

“THERE USED TO BE NOWHERE TO EAT IN THIS TOWN:” RESTAURANT-LED
DEVELOPMENT IN POSTINDUSTRIAL PHILADELPHIA

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ABSTRACT

There Used To Be Nowhere To Eat In This Town: Restaurant-led Development In Postindustrial Philadelphia

This project examines the roles that restaurants have played in the revitalization and reconceptualization of postindustrial Philadelphia. While many studies of Philadelphia after 1945 focus heavily on race relations, politics, deindustrialization, large-scale renewal, or historic tourism, analyses of restaurants as spaces of consumption and experience have been conspicuously absent in the historiography. This project elevates the history of restaurants to determine how they allowed Philadelphia to cope with the many challenges of deindustrialization, the flight of human and monetary capital, and the rise of competing suburban centers of gravity.

The research procedures for this project included readings and analyses of secondary works centered on urban history, foodways, and histories of consumption; readings of food magazines, trade journals, menu collections, cookbooks, guidebooks, restaurant reviews, and restaurant design works; the conducting of oral interviews with many participants and employees of the restaurant, real estate, and public relations industries; archival research in Philadelphia, New York, and Wilmington, DE; market analyses of the restaurant industry both locally and nationally; and many hours of personal observation in Philadelphia's restaurants.

Situating restaurant-led development within the postindustrial city required considerable personal debate. The basic premise was that after factories closed and

suburban malls drained Philadelphia of its retailing strength, restaurants became *new* factories in the experience economy. Deciding on which restaurants to focus and how neighborhoods were altered by them proved challenging. Ultimately, a combination of specific restaurant genres and selected neighborhoods seemed the most feasible strategy. “The New Urban Dining Room” considers how sidewalk cafes, one of the most popular phenomena in Philadelphia, regenerated public space and reflected changing tastes for urban experiences. Stemming from European traditions and influenced by the postwar romance of *La Dolce Vita*, Philadelphia had in 2010 more than two hundred sidewalk cafes. Many people equated dining al fresco on a busy street or plaza with the good life. American cities, namely New York and Los Angeles, contained sidewalk cafes as early as the 1950s. But Philadelphia and its residents preferred the intimacy of homes or the elite seclusion of hotel dining and supper clubs. Coupled with those traditions, the development of sidewalk cafes produced years of legal battles and cultural divisions. Once those battles subsided and the political divisions mended, sidewalk cafes grew exponentially in Philadelphia, clearly indicating a new appreciation for public urban experiences.

“Brokering Beef” examines the many high-end steakhouses on the South Broad Street corridor, once the nerve center of Philadelphia’s business district. From the 1890s to the 1940s, the area thrived as Philadelphia’s literal and figurative center, containing important banks, stock exchanges, brokerages, government offices, hotels, and department stores. After WWII, South Broad languished as other areas of Center City were renovated and redeveloped. By the late 1980s, after retail decentralization and the erasure of the local banking industry, the grand frontages and interior spaces of South

Broad lay vacant. Finding suitable tenants proved difficult, for few businesses could afford the rents along South Broad or utilize its massive interior spaces. Corporate steakhouses such as The Capital Grille, Morton's of Chicago, Del Frisco's, and Ruth's Chris were ideal matches for grand architecture once indicative of power. As the consumption of steak long was associated with strength, virility, and power, replacing the banks and brokerages with beef allowed a new centrality to take root in the spatial lacunae of the South Broad corridor.

"At Disney's Altar" described how the entrepreneur Stephen Starr almost singularly redefined the restaurantscape of Philadelphia. Beyond food, Starr's restaurants embodied a broader maturation of urban space, from rotting industrial landscapes to areas of hip consumerism. In certain neighborhoods, they remediated crumbling portions of the human-built infrastructure placed atop the nonhuman landscape. Starr's restaurants redefined the city as a site of the experience economy, a place not from which to escape but a place in which to partake. Within these transitions, new flows customers, suburbanites, and tourists entered the deindustrial ecology of Philadelphia. Through the recycling of the Continental diner, the creation of University City's Pod, and the opening of Talula's Garden on Washington Square Park, Starr, by providing patrons with multi-sensory ways to reimagine the city, used experience dining to rebrand Philadelphia.

"The Hipsters at the Cantina" examined how new restaurants and cafes sprouted in one of Philadelphia's most ethnically guarded neighborhoods. Instead of treating the restaurant experience as purely theatrical, the restaurantscape in East Passyunk after 2000 resembled an organic, authentic alternative to Starr's dining theme parks. Upon closer inspection, this change resulted from a concerted grassroots effort to rebrand a

neighborhood suffering from neglect and disinvestment. East Passyunk's transformation was engineered by the Citizens Alliance for Better Neighborhoods (CABN), a non-profit redevelopment agency formed in 1991. For decades, many in East Passyunk watched their neighborhood decline due to suburban growth and the popularity of shopping malls. By the 1980s, its commercial vigor had weakened with remaining businesses keeping irregular hours and residents angered by the city's failure to deliver basic services. With political acumen and a specific vision, the CABN leadership imagined a café society to attract new residents and businesses. CABN assumed control of neighborhood services and acquired properties along East Passyunk Avenue, and through their backing of restaurants, coffeehouses, and bars, seeded new growth in East Passyunk that appealed to a young, hip demographic.

"Zones of Certain Taste" considers one of Philadelphia's most unique forms of restaurant development, "bring your own bottle" (BYOB) establishments. Given the prohibitive costs of liquor licensing in Pennsylvania for restaurants, a tangential phenomenon emerged to skirt those costs. These restaurants first gained popular appeal in the 1970s in neighborhoods such as Chinatown and East Passyunk. As Philadelphia's restaurantscape matured in the 1990s, the number of BYOBs grew. Many chefs who'd trained in upscale eateries left to seed new projects in off-center neighborhoods with minimal capital. Without alcohol sales, their focus fell on food. Without corporate rigidity and theatrical presentations, restaurants such as Bibou, Radicchio, Audrey Claire, Tre Scalini, and Cochon Fish formed a substrata of the city's restaurantscape. For patrons, knowledge of food and wine could be conspicuously displayed, making BYOB restaurants stages for a small-bore, *niche* consumer experience. After decades with Starr's

experience dining and the continual arrival of corporate chains, taste-savvy Philadelphians sought antidotal places in which to display their food refinement. Starr, who relied upon suburbanites as his primary customer base, offered one version of urban authenticity; he provided Philadelphia unique stages upon which multiple sensations were layered. Over time, audiences that patronized Continental, Pod, or Talula's Garden looked elsewhere for badges of urban sophistication. It was in BYOBs that sophistication lay. On the surface, the benefit of patronizing BYOBs was less expensive beer, wine, or spirits, greatly reducing the total costs of a meal. But digging deeper, the small spaces, casual waitstaffs, minimal theatrics, and out-of-the-way locations seemed the real payoff for customers seeking restaurant authenticity.

The epilogue, "Vetri's Gamble," considers the limitations of restaurant-led development in Philadelphia. Marc Vetri, whose eponymous restaurant Vetri and casual offshoot Amis were among the most celebrated eateries in Philadelphia, transferred his talents out of the rarefied precincts of Center City and into the developmental void of North Broad Street. Vacancies and neglect proliferated. Panhandlers were many. Post offices were shuttered. "For Lease" signs adorned many of the car showrooms and theaters while the once-gilded mansions of the city's elite saw second lives as plasma clinics and storefront churches. In the middle of this landscape was the Mulford Building, once the home of a sewing machine factory. Renamed "640 Lofts," the upper floors were converted into luxury apartments offering "SoHo style living." In shorthand, the apartments were to be populated by young people with disposable income, a demographic foreign to the nearby weeded lots and pockmarked buildings. On the first floor, Vetri opened a casual eatery named Osteria. What made this gamble unique was not

the fact that North Broad Street lay off traditional foodie radar, but that Vetri's reputation was thought to have the cultural magnetism to attract similar restaurants and amenity-style development. Five years after Osteria opened, the restaurant-led development that proved successful elsewhere in Philadelphia failed to take root. The majority of Osteria's patrons were upper-middle class whites who drove to the restaurant, never venturing beyond the storefront. Areas residents were mainly black families that did not have the taste for octopus-topped pizzas or braised rabbit with polenta.

Restaurant-led development, as successful as it was in certain areas, did not fully remedy Philadelphia's problems. Beset by limitations, Poverty, crime, failing schools, pollution, and budgetary woes were concerns that Marc Vetri, tapas bars, or expensive steakhouses would not erase. Dining out in restaurants has always been more the province of those with disposable or leisure income. In this regard, many contemporary Philadelphians lacked the means to patronize one of Starr's dining theme parks or short in the cultural capital needed to appreciate basmati rice ice cream or charred venison. When assessing the areas of Philadelphia where restaurant-led development had been most visible and profitable, there was a firm sense that the dynamic represented a culinary colonization of certain streets and neighborhoods, at times to the consternation of those who felt trendy restaurants were signs of impending gentrification. Yet unlike expressways, stadiums, parks, malls, convention centers, and other "big-ticket" urban development, restaurants seldom required massive demolition or residential displacement. If gentrification was ever linked with a restaurant opening, hostility from those displaced was minimal. The following chapters will explore how restaurant-led development affected various parts of Philadelphia and the roles that restaurants played in

the renewal of and rekindling interest in the postindustrial city.

