufacturing jobs; lagging job growth; and income growth and college graduation rates behind the state and the nation. In response, they suggested several strategies to revitalize the older communities in the Lehigh Valley, including investment in workers and industries to boost wages and improving the region’s competitiveness.

**Housing**

The following specific suggestions and ideas were offered during key informant and public meeting interviews in regard to housing:

- **Housing conditions** – improve code enforcement; assist low-income homeowners with repairs and renovations
- **Housing stock** – diversify the types of homes that are available; more mixed-income neighborhoods
- **Affordability** – housing costs are increasing; advocate for quality affordable housing options in development projects; respond to shifts in student housing
- **Homeownership** – increase homeownership to improve quality of housing and reduce transiency
- **Vacancy** – minimize the number of vacant properties

In the community survey, residents and small business owners rated the quality of housing and availability of affordable housing in south Bethlehem as lower than what they would expect to find in an ideal neighborhood. There was a large gap between ratings of south Bethlehem and an ideal neighborhood in this area.
Lower income individuals and families face significant challenges in regard to housing opportunity and choice, which often makes it difficult to acquire affordable, safe, and appropriate housing. Whether or not 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 in the existing conditions section 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.

The lack of affordable housing for both renters and potential homeowners is a significant hardship for low- and moderate-income households, preventing them from meeting their other basic needs, such as nutrition and healthcare, or saving for their future and that of their families. According to HUD, families that pay more than 30% of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. *Out of Reach*, an annual national study of rental affordability by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, captures the gap between wages and rents across the country, and is the estimate of the full-time hourly wage that a household must earn to afford a decent apartment at the HUD estimated Fair Market Rent (FMR), while spending no more than 30% of income on housing costs. The Fair Market Rent in Northampton County for a two-bedroom apartment in 2013 is $915 per month. In order to afford that without being cost burdened, a head of household would need to make $17.60 an hour (an annual salary of $36,600) or hold 2.4 minimum wage jobs.

Many recent plans and strategic papers also concur that housing is a concern for south Bethlehem. According to the *County of Northampton 2012-2017 Consolidated Plan*, cost burden “is the single most prevalent housing problem for many households.” The *City of Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan* (2009), recommends “addressing absentee landlord problems, striving for a bigger impact of housing rehabilitation funds and reviewing the Zoning ordinance to ensure it adequately addresses issues of compatibility between commercial uses and adjacent residential uses and to ensure a mix of residential uses” across the City, including south Bethlehem.

Bethlehem’s Zoning Ordinance of 2012 is designed to address a number of issues that impact housing, including: a complete review of approved land uses to allow a greater mix of uses that do not create negative impacts on surrounding uses, tighter regulations of conversion of single family homes, implementation of design guidelines in the downtown and surrounding residential areas,
development of more flexible parking requirements, strengthened landscaping requirement, incentives to encourage energy efficiencies, and inclusion of provisions to regulate demolition of historic buildings outside of the existing historic districts.

The *South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway Market Study*, which was issued in March 2014 by 4ward Planning LLC, was designed to, “conduct socio-economic research and perform a real estate market analysis for the City of Bethlehem to support the development of recommendations for proposed land-uses, targeted toward the vacant and/or underutilized parcels in the south Bethlehem Eastern Gateway.” The plan predicts that there will be considerable demand for housing in the primary market area (defined as a 15-minute drive contour from the intersection of East Fourth Street and Daly Avenue) with the potential to support more than 1,200 new housing units in the Eastern Gateway alone. The plan predicts that demand will be primarily for multi-family units with one- and two-bedroom units for “Young Workforce and Grads (25- to 34-year olds); Young Empty Nesters (55- to 64-year olds); and Older Empty Nesters (65- to 74-year olds)” in addition to Hispanic households, which create a strong demand for “three- and four-family residential units, driven by the nascent growth of multi-generational housing.” The plan forecasts that 60% of the demand will be for rental units and that with the continuing low vacancy rates for rentals that the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Metropolitan Area “is likely to continue to experience a strong and tight multifamily residential housing market in the near term.” The plan suggests that this creates the potential to attract new residents to the Eastern Gateway (and surrounding areas) because of lower rents. However, the plan also notes that “prospective developers will need to determine how to profitably develop new multi-family rental housing, while providing affordable, quality product.”

