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DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY

BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA AFTER BIG STEEL

Evan Orf

In 1943, Bethlehem Steel, then the second largest steel manufacturer in the United States, employed a record 283,735 workers. By 1945, the company held net assets of \$880 million and had revenues of \$1.1 billion. The industrial giant unified the small, incredibly diverse City of Bethlehem under one roof, one cause and one extremely proud identity. But in 2001, “the Steel” went bankrupt, and the blast furnaces that once roared and blazed all day and night went cold. Today, the city is in a state of urban renewal in attempts to reclaim a sense of unified identity in the wake of Bethlehem Steel’s collapse. Though the blast furnaces still stand, the urban renewal project, called Southside Vision 2014, is steering Bethlehem in too many different directions at the same time, giving the city a sort of dissociative identity. This essay charts both of these stories — the rise and fall of Bethlehem Steel, and the renewal of the city post-steel — and the links between them.

PROGRESS: 1857 – 1901

In late 1857, American businessman and founder of the Iron Company Augustus Wolle plans to build a blast furnace near Saucon Creek, drawing upon the iron ore deposits near its banks. He intends to develop pig iron, an intermediate product that can be sold for later melting and casting. Wolle's friend, local attorney Charles Brodhead, suggests that he aim higher; rather than building a small venture on a creek, Wolle should build on the banks of the Lehigh River, and rather than pursue the dead-end marketability of pig iron, he should produce rails for the growing Lehigh Valley Railroad, a project with much higher potential profit. Wolle takes his friend's advice, and in 1861, the Bethlehem Iron Company is born.¹

By 1873, the synthetic production of steel is gaining steam, so current Bethlehem Iron director Robert H. Sayre adopts the Bessemer process for the Bethlehem plant with the intent to continue forging rails, now out of steel, for the railroad. When the necessity for rails starts to decline in the 1880s, Superintendent John Fritz suggests expanding the Bethlehem product line to include large forgings in the shapes of gunnery and ship hulls. After stiff initial resistance from the board of directors, eventually the move toward producing heavy forgings is made. In March of 1887, the Bethlehem Iron Company wins the massive contract of the United States Navy, valued at approximately \$4 million, and four years later, it wins a similar contract for the United States Army.

Despite Andrew Carnegie's entrance into the defense contract market, reducing the company's market share to 40 percent, Bethlehem continues to profit from both rail production and large forgings. By the time renowned business-mind Charles M. Schwab takes over the company in 1901, Bethlehem Iron has transformed into

Bethlehem Steel. Progress has conceived an industrial giant.²

CLOSURE: 1999

On the evening of September 9, 1999, a gathering of over 300 people trudges out of the rain and into the old abandoned Iron Foundry on the site of the once great Bethlehem Steel Corporation in eastern Pennsylvania. Over 100 years prior, thousands of machines and tools, hot with smelted metal, filled the vast foundry, but today the structure shows its age. Stones in the wall have been chipped away, eroded by heat and weather. The cracks in the roof leak rain onto members of the audience below, but the spectators remain seated, eagerly awaiting the start of a new adaptation of the Greek tragedy of Prometheus, *Steelbound*. (Figure 1) At the center of the foundry rests a 27-ton, 9-foot-tall ladle, a miniscule artifact in comparison to the massive volume of open space enveloped by the foundry walls. Heavy rain, thunder and howling winds only accentuate the desolation of the place. This is the first of eight sold out shows.⁴

The play begins. A Cadillac pulls into the building from the rain and stops in front of the ladle. The personified characters of Brutality and Indifference weld our hero, the former steelworker Prometheus, to the mammoth hunk of steel, an eternal prison to which he has been condemned by Progress, the Steel's mortal enemy. Chained to the memory of Bethlehem Steel, he will watch the world go by, suffering the emotional agony of his purposelessness. The voices of the women's choir echo through the trusses and beams of the roof structure: "It's been so long since we heard/ the mill heave and slam/ with metal on metal."⁵ The words resonate in the minds of the former steelworkers, and their families, in the audience.