For Hal K. Rothman (1958-2007)
....still the king

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THERE USED TO BE NOWHERE TO EAT IN THIS TOWN

On a summer afternoon in 2008, a friend and I discussed where to meet for happy hour. Since we'd grown tired of our usual haunts, my friend made an off-the-cuff suggestion: "how about Bookbinders?" I laughed, admitting I wasn't sure the Old City landmark was still open for business. Not only was it open, he assured me, but due to the restaurant industry's embrace of "recession specials," Bookbinders introduced an inexpensive happy hour menu with \$1 oysters, \$2 Yuengling lager drafts, \$5 tuna sliders, and their famous snapper soup. This pricing-down followed their ambitious \$4.5 million makeover, including a sushi and raw bar in the main dining room as well as high-end condominiums in the upper floors. Arriving at the restaurant, it in fact appeared closed. Discarded newspaper blew down the sidewalk. The glass-paned vestibule seemed dark and dusty. Inside, we perched at the bar in the Presidents Room, a clubby, mahogany lair with mounted marlins and portraits of past chief executives. For the entire meal, we were the restaurant's only customers. Local newscasts droned in the background while a slight mustiness pervaded our noses. Oyster crackers sat in bowls along the bar, anticipating patrons who never came. We briefly considered leaving for Stephen Starr's *uber*-restaurant Buddakan two blocks away, but decided to stick it out after a twenty-minute walk. During our meal, we reminisced about the Bookbinders of the past, how crowds gathered outside and how famous and important people, from Richard Nixon to Elizabeth Taylor, once graced its tables. I recalled the mullioned windows, red-jacketed waiters, ladies in fur coats, and clouds of cigarette smoke. For a young suburbanite in the 1980s,

eating dinner at Bookbinders meant *experiencing* the big city. Turning to the picture wall of athletes, rock stars, and politicians (many dead or long past their prime) and taking in the museum-like atmosphere, it was clear “Bookies” fortunes had changed.

In April 2009, after an historic 116-year run, Bookbinders closed for good. Walking by the shuttered restaurant that month, I noticed a small sign taped to the vestibule: “if you’re interested in helping save Bookbinders, please call.” There was a local phone number printed beneath. It was a desperate plea for a restaurant that for decades served the well-known and well-connected. Yet Bookbinders’ demise was not due solely to troubles in the Taxin family, which had owned the restaurant for years, or their staggering debts; its closure resulted more from changing tastes. By 2009, Philadelphia’s restaurantscape had matured to an unprecedented, nationally recognized level. With sidewalk cafes, cheese and wine bars, fusion cooking of all kinds, steakhouses, tapas, French bistros, gastropubs, charcuteries, sushi bars, taquerias, and gourmet food trucks, old hats such as Bookbinders lost both their romance and customer base. Le Bec Fin, once considered the finest restaurant in the United States, had scrapped its tie-and-dinner jacket requirements and resorted to discounted lunch specials. Not even modernizing seemed to help. Though Bookbinders’ costly makeover was aimed at erasing its “tourist trap” label, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* glumly noted in 2009 that the venerable restaurant’s “ships have finally sunk.”¹

The American restaurant industry is perilously difficult; more than eighty per cent of all new establishments fail within one year. In this respect, Bookbinders was not

¹ Michael Klein, “More bad news: Bookbinders’ bankruptcy petition dismissed,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 30, 2009, B1; Dan Gross, “Bookbinders seeking help,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 1, 2009, 37; Rick Nichols, “On the side: a low-key but grand reopening,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 2009, F1.

merely a restaurant; it was a Philadelphia institution. As restaurants became more prominent in American culture after 1970, they served purposes other than caloric fulfillment. Like Bookbinders in its day, they were places for gathering and social legitimization. But they also emerged as key sites for attaining cultural experiences. And with cities as physical manifestations of culture, restaurants profoundly influenced how people experienced urban environments. After the 1970s, more than at any other time in Philadelphia's history, people engaged and navigated the city through restaurants. While parks, museums, historic sites, shopping, and sporting events remained important draws, restaurants were, in certain ways, more accessible and appealing. They were a vital medium through which people experienced new flavors, confronted unfamiliar cultures, and in postindustrial Philadelphia, became acquainted with the landscape.

Ask any Philadelphian about restaurants. Whether on the street, at sporting events, or checking into a hotel, their eyes light up. They speak from personal experience when possible and if not, somehow know the best Banh Mi, richest Sheppard's Pie, or the latest Jose Garces restaurant. Some imagine local chefs as celebrity athletes. Many know the coziest bistros, the most welcoming sidewalk cafes, and the most "authentic" Italian restaurants in town. Local boosters and chambers of commerce relied on restaurants as cultural magnets; as Meryl Levitz, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation CEO noted in a 2012 Philadelphia tourism forum, "if you want your neighborhood to be on the map, get Starr or Garces to open a restaurant there." The local blogosphere was filled with restaurant reviews, entrée suggestions, and information on self-guided tours. This was unique in itself, as such appreciation and knowledge once was the province of an exclusive few. With restaurant knowledge an important emblem of taste, scholars

argue that such smarts are beholden to the upper-class or those with what the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu famously defined as “cultural capital.” Though consumer taste influenced the variety of Philadelphia’s restaurantscape, the more important (and historically neglected) dynamics are how restaurants influenced urban development and allowed people to reconceptualize the postindustrial metropolis.²

In conducting formal interviews and engaging in casual conversations for this project, one sentiment constantly emerged: there used to be nowhere to eat in Philadelphia. Older respondents, discussing the city before 1970, amusingly counted available restaurants on one hand. Joan Pileggi, who for several years owned real estate, salons, and clothing boutiques in Center City, commented that before the 1970s, “there was Bookbinders, there was Arthur’s, there was the Vesper Club...and that’s it.” Naturally, this is an oversimplification, for even the Founders ate out on occasion. But considering the breadth of the city’s restaurantscape after the 1970s, the absence sentiment contains grains of truth. In the last four decades, Philadelphia’s restaurant scene, long underwhelming and outshone by that of New York, came into its own. This maturation broadened the culinary aptitude of Philadelphians and their visitors, bringing new vitality to the city. Via restaurant-led development, a process by which restaurants generate activity and investment in an urban landscape, chefs, entrepreneurs, patrons, mayors, neighborhood groups, investors, real estate developers, public relations experts, various city agencies, and the media intersected to create one of the most exciting restaurantscapes in the country. Restaurants came to occupy concrete and conceptual spaces in Philadelphia life; from Kensington’s taquerias and University City’s falafel

² Phil Vettel, “Philadelphians are chummy at best when talking about their food,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 2010, E18; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique*

trucks to Chinatown's dumpling houses and Fairmount's farm-to-table cafes, Philadelphians navigated their city through the restaurantscape.³

What made restaurants so important in American life? Starting in the late 1960s, the United States underwent a "food revolution," during which more people experienced new and exotic foods than ever before. David Kamp suggests the sensibilities of a "tiny gourmet elite," present since the early republic, trickled down to broad swaths of the middle-class. Those who'd never consumed croissants, pheasant, or even salsa expanded their tastes, propelling restaurants to new heights. Young chefs from New York, California, Europe, and southeast Asia introduced diverse flavors to what Lizabeth Cohen termed the "segmenting consumer's republic." Baby Boomers entering their late twenties and thirties abandoned the diners, drive thrus, and "country club cuisine" of their youth for goat cheese pizza, aged balsamic, and Pad Thai. Scholars have addressed this restaurantic shift, debating its origins and effects. Several, including Kamp, Juliette Rossant, Warren Belasco, Thomas McNamee, John Mariani, and Richard Pillsbury, argued that the revolution emanated from points as various as Julia Child's televised cooking show, a countercultural affinity for non-processed food, the restaurant reviews of Craig Claiborne, cutting-edge French chefs in New York and Los Angeles, or the "local pioneering" of Alice Waters' Chez Panisse.⁴ The effects, stated Jonathan Deutsch, Annie

of the judgment of taste (New York: Routledge, 1984).

³ Joan Pileggi, as told to the author, September 6, 2010.

⁴ David Kamp, *The United States of Arugula: how we became a gourmet nation* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006); Thomas McNamee, *Alice Waters and Chez Panisse* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007); Juliette Rossant, *Super Chef: the making of the great modern restaurant empires* (New York: Free Press, 2004); Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: how the counterculture took on the food industry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); John Mariani, *The Four Seasons: a history of America's premier restaurant* (New York: Crown, 1994); Richard Pillsbury, *From Boardinghouse to Bistro: the American restaurant then and now* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

Hauck-Lawson, Dina Berger, Shyon Baumann, and Leslie Brenner, included not only more exciting restaurants but also new social identities shaped by restaurant geography and food authenticity. These changes appeared in 1970s Philadelphia when chefs such as George Perrier, Fritz Blank, and Steve Poses introduced French, California *nouvelle*, and Thai recipes to a city known for red gravy, cheesesteaks, and soft pretzels. But exotic menu items were just the start. From the 1970s through the 2000s, Philadelphia increasingly relied on restaurants for renewal and places through which people reimagined the postindustrial city; whole blocks and in some cases, entire neighborhoods were transformed through restaurant-led development.⁵

Restaurant-led development was not confined to Philadelphia. Cities across the country turned towards food and restaurants as branding strategies and consumer enticements. In Philadelphia, retail, cultural venues, the arts, historic sites, convention centers, sports stadiums, and restaurants were promoted to revitalize and sustain interest in the city. Alternately called “glamour zones,” “amenity landscapes” or “entertainment districts,” many cities redeveloped their centers as sites for consuming experiences. On the Las Vegas Strip and in New York’s Times Square, the process looked steroidal. It was conducted smaller-scale (and perhaps more tastefully) in places such as Franklin, TN, Portland, OR, and West Palm Beach, FL. Philadelphia was no exception, as portions of Center City were remade into an amenity landscape, replete with retail, convention space,

