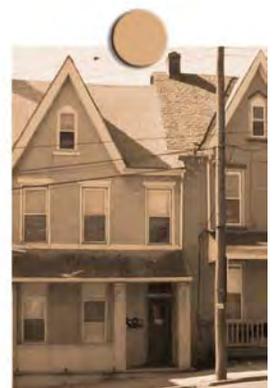

1.0 Executive Summary

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania is a historic industrial community in the midst of a profound transformation to a model small, sustainable city for the 21st Century – with the expressed goal of keeping the young graduates of its local colleges as residents of Bethlehem.

This goal means that the conversion from heavy industrial to high-tech economy must include the full range of “quality of life” resources that are sought by employers and employees in today’s market. Part of this renaissance is the shared dream of both city leaders and the general public to reclaim the former industrial railroad corridor that runs through the center of South Bethlehem as a modern urban public open space – greenway and trail.

This report documents the public process that led to recommendations to develop the Greenway / trail as a major element of municipal infrastructure in South Bethlehem.

1.2 The Greenway is Favored

There is nearly complete consensus in favor of a “Greenway” through South Bethlehem. With that support, came concerns that were justly expressed about safety, security, costs, and strengthening neighborhoods in Bethlehem – as they are always discussed in every thoughtful community that formulates a bold vision for the future.



Iconic industrial structure at the former Bethlehem Steel plant.



1.3 Public Study Process

In 2005, an eight (8) month-long master planning study transformed the general concept of creating a greenway / trail corridor into a specific guidebook for the acquisition and development of the Norfolk Southern railroad right-of-way as a new civic amenity to run through the center of the Southside of Bethlehem.

1.4 Corridor Description

The South Bethlehem Greenway offers potential benefits for all sectors of the community – as an alternative transportation corridor that will also function as a public “green space.” The railroad right-of-way (R.O.W.) is knitted tightly into the fabric of this town. It is generally sixty (60) feet wide and the Phase 1 project area to be acquired by the City is one and three quarter miles through the commercial, residential and academic heart of the original steel mill community. The Greenway is approximately seventeen (17) acres in area.

1.5 Transportation Potential

The historic railroad corridor is ideally suited to be reused for transportation purposes, but is also suitable as much more. The rail corridor has the unique alignment of running parallel to Route 412 / Third Street – the primary east-west highway corridor through South Bethlehem. Many share a vision that this corridor will provide multiple modes of alternative transportation including pedestrian, bicycle, and perhaps even dedicated transit facilities – all in a green, linear park-like setting.

1.6 Linkages

As the community master planning process evolved it became clear how directly a “greenway” will touch the existing residential / commercial neighborhoods that surround the corridor at every local street crossing. The plans to convert the 200-acre former Bethlehem Steel site into a major development of mixed uses one block north of the Greenway corridor include provisions to develop direct pedestrian linkages to the Greenway and the Southside community. The Greenway also has the potential to connect to regional trails.

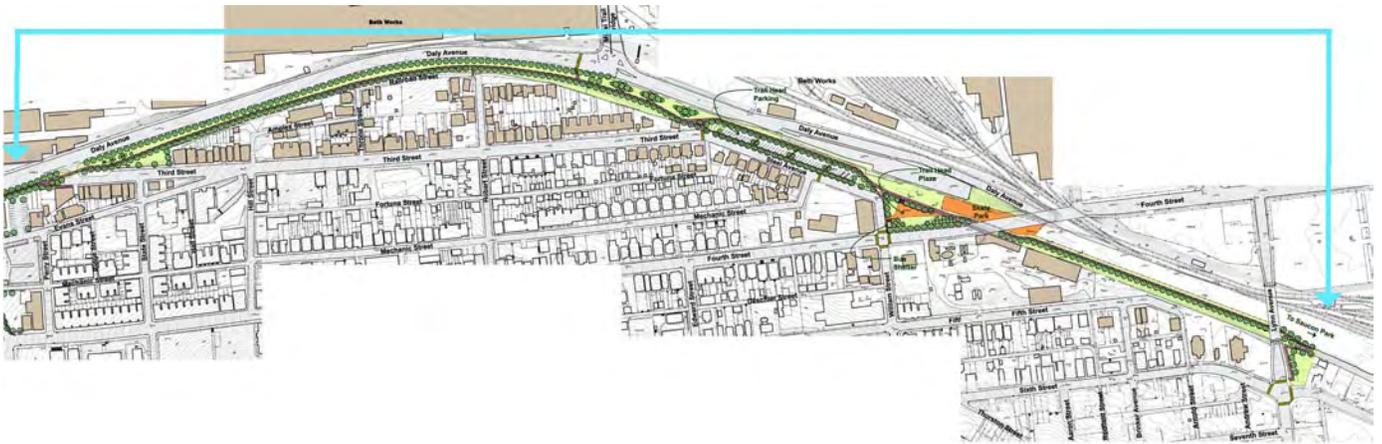


1.7 Improve Local Streets at Greenway Intersections

The grid of streets in South Bethlehem intersects with the former railroad spur at twelve (12) “on-grade” crossings within the project area. Each of these intersections will serve as a major “entry” into the Greenway. Additional trail connections to other nearby streets are also envisioned to provide the most universal access possible. The greenway planning and design can help Bethlehem develop specific streetscape improvements such as connections to local sidewalks, crosswalks, curb cuts, directional signage and other amenities at these local intersections.