*Public Spaces*

The following specific suggestions and ideas were offered during key informant and public meeting interviews in regard to public spaces:

- **Park amenities** – continue implementation of the South Bethlehem Greenway Master Plan; install water fountains, grills, playground equipment, emergency call boxes, dog waste receptacles, concession stands, monuments and fountains, and more trees and flowers; connect trails to the South Bethlehem Greenway.
- **Streetscaping** – install new banners, bus stops, sidewalks, lighting, and garbage cans; improve the condition of north-south streets with wider sidewalks and more lighting; continue improving the Eastern Gateway and Four Blocks International neighborhoods; more public art

- **Events** – organize more events to increase awareness and utilization of parks; host intergenerational events

In the community survey, residents and small business owners rated the parks and playgrounds in south Bethlehem lower than what they would expect to find in an ideal neighborhood. There was a large gap between ratings of south Bethlehem and an ideal neighborhood in this area.

This public input reflects what research shows creates a vibrant community. The Mayors’ Institute on City Design’s *Creative Placemaking* white paper identified decentralized cultural resources as an effective community and economic development strategy. The Congress for New Urbanism’s *Chart of the New Urbanism* lists several principles that resonate with the desires of south Bethlehem residents, including the development of walkable neighborhoods and conserving environmental resources.

The aspirations of the community are also in alignment with recent studies and plans developed for the neighborhood. In 2001, the City of Bethlehem developed the *South Side Master Plan*, a strategic plan for the enhancement and redevelopment of the south Bethlehem downtown core. The purposes of the plan were to create a thriving retail district, clarify future development opportunities, generate public and private interest in future investment, and develop policies to assist in this redevelopment. Major recommendations included the creation of urban design guidelines for future development, the development of a timeline for future development, a concentration of positive policy incentives, and the development of good basic urban policies. The *South Side Master Plan* was the first to make the development of the South Bethlehem Greenway a priority for open space, economic development, and connectivity. A significant amount of private, infill development has occurred in south Bethlehem as recommended in the plan, such as the Lehigh Riverport development. In addition, many of the public and streetscape improvements recommended in the plan have been installed. Despite its many successes, some specific recommendations have not moved forward as well as projected, including the development of the north/south connector streets to between Third and Fourth Streets and between Lehigh University and the Bethlehem Steel redevelopment area, development of a coordinated public signage program, redevelopment of the Five Points Western Gateway for south Bethlehem and implementation of policy changes designed to improve quality of life such as code enforcement related to litter, garbage, and property maintenance. Environmental protection
of South Mountain and the rehabilitation of green space are also priorities, with a particular focus on the South Bethlehem Greenway as well as Yosko and McNamara Parks.

The City of Bethlehem Comprehensive Plan (2009) notes a number of adaptive reuse projects that have been successful in south Bethlehem and recommends that these continue to be encouraged and incentivized. The plan further recommends the strengthening of the downtown’s branding and identity, development of the south Bethlehem gateways, completion of a “way-finding” signage program, completion of streetscape improvements and better coordination and implementation of Bethlehem’s incentive programs such as Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ), Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA), Enterprise Zone, façade improvements, and others. The plan also calls for the improvement of Fourth Street’s “Main Street” atmosphere and the identification of priority bicycle routes and inclusion of pedestrian improvements in all new development.

The City of Bethlehem’s Zoning Ordinance of 2012 prioritizes improving public space by a complete review of approved land uses to allow a greater mix of uses that do not create negative impacts on surrounding uses, implementation of design guidelines in the downtown and surrounding residential areas, development of more flexible parking requirements, strengthened landscaping requirements, and inclusion of provisions to regulate demolition of historic buildings outside of the existing historic districts.

The South Bethlehem Greenway Master Plan (2005) was pursued as a follow up to the recommendations of both the South Side Master Plan and the Southside Vision 2012 Southside Bethlehem Residential Master Plan 2002-2012. The plan recognizes that the South Bethlehem Greenway is important to south Bethlehem and the region for much more than recreation and open space. The South Bethlehem Greenway is an important component to the economic development efforts and to the quality of life in south Bethlehem. The Norfolk Southern rail corridor was purchased in 2008 and the first phase of construction began in 2009. The construction of the South Bethlehem Greenway infrastructure (trail, utilities, benches, lighting, receptacles, grade crossings and trees) was prioritized to get as much trail constructed as quickly as possible. Infill of trail amenities is taking place with many community partners block by block as funding and interest allow. Bethlehem is currently pursuing construction of additional phases outside of the downtown area, acquisition of additional sections of the rail corridor, and connections to other local trails. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission’s Lehigh Valley Trails Inventory (2013) identified connections between the South Bethlehem Greenway and the Saucon Rail Trail as a priority gap for the two-county region. Several studies from the Rails to Trails Conservancy have demonstrated that there is a strong connection between trail expansion and economic development.
In the *City Livable: Modest Proposals For a More Walkable Downtown* (2009), which is more commonly known as the “Walkability Study,” the City took a close look at walkability in both of its downtowns since the development of a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere is recognized as being an important component of the quality of life and economic development. The study found that south Bethlehem has many surface parking lots on main corridors that interfere with a quality pedestrian experience. It recommends the development of these parcels in a pedestrian-friendly way with buildings along the street line, parking in the rear, retail and office on the first floors, and office or residential space on the floors above.