5 Annie Hauck-Lawson and Jonathan Deutsch, eds., *Gastropolis: food and New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Dina Berger and Andrew G. Wood, eds., *Holiday in Mexico: critical reflections on tourism and tourist encounters* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 221-240; Josee Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Leslie Brenner, *American Appetite: the coming of age of a national cuisine* (New

and restaurants. After decades of manufacturing tangible goods, the city now manufactured *experiences*. In some ways, as the geographer Carolyn Adams argued, this strategy served Philadelphia well. But as the architecture critic Inga Saffron warned, such development “assumes that people should be consuming *ad infinitum*.”⁶

Restaurantscapes are more than guidebook listings of places to eat; they’re geographic and cognitive mappings of the city via dining establishments, from pretzel stands and BYOBs to bistros and luncheonettes. Restaurant “strips” or “clusters” lent new centrality to streets and neighborhoods. As the historian Robert Fogelson argued, downtown since the 1950s had “become an obsolete concept and a place.” Yet in Philadelphia, restaurants helped reverse the trend. For instance, in the mid-2000s, Starr’s Blue Angel, Jones, and Morimoto all occupied a single block off Jewelers’ Row, giving visitors to Independence Hall new reason to venture west on Chestnut Street. The urban historian Eugenie Birch noted while most U.S. cities had only one cluster, Philadelphia’s multiple clusters “are testament to a rising residential population....spurring the invention of new downtowns.” As a cognitive mapping tool, restaurantscapes allow people to link taste with urban space. With the erasure of manufacturing, banking, and other industries

York: Harper Collins, 1999).

⁶ Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: dreams, media fantasies, and themed environments* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York: how a city in crisis was sold to the world* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: work is theater and every business a stage* (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press, 1999); Joel Kotkin, *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010); Hal K. Rothman, *Neon Metropolis: how Las Vegas started the twenty-first century* (New York: Routledge, 2002); James Traub, *The Devil’s Playground: a century of pleasure and profit in Times Square* (New York: Random House, 2004); John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: pleasure and profit in the postmodern metropolis* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Peter H. Brown, *America’s Waterfront Revival: port authorities and urban redevelopment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Carolyn T. Adams, “The Philadelphia experience,” *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 551 (May 1997): 222-234; interview with

long anchored in to Philadelphia, restaurants filled spatial and conceptual vacancies. Since the 1980s, the city's seedy taprooms gave way to gastropubs, faded diners became hip cocktail lounges, grandly designed banks were reborn as steakhouses; and its sidewalks were fashioned into *al fresco* repasts. Northern Liberties, its factories and breweries long shuttered, housed trendy Mexican and Greek restaurants. University City, its dining options once limited to pizza joints and greasy food trucks, boasted of celebrity chefs and million-dollar restaurants. The types of restaurants in specific neighborhoods revealed who inhabited or entered those spaces and how people imagined their place within urban geography.⁷

In the realms of production, distribution, consumption, and even digestion, foodways breach numerous social and physical science fields. As Charles Camp noted in the early 1980s, foodways long were "divided between scholarly encampments," including economics, anthropology, history, and sociology. Yet in recent decades, food propelled these fields into a disciplinary overlap, allowing food studies to emerge a bona fide area of inquiry. Colleges and universities have added food-themed courses, food studies majors, and postdoctoral programs in foodways to their curricula while the explosion of cooking shows, eating contests, food tourism, and celebrity chefs continues to excite American palettes. Gerard Fitzgerald and Gabriella Petrick argue that even though the act of eating requires the use of all human senses, "food history" as a defined field is young and constantly maturing. Yet *restaurant history*, a fledgling offshoot of

Inga Saffron conducted by the author, March 25, 2010.

⁷ Robert Fogelson, *Downtown: its rise and fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 8; Eugenie Birch, "Changing place in the new downtown," in *New Downtowns: the future of urban centers*, ed. Jonathan Oakman (Princeton: Princeton University Press and Penn Institute for Urban Research, 2006), 53-82; Craig LaBan, "Options grow as Walnut Street dining fades," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 10, 2009, A1.

food history, still needs greater attention and can offer geography- and class-based explorations into consumption, social identity choices, and how they affect the urban landscape. Though explicit restaurant histories are few, scholars such as Mariani, Rebecca Spang, David Bell, David Beriss, Cindy Lobel, and Andrew Haley have shown the analytical possibilities between restaurants and cities.⁸

Mirroring what the environmental historian Richard White dubbed the “cultural turn,” other scholars have focused on vernacular and ephemeral aspects of Americana, setting their sights on materials and built landscapes. In James Sullivan’s discussion of blue jeans, Phoebe Kropp’s examination of California’s “Spanish tile” heritage, John A. Jakle and Keith Sculle’s study of gas stations, Ellen Stroud’s take on dead bodies, and Julian Montague’s analysis of abandoned shopping carts, the histories surrounding everyday objects and spaces reveal consumer behavior and lifestyle choices. In this context, restaurants and cities require more solid connection. The historian Kevin Starr noted restaurants had not “received their full measure of regard in the writing of American history, despite the fact that they are paradigms of place.”⁹ Philadelphia’s

8 Charles Camp, “Foodways in everyday life,” *American Quarterly* 34 (1982): 278-289, 280; Gerard Fitzgerald and Gabriella Petrick, “In good taste: rethinking American history with our palettes,” *Journal of American History* 95 (September 2008): 392-404, 399; John Mariani, *The Four Seasons: a history of America’s premier restaurant* (New York: Crown, 1994); Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and modern gastronomic culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); David Bell, “Taste and space: eating out in the city today,” in *Culinary Taste*, ed. Donald Sloan (Boston: Elsevier, 2004), 43-57; David Beriss and David Sutton, eds., *The Restaurants Book: ethnographies of where we eat* (New York: Berg, 2007); Cindy Lobel, “Out to eat: the emergence and evolution of the restaurant in nineteenth-century New York,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 44 (Summer 2010): 193-220; Andrew Haley, *Turning the Tables: restaurants and the rise of the American middle class* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

9 Richard White, “From wilderness to hybrid landscapes: the cultural turn in environmental history,” *The Historian* 66 (2004): 3-10; James Sullivan, *Jeans: a cultural history of an American icon* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006); Phoebe Kropp,

restaurants are ideal in this vein, merging exchange, modes of production, and consumption. Many studies of postindustrial Philadelphia are rooted in the “urban crisis” paradigm, focusing on racial tensions, political inaction, deindustrialization, the promotion of tourism, or questionable urban renewal, narratives that often show the city in unrelenting decline.¹⁰ While illuminating, these studies would benefit from analyses of consumption, the places in which it occurred, and how the city coped with, rather than wallowed in, decline. Recent works by Jerome Bjelopera, Elijah Anderson, Charlene Mires, and Steven Conn addressed in Philadelphia leisure, the usages of public spaces, and the values of heritage tourism, yet failed to consider how restaurants reflected

California Vieja: culture and memory in a modern American place (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); John Jakle and Keith Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); Ellen Stroud, “Dead Bodies in Harlem,” in *The Nature of Cities: culture, landscape, and urban space*, ed. Andrew C. Isenberg (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 62-78; Julian Montague, *The Stray Shopping Carts of Eastern North America: a guide to field identification* (New York: Abrams Image, 2006); Kevin Starr, “The Musso and Frank Grill in Hollywood,” in *American Places: encounters with history*, ed. William E. Leuchtenberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 283-294.

¹⁰ Paul Levy, *Queen Village: the eclipse of community* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Civic Values, 1978); William J. Stull and Janice Madden, *Postindustrial Philadelphia: structural changes in the metropolitan economy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); Carolyn T. Adams and others, *Philadelphia: neighborhoods, division, and conflict in a postindustrial city* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991); Stephen Metraux, “Waiting for the wrecking ball: Skid Row in postindustrial Philadelphia,” *Journal of Urban History* 25 (July 1999): 690-715; Paul Lyons, *The People of this Generation: the rise and fall of the New Left in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Elizabeth Grant, “Race and tourism in America’s First City,” *Journal of Urban History* 31 (September 2005): 850-871; Matthew Countryman, *Up South: civil rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided: race and politics in the city of brotherly love* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: liberalism, race, and deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: the forgotten struggle for civil rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

redemptive consumer taste.¹¹ Existing restaurant histories, especially those by Lobel and Haley, focus solely on New York in the Progressive Era, linking restaurants with an emerging American middle class and the rise of urban nightlife. Studies of postwar consumption by Andrew Hurley, Lizabeth Cohen, Meg Jacobs, and Dana Thomas shed light on the motivations of consumers and how economic power informed their purchases. Hurley and Cohen demonstrated that Americans identified themselves through not only their material purchases but the places where those purchases occurred. Jacobs explored connections between consumerism and the “redistributive economic policies” designed to enable working- and middle-class Americans to buy more. Dana Thomas argued that since the 1980s, increasing affluence “democratized” luxury, creating a proliferation of counterfeit goods that appealed to down-market customers and propelled a credit-rich middle-class to charge its way into material refinement. Save for Hurley’s examination of diners, these studies neglected restaurants as stages upon which consumption took place. Philadelphia’s restaurantscape then, provided a lens through which to examine social meaning, consumer taste, and patterns of urban renewal.¹²

