

Bethlehem Nature & Science Center: executive summary

A hands-on nature and science center planned for South Bethlehem, beside the planned Ocean Discovery Center. Small rescued reptiles and amphibians, a native pollinator meadow on the Greenway, Lehigh River science and labs for everyone. Planning phase: nothing is funded or built yet.

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What it is. A planned, hands-on nature and science center in South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It has small reptiles and amphibians from rescues and captive breeding (never wild-caught, never venomous, never released) and labs for weather, water, rocks and microscopes. Outdoors there's a native pollinator meadow with native-bee habitat instead of managed beehives, plus Lehigh River stream science and citizen-science projects anyone can join.

Who it helps. Children, families, schools and neighbors, especially people for whom cost or transport stands in the way. It's step-free, bilingual (English and Spanish) and has quiet hours.

Where. Beside the planned Ocean Discovery Center on South Bethlehem's East 3rd Street corridor, reusing an existing building. The two share a campus: lobby, restrooms, a food and water hub and an e-bike station. The meadow is planned for a section of the South Bethlehem Greenway.

How it's built. Reused and local materials, solar with battery backup, heat pumps and rainwater, plus recycling and compost at every entrance and event. Animal welfare comes first: a reptile veterinarian, care plans and habitats before any animal arrives.

Status. Planning phase. No building, partners, animals, permits or funding yet. Permits are to be confirmed with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and other agencies.

What it needs. A willing building owner, the City's written agreement for the Greenway meadow, a veterinary adviser, and funding.

Next step. Share the plan with neighbors and existing nature centers, and confirm the permit paths.

Planning phase. An independent plan; nothing is funded or built yet. Not an official project of, or endorsed by, the City of Bethlehem, Lehigh University or any agency.

Planned for South Bethlehem, beside the planned Ocean Discovery Center. Main location being finalized.

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