*Safety and Wellbeing*

The following specific suggestions and ideas were offered during key informant and public meeting interviews in regard to safety and wellbeing:

- **Health and wellbeing** – better access to healthy food; more access to constructive activities for youth
- **Perceptions of crime** – certain areas of south Bethlehem are perceived to be less safe at night such as off of the Lehigh campus or east of Hayes Street; cleanliness improves feelings of safety; a marketing campaign is needed to shift negative perceptions of south Bethlehem
- **Law enforcement** – more cultural diversity and sensitivity, more involvement in the community, continue and expand community policing
- **Lighting and security cameras** – adequate lighting and security cameras improve feelings of safety

In the community survey, residents and small business owners rated crime and police relations in south Bethlehem as lower than what they would expect to find in an ideal neighborhood. Out of sixteen items, crime and police relations were the second and third lowest rated community features.

Like most urban communities, crime (or the perception of crime), including gang related-activities, is a concern. Eastern Pennsylvania has seen an increase in gang violence since the late 1990s when there was an upsurge in anti-gang enforcement in New York City in part because Interstate 78 creates an easy thoroughfare. In March 2006, then United States District Attorney Patrick Meehan initiated the Route 222 Corridor Anti-Gang Initiative to address the issue. This multi-jurisdictional task force was
designed to address the influx of gangs in a six county, seven city area spanning eastern Pennsylvania, which included both Bethlehem and Northampton County. The City of Bethlehem’s Police Department website has a section dedicated to gang information, which details the department’s efforts to use graffiti to track potential gang activity.

The department’s website also states that “the Bethlehem Police Department is structured using the community policing philosophy and is committed to community and police partnership.” There is a police substation located in south Bethlehem right in the heart of the Four Blocks International neighborhood. In addition, the department has recently deployed an officer who patrols the neighborhood on foot and the mounted police have semi-regular patrols of the South Bethlehem Greenway.

There is a clear link between wellness and community development. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that communities promote physical activity by enhancing access to public spaces where people can be active and by promoting cross-sector collaboration. A recent report from the American Public Health Association noted that substandard housing is a key determinant of health and wellbeing, contributing to asthma, radon and lead exposure, and accidents. There are many documented health concerns in south Bethlehem. The Lehigh Valley Research Consortium’s State of the Lehigh Valley 2012-2013 noted that there is a high degree of black carbon exposure in south Bethlehem’s heavy traffic areas. The United States Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service has identified south Bethlehem as a food desert. A food desert is an area that does not have a supermarket located within a one-mile radius.

Activities that challenge youth intellectually and physically are crucial to the wellbeing of the entire community. A ten-year study completed recently by Harvard University confirmed the common wisdom that after school programming for youth has positive benefits, which include improved academic achievement, social and emotional development, crime, drug, and sex prevention, and health and wellness. However, the study indicated that important factors to successful outcomes are “access to and sustained participation in programs, quality programming and staffing, and strong partnerships.” The Pennsylvania Department of Education has adopted a holistic resilience approach to nurture children and youth; the components of this approach are: provide opportunities for meaningful participation; increase pro-social bonding; set clear, consistent boundaries; teach life skills; provide caring and support; and set and communicate high expectations.
Community Engagement and Communication

The following specific suggestions and ideas were offered during key informant and public meeting interviews in regard to community engagement and communication:

- **Community engagement** – help people understand ways they can get involved; provide more opportunities for involvement; ask people what they need and want more frequently; organize more community events and neighborhood pride activities; more involvement of Lehigh University students; more unified community

- **Communication** – more frequent updates about Southside Vision; better marketing of south Bethlehem and the Four Blocks International neighborhood as a destination

- **Relationships** – the public noted socio-political divisions between: north and south Bethlehem; the Sands casino and the rest of south Bethlehem; the east and west side of south Bethlehem; businesses in the Arts and Entertainment district and the rest of south Bethlehem; people with power and local residents with economic needs; people of different ages; landlords and renters; homeowners and renters; Lehigh students and residents; visitors from Chinatown and the rest of the community; and different community-based organizations