With America’s postindustrial economy reliant on consuming experiences, history, ethnography, urban studies, and food studies have begun presenting restaurants as key

¹¹ Jerome Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: office and sales workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Elijah Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: race and civility in everyday life* (New York: Norton, 2011); Charlene Mires, *Independence Hall in American memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); Steven Conn, *Metropolitan Philadelphia: living with the presence of the past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

¹² Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: chasing the American dream in the postwar consumer culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: the politics of mass consumption in postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003); Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: economic citizenship in twentieth century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: how luxury lost its luster* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).

sites. Sociology was the earliest field to treat restaurants in an academic manner. William H. Whyte's *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry* (1948) is regarded as the first to examine the "complex human theater" within America's eateries. Whyte's work was followed by Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), which discussed social decorum among elite diners at a Shetland Islands hotel. Anthropologic restaurant studies appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, with James Spradley's *The Cocktail Waitress* and Gerald Mars' *The World of Waiters*. *The Cocktail Waitress*, set in the Midwest, focused on the symbolic and social construction of gender as related to status hierarchies within the bar. Spradley provided detailed character portraits of female servers and their decision-making in the workplace. Mars, analyzing collected data from several British restaurants, argued that the occupational structure of restaurant work shaped the moral and social life of waiters. Their work influenced later sociological interpretations of restaurants, such as those by Gary Fine, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Alison Owings. Yet these studies were somewhat limited in scope, for their analyses were restricted to social and occupational dynamics *within* restaurants and did not consider how they were related to consumption or urban renewal.¹³

If restaurants "make a city," urban historians should consider how restaurants' interior dynamics translated into external realms of the metropolis. Stefano Luconi discussed how south Philadelphia's Italians made social and cultural leaps from

13 William H. Whyte, *Human Relations in the Restaurant Industry* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); James Spradley, *The Cocktail Waitress: woman's work in a man's world* (New York: Wiley, 1975); Gerald Mars, *The World of Waiters* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1984); Gary Fine, *Kitchens: the culture of restaurant work* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: on not getting by in America* (New York: Metropolitan, 2001); Alison Owings, *Hey Waitress! The USA from the other side of the tray* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

marginalized immigrants to white ethnics. In his focus, food and restaurants (central to Italian-American culture) were given short shrift. Murray Dubin's history of south Philadelphia nostalgically discussed boardinghouses, diners, and small Italian eateries yet did not include how East Passyunk emerged as an exciting restaurant area. Steven Conn, while viewing Philadelphia's future through its entertainment potential, ignored how restaurants were crucial to that future. David Grazian depicted Philadelphia's up-market restaurants as places where city and suburban dwellers competed for social status, self-esteem, and sexual power. For Grazian, the menu was the least important aspect of Philadelphia's restaurants. Instead, the location, décor, crowd, and noise level, when combined, provided the *real* experiences. He concluded that customers patronized restaurants not for the food per se, but for the sake of social status and conspicuous consumption. In *Social Capital in the City*, Richardson Dilworth showed how throughout history, Philadelphia's social classes were bridged by networks of local organizations and civic engagement. While Dilworth included case studies of Election Day celebrations, the 1876 Centennial, the creation of Wissahickon Park, and ethnic business owners associations, an examination of restaurants or dining spaces would have revealed how central they have become in facilitating social interaction.¹⁴

Yet restaurants themselves are half the battle; determining how they affected urban development in Philadelphia provides greater context for understanding their importance. The city witnessed numerous urban renewal projects after 1945. Some were

¹⁴ Stefano Luconi, *From Paesani to White Ethnics: the Italian experience in Philadelphia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Murray Dubin, *South Philadelphia: mummies, memories, and the Melrose Diner* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996); Conn, 2006; David Grazian, *On the Make: the hustle of urban nightlife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7; Richardson Dilworth, ed., *Social Capital in the City: community and civic life in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia:

successful while others were abysmal failures. Good and bad alike, their key feature was the principle of imagined utopia, the notion that millions of dollars spent, legal battles fought, and aesthetic disagreements assuaged would result in a perfect addition to the cityscape. Rarely did the most foresighted planners witness or accurately measure the true legacies of their projects. For instance, when promoting the Penn Center project in the early 1950s, its designers felt windswept plazas and wide-open spaces would attract greater human density. Latter-day observers have indicated that the reverse happened. By the 1970s, Penn Center appeared an impenetrable garrison in Center City, one vacant after rush hour and presaging the “fortress city” that the urban theorist Mike Davis described in his iconoclastic view of Los Angeles.¹⁵

Although critics faulted comprehensive planning for erasing and/or sterilizing the charms of the prewar city, many Philadelphia agencies still considered and formulated plans in this vein. While Independence NHP (1970s) and the Avenue of the Arts (1980s) and achieved degrees of success, such undertakings were fraught with confrontations and unintended consequences. When considering how restaurants (smaller, private ventures) *collectively* affected the urban landscape, the calculus of redevelopment appeared different. The desire for restaurants appeared in Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) white papers over the years. Along with performing arts theaters, convention centers, retail stores, hotels, and infrastructure, the PCPC encouraged restaurants to resuscitate ground floor vacancies and attract visitors. Yet to argue that restaurant-led development rescued Philadelphia from its postindustrial miseries would be an

Temple University Press, 2006).

¹⁵ Guian McKee, ““Blue Sky Boys, professional citizens, and knights in shining money: Philadelphia’s Penn Center project and the constraints of private development,” *Journal of Planning History* 6 (February 2007): 48-80; Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*:

overstatement. Along with professional sports, convention facilities, parks, museums, corporate tenancy, and higher education, restaurants helped Philadelphia weather the deindustrial storm. With the rise of restaurants in American life, Philadelphia increasingly turned to them for rebranding and resurgence. And the city's longstanding inferiority complex with New York compelled many actors to raise the bar of restaurant sophistication.¹⁶

Situating restaurant-led development within the postindustrial city required considerable personal debate. My basic premise was that after factories closed and suburban malls drained Philadelphia of its retailing strength, restaurants became *new* factories in what Pine and Gilmore termed "the experience economy." Deciding on which restaurants to focus and how neighborhoods were altered by them proved challenging. Ultimately, a combination of specific restaurant genres and selected neighborhoods seemed the most feasible strategy. Chapter One, "The New Urban Dining Room," considers how sidewalk cafes, one of the most popular phenomena in Philadelphia, regenerated public space and reflected changing tastes for urban experiences. Stemming from European traditions and influenced by the postwar romance of *La Dolce Vita*, Philadelphia had in 2010 more than two hundred sidewalk cafes. Many people equated dining al fresco on a busy street or plaza with the good life. American cities, namely New York and Los Angeles, contained sidewalk cafes as early as the 1950s. But Philadelphia, in the words of historian Sam Bass Warner, was a "private city" and its residents

excavating the future in Los Angeles (New York: Verso, 1990).

¹⁶ Scott Gabriel Knowles, ed., *Imagining Philadelphia: Edmund Bacon and the future of the city* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Mires, 2002; Setha Low and others, *Rethinking Urban Parks: public space and cultural diversity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 149-173; Elizabeth Grant, "Race and tourism in America's First City," *Journal of Urban History* 31 (September 2005): 850-871.

preferred the intimacy of homes or the elite seclusion of hotel dining and supper clubs. Coupled with those traditions, the development of sidewalk cafes produced years of legal battles and cultural divisions. Once those battles subsided and the political divisions mended, sidewalk cafes grew exponentially in Philadelphia, clearly indicating a new appreciation for public urban experiences.

Chapter Two, “Brokering Beef,” examines the many high-end steakhouses on the South Broad Street corridor, once the nerve center of Philadelphia’s business district. From the 1890s to the 1940s, the area thrived as Philadelphia’s literal and figurative center, containing important banks, stock exchanges, brokerages, government offices, hotels, and department stores. After WWII, South Broad languished as other areas of Center City were renovated and redeveloped. By the late 1980s, after retail decentralization and the erasure of the local banking industry, the grand frontages and interior spaces of South Broad lay vacant. Finding suitable tenants proved difficult, as evidenced by the so-called “drug store wars” in the 1990s. Few businesses could afford the rents along South Broad or utilize its massive interior spaces. Corporate steakhouses such as The Capital Grille, Morton’s of Chicago, Del Frisco’s, and Ruth’s Chris were ideal matches for grand architecture once indicative of power. As the consumption of steak long was associated with strength, virility, and power, replacing the banks and brokerages with beef allowed a new centrality to take root in the spatial lacunae of the South Broad corridor.

