SOUTHSIDE VISION REPORT 2001-2014
Our Mission

To promote social and economic change by fostering business and other economic opportunities within the community of south Bethlehem.
The Southside Vision project was conceived through public participation and partnerships beginning in 2001. It has always been led by Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem (CADC) and the City of Bethlehem, who have worked together with residents and stakeholders to revitalize the neighborhoods of south Bethlehem.

It was a comprehensive plan aimed to tackle complex problems, such as aging housing stock, lack of open space, few gateway features, inadequate street lighting and commercial districts, insufficient parking and a need for youth recreation in south Bethlehem.

In order to implement the Southside Vision plan, a Steering Committee and five sub-committees were created. Each sub-committee was chaired by at least one Steering Committee member, and received staff support from both CADC and City of Bethlehem staff. The following sub-committees were created:

1) Open Space  
2) Housing  
3) Eastern Gateway  
4) Youth Services  
5) Fourth Street

All of the committees recruited residents and community partners to engage local talent. The Steering Committee was always co-chaired by the Mayor of Bethlehem and a representative from Lehigh University. CADC administered the project in partnership with the City of Bethlehem.
During the 12 years of the project (2001 through 2014), four corporations provided Southside Vision with a total of $1,942,602 directly resulting in

“Over the past decade in south Bethlehem, I have noticed a new vitality in the community—nice apartments, new small businesses, and a robust diversity. I think Community Action is largely responsible for being the catalyst of this vitality.”

BILL GEORGE - Co-Founder of Touchstone Theatre

Originally, M & T Bank pledged $1 million to Southside Vision over a 10-year period. The project would have expired in 2012, but three corporations pledged additional contributions and the project was extended until 2014.

- Spectrum Health Services of Lehigh Valley Hospital - $250,000
- PPL Corporation - $350,000
- Just Born, Inc. - $350,000

All of the corporations participated in a Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development tax credit program – the Neighborhood Partnership Program.

Funding

Southside Vision

Total Spent by Committee 2001 - 2014

- Business Development $485,000
- Eastern Gateway $419,130
- Youth Services $339,346
- Open Space $327,319
- Fourth Street $210,587
- Housing $113,720
- Southside Vision Planning $47,500

Grand Total: $1,942,602

Because the Southside Vision project was a strategy of neighborhood-based community and economic development, the Steering Committee allocated a portion of each year’s funding to neighborhood business development – Start Your Business classes and technical assistance from CADCB.

The Steering Committee also prioritized and funded yearly youth programming for Southside youth 13 through 18 years of age. The remainder of the annual contributed funds was discretionary, and made available through a yearly competitive proposal process.
$14,601,323 of programs, projects and physical improvement to south Bethlehem neighborhoods.

**CHART 1**
This chart compares total funding received by committee – Southside Vision funds and the amount those funds were able to leverage for each committee.

- **Southside Vision**: $1,942,602
- **Other Funding**: $12,658,721
- **Total Funding**: $14,601,323

**CHART 2**
This chart illustrates total funding by committee per year. The Eastern Gateway and Open Space Committees have been removed because the leveraged amounts were disproportionately high compared to the other committees.
Business Development

Guide entrepreneurs through the process of developing a business plan and provide technical assistance to prospective and existing business owners.

A total of **221** businesses were opened

**117** are still operational

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Businesses opened in</th>
<th>South Bethlehem</th>
<th>Bethlehem</th>
<th>Lehigh Valley</th>
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<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td><strong>63</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
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**Lehigh Shoe & Leather Repair**

A Four Blocks International Business

Jose Andrade and Blanca Nunez both come from a long line of leather handcrafters. After emigrating from Ecuador to the United States 30 years ago, they worked in leather shops until they opened their own leather business in Manhattan. They designed and crafted custom handbags for 19 years, until the recession hit. In 2010, they moved to Bethlehem, where they found a vacant storefront at 501 East 4th Street. The building had already received a façade renovation through the Southside Vision 2014 Commercial Façade program. CADCB staff assisted Blanca in renting the storefront, providing translation services as she leased the building and purchased equipment and inventory, and setting up a marketing plan. Lehigh Leather and Shoe Repair opened in December 2011. Jose and Blanca are very grateful for the support CADCB staff provided them. According to Blanca, “We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the support of CADCB; they have always been here for us.”
Objectives