The event of the play, though, is not the imprisonment of Prometheus, but the story

of Bethlehem Steel, told eloquently through songs and soliloquies as the hero tries to help a young woman, Penny, regain her memory after she crashes her car into the foundry wall. (Figure 2) Prometheus, while chained to his steel torment, reminds her that her parents worked at the Steel; that she grew up hearing the sounds and inhaling the fumes of the blast furnaces; that she was supposed to carry on their legacy and work at the plant, but plans changed. A cast of both steelworkers and non-steelworkers act out the history of the company and



Figure 1. *Prometheus Welded to the Ladle in "Steelbound"*³

its impact on the people of Bethlehem, culminating in a symbolic piling of old tools, hard hats and steel scraps—a funeral pyre marking the demise of the industrial giant.⁶

Satisfied, Penny leaves Prometheus, saying, "I know what my parents had/ And what I'm missing/ And it's OK."⁸

Herman, a historian, enters the foundry and finds Prometheus. He explains to Prometheus that he need not worry—Herman is in the process of planning an onsite museum dedicated to the Steel and its workers. With that knowledge, and with the encouragement of all the community members, Prometheus lets go of his torment, breaks his chains and reenters the outside world, singing:

*No matter how many years I
worked here,*

*I still had to stop and watch every
time the oven was tapped.
It was beautiful.
I was happy when I worked here,
And I didn't think I'd ever leave.
But here I go.
So let's go.⁹*

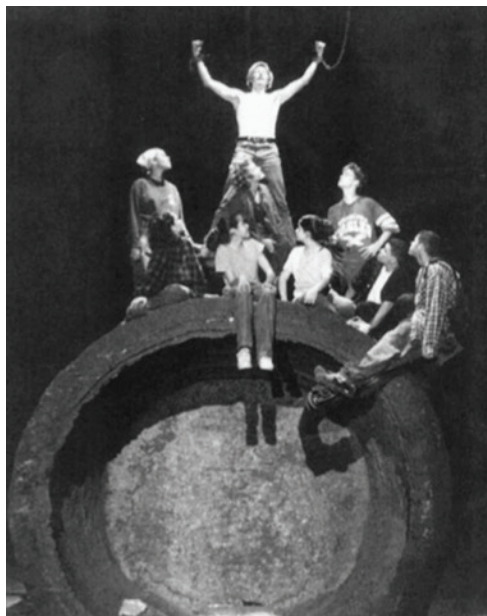


Figure 2. *Prometheus Welded to the Ladle in "Steelbound"*⁷

Thus, the final event, the final creation of Bethlehem Steel—closure—seems as solid and as strong as the steel it produced for over 100 years. The vast emptiness of the iron foundry feels not so empty. Audience members leave with tears glistening on their cheeks, but with their heads held high, confident in the resilience of their Steel community. An old, crumbling, rusted building, open to the rain and wind and vacant from wall to wall, acts as the venue for the symbolic defeat of the scapegoat Progress. But Progress is not, nor has it ever been, the enemy. Bethlehem has indeed written and read the last chapter of its industrial identity, but its new quest for self-rediscovery has started on a very wrong note.

AMBITION: 1908 – 1930

In 1908, Charles Schwab, now a veteran in the steel industry, begins manufacturing a brand new, stronger type of structural building material: the H-beam. Developed by Henry Grey, the H-beam looks very similar to its predecessor, the I-beam, but rather than the typical narrow flanges at either end of the shaft of the “I,” this new beam features flanges as wide as 16 ½ inches, strengthening the beam immensely. The forging of such a beam requires a whole new process and a whole new factory, a \$5 million gamble, which Schwab takes, and which pays off immensely. Formerly, with I-beams, a building could not reach higher than 20 stories without a major spike in construction and material cost. With Grey’s beam, buildings can reach more than four times that height.¹⁰ Schwab’s gamble has changed cityscapes forever.

Between 1922 and 1930, Bethlehem monopolizes skyscrapers. Steel from Bethlehem plants constructs the 70-story neo-gothic Bank of Manhattan and the 66-story American International building in New York, the 45-story Morrison Hotel and the 47-story Randolph Tower in Chicago and the Cathedral of Learning, which towers 42 stories over Bethlehem rival U.S. Steel’s home town of Pittsburgh. Practically every historically important skyscraper in this era is built with Bethlehem Steel.¹¹

In 1929, two business moguls, auto industry tycoon Walter Chrysler and banker George Ohrstrom, are in a race to build the tallest building in the world. Chrysler’s tower will reach 808 feet, while Ohrstrom’s 67-story skyscraper’s height will be comparable, if not taller. Chrysler, though, wants to stretch even higher. Upon hearing rumors of Chrysler’s intent, Ohrstrom makes the top of his building steeper and adds a steel cap, soaring it to 945 feet. As a rebuttal, Chrysler adds a 186-foot spire, making his now 1,046-foot art deco monument not

just the tallest building, but also the tallest manmade structure (surpassing the Eiffel Tower) on the planet. Neither magnate, though, surpasses the triumph of Bethlehem Steel, which owns the contracts to build *both* buildings.¹² America’s cities are expanding explosively, and Bethlehem, the new forger of American Progress, is at the center of that explosion.