Chapter Three, “At Disney’s Altar,” described how the entrepreneur Stephen Starr almost singularly redefined the restaurantscape of Philadelphia. Highly attuned to the demands of the experience economy, Starr borrowed cues from the Disney playbook to

reimagine restaurants not as places for caloric fulfillment, but as spaces for providing unique, multi-sensory experiences that elevated Philadelphia dining-out to new heights. Beyond food, Starr's restaurants embodied a broader maturation of urban space, from rotting industrial landscapes to areas of hip consumerism. In certain neighborhoods, they remediated crumbling portions of what the environmental historian William Cronon termed "second nature," the human-built infrastructure placed atop the nonhuman landscape. Starr's restaurants redefined the city as a site of the experience economy, a place not from which to escape but a place in which to partake. Within these transitions, new flows customers, suburbanites, and tourists entered the deindustrial ecology of Philadelphia. Through the recycling of the Continental diner, the creation of a "techno-fantasy" with University City's Pod, and the opening of Talula's Garden on Washington Square Park, Starr, by providing patrons with multi-sensory ways to reimagine the city, used "experience dining" to rebrand Philadelphia.¹⁷

Chapter Four, "The Hipsters at the Cantina," examined how new restaurants and cafes sprouted in one of Philadelphia's most ethnically guarded neighborhoods. Instead of treating the restaurant experience as *purely* theatrical, the restaurantscape in East Passyunk after 2000 resembled an organic, authentic alternative to Starr's dining theme parks. Yet upon closer inspection, this change resulted from a concerted grassroots effort to rebrand a neighborhood suffering from neglect and disinvestment. East Passyunk's transformation was engineered by the Citizens Alliance for Better Neighborhoods (CABN), a non-profit redevelopment agency formed in 1991. Outside the purview of the state and city, the group's leadership banked on the neighborhood's food authenticity and

17 William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991), 56.

fashioned the area into a hipster enclave. For decades, many in East Passyunk watched their neighborhood decline due to suburban growth and the popularity of shopping malls. By the 1980s, its commercial vigor had weakened with remaining businesses keeping irregular hours and residents angered by the city's failure to deliver basic services. With political acumen and a specific vision, the CABN leadership imagined a "café society" to attract new residents and businesses. CABN assumed control of neighborhood services and acquired properties along East Passyunk Avenue, and through their backing of restaurants, coffeehouses, and bars, seeded new growth in East Passyunk that appealed to a young, hip demographic.

Chapter Five, "Zones of Certain Taste: consuming Philadelphia's BYOBs," considers one of Philadelphia's most unique forms of restaurant development, "bring your own bottle" (BYOB) establishments. Given the prohibitive costs of liquor licensing in Pennsylvania for restaurants, a tangential phenomenon emerged to skirt those costs. These restaurants first gained popular appeal in the 1970s in neighborhoods such as Chinatown and East Passyunk. As Philadelphia's restaurantscape matured in the 1990s, the number of BYOBs grew. Many chefs who'd trained in upscale eateries left to seed new projects in off-center neighborhoods with minimal capital. Without alcohol sales, their focus fell on food. Without corporate rigidity and theatrical presentations, restaurants such as Bibou, Radicchio, Audrey Claire, Tre Scalini, and Cochon Fish formed a substrata of the city's restaurantscape. For patrons, knowledge of food and wine could be conspicuously displayed, making BYOB restaurants stages for a small-bore, *niche* consumer experience. After decades with Starr's experience dining and the continual arrival of corporate chains, taste-savvy Philadelphians sought antidotal places

in which to display their food refinement. Starr, who relied upon suburbanites as his primary customer base, offered one version of urban authenticity; he provided Philadelphia unique stages upon which multiple sensations were layered. Over time, audiences that patronized Continental, Pod, or Talula's Garden looked elsewhere for badges of urban sophistication. It was in BYOBs that sophistication lay. On the surface, the benefit of patronizing BYOBs was less expensive beer, wine, or spirits, greatly reducing the total costs of a meal. But digging deeper, the small spaces, casual waitstaffs, minimal theatrics, and out-of-the-way locations seemed the real payoff for customers seeking restaurant authenticity.

The epilogue, "Vetri's Gamble," considers the limitations of restaurant-led development in Philadelphia. Marc Vetri, whose eponymous restaurant Vetri and casual offshoot Amis were among the most celebrated eateries in Philadelphia, transferred his talents out of the rarefied precincts of Center City and into the developmental void of North Broad Street. Vacancies and neglect proliferated. Panhandlers were many. Post offices were shuttered. "For Lease" signs adorned many of the car showrooms and theaters while the once-gilded mansions of the city's elite saw second lives as plasma clinics and storefront churches. In the middle of this landscape was the Mulford Building, once the home of a sewing machine factory. Renamed "640 Lofts," the upper floors were converted into luxury apartments offering "SoHo style living." In shorthand, the apartments were to be populated by young people with disposable income, a demographic foreign to the nearby weeded lots and pockmarked buildings. On the first floor, Vetri opened a casual eatery named Osteria. What made this gamble unique was not the fact that North Broad Street lay off traditional foodie radar, but that Vetri's reputation

was thought to have the cultural magnetism to attract similar restaurants and amenity-style development. Five years after Osteria opened, the restaurant-led development that proved successful elsewhere in Philadelphia failed to take root. The majority of Osteria's patrons were upper-middle class whites who drove to the restaurant, never venturing beyond the storefront. Areas residents were mainly black families that did not have the taste for octopus-topped pizzas or braised rabbit with polenta.¹⁸

Restaurant-led development, as successful as it was in certain areas, did not fully remedy Philadelphia's problems. Beset by limitations, Poverty, crime, failing schools, pollution, and budgetary woes were concerns that Marc Vetri, tapas bars, or expensive steakhouses would not erase. Dining out in restaurants has always been more the province of those with disposable or leisure income. In this regard, many contemporary Philadelphians lacked the means to patronize one of Starr's dining theme parks or fall short in the cultural capital needed to appreciate basmati rice ice cream or charred venison. When assessing the areas of Philadelphia where restaurant-led development had been most visible and profitable, there was a firm sense that the dynamic represented a culinary colonization of certain streets and neighborhoods, at times to the consternation of those who felt trendy restaurants were signs of impending gentrification. Yet unlike expressways, stadiums, parks, malls, convention centers, and other "big-ticket" urban development, restaurants seldom required massive demolition or residential displacement. If gentrification was ever linked with a restaurant opening, hostility from those displaced was minimal. The following chapters will explore how restaurant-led

18 John Marchese, "The Rebirth of North Broad," *Philadelphia Magazine*, June 2007, 123-130; Frank Bruni, "A chef to the few heeds a call to the many," *New York Times*, May 23, 2007, F1; Craig LaBan, "A luscious Italian newcomer to North Broad," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 20, 2007, M1.

development affected various parts of Philadelphia and the roles that restaurants played in the renewal of and rekindling interest in the postindustrial city.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW URBAN DINING ROOM: SIDEWALK CAFES IN THE POSTINDUSTRIAL CITY

In 1997, Neil Stein learned the wine shop on Rittenhouse Square East was closing. Energized by the success of his Striped Bass, the veteran restaurateur imagined for the space a French bistro that would “use the Square as an asset.”¹⁹ His peers found the space too small to accommodate both a bar and dining room; where would his patrons *sit*? Unfazed, Stein simply said people would eat outside. This was a radical notion when there were few sidewalk tables in Philadelphia. After Rouge debuted in April 1998, Stein’s gamble paid off. Packed on a daily basis, its black-clad waitstaff pushed through fashionable people mobbing the sidewalk tables, high-line cars cruised by, and pedestrians interacted with those patrons sitting, creating a Felliniesque tableaux. *Philadelphia Weekly* praised Stein’s effort, proclaiming “the people-watching is of such high-caliber it could provide a distraction from the most mediocre food” and “romance is what Rouge is all about.”²⁰ By offering what Stein defined as “theater on a piazza,” Rouge became the central attraction of (and one of the few sidewalk cafes ever to grace) Rittenhouse Square.²¹ The following year, the *New York Daily News* announced Philadelphia’s sidewalk café growth reflected its residents’ “falling back in love with

19 Jenice M. Armstrong, “Saloon passes Stein’s scrutiny,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 2, 1998, 5; Craig LaBan, “Superb bistro fare in a scene worthy of Fellini,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 16, 1998, SO1; Andrew F. Smith, ed., *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 53-54.

20 Judy West, “Food Red Hot,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, May 20, 1998, p.119.

21 Interview with Neil Stein conducted by the author, November 10, 2009.

their space.”²² Since 1998, nearly 260 sidewalk cafes appeared in Philadelphia. In block-by-block fashion, these cafés created a new urban dining room, magnetizing neighborhoods from East Passyunk to Northern Liberties and drawing people into a once-forbidding postindustrial city.²³

Though not without limitations, Philadelphia’s sidewalk cafes were much more than welcoming spaces in which to dine. Through analysis of their origins and recent surge in popularity, these cafes emerged as vital components of commerce and civic life in postindustrial Philadelphia. Commercially, they invigorated the local restaurant industry. In a civic capacity, they provided Philadelphians and their visitors a higher degree of cosmopolitanism, a more pronounced feeling of safety, places for gathering, and an appealing way to *experience* the city. Echoing sociologist Elijah Anderson Philadelphia’s sidewalk cafes fell under the “cosmopolitan canopy” of busy, yet bounded quasi-public spaces where people could “relax their guard” against urban elements.²⁴ In another sense, the proliferation of sidewalk cafes indicated that for a city long-considered provincial and tradition-bound, Philadelphia finally was importing (and embracing) a tenet of European public urban culture. Regarding safety, Philadelphia’s sidewalk cafes blossomed in the vertices of political and economic changes, those transformations of the

22 Craig LaBan, “To the sidewalks: the city is warming to the café life,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 11, 1999.