- Create a permanent “greenway” along the abandoned railway bed
- Improve the safety and usability of McNamara Park
- Ensure Southside park maintenance
- Create primary and secondary connectors to existing and proposed open spaces
- Improve community connections to Lehigh University’s historic Asa Packer Campus
- Create civic open space in the heart of the 4th Street commercial zone
- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle accessibility
- Using signage, connect Southside parks and develop a network of green space
- Create connections to the mountaintop and create open space/park connections to the Beth Works site and throughout the region

Key Concepts

Create new open space opportunities and link new and existing green areas (Southside, local, and regional) in ways that enhance neighborhood character.
Accomplishments

- The City of Bethlehem acquired the Norfolk Southern Railway, conducted greenway studies and built the South Bethlehem Greenway
- In partnership with various community groups, Adopt-A-Park Program initiated for Southside Parks
- Renovated McNamara Park and the pocket park at Third and Wyandotte streets
- Involved youth in creating both a sculpture for the Greenway and a native plant garden
- Provided landscaping and physical improvements to Parham Park
- Purchased and installed a playground on the South Bethlehem Greenway
- Renovated youth football field and little league fields at Saucon Park
- Procured all the equipment and features to create the Yosko Splash Park
- Landscaped a triangular garden at the western entry to the Southside

Next Steps

- Complete and enhance the South Bethlehem Greenway and Bethlehem Skateplaza
- Continue to link regional trails through south Bethlehem
- Promote South Bethlehem Greenway and Skateplaza as tourist destinations
- Create more north-south connectors and link area attractions

Open Space Funding

- Southside Vision: $327,319
- Other funding: $7,953,913

Total Funding: $8,281,232
Committee

Housing

Objectives

- Increase the number of owner-occupied housing units
- Improve the quality of the housing stock
- Identify target areas for stricter enforcement of existing conversion regulations and possible deconversion policies

Accomplishments

- Enlisted Lehigh University graduate student to conduct the Southside Gentrification Study
- Prepared 69 residents of south Bethlehem for home ownership through counseling and seminars, with about a dozen families buying homes in south Bethlehem
- Renovated 27 homes through the Operation Facelift program
- Partnered with St. Luke’s University Network Hospital to provide an Employer-Assisted Housing Program to 3 employees who received down-payment assistance
- Provided 21 low-income households with emergency housing repairs
- “Seeded” the Lehigh Valley Community Land Trust, incorporated as a non-profit organization which has renovated 2 homes in south Bethlehem and sold them as single-family residences

“Everything has changed in such a short time that we, the residents, can appreciate the positive influence. South Bethlehem is safer due to the programs of Southside Vision 2014.”

DANIEL BERRIOS - Owner of Borinquen Restaurant
Housing Funding

- Southside Vision: $113,720
- Other funding: $453,567

Total Funding: $567,287

Key Concepts

Encourage home ownership and increase the quality of the housing stock in all neighborhoods.

Next Steps

- Increase the number of owner-occupied homes
- Continue to renovate housing stock by providing emergency housing repairs, façade renovations and interior housing rehabilitation
- Develop additional employer-assisted housing programs
Committee

Eastern Gateway

Objectives

- Define the area and make physical assessments
- Emphasize code enforcement and encourage home improvements
- Complete Forte Building project and hold grand opening
- Pursue commercial zoning for “gateway” of East 4th Street corridor
- Pursue funding for and install public improvements along the East 4th Street commercial corridor
- Improve the quality of the housing stock
- Encourage better mix of retail/commercial uses of existing structures
- Identify vacant buildings and partner with owners for their reuse