DELUSION: 2003 – 2006

For eight years, the Bethlehem Steel site has been virtually abandoned; everything remains standing, untouched and neglected. Various individual groups have attempted to create plans for a redevelopment of the site, including a previously strong, now-withered attempt at opening a National Museum of Industrial History onsite. A lack of unity and assertion has proven all attempts faulty in some way. In late 2003, however, a development group out of Philadelphia called the Delaware Valley Real Estate Investment Fund has financial interest in the former Bethlehem Steel site, with plans of demolishing the existing buildings for big box retail, namely a pristine parking lot and shopping mall. Progress threatens to strike again. Overnight, groups all over Bethlehem and the surrounding areas emerge to stop Delaware Valley Real Estate from destroying the site’s integrity. These groups include the organization of concerned citizens called Save Our Steel (later Friends of the Steel), who begin to disseminate information about the site and its preservation citywide, and the Steelworkers’ Archives, a group of former steelworkers who, a few years earlier, began a record of workers’ stories and a collection of Bethlehem Steel artifacts. Both the Historic Bethlehem Partnership, which had been involved in the preservation and integration of the historic Moravian site across the river, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities based at Rutgers University-Camden, become

heavily involved in lobbying for the site's preservation.¹³

In January 2005, the Friends of the Steel compile a forum report defining six goals for the site decided on by members of the surrounding communities: "(1) preserving the buildings and the look and feel of the site, (2) integrating the redeveloped areas with the nearby neighborhoods, (3) creating mixed uses so the site is populated night and day, (4) making room for open space and pedestrian access, (5) providing innovative transportation facilities, and (6) welcoming sustained community involvement."¹⁴ These ambitious goals take the forms of hundreds of different suggestions, including hiking and biking trails, a pedestrian bridge over the river connecting the divided communities of North and South Bethlehem, transportation hubs to New York and Philadelphia, the promised industrial history museum in Machine Shop #2 (which, at 300,000 square feet, was once largest machine shop in the world), and an arts facility to host the popular Bethlehem Musikfest and other cultural events. When all the plans are completed, the cost calculated and the time-span estimated, Bethlehem faces a project that will cost an unjustifiable \$879 million and take up to 25 years to complete.¹⁵ Caught up in fantastic hopes, the coalition had disregarded all probability and realism. Three years have been wasted on an impossible ambition, a delusion.

With nowhere near the public funds needed and no investors willing to take the gamble, the coalition of groups, calling themselves *BethWorks Now*, step aside to let the Community Action Development Corporation of Bethlehem (CADC-B), in cooperation with the city, and their Southside Vision 2014 take over.

VISION: 1931 – 1937

For years, Bethlehem has forged the steel for countless skyscrapers and bridges, but in 1931, with the purchase of the nation's largest steel fabricator McClintic-Marshall Corp. of Pottstown, it can now build and erect the steel it sells. And with the purchase of this new subsidiary, which is renamed the Fabricated Steel Construction division of Bethlehem Steel, the corporation also acquires all its contracts, including one visionary project that will eventually become the crown jewel of the Bethlehem portfolio.

Engineer Joseph Baerman Strauss stands looking out over the San Francisco Bay in 1931. His job is to design, plan, and oversee the construction of a bridge over the Golden Gate, a 6,400-foot wide chasm filled with 100-foot deep rushing water shore to shore. If he succeeds, he, along with his team of engineers, contractors, machines and laborers, all from Bethlehem Steel, will have created the largest bridge in the world's history. For years, he has fought back skepticism from peers and San Francisco residents, who constantly tell him that the \$35 million projected cost and the mile-wide channel is simply too big, the water too deep. Even E.J. Harrington, the designer of the Dumbarton Bridge on the south end of the Bay, claims that no steel mill in existence can fabricate the massive pieces of steel needed for construction. But Strauss has a vision.