23 April White, ed., *Philadelphia Magazine’s Ultimate Restaurant Guide* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004) 35; Peter Van Allen, “Color Neil Stein ‘bleu,’” *Philadelphia Business Journal*, March 5, 2004, 12; in his examination of lower-income neighborhoods, Alexander Von Hoffman argues that in the absence of Federal support, successful urban renewal since the early 1990s has occurred at the localized level through the combined efforts of citizens, clergy, entrepreneurs, wealthy benefactors and private institutions. Alexander Von Hoffman, *House by House, block by block: the rebirth of America’s urban neighborhoods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

24 Elijah Anderson, “The Cosmopolitan Canopy,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595 (September 2004): 14-31, 15 and 28.

late 1990s that led the city from disaster (real and imagined) to recovery. Crime rates dropped, jobs were created, tax abatements generated new development, and Center City added nearly 12,000 new housing units. These improvements led historian Steven Conn to declare in 2006 “Philadelphia is now a more exciting, lively, vibrant place than at any time since Jefferson and Franklin were walking the streets.”²⁵

For Conn to classify postindustrial Philadelphia as “vibrant,” he most likely witnessed more than new housing starts and fewer murders; he needed to see people outdoors, interacting and enjoying the city. When measured against waning attendance to parades, the disappearance of “street theater,” and among some scholars a sense that public spaces have vanished from American urban landscapes, sidewalk cafes encourage behaviors that are less politicized and more reliant on conspicuous consumption. The activities practiced *within* them (dining, imbibing, conversing, people-watching, and commercial transactions) provide for owners, patrons, and passersby a form of urban spectacle, one both profitable and pleasantly contagious.²⁶ Sociologist Ray Oldenburg states that in Parisian life, sidewalk cafes’ “openness lends a legitimacy born of visibility.”²⁷ Despite differences between the sidewalk cafes of Paris and Philadelphia, such as size, design, and patrons’ behaviors, their proliferation indicated in both cities a desire to gather and socialize in public view. Finally, sidewalk cafes became devices

25 Steven Conn, *Metropolitan Philadelphia: living with the presence of the past* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) 21.

26 The notion of sidewalk cafes as “urban spectacle” borrows from Anne Friedberg’s social contextualization of arcades in post-Haussmann Paris. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: cinema and the postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 68-70; Susan Davis, *Parades and Power: street theater in nineteenth-century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986) 5.

27 Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community* (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 149.

through which people could experience postindustrial Philadelphia. While its cultural offerings (performing arts venues, universities, museums, and historic sites) contributed to Philadelphia's *sense* of urbanity, many of these establishments required some degree of cultural aptitude in order to fully appreciate them. Sidewalk cafes cast a wider net. Largely informal when compared with the 19th century practice of urban promenading, which in Philadelphia commanded formal types of dress and courtly mannerisms, the city's sidewalk cafes in the 21st century were casual spaces for dining out and people-watching. Existing in various neighborhoods and offering different types of cuisine, were in theory more inclusive places for people to attain an urban experience.²⁸

Despite those urban experiences, the limitations of Philadelphia's sidewalk cafes were equally numerous. First, the overwhelming majority of them appeared in affluent Center City areas, such as Rittenhouse Square, Washington Square West, Old City, Independence Park, and Queen Village. This geographic specificity indicates the target audience of sidewalk cafes, mainly middle- and upper-middle class patrons that sought what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu identified as cultural capital. For them, sidewalk cafes represented bastions of the good life, helping transform portions of Center City into a glamour zone. Secondly, as a result, the concentration of sidewalk cafes in Philadelphia's well-to-do neighborhoods generated a cultural forcefield, one impenetrable to the protracted problems of infrastructural decay, abandoned properties, and crime that

28 In an 1826 comparison between the café and the "box in the theatre" of London, Leigh Hunt remarked that the theatre box represented a kind of confinement while the "old coffeehouse" (café) represented a "more humane openness of intercourse." While this was quote made in reference to the disappearance of coffeehouses in imperial London, it highlights the difference between cultural aptitude and casual socialization. Markman Ellis, *The Coffeehouse: a cultural history* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 208; Mona Domosh, "Those gorgeous incongruities: polite politics and public space on the streets of New York City," *Annals of the Association of American*

plagued areas peripheral to Center City. Thirdly, in areas weathering the process of gentrification, such as Northern Liberties, Fairmount, and University City, sidewalk cafes represented agents of class conflict and worries over rising property values; in some cases, notably in the city's Far Northeast, early proposals for sidewalk cafes were defeated due to such concerns. Finally, the arduous process in legalizing these cafes in Philadelphia demonstrated ambiguities in and disagreements over the use of public space and the types of commerce allowed in the city's central neighborhoods.

While many people assumed Rouge was the city's first (and Stein defended the assumption), Philadelphia's sidewalk cafes had a long contested history couched in spatial politics. Initially authorized by City Council in May 1979, several factors stalled their growth until the late 1990s.²⁹ First, Philadelphia's bitter (and long-running) feuds over street vending pitted merchants' associations, health officials, citizens, and City Council against entrepreneurs operating on the city's sidewalks. The comprehensive urban planning proposed for Philadelphia's renewal in the 1950s and 1960s, with its sleek modern fluidity, had no place for street vendors. More, in preparing for the Bicentennial, which transformed portions of Philadelphia into what geographer David Lowenthal termed a "make-believe landscape," bazaar-like sidewalk retail was viewed by many politicians and citizens as detrimental to the city's cosmetic improvement. In these contexts, debates over commercial and aesthetic uses of sidewalks ultimately stalled café growth. Secondly, Philadelphia's restaurant-scape changed considerably in the early

Geographers 88 (April 2002): 209-226.

²⁹ Despite their benefits, in the first ten years of their being legal, only 17 sidewalk cafes appeared in Center City. Long before the City Council ordinance, Da Vinci Ristorante (located at 2007 Walnut St.) had sidewalk tables. But in a 1965 restaurant review, Nancy Love stated "nobody ever sits at the sidewalk tables out front. They merely prepare you for the cozy feeling inside." See Nancy Love, *Guide to Philadelphia*

1970s as haute, California nouvelle, and ethnic cuisines began edging out automats, luncheonettes, and supper clubs. Commenting on the shift in 1974, legendary food writer Craig Claiborne opined the city “long was a negligible place to dine.” Compared with the palettes of New York, L.A., or Paris, Philadelphians were unsophisticated and undemanding of sidewalk cafes.³⁰

Thirdly, instead of placing tables on sidewalks (as stipulated by councilmanic law), Philadelphia restaurateurs during the 1980s erected permanent structures in defiance of building regulations. These structures, many of which were enclosed patios partitioned from the sidewalks, generated friction among the W. Wilson Goode Administration (1983-1991), the City Planning Commission (CPC), City Council members, neighborhood associations, and restaurateurs. As CPC executive director Barbara Kaplan remarked in 1999, “it took a while for restaurateurs to understand the [sidewalk café] law.”³¹ Fourthly, until Philadelphia’s sidewalk café law was amended in the 1990s, all applicants were required to own prohibitively expensive liquor licenses. Issued by the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB), the high cost of licensing discouraged sidewalk cafes for decades. Lastly, despite moderate quality-of-life improvements in the 1980s, Philadelphia continued to suffer from blight and crime. Those restaurateurs who petitioned for sidewalk cafes were unwilling to directly expose their patrons to the street. As *Inquirer* architecture critic Thomas Hine opined in 1987, “the places at which Philadelphians like to dine outdoors tend to be walled and sheltered

(Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1965), 206.

30 David Lowenthal, “The Bicentennial Landscape: a mirror held up to the past,” *Geographical Review* 67 (July 1977): 253-267; Mariani, 1994; Kamp, 2006; McNamee, 2007; Craig Claiborne, “The Chef could only beam and tell his class, ‘Une Merveille!’” *New York Times*, March 21, 1974, 48.

31 Erin Einhorn, “Dining Out[side]: taking it to the streets, outdoor dining is

and as far from any sidewalk as possible.”³²

When historicizing sidewalk café development in Philadelphia, the political tensions surrounding street vending and sidewalk use mark a point of departure. Typically, debates over the legality and placement of urban street vendors were fraught with public health issues, though as Daniel Bluestone, John Gaber, John Cross, and Sharit Bhowmik indicate, such debates (from New York to Mexico City) usually were undergirded by racial and class animosities.³³ In Philadelphia, the so-called “vendor wars” created raw sensibilities over legitimate and proper use of sidewalks. Ultimately, similar dynamics came into play regarding Philadelphia’s sidewalk cafes; as with vendors, many city officials and residents lamented their flimsy appearance, nonconformity with building codes, incongruity with historic architecture, generation of noise and congestion, and the stubbornness of restaurateurs who skirted the proper licensing channels. In these contexts, historic bouts over Philadelphia’s street vendors set the stage for later debates over the role(s) and legality of the city’s sidewalk cafes.³⁴

springing to life throughout the city,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 30, 1999, 18.

³² The PLCB formed at the end of Prohibition in 1933. By the early 1980s, Gov. Richard Thornburgh’s administration devoted considerable energy to greater decontrol of alcohol sales in hopes of dismantling the PLCB; Thornburgh felt the system was “outdated, corrupt, and poorly managed.” Frederick Cusick, “This time, liquor-reform plan may pack more punch,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 4, 1983, D1; Mark Wagenveld, “Rounding up Center City prostitutes,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 25, 1983, B1; Thomas Hine, “The central issue is the size of Philadelphia’s center,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 17, 1983, A2. Thomas Hine, “Sidewalk Syndrome: if it’s not cafes, it’s construction,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 8, 1987, G16.