Studies indicate that these activities would help to strengthen the neighborhood. In *The Impact of Community Development Corporations in Urban Neighborhoods*, the Urban Institute found that residents who are intentionally involved in community development projects go on to pursue other leadership opportunities in their community. Research confirms that there are many benefits to the participation of local residents in community development initiatives. The Bridgespan Group’s *Needle-Moving Collective Impact Guide* states that community participation leads to better alignment with community needs and project sustainability. *Resilient Cities: A Grosvenor Research Report* further suggests that democratic community participation is key to community resilience. Resilient cities are able to adapt to changes and bounce back after crises.
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Project Objectives

Southside Vision is a holistic community and economic development initiative that will continue the transformation of south Bethlehem in five interrelated areas: economic sustainability; housing; public spaces; safety and wellbeing; and community engagement and communication. Southside Vision is:

- A sustainable effort that unites people across socio-political 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 means of facilitating effective cross-sector collaboration that mobilizes and integrates social, political, institutional, intellectual, environmental, cultural, and financial resources to achieve community goals
- A lever that attracts additional public and private funds to south Bethlehem
Through strategic implementation of goals in each of the five areas, this initiative will create a south Bethlehem that is:

- A vibrant and healthy community where people want to live, work, and play
- A place where residents of all ages feel connected, engaged, and full of hope for the future
- A stable, united community that is enriched by the ideas, resources, and active involvement of residents, business owners, community leaders, and students
- A diverse microcosm of the global marketplace
- A community where residents have access to meaningful jobs that pay a living wage
- Open and green with plentiful opportunities for outdoor recreational activities
- Beautifully designed with modern streetscapes, updated residential and commercial façades, and public art
- A shopping and entertainment destination for residents of the Lehigh Valley and beyond
- An exciting, lively community with frequent events and activities
- A community where residents and visitors feel safe at any time of the day
- Environmentally and economically sustainable and resilient
- A model community to neighboring municipalities
Goals and Strategies

Economic Sustainability

Goals

- Residents have the skills, knowledge, and connections needed for employment or to start and maintain a business
- South Bethlehem has strong business districts where there is a spirit of entrepreneurship and collaboration
- Businesses create new jobs for south Bethlehem residents
- South Bethlehem businesses and restaurants are utilized by residents of the community and surrounding areas
- There is sufficient parking and public transportation in commercial districts
- South Bethlehem is perceived by residents and others to be a safe, clean, friendly, and fun place to live, work, and play

Strategies

- Provide small business training and technical support to prospective, start-up, and existing business owners
- Facilitate communication and cooperation with neighborhood businesses to help them address concerns and needs
- Develop supportive, mutually-beneficial relationships and networks among all businesses with a presence in south Bethlehem
- Advocate for more opportunities for small businesses in south Bethlehem including procurement, networking, and access to resources
- Help small business owners and prospective owners obtain financing through the Rising Tide Community Loan Fund (RTCLF) and other sources
• Improve the utilization of commercial space, including vacant storefronts and underused parking lots

• Work with local businesses to advocate for equitable employment for south Bethlehem residents

• Support efforts to attract major employers to south Bethlehem

• Create greater economic opportunities by removing barriers to employment and increasing access to training

• Increase the number of certified woman- and minority-owned businesses in south Bethlehem
Goals and Strategies

Housing

Goals

- Residents of south Bethlehem have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing
- The housing stock of south Bethlehem is upgraded through façades and rehabilitation
- Landlords are responsible for the properties that they own, keeping them in compliance with city codes
- Tenants are aware of, and comply with, city ordinances and help to hold landlords accountable for maintaining their properties
- More homes in south Bethlehem are owner-occupied

Strategies

- Advocate for quality affordable housing in south Bethlehem
- Partner with developers, builders, and realtors to advocate for high-quality, affordable housing units
- Strategically respond to ripple effects of new student housing development projects
- Target streets for residential façade improvements, interior rehabilitation, and weatherization
- Offer seminars and other educational programs to residents and landlords about housing codes and zoning
- Promote the maintenance and upkeep of real estate owned properties
- Educate residents about fair housing practices
- Encourage community partners, including the Lehigh Valley Community Land Trust, Community Action Financial Services, and others to promote homeownership in south Bethlehem
- Educate prospective homebuyers
- Provide incentives to encourage homeownership
- Advocate for additional investment in employer-assisted housing initiatives
- Identify target areas for stricter enforcement of existing conversion regulations and possible de-conversion policies and incentives
Goals and Strategies