And Bethlehem Steel will realize that vision. Every single step in the process of construction is planned thoroughly and thoughtfully, so that no time will be wasted and no corners cut. Between 1933 and 1937, Bethlehem forges 68,000 tons of steel at its Bethlehem and Steelton plants. That steel is then transported by rail to Pottstown, where the Fabricated Steel Construction division fabricates the pieces and builds large sections of the bridge to make sure everything fits correctly. The fabricated

pieces are placed on the train again, this time to Philadelphia, where they are loaded onto ships. These ships then travel all the way around the continent, through the Panama Canal and up to San Francisco where the pieces are assembled.

By 1937, the construction, an unparalleled feat of American ingenuity, is completed, and from planning to completion, Bethlehem Steel has surpassed all expectations. The suspension bridge, spanning 4,200 feet between its two towers and 1,100 feet on either side, is not only the longest bridge in the world, but its 746-foot towers also make it the tallest structure in America west of New York City.¹⁶ Immediately upon completion, the bridge is revered as an icon, and the city of Bethlehem, now an industrial icon itself, celebrates its triumph.

PLAN: 2002

During the planning of Southside Vision 2014, which extends far outside the Bethlehem Steel cite, the CADC-B receives numerous grants and donations from citizens as well as the state and federal governments. The plan is ambitious, costly and disjointed, focusing on seven major re-planning principles: (1) creating a strong open space network throughout the city, (2) commercial and retail improvements, (3) identifying and reusing abandoned parcels and buildings, (4) improving the Gateway Districts at the east and west ends of the South Bethlehem community, (5) improving parking, (6) deconversion programs aimed at lowering neighborhood density, and (7) encouraging home ownership, as opposed to renting, and home improvement.¹⁷

These principles form a plan that, due to its disjointedness, randomness and haste, truly lacks vision. In 2001, Bethlehem Steel goes bankrupt, and by 2002, this official plan is released. Only seven months of deliberation take place before releasing said

plan, and only 70 residents out of more than 30,000 on the South Side are interviewed about what they want to change—a very short time and a very low number for a redevelopment that could change the city for generations. The “vision” is hardly visionary, but rather schizophrenic, a reflection of Bethlehem’s current and many dissociative identities. In overzealous haste to do *something* in the wake of Bethlehem Steel’s bankruptcy, Mayor John Callahan and the city government are just procrastinating, keeping Bethlehem busy in hopes that this procrastination will produce success. But even the city and the well-known, well-respected CADC-B cannot garner enough public support to fund the project. With no large tax revenue base after the Steel’s bankruptcy, the project threatens to be dead on arrival like *BethWorks*, its predecessor, until the news spreads that the Las Vegas Sands Corporation is looking to open its first east coast casino.

PRODUCTION: 1939 – 1945

Eugene Grace, current Chairman of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, prepares to tee off at Saucon Valley Country Club’s Old Course. Grace had been handpicked by Charles Schwab to take control of the company in 1916. With Schwab having paved the way, Grace led the company through America’s involvement in World War I (providing defense armaments not only for the United States, but for its allies overseas), through a massive period of expansion during Bethlehem’s skyscraper monopoly and through a construction and armament-forging drought during the Great Depression. Today, September 1, 1939, his vice presidents accompany him on the course. Right before he tees off, a caddy runs up to the group to tell them that World War II has begun. Grace immediately turns to his executives and says, “Gentlemen, we are going to make a lot of money.”¹⁸

And they do. When Japan bombs Pearl Harbor in 1941, America is launched into its Second World War, and Bethlehem Steel resumes its role as the largest defense contractor for the American Armed Forces. During the American involvement in World War II, Bethlehem Steel builds more than 1,000 ships for the Allied Forces and produces 80 percent of the parts for nearly every American fighter plane, bomber, transports, patrol planes and naval attack aircrafts. It becomes the nation’s largest source of ordnance, armor plating and artillery shells. The production grows so immense that the city of Bethlehem turns off the ever-shining Bethlehem Star as an attempt to prevent a possible Axis bombing of the plant. In 1943, Bethlehem Steel employs a record 283,735 workers nationwide, and by 1945, holds assets of \$881 million, revenues of \$1.1 billion, and has a net income of \$35 million. Even greater than the tax revenue benefitting the city is the strength of the unity in the South Side community, and its pride in the steel it has forged.¹⁹