Accomplishments

- In partnership with City of Bethlehem, organized a sweep to promote code compliance and clean-up of 125 properties
- Created corporate offices, community meeting space and affordable housing units through adaptive reuse of the Forte Building
- Developed a master plan for the Eastern Gateway guided by the prestigious planning firm Project for Public Spaces
- Purchased and installed over 90 street lights along East 4th Street and 25 trees along the Bethlehem Skateplaza with assistance from the City of Bethlehem
- Coordinated the design and fabrication of an innovative bus waiting shed at East 4th and Williams streets
- Furnished an outdoor seating area in front of Donegan Elementary School
- Coordinated a public art competition resulting in two outdoor murals – one at the corner of 4th and William streets, the other on the exterior of the Skateplaza
- Created an entryway pavilion with public amenities for the Bethlehem Skateplaza

Streetscape Amenities along East 4th Street
Next Steps

- Complete Bethlehem Skateplaza construction and public improvements along East 4th Street, highlighting the urban square at East 4th and William streets
- Construct two additional South Bethlehem Greenway entryways from the community
- Encourage real estate development of the four parcels at East 4th and William streets consistent with the gateway plan

Key Concepts

Enhance the area bound by William Street, Daly Avenue, Hayes and 5th streets. Encourage owner occupancy and bring together programs to accomplish neighborhood improvements.

Paul B. Wood Mural

Eastern Gateway Funding

- Southside Vision: $419,130
- Other funding: $883,306

Total Funding: $1,302,436
Youth Services

Yosko Splash Park

Adventure Camp

Key Concepts

Engage youth, particularly the 13-18 year-old age group, to participate in constructive recreational activities to help them develop leadership, socialization skills and self-esteem.

Youth Service Funding

- Southside Vision: $339,346
- Other funding: $394,080

Total Funding: $733,426
Accomplishments

- Opened the Fowler Children’s Technology Center through which 559 youth increased their technology skills
- Partially funded the construction of the Glass Studio at Banana Factory
- Funded the youth recreation coordinator since 2004
- Approximately 3,700 youth have participated in over 107 activities such as:
  - Bowling for Kids
  - Video Game Night
  - Traveling Game Night
  - Movies for Youth
  - Young Author’s Program
  - HALA Dance
  - Yosko Park Swimming
  - Sports
  - SAT Preparation
  - Touchstone Teen Ensemble
  - NCC Fab Lab
  - Media Club
  - Taekwondo
  - Adventure Camp

Next Steps

Expand partnerships to ensure quality, affordable recreational programs for Southside youth

SAT Preparation Class

A Success Story

Ashanti Littlejohn was graduated from Freedom High School in 2001. An honor student, she was recognized as one of America’s future leaders, and received the Donley Award. Ashanti applied to and was accepted at Drexel University, Rutgers University, Temple University, and Stony Brook University. She credits the SAT Prep Class funded by Southside Vision with helping her to gain acceptance from all of these schools. Ashanti chose Temple University, where she is a pre-medical student majoring in Biology. She is passionate about community service, and returned to be a summer camp counselor for the City of Bethlehem.
Objectives

- Convert a large parking lot into a civic plaza and support programs that utilize this plaza as a neighborhood anchor
- Create façade, signage and building improvement guidelines
- Create designs for streetscape improvements
- Encourage a mix of retail that meets local residents’ needs and provides opportunities for local jobs

Accomplishments

- With residents’ and community input, created an identity for the 500-800 blocks of East 4th Street
- Conducted marketing and promotion of the Four Blocks International Neighborhood through a website, social media, video, street banners, and advertisements
- Organized 6 neighborhood community festivals celebrating the diversity of the neighborhood
- The Four Blocks International Conceptual Streetscape Design Plan was created by Urban Research and Development Corporation
- 8 commercial facades were refurbished creating 10 new commercial storefronts
- A commercial signage program provided 4 businesses with new signs; 3 of them included new LED light fixtures
- A vacant lot on East 4th Street was leased to become a pocket park for the neighborhood
- Tranquility Park was built, lit, furnished and secured with a surveillance camera
“The best of 4Blocks, is that I can walk, shop and eat. I feel happy, I feel safe. I feel like if I were in Thailand, in my own neighborhood.”

PRIM LOCH - Co-owner of Charly's Thai Restaurant

Key Concepts
Revitalize the former commercial corridor in the 500 to 800 blocks of East 4th Street.