1.8 Integrate Greenway with Transportation and Land Use Plans

The South Bethlehem Greenway project offers the potential to help unify several redevelopment initiatives that are underway on the Southside. The master plan identifies how the “Greenway” development can dovetail with parking improvements; local roadway improvements; state highway and bridge improvements; as well as potential public-private partnerships to develop adjacent parcels in ways that support the City’s renaissance efforts on the Southside.



1.9 Greenway Concept

The Southside Greenway is envisioned as three (3) distinct segments – each with a different character and focus:

- **Segment 1: East - Lynn Avenue to Hayes Street** – The character of this segment is very linear, uninterrupted by on-grade street crossings and dominated visually by the adjacent highway along Daly Avenue, the former Bethlehem Steel Site, and the active railroad yard to the east of Lynn Avenue. This segment is largely separated from adjacent neighborhoods by elevation. The grade of the original railroad is lower than the local streets, and runs within a “bench” into the hillside. Greenway connections can be made by stairs to many local streets in this segment.
- **Segment 2: Central - Hayes Street to Third Street** – This segment of the project corridor runs approximately one block south of Third Street, and is dominated by ten (10) at-grade crossings with local roads. This segment directly touches the heart of the residential / commercial center of South Bethlehem. The City owns several blocks between the corridor and Mechanic Street in this segment that serve as Parking Authority surface lots. The long distance bus station and police substation also exist adjacent to this segment.
- **Segment 3: West - Third Street to the Hill-to-Hill Bridge** – The western segment of the Greenway is contained within two blocks located north of Third Street. This area is also part of the commercial center of South Bethlehem, but is distinctly different in character. These blocks are much flatter and open, and formerly served as a yard and “roundhouse” area for the railroad. Industrial buildings surrounding this area are still in use by heavy industry. Adaptive reuses for commercial, residential and cultural uses have also been introduced.



1.10 Greenway Recommendations

1. **Develop Greenway in Phases** – The Southside Greenway is a major civic project that will need to be developed in phases. The master plan provides the guidelines for the general development, as negotiated through the public involvement process. The master plan should be considered an active document – flexible enough to accommodate future changes that will inevitably come from additional public input. More detailed information about physical conditions, new partnership opportunities that develop, and the availability of project funding will all impact how the Greenway is ultimately developed.
2. **Focus Early Improvements on “Greening”** – As control of the R.O.W. properties is established by the City, the Greenway can first be made “green” for its entire length by minor clearing / grading / seeding and obvious safety improvements. The subsequent mowing maintenance required is straightforward and within the capability of the City’s current park maintenance operations. Greening the corridor and regular landscape maintenance along its length will unify the greenway visually from block to block and define the boundaries of the public property. Adjacent property owners will be encouraged to match this simple maintenance regime for properties abutting the Greenway. Signs at Greenway entrances are good, relatively low cost, early improvements that showcase public “ownership” and community pride in Bethlehem.
3. **Develop “Adopt a Greenway” System for Community Partnerships** – Community organizations can help the City to develop and maintain the Greenway on a block-to-block basis. Partnership assistance can include: installation of amenities, periodic maintenance, and block watch coordination with police. “Adopt a Greenway” signs can be installed on each block to acknowledge the contributions from the individual organizations. The city can institutionalize these volunteer groups by assigning a coordinator in one of the City departments to regularly convene volunteer representatives, as well as provide a procedure for the City to review proposals from volunteers to make improvements to individual blocks.
4. **Acquisition of the Greenway** – Negotiate the terms for control of the Greenway R.O.W. with Norfolk Southern to enable the City to take advantage of the opportunities for greenway development funding from state, federal and other sources.



5. **Secure Funding** – The next phase, after master planning, is design and construction of various Greenway components. To achieve this goal, greenway trail developers usually tap into funding from multiple sources. Public agencies that typically fund development of greenways and trails include the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and PA Department of Transportation. Bethlehem is eligible for greenway funding from both, as well as from other sources.
6. **Enact Partnerships** – These cooperative agreements may be negotiated between agencies or between public and private entities. Lehigh University, BethWorks Now and the City Parking Authority are each examples of potential partners that can help the city develop specific components of the Greenway system.
7. **Official Map** – The Official Map is a planning tool that can be adopted by the municipality to identify future public improvements that it wishes to see developed on public and private properties. Improvements can include roads, utility rights of ways, trails and other public improvements. Items included on the Official Map must be acted upon by the municipality within one year of an official land development submission for a specific parcel. If the municipality declines to act, then the applicant is not obligated to include the public improvement in the plans.

In the case of the South Bethlehem Greenway, official map elements might include:

- Trail extension East to Saucon Park (around the outside of rail yard)
- Public parking structure / bus station / police station / public plaza in the block bounded by Second, Third, Brodhead, and the Banana Factory.
- Greenway trailhead / parking on the parcel at Fourth and William Streets.

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