STAGNATION: 2009

“We like to say that not all casino resort properties are created equal and with its advantageous location, intriguing design, and its popular amenities...we think Sands Bethlehem will become the new standard against which other regional casino properties will be judged,” proclaims Las Vegas Sands Chairman on the grand opening of his new casino-resort. (Figure 3) The date is June 2, 2009, and despite a “soft” opening two weeks prior, the ceremonial cutting, not of a ribbon but of a steel chain, marks this official grand opening. Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell and Bethlehem Mayor John B. Callahan are among the important figures in attendance.²⁰

And the casino certainly is intriguing. The site on which it rests is the old abandoned

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Figure 3. Sands Casino ²¹

Bethlehem Steel Mill, surrounded by dilapidated warehouses and foundries. Directly above the ceremony stretches an old Bethlehem Steel crane, an extremely imposing structure painted matte black, announcing to gamblers the context in which the resort is set. The design of the hotel and casino themselves are distinctly and purposefully non-Vegas. They are not bright or flashy or metallic. In fact, the buildings' features—gray reinforced concrete, pitched tin roofs, steel and glass framing, cookie-cutter windows—are unashamedly industrial. The five 20-story blast furnaces rise up in the background, highlighted by a cold, cobalt blue glow projected from the ground, a perfect backdrop for a post-industrial getaway. The old respectfully steps aside for the new.

But the design of this casino, along with its place in the town's fabric, only prolongs Bethlehem's already pronounced state of post-industrial limbo. The five volcanic blast furnaces have been inactive for nearly 15 years. Once the beating, howling, smoking hearts of Bethlehem, they now stand only as monuments for what once happened there. The town clings to its industrial heritage. The silhouettes of the furnaces can be seen everywhere in the city, not only on the mill grounds, but on announcements, posters, business ads, coffee shop logos and graffiti. Practically every dilapidated shed on the 120-acre site still stands, untouched out of fear that removing a building will remove Bethlehem's history.

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And the new casino provides a new tax revenue base required for the redevelopment initiative, but provides few other benefits to the community. In planning the casino, Mayor Callahan has made sure that the impact of the casino on the neighborhood is as neutral as possible. The casino owns the majority of the 120-plus acre former steel mill, but for the time being has agreed to leave it standing, planning the resort complex only between existing buildings.²² It provides a base for tax revenue, but at a cost. Unlike Bethlehem Steel, it cannot expand its clientele, its production or its operations to directly benefit the community, nor will it last another 140 years. A drug, the Sands only prolongs the south side's loss of identity after the collapsing of the Steel, certainly preventing Bethlehem from dying, but also locking it into a state of economic stagnation.

COMMUNITY: 1945 – 1960

In the 1940s and 1950s the blast furnaces continue to blaze, and the community continues to grow as more and more immigrants pour into the Lehigh Valley. The South Bethlehem neighborhood is extremely diverse. From the buses to the Steel every morning to the central Bethlehem Market, where the wives and children of steelworkers go to buy farm produce and socialize, citizens of various ethnicities from various parts of the city live and work as one community. Each ethnicity—Russians, Slovaks, Slovenes, Wyndish, Hungarians, Sicilians, Neapolitans, Pennsylvania Germans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Portuguese, to name a few—has its own religious domination and its own church. People often live in ethnically defined enclaves, but they are united under one great aspect: almost all of them work for Bethlehem Steel.²³ In 1943, over 30,000 men and women, more than half the city's

population, work at the Bethlehem plant. Eight-hour shifts run all day and all night. The sound of the hammers echoes loudly and constantly throughout the South Side, but the blue collar town knows that the smoke, soot and noise mean a good living, a happy family and food on the table. Inside the Steel, the workers face terrible conditions—extreme heat, cold, severe dust and dirt and grease—and though serious injuries and death are not prevalent, they are there. But out of these conditions emerge strong, proud men and women who understand their community, who understand each other, and who know that they are lucky to be in Bethlehem.²⁴

FRAGMENTATION: 2013

By 2013, the Southside Vision 2014 is close to completion, and the results are as disjointed and confusing as the initial intent, due partly to the introduction of the casino, which had been absent from the original plan. The community of South Bethlehem residents is not dead, but it is becoming increasingly more displaced from its original home and culture. Without the Bethlehem Steel unifier, the neighborhoods become more divided, and the 1,000 low-wage, non-union jobs provided by the Sands do little to combat this. As a consequence of the hurried Vision 2014 plan, five distinct fragments, with their own distinct pocket cultures and identities, emerge out of the once cohesive community.