³³ Daniel Bluestone, “The Pushcart Evil: peddlers, merchants, and New York City’s streets, 1890-1940,” *Journal of Urban History* 18 (November 1991): 68-92; John Gaber, “Manhattan’s 14th Street vendors’ market: informal street peddlers’ complimentary relationship with New York City’s economy,” *Urban Anthropology* 23 (Winter 1994): 1-36; John C. Cross, *Informal Politics: street vendors and the state in Mexico City* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); Sharit Bhowmik, ed., *Street Vendors in the Global Urban Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

³⁴ Edward Colimore, “On foot, it’s no cakewalk in the city,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*,

Philadelphia's street vending hailed from the colonial period, when its port and commercial operations were among the busiest in the world. William Penn's original city plan (1682) specified that High Street (now Market Street) be lined with hucksters and market stalls; this pattern persisted well into the 1850s. Through the 19th and into the 20th centuries, seafood, soups, clothing, jewelry, leather products, candles, and fruit were sold by hucksters who burst into song or blew their truck horns while factory workers and housewives shouted their orders from upper-story windows. Many vendors were immigrants, with the trade providing their initial entry into the U.S. labor force. Several operated in the same neighborhood for generations. Though lively and theatrical, the vendors were not universally accepted. In 1927, Building Inspection Bureau chief Morris Brooks complained about their spreading throughout Center City. Calling their operations unfair competition and "eyesores on our principal streets," Brooks believed their appearance drove down property values and made Philadelphia "look like a jay town."³⁵ Despite noise and cluttered sidewalks, this urban bazaar was integral to the city's economy and provided citizens with a wealth of chance encounters before the dominance of privatized central business districts (CBDs) and shopping malls.

In the summer of 1940 Philadelphia's street vendors, particularly those selling food, came under heavier fire. Health Director Hubley R. Owen lobbied City Council to regulate the vendors in ways similar to the city's storefront dining establishments. Owen argued that vendors required licenses, sanitary inspections, and should be prohibited to roam freely. More, he complained that several vendors paid "protection fees" to the police to avoid harassment. Vendors felt Owen's proposal resulted from merchants'

January 10, 1988, A1.

35 Richard J. Beamish, "Lunch Wagon drive to be called off," *Philadelphia*

complaints about unfair competition and lost profits.³⁶ But in August, a food-poisoning epidemic broke out and was traced back to sandwich vendors operating in the city's Northeast section. Framed as a health crisis, the outbreak gave Owen the upper hand. In April 1941, City Council passed an ordinance regulating all food vendors in Philadelphia. Effective July 1, the law required them to obtain licensing, adequately cover their foods, and adhere to strict rules of personal hygiene. Those who failed to comply faced fines between \$10 and \$50. Though vendors voiced concerns that the new restrictions would harm their businesses, the law proved difficult to enforce. During the early 1950s, the police conducted "drives" in Center City, with many vendors cited and/or arrested for health code violations, not displaying proper permits, or using vulgar language. In most cases, the vendors were given warnings. Few were fined. But the word was out: the city of Philadelphia was cracking down. As *Bulletin* columnist Phillip Schaeffer noted, "a germ-conscious City Council killed the vendors."³⁷

The fight between vendors and the city gained momentum after 1950, when the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA) and Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM) cited them not as health code violators but as obstacles to reviving Center City.³⁸

Evening Bulletin, May 9, 1927.

36 Morley Cassidy, "Hokey-pokey, pretzels, pepper pot: picturesque army on way out," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 18, 1940.

37 Philip Schaeffer, "Soft pretzel street vendors all ready for busiest season," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 12, 1950.

38 The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority was created by Federal statute in 1945. Using government funding, the PRA acquired land and/or demolished buildings being put to "undesirable uses." See Russell Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: a 300-year history* (New York: Norton, 1982), 670; The Greater Philadelphia Movement, established in 1949, was a public-private interest alliance aimed at expanding the city's service sector as its manufacturing base began to decline. See Carmen Teresa Whalen, "Citizens and workers: African-Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia's regional economy since WWII," in *African-American Urban History since World War II*, eds. Kenneth Kusmer

By this time, urban planning in the U.S. assumed a modernist direction, with the primary goal of reshaping cities to suit the country's growing car culture. From Detroit and Cincinnati to New York and Los Angeles, U.S. cities forsook density and mass transit, instead demolishing slums, building expressways, and removing much of the prewar city. Philadelphia was no exception.³⁹ Representatives of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) visited Philadelphia in 1951, finding "a sleepy, unprogressive city" and chiefly recommended redeveloping the square blocks adjacent to City Hall.⁴⁰ These areas had devolved into a "honky-tonk zone" as suburban migration left voids in downtown real estate filled by adult entertainment venues, seedy bars, and street vendors. When Joseph Clark became mayor in 1952, he pledged to address the business community's concerns about cleaning up the area. Edmund Bacon, who stood at the helm of the CPC, envisioned a "total-design concept" for Philadelphia, a macro-renewal strategy to open up the CBD and clear away vestiges of the prewar city.⁴¹

Bacon cherished space and fluidity in his Better Philadelphia model, the sense that "bringing light to darkness" would attract people to Center City. A cluttered

and Joe Trotter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 106-129.

39 Though Philadelphia engaged in slum clearances, the amount was less than those conducted in New York, New Haven, or Boston. For a comparative explanation of Philadelphia's postwar overhaul, see Knowles, ed., 2009.

40 For a recent revision of postwar urban planning in the U.S. and its legacies, see Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: the transformation of New York* (New York: Norton, 2007); Leo Adde, *Nine Cities: the anatomy of downtown renewal* (Washington D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1969), 15-43.

41 Bacon was especially insistent about removing the food vendors and stalls from the Dock Street Market (adjacent to Old City) in hopes of redeveloping the area as "Society Hill." The vendors and stalls were removed in 1959 and relocated to the Food Distribution Center in south Philadelphia, clearing the way for the I.M. Pei-designed Society Hill Towers and colonial refurbishment. Joseph Guess, "Society Hill developers sign contracts," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, January 9, 1959, F4; "2 councilmen balk at razing in Society Hill," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, January 28, 1959; Bacon called contemporary urban planners "space blind," arguing they were more concerned with

arrangement of street vendors simply was incongruous with his vision. Denise Scott-Brown, one of Bacon's earliest critics, stated he underestimated suburbanization's appeal. The prewar urban core had by the mid-1950s blended into a decentralized "city-region" with development projects (and population growth) in Philadelphia's suburbs radically outpacing those in the city. Scott-Brown felt the primary goal of Better Philadelphia should rely less on widened spaces. Rather, Bacon and his architects needed to focus on maintaining economic activity, namely retail and residents if Philadelphia was to remain viable in the postwar years.⁴² Bernard Spain, a restaurant and real estate investor in Philadelphia since the late 1960s, argued "to this day, the CPC still believes in comprehensive design as opposed to smaller-scale development. For some reason, Bacon felt that open space would attract people." Regarding Penn Center, Spain contended "he [Bacon] ended up being wrong."⁴³

The renewal was not only architectural. The newly elected Democrats in City Hall sought ways to improve the city's tax base. Due to their history of subverting tax codes, street vendors were targeted. In April 1953, forty-five Center City food vendors and lunch stands (non-roaming operations) received notices to vacate within fifteen days. The following day, twenty vendors and stand operators gathered in chief building engineer Samuel Bernhang's office to protest the removal. They complained that for more than

mass. See Edmund Bacon, *The Design of Cities* (New York: Viking Press, 1967), 13-17.

⁴² For perspectives on Philadelphia's "honky-tonk zone," see Robert W. Bailey, *Gay Politics, Urban Politics: identity and economics in the urban setting* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 251-252; The "Better Philadelphia" exhibition was a downscaled model of Bacon's renewal plan, unveiled at Gimbel's Department store in 1947. Historians have likened Better Philadelphia to Norman Bel Geddes' Futurama exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair in New York. Doug Hassebrook, "Edmund Bacon: savior of the streams," *Perspecta* 30 (1995): 84-92; Denise Scott Brown, "Form, design, and the city," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 28 (November 1962): 293-299.

⁴³ Interview with Bernard Spain conducted by the author Tuesday, October 13,

thirty years, despite occasional police harassment, they never had been *forced* to move out. Bernhang sympathized with the vendors but explained that he was following orders. Councilman Samuel Rose of west Philadelphia, attending the meeting on the vendors' behalf, stated "it seems strange that these businesses are illegal now after all these years. Some of these people have made investments in their businesses."⁴⁴ The removal had aesthetic reasons as well. In 1957, *Bulletin* columnist Frank Brookhouser remarked that "an ironic aspect to the building of the Penn Center is that right across from this glistening, handsome, modern edifice lies the honky-tonk stretch of Market Street with a conglomeration of gaudy neon-lit penny arcades, pinball palaces, cheap shops, and hot dog and orange drink stands."⁴⁵ Arthur Kaufman, head of the Philadelphia Civic Affairs Council (PCAC) further stated in 1958, "it's up to us to protect both the public and the businessmen from an onslaught of pitchmen who would do nothing but clutter up central Philadelphia and in too many instances offer shoddy merchandise for sale." In the end, only newsstands and pretzel vendors were permitted to remain in the CBD.⁴⁶

The development of Penn Center (the centerpiece of Bacon's Better Philadelphia)

2009.

⁴⁴ Many of the lunch stands (non-roaming operations) were dilapidated structures of wood and corrugated metal that were in non-compliance with Philadelphia's building codes. Some of these lunch stands had been in operation since the 1920s. "Operators of lunch stands protest city order to move," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, April 14, 1953, F4.

⁴⁵ Frank Brookhouser, *Our Philadelphia* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957), 11.

