

Sheetz on Southside Bethlehem, with drive-through, set to open Thursday

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By Pamela Sroka-Holzmann | For lehighvalleylive.com



The Lehigh Valley's newest Sheetz convenience store is slated to open Thursday on the eastern portion of Bethlehem's Southside.

The store at 1780 E. Fourth St. — between Emery Street and Lynn Avenue — will host a grand opening on May 2nd starting at 9 a.m. with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to follow. There'll be multiple prizes and giveaways; a grand prize featuring free Sheetz items for a year; and free self-serve coffee and soda for the entire day, chain representatives said.

Additionally, Sheetz representatives plan to donate \$2,500 to the Second Harvest Food Bank of the Lehigh Valley and Northeast Pennsylvania, as well as \$2,500 to the Special Olympics of Pennsylvania. The food bank serves 200 agencies in Northampton and Lehigh counties, as well as neighboring Carbon, Monroe, Pike and Wayne counties, according to its website. Customers who donate non-perishable food items to the food bank from 9 to 11 a.m. Thursday also will receive a Sheetz-brand thermal bag, while supplies last, representatives said.

It's the second new chain convenience store to open in the Bethlehem area in a week's time. Wawa opened a store April 25 at 3608 Nazareth Pike in Bethlehem Township.

Sheetz is known for its made-to-order food items — including burgers and hot dogs; chicken sandwiches; wraps and salads; pizza “flatz” and burritos. They're paired with a variety of beverages, such as smoothies, milkshakes and coffee and espresso drinks.

All stores typically stay open 24 hours daily, seven days weekly, and 365 days annually.

Bethlehem zoners in October 2022 approved plans for the new Sheetz, complete with drive-through. City plans previously showed the 78,000-square-foot lot including 55 parking spaces, six two-sided gas pumps, and the convenience store measuring 6,139 square feet.

Store typically employ 30-35 workers, said chain spokesman Harry Hammel.

Blair County, Pennsylvania-based Sheetz currently has more than 720 locations across Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio and Maryland. There are plans to move the chain into Michigan within the next year, according to MLive.com.

Regionally, the chain's most recent site opened this past summer along Lehigh Street in Allentown. There's a handful of other sites in Palmer Township; Bethlehem area; Whitehall; Upper Macungie and other Lehigh County areas.

There also are plans on the books for another site at Main Street and Kichline Avenue in Hellertown. That site is about two miles south of the new East Fourth Street location, borough manager Cathy Hartranft told lehighvalleylive.com.

Sheetz also has plans to demolish an existing Bethlehem store in favor of a next-generation model, complete with drive-through, car wash and parking and fuel areas: Bethlehem planners in May 2023 approved a land redevelopment plan, calling for the demo of the store at 3201 Schoenersville Road, in the Lehigh County portion of Bethlehem, said Craig D. Peiffer, the city's assistant director for planning and zoning.

Sheetz wants to build a new 6,139-square-foot convenience center with 12 fueling stations on the 2.2-acre lot along Schoenersville, according to plans. The chain as early as 2005 reportedly began unveiling its roughly 6,000-square-foot stores.