Public Spaces

**Goals**

- South Bethlehem has the feel of a modern city that has preserved its rich cultural heritage and historical legacy
- The Eastern Gateway neighborhood draws residents and visitors into south Bethlehem
- South Bethlehem’s public parks attract visitors and are highly utilized by community residents
- The South Bethlehem Greenway is a hub connecting people to local businesses and to a regional network of trails
- The community is accessible via various modes of transportation – walking, biking, driving, and public transit
- Safe, bright north-south streets connect community anchors, neighborhoods, and amenities, encouraging residents and visitors to travel throughout south Bethlehem
- Public spaces throughout south Bethlehem are bustling with activity
Strategies

- Continue implementation of the South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway Vision Study
- Continue implementation of the Four Blocks International Conceptual Streetscape Design Plan
- Continue implementation of the South Bethlehem Greenway Master Plan, including connections with neighborhoods and trails
- Continue to improve the utilization and appearance of parks and open spaces throughout south Bethlehem
- Improve the appearance and walkability of north-south streets by repairing sidewalks and increasing lighting
- Encourage the development of an infrastructure that promotes safe walking and biking
- Advocate for public transportation improvements to meet the needs of residents
Goals and Strategies

Safety and Wellbeing

Goals

- South Bethlehem is a safe and healthy community
- Youth who live in south Bethlehem are healthy and are engaged in safe, constructive activities that develop skills and resilience
- South Bethlehem is known by residents and visitors alike as a safe and secure community

Strategies

- Promote wellness through outreach, advocacy, education, strategic partnerships, and activities
- Explore and support additional means of expanding access to fresh, healthy food
- Facilitate improved relationships between police and the community
- Encourage the further implementation of, and increase involvement in, neighborhood associations
- Provide youth with recreational activities that provide intellectual stimulation, creative inspiration, and physical movement
- Create a strategic communication plan to shift negative perceptions of south Bethlehem
Goals and Strategies

Community Engagement and Communication

Goals

- All Southside Vision committees and subcommittees will be representative of the community served
- The community knows about, understands the work of, and knows how to get involved with Southside Vision
- The entire community is engaged in the process of neighborhood revitalization
- Residents, business and community leaders, and other stakeholders regularly contribute their ideas
- Neighbors, police, service providers, city officials, volunteers, and other partners regularly interact, effectively communicate, and coordinate resources
- People who work, live, and play in south Bethlehem are aware of the community’s assets, events and activities, and accomplishments
Strategies

- Engage community residents and others in the implementation of this plan
- Create volunteer and leadership opportunities for community residents
- Record, document, and report Southside Vision accomplishments and successes
- Host public meetings in south Bethlehem to keep people informed about the progress of Southside Vision and to obtain input on Southside Vision action plans
- Educate south Bethlehem residents about local issues and ways to get involved
- Connect south Bethlehem residents across generations through intentional activities that build positive relationships
- Organize community events to promote unity among residents and attract visitors to south Bethlehem
- Use email newsletters, social media, traditional media, and strategic partnerships to consistently communicate with the public and inform them about south Bethlehem assets, events, activities, and accomplishments
- Create and implement a marketing strategy to promote south Bethlehem both within and outside the community
Administration and Implementation of the Plan

Leadership
Southside Vision will continue to be led by a diverse Steering Committee composed of neighborhood residents, business owners, service providers, funders and other local representatives. The Steering Committee will be co-chaired by the Mayor of the City of Bethlehem and a representative from Lehigh University. The Steering Committee will meet every other 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 help 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 business and industry, funders, and representatives from education, healthcare, and nonprofit organizations. Two employees from CADCb and/or the City of Bethlehem will provide staff support to each subcommittee. Every Steering Committee member will serve on one subcommittee.

Coordination of Effort
Southside Vision 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 Vision 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 proposals from each subcommittee. The Steering Committee will then 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. Southside Vision 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 that are available for implementation. Staff will keep abreast of available grants and other funding or financing opportunities and periodically meet with funding providers to discuss Southside Vision projects and grant funding possibilities.
### Project Timeline

#### Economic Sustainability

*P = Planning; I = Implementation; O = Ongoing*

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## Project Timeline

### Housing

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## Project Timeline

### Public Spaces

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### Project Timeline

#### Safety and Wellbeing

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## Project Timeline

### Community Engagement and Communication

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- **Create a strategic communication plan to shift negative perceptions of south Bethlehem**
  - P, I
- **Engage community residents and others in the implementation of this plan**
  - P, I
- **Create volunteer and leadership opportunities for community residents**
  - P, I
- **Record, document, and report Southside Vision accomplishments and successes**
  - O
- **Host public meetings in south Bethlehem to keep people informed about the progress of Southside Vision and to obtain input on Southside Vision action plans**
  - P, I
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<td><strong>Create and implement a marketing strategy to promote south Bethlehem both within and outside the community</strong></td>
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