



A Letter from Marlena in Bethlehem, PA

Posted by [Glenn](#) on April 6, 2006 - 9:10am in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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Last weekend I went to visit my girlfriend's family near Allentown PA in Bethlehem. As we drove through the area, she explained how there had been a shift which is still in progress from prime farmland to development land for strip malls, residential housing, even trucking depots and warehouses, etc. Instead of being something forced on the local area, I started to think that probably all of this was just a product of people's collective desires in the local area.

Then on the last morning, I caught this [letter to the editor](#) in "The Morning Call" the local newspaper which sort of cheered me up a little because it seems to present the end of the exurban experience of development, traffic congestion, segregated zoning, etc could come full circle to a type of new urbanism if people start taking an active voice in the development of their communities.

I have lived in Bethlehem Township for almost a decade. The development that my family moved to, King's Crossing, used to be virtually in the middle of nowhere. Today, Bethlehem Township is very different. Route 33 was built, now serving as a vein to Route 78.

This has spiked the value of our homes and created much more convenient routes for traveling. However, with the new access and the expanded Freemansburg Avenue came a flashy new strip mall.

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People from all over the Lehigh Valley commute to our once very quiet side of town to indulge in their addiction to consumerism. Never mind the absurd amount of time it takes for local families to battle the traffic.

Most of the land that was ruined is covered by vast, empty parking lots. There is no sidewalk access from the neighboring communities to the malls. The entire strip mall can only be accessed by car.

A pedestrian-friendly shopping venue could have easily been created -- and could have, to a small degree, compensated for the destruction of the area. But of all the tons of cement laid down on those fields, nobody every bothered to invest in a few measly blocks of sidewalk.

Marlena Sarunac, Bethlehem, PA

Thanks for your letter Marlena. We need more people like you to stand up and point out the obvious consequences that planning mistakes like this create. Hopefully in the future these situations can be fixed and avoided with more local involvement into the planning process.



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