I. GATEWAY

The focus of Vision 2014 (Figure 4) on the two major gateways consists primarily of cosmetic rehabilitation for tourism purposes. As entrances into the South Side, the gateways, which are primarily residential as opposed to commercial, are being redeveloped in order to present a better first impression to tourists, gamblers, or just those passing through. The new Eastern Gateway is being designed by outside planning firms Project for Public Spaces (PPS) and Phillips Preiss Grygiel (PPG), based on feedback and suggestions from small retail (restaurants and shops), big businesses (e.g. Sands Casino and Resort) and residents, as well as their own design intuition. And after compiling testimonies and suggestions, the two groups and the city decide on a unified vision for the neighborhood: “The South Bethlehem Eastern Gateway will become an active, dynamic, lively public space that serves as a physical and programmatic hub of the City of Bethlehem.”²⁶

An embrace of facadism—a facelift for blank building walls, street crosswalks, sidewalks and homes—will realize this vision. Benches wrapped in landscaping, outdoor café seating and brick crosswalks are among the cosmetic upgrades that will be used to attract and welcome visitors. The public art and façade treatments on the buildings, like the mural “Directions in Perspective” by Port Richmond-based design group Amber, will embrace the history of Bethlehem as well as the neighborhood’s dominant Hispanic population. Other design elements include creative signage pointing to areas of interest (Sands, Lehigh University, SteelStacks), more greenery on the sidewalks and encouragement of more elaborate storefront signage and lighting. In the end, the redevelopment will “create a place that becomes a local dining destination for visitors, employees, students and

THE RESULTANT IDENTITY OF THESE GATEWAY NEIGHBORHOODS IS JUST THAT: THE “FIRST-IMPRESSION” NEIGHBORHOODS ON THE EAST AND WEST SIDES ARE PROMOTED FOR THEIR DIVERSITY IN ORDER TO SET THE STAGE FOR THE COMING ATTRACTIONS.

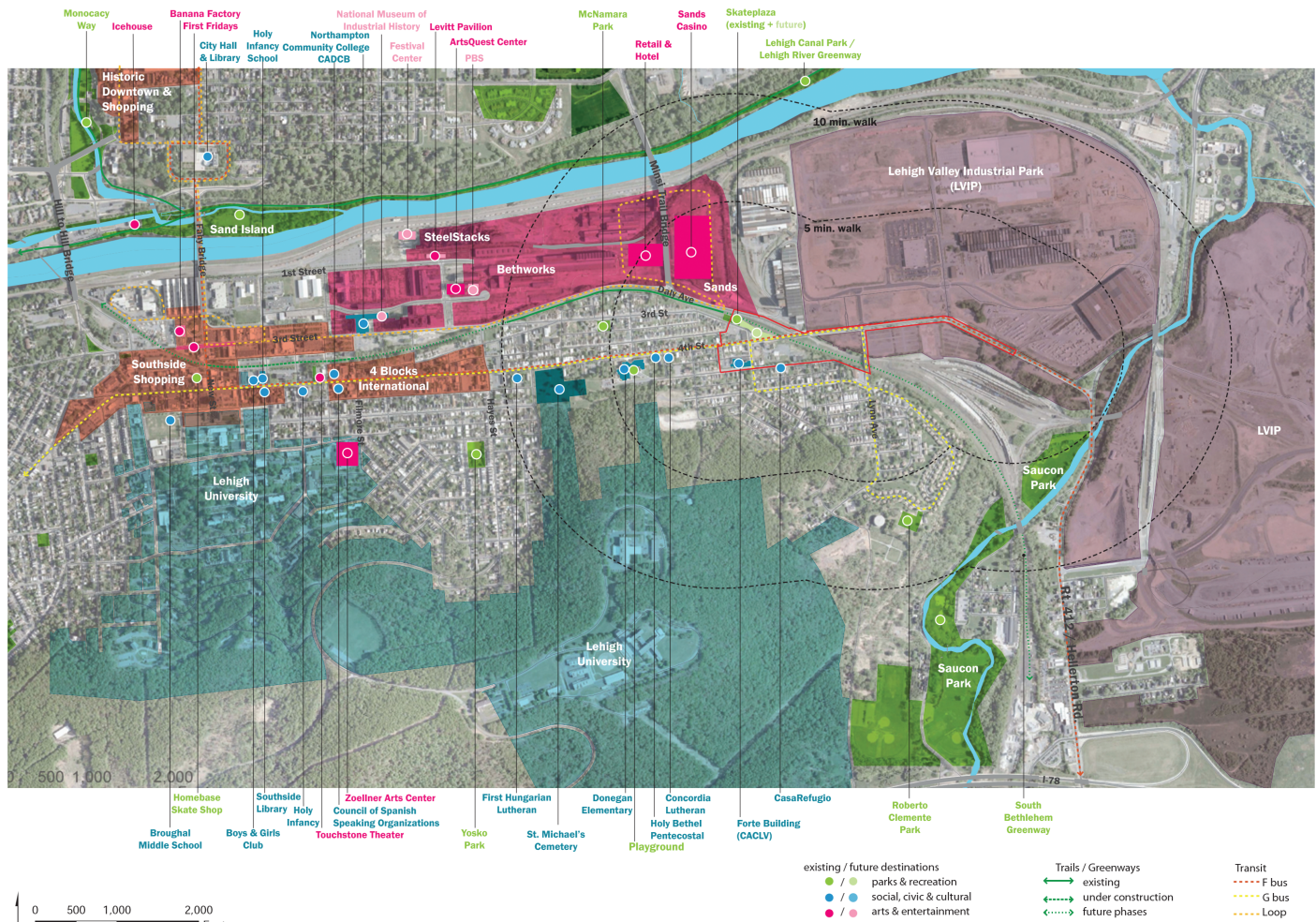


Figure 4. Southside 2014 Vision Map ²⁵

residents from other neighborhoods...and build on ethnic diversity in terms of dining and specialty retail.”²⁷ The resultant identity of these gateway neighborhoods is just that: the “first-impression” neighborhoods on the east and west sides are promoted for their diversity in order to set the stage for the coming attractions.

II. CASINO

When the casino is opened in 2009, it garners a variety of reactions from the townspeople. Some embrace the new jobs it creates, some ruefully accept that this is the last decent option, and many vehemently oppose the casino, claiming that it is a short-term, unethical solution that will draw an outside crowd for the wrong reasons. The Bethlehem Sands is to compete with Atlantic City casinos, welcoming hordes of gamblers

from New Jersey and New York (just a 90-minute bus ride down I-78).²⁸ These nay-sayers fear Bethlehem will become a hub for organized vice, now simply catering to the cities it once helped build.

Empathizing with the concerns of the townspeople, the local government, Mayor Callahan in particular, does everything in its power to limit the cultural impact of the \$800 million dollar casino and resort complex on the surrounding neighborhood.

This includes new zoning regulations: barring pawn shops, cash-checking vendors and adult entertainment stores within 5,000 feet of the casino. It includes widening roads to reduce traffic and upping the Bethlehem police force by a few officers each year. The results are positive; crime rate does not change dramatically, nor does traffic increase after a spike in congestion during the first couple weeks following the grand opening, and the surrounding area is free of the shadier retailers many anticipated.²⁹

The result of these factors—out of town gamblers and new zoning regulations—along with the industrial, low-key design of the casino, is a completely neutral, isolated casino culture. The populations of this culture are the gamblers, the majority of whom come from out of state and stay only on the casino grounds, and the workers, who do not identify with their jobs as former steelworkers once did. Tax revenue and the prolonging of economic and cultural stagnation are essentially the only relations the casino and city share.

III. GENTRIFICATION ZONE

The Gentrification Zone, consisting of the 3rd and 4th Street shops on the blocks adjacent to New Street as well as the area around the blast furnaces (SteelStacks), is the main tourist attraction following the redevelopments after Bethlehem Steel's demise. Marketed by the city as a retail, arts and entertainment district, the redevelopment of this area focuses on general environment changes coupled with more cultural and social planned events.³⁰

Cosmetic changes in the New Street area are limited mostly to the streets and sidewalks rather than the buildings themselves. Updates include strategically placed seating, planters and trees, as well as better lighting to encourage evening use. The city also has begun to more strictly enforce policies like property management

and garbage collection in order to keep the area updated and clean.³¹ Redevelopment of the area around the blast furnaces has been much more extensive, made possible only through the tax revenues from the casino. At the base of the furnaces is a new, rarely utilized public square and green space circumscribing the Leavitt Pavilion, a stage for outdoor concerts and events. Also on the grounds is the arts and entertainment center ArtsQuest, a mixed-use venue containing a movie theater, shops and concessions, gallery space and event spaces. All these updates make up the SteelStacks complex, the crown jewel of Bethlehem's steel mill redevelopment.³²



Figure 5. *Musikfest at SteelStacks* ³³

This Gentrification Zone is the center of Bethlehem's new brand of cultural events. First Fridays, Celticfest, Musikfest and gallery openings draw in the middle class from surrounding areas like Northampton, North Bethlehem and Allentown to have a genuine South Bethlehem experience—fairly generic art events to boost revenues. The local South Side population, typically of lower income, are mostly absent from these events, giving the Gentrification Zone a specifically tourist identity.

IV. UNIVERSITY

Lehigh University, built on the steep slopes of South Mountain, remains virtually absent from the South Side Vision 2014 plan despite its central location in the South Bethlehem community. Historically, Lehigh's extremely strong School of Engineering

was a feeder for management positions to Bethlehem Steel; the Steel's most profitable and influential president, Eugene Grace, graduated from Lehigh in 1899 and served as president of the board of trustees from 1924 to 1957. Much of the success and prestige of the engineering school stems from the influence of important Bethlehem Steel engineers like Grace and John Fritz, whose name is now attached to one of Lehigh's largest engineering labs. Donations from the Steel also helped to build up Lehigh's endowment.³⁴

But with the absence of Bethlehem Steel, the school remains virtually disconnected from the surrounding community, other than occasional community service projects benefitting the area's children. The university retains its own student culture, with many students ignorant to the city's current dealings and its history.

V. NEGLECTED NEIGHBORHOODS

Almost entirely absent from the redevelopment plan is any attempt to integrate the larger residential areas on the western and southern ends of the hill into the new Bethlehem the city is attempting to create. The residents of these ethnically diverse neighborhoods, over 30 percent of whom have incomes below the poverty level and nearly 10 percent of whom are unemployed, remain alienated from the city's efforts to turn Bethlehem into a more tourist-friendly, welcoming place.³⁵ Vision 2014 makes little effort to help the residents of Bethlehem who are truly in need, instead focusing only on making these areas safer for outsiders by providing better, more pedestrian-friendly lighting conditions, and "encouraging home ownership and home improvement in all neighborhoods based on building conditions."³⁶ These generally poorer areas rarely benefit from the art and entertainment opportunities like Musikfest and First Fridays in which most of the

products and events cost money that the families can't spare. Their only saving grace is the Greenway, a tree-lined linear park tethering neighborhoods together, and the Skateplaza, a free and in fact nationally renowned skate park at the east end of the Greenway used heavily and enthusiastically by Bethlehem's large, growing community of skateboarders.³⁷ But even that is a pseudo-ploy to keep skateboarders out of the Gentrification Zone. The neglected neighborhoods retain their identity of post-industrial hardship.

LEGACY: 1970 – 2001

In 1970, U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel place competing bids on the contract to construct the new World Trade Center, two 1,300-foot towers designed by Minoru Yamasaki, in New York. After finding out that its \$117 million bid undercut the U.S. Steel bid by \$5 million, Bethlehem believes they have won the project, but instead, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey splits the contract into 15 pieces, divvying them out to a consortium of smaller companies who integrate foreign steel and collectively underbid Bethlehem by \$34 million. This sets a precedent; the years of one contractor large-scale building projects is over, and Bethlehem loses a contract it desperately needed.³⁸

Despite 1979 being Bethlehem Steel's most profitable year ever, the 1980s mark the beginning of the Steel's inevitable decline in full swing. Due to overpaid executives, resistance of progress and innovation, and a massive pension plan it cannot even begin to pay, the corporation is slowly sliding deeper and deeper in debt. Unable to hook big contracts to make up for the losses, the Steel makes major layoffs in the mid 1980s to early 1990s, forcing the shutdown of six of its 11 plants, and by 1995, the company is down to 12,000 employees, whose production must profit enough to

provide pension support and benefits to 130,000 retirees. In 1995, the Bethlehem plant is forced to shut down, in 2001, Bethlehem Steel files for bankruptcy and in 2003, the International Steel Group buys the once industrial giant for \$1.5 billion.³⁹

The history of Bethlehem ends with Bethlehem Steel, but as Bethlehem carries the legacy of its industrial past, the question remains as to whether Bethlehem will learn from its past or carry the weight of its industrial heritage as a burden, remaining in a state of post-industrial limbo.

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