Next Steps
- Complete streetscape improvements outlined in the master plan
- Complete construction of Tranquility Park
- Continue neighborhood business development

Fourth Street Funding

- Southside Vision: $210,587
- Other funding: $273,855

Total Funding: $484,442
According to the US Census Bureau (2000 compared to 2010)

- Per capital income increased in all but one of the census tracts (the tract mostly comprised of Lehigh University students).
- The median household income increased in all of the Southside census tracts, with the smallest percentage (13%) income increase in census tract 112, and the largest increase (88%) in census tract 113.
- The median home values for owner-occupied units also increased in all the census tracts, the smallest rate change being 65% in census tract 109, and the largest being 123% in census tract 113.
- The number of Southside adults who were employed increased 7%.
- The percentage of residents with some type of college degree grew 3%, to 22% of the Southside population.
- The number of Southside residents reporting self-employed income increased 8%. The aggregate self-employment income increased 432% to $10,575,100.
- The number of housing units increased 15%.
- The number of business establishments in the 18015 zip code increased 8.5%, from 508 to 551, with the number of paid employees increasing by 19.5%.
Our Partners

4Ward Planning, Inc.
Albarell Electric, Inc.
Alert Partnership for a Drug Free Valley
Amber Art & Design, LLC
Artefact, Inc.
ArtsQuest
Ashley Development Corporation
Baker Institute for Entrepreneurship at Lehigh University
Bethlehem Area School District
Bethlehem Business Council
Bethlehem Health Bureau
Bethlehem Parking Authority
Block Watch Groups
Boys & Girls Club of Bethlehem
Broughal Middle School
City of Bethlehem
Cloud Gehshan Associates
Coalition for Appropriate Transportation
Coca Cola Bottling Company
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley
Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown
Community Artists of Bethlehem
County of Lehigh
County of Northampton
Creative Landscape, Inc.
DaVinci Science Center
Donegan Elementary School
Downtown Bethlehem Association
Edge of the Woods Native Plant Nursery
El Grupo Mexicano
Envision Lehigh Valley
F.A. Rohrbach, Inc.
Fountain Hill Elementary School
Four Blocks International Businesses
Fowler Tech Center
Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce
Guardian Life Insurance
Hispanic American League of Artists
Hispanic Center of Lehigh Valley
Hispanic Chamber Commerce of Lehigh Valley
Hogar Crea
Image Works, Inc.
JF Magic, Inc.
Just Born, Inc.
Kaplan Test Prep Services
Keystone Nazareth Bank & Trust (KNBT)
Laros Foundation
Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority
Lehigh Valley Community Mental Health Center
Lehigh University
Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation
Lehigh Valley Hospital and Health Network
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Lehigh Valley Storytelling Guild
M&T Bank
Mayor’s South Side Task Force
National Penn Bank
Neighborhood Housing Services of Lehigh Valley
North Creek Nurseries, Inc.
Northampton Community College
Northampton County Area Agency on Aging
Our Lady of Pompeii Church
Pennsylvania CareerLink Lehigh Valley
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture
Penn State Cooperative Extension - Lehigh and Northampton Counties
Pennsylvania Department of General Services
Phillips, Preiss, Grygiel, LLC
PNC Bank
PPL Corporation
Private Industry Council of Lehigh Valley
Project for Public Spaces
Renew Lehigh Valley
Rising Tide Community Loan Fund
Sands Casino Resort Bethlehem
Sasaki Associates
Small Business Development Center of Lehigh University
South Bethlehem Neighborhood Center
Spectrum Health Ventures
St. Luke’s University Health Network
State Farm Insurance
TD Bank
Martindale Center for the Study of Private Enterprise
The Morning Call
The RBA Group
Touchstone Theatre
Tri-State African American Chamber
United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley
Urban Research and Development Corporation
U.S. Small Business Administration
WDIY Radio
Wells Fargo Bank
Thank you
We are grateful to the many individuals, corporations, small businesses and government funders who support us and enable us to continue our good work.

We are proud of our accomplishments and thankful for all of the volunteers who serve on our committees and boards, and to the many partners we work with throughout the year.

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