⁴⁶ "Merchants battle city bill to drop bans on peddlers," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 13, 1958; Guian McKee, "Blue Sky Boys, professional citizens, and knights in shining money: Philadelphia's Penn Center Project and the constraints of private development," *Journal of Planning History* 6 (February 2007): 48-80; in March 1960, the Philadelphia City Council voted 16-1 to allow newsstands to remain in the CBD, citing them as a "public commodity" and the "only way that people have of finding out what's going on in the world." Pretzel vendors were allowed to remain, for they sold foodstuffs uniquely representative of Philadelphia's heritage. David Runkel, "Council panel curbs a proposal for Center City sidewalk cafes," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*,

required the demolition of the “Chinese Wall” rail trestle and the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Broad Street Station. With rail lines submerged beneath a warren of concourses and street vendors ordered to disperse, Bacon’s project reflected what Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht describe as “modernist planning replacing complexity with order.”⁴⁷ Vendors contributed to that complexity. While many lunch stands disappeared by the mid-1960s, street vending grew considerably in the early 1970s, spreading to university campuses, subway stations, and neighborhoods beyond the CBD. In 1973, the Rizzo Administration introduced a bill to City Council prohibiting vendors selling anything besides newspapers and pretzels from being less than 300 feet from a storefront establishment selling similar wares. More, they were forbidden to operate in “no parking” zones. The vendors believed they were in the right, earning an honest living and lending the city a “picturesque image.”⁴⁸ Other parties supported the vendors. The ACLU called the Rizzo bill “unconstitutional harassment,” claiming the city was “destroying part of the counterculture.” T.T. Chang, executive director of the Chinatown YMCA, called the vendors “the root of the free-enterprise system.”⁴⁹ Some vendors operated out of their own cars, ready to pack up and move in the face of harassment. But chronically lax enforcement angered the vendors’ opponents. The anger grew when the city began planning for the Bicentennial, which many officials viewed as an opportunity to

November 1, 1978.

⁴⁷ The “Chinese Wall” was a masonry rail trestle that bisected Center City between Penn Square and the Schuylkill River. Aside from being difficult to cross at street level, the constant movement of elevated trains made the Chinese Wall a source of derision. Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht, *Sidewalks: conflict and negotiation over public space* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 4.

⁴⁸ Marc Schogol, “Uneasy Ceasefire exists in merchant-vendor war,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 16, 1974.

⁴⁹ L. Stuart Ditzen, “ACLU assails bill to restrict street vendors,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 8, 1973; T.T. Chang, “There is room for the vendors,”

cosmetically improve Philadelphia. In a 1975 *Evening Bulletin* survey regarding the vendor issue, a Philadelphia homemaker commented, “they [vendors] make the sidewalks into a junk shop and with the Bicentennial coming up, what are outsiders going to think?” Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce vice president Henry Reichner delivered more invective: “let no one be misled into believing that the vendor is an individual craftsman or proprietor. The great majority are salesmen of goods manufactured and distributed by others....they’re archaic, unpleasant, unsafe, and a costly mess; the vendors must go!”⁵⁰

For decades, rifts over street vending overshadowed development of sidewalk cafes in Philadelphia. With urban planning that streamlined mobility and directed people inward, commercial transactions (of most kinds) in the public right-of-way appeared too contentious. Comparatively, New York City engaged in similar feuds with its street vendors. At various times, New York settled on strict licensing and zoning regulations, going so far as to reassign vendors into enclosed “pushcart markets.” But that city recognized the importance of sidewalk cafes. In 1955, New York had exactly three sidewalk cafes; by the late 1960s, after their appearance was encouraged to cut down on street crime, there were over one hundred. Though licenses and fees were expensive, New York restaurateurs significantly increased their seating capacities.⁵¹ In Philadelphia, the first proposal to permit sidewalk cafes did not appear until the late 1970s. In November 1978, at the request of City Solicitor Sheldon L. Albert, Council’s Licenses

Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, February 6, 1975.

50 Henry Reichner, “Vendors mar the city’s image,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 6, 1975.

51 Oldenburg, 150; Bluestone, 74; Bernard Rudofsky, *Streets for People: a primer for Americans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 313; Diane Cardwell, “Lured by a hint of spring, diners flock outdoors,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2010, A19.

and Inspections (L&I) Committee postponed consideration of a café ordinance. Soured by the acrimonious climate over vending, Albert stated the proposal's language needed clarification separating sidewalk cafes from street vendors. As it stood, the café proposal permitted "restaurants and bars to temporarily place tables on sidewalks in front of their establishments as long as the tables would not interfere with or impede pedestrian travel."⁵² The proposal was delayed for several months. On behalf of restaurateurs, Councilman Melvin Greenberg continued sponsoring the bill, arguing that unlike the vendors, the cafes would rest against building facades away from both curbs and the sidewalks' middle. Greenberg stated "the restaurant people own their own building or pay rent. They pay their taxes. The vendors operate on the sidewalk without paying rent to anyone. Besides, the cafes would be alongside the restaurants not out near the curbs." Jack Downey, owner of Downey's Irish Bar, also pushed for the measure; he reasoned that "20 to 30 other cities in this state permit sidewalk cafes...why can't we?" William F. Gillen, executive vice president of the Philadelphia-Delaware Valley Restaurant Association, stated "outdoor cafes will enhance the image of our city."⁵³ In the minds of these proponents, sidewalk cafes provided a regulated, taxed, and culturally appealing alternative to street vending. On May 7, 1979 Bill # 1262, allowing sidewalk cafes in specific areas of Center City, passed Council by 10-1 and was signed into law by Mayor Rizzo.⁵⁴

To soothe the city's foes of sidewalk retail and to minimize conflict over usage of

52 Philadelphia City Archives, "Ordinances 1979: Section 9-208 Sidewalk cafes," 416-420.

53 David Runkel, "Council panel curbs a proposal for Center City sidewalk cafes," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 1, 1978.

54 Philadelphia City Archives, "Ordinances 1979" pgs. 416-420; "Section 9-208 Sidewalk cafes."

public space, the 1979 sidewalk café law was heavily influenced by street vendor-related concerns and set forth provisional guidelines. To open a sidewalk café, all potential operators required: a licensed and inspected storefront, thereby undermining “pushcart” food vendors; a costly PLCB license; submission of a detailed proposal of the café to be accepted or rejected by Council’s Licenses and Inspections (L&I); an \$80 annual fee; and approval from the Philadelphia Department of Streets to ensure the café area would not impede pedestrian travel or utility maintenance. Most importantly, all cafes were required to be temporary, easily removed structures. If at any time café operators violated Council’s terms, they were given thirty days to remove the café. Failure to remove the café would then lead to demolition by the city, with the operator(s) shouldering the expenses. In theory, the Philadelphia City Council announced that these regulations served to “protect the general public;” in reality, during the 1980s and early 1990s, City Council “had a habit in ‘sidewalk encroachment cases’ to approve bills tailored to restaurateurs’ advantages.”⁵⁵

The approval of sidewalk cafes appeared in the wake of the Bicentennial and the “back-to-the-city” movement of the 1970s, both of which brought new residents and restaurants to Philadelphia. Bacon’s Society Hill project (on the former site of the Dock Street food market stalls) stood out as an exceptional case of urban rehabilitation with its restored colonials, pocket parks, and New Market festival plaza. Haute cuisine, prepared in restaurants such as La Panetiere, Lautrec, Déjà Vu, and Le Bec Fin found a niche among the area’s most sophisticated palettes. Younger, more adventurous diners chose nouvelle/ethnic upstarts such as Frog or the “buy local” pioneers of White Dog Café and

⁵⁵ Ginny Wiegand, “Downtown, a sidewalk battle revisited,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 18, 1993, B1.

Astral Plane.⁵⁶ In tandem the city's automats disappeared, many supper clubs closed, and hotel dining lost its luster. Philadelphians were moving beyond their culinary desert and seemed poised to accept sidewalk cafes. Yet as a whole, Philadelphia still wrestled with image crises. To meet the challenges of postindustrial economic change, "big-ticket" proposals to improve the city surfaced in the late 1970s.⁵⁷ These included a convention center, expanded museums, new public transit options, a revitalized Broad Street subway concourse, business-class hotels, and development of the "Avenue of the Arts." Though the CPC, City Council, and mayor's office recognized that the city's future relied on enticing residents and attracting suburbanites and tourists, these bodies rarely saw eye to eye. Many proposals (Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Gallery Mall, hotels, and the Avenue of the Arts) were realized while others (the subway concourse, a World's Fair, Olympic Games bids, and the infamous Chestnut Street "Transitway") died completely or were left to languish. However, those projects realized failed to resuscitate public space and instead directed people inward.

Given the optimism expressed by sidewalk cafés' earliest proponents and the restaurant growth in the 1970s, surprisingly few restaurateurs took advantage. Arguably, the high cost of a liquor license deterred many would-be operators. Without alcohol sales, most restaurants could not survive. Those who did venture into this new territory (and who owned liquor licenses) defied the spatial regulations of the 1979 law.

Downey's, located at Front and South Streets, was the first sidewalk café to open under

⁵⁶ John Mariani, *Eating Out: fearless dining in ethnic restaurants* (New York: Quill, 1985).

⁵⁷ Larry Ford argues that postmodern urban planning focused less on promoting the growth of office space (of which Philadelphia had a glut in the 1980s) and more on developing sports stadiums, waterfront parks, convention centers, and cultural centers. Larry Ford, *America's New Downtowns: revitalization or reinvention* (Baltimore: Johns

the new law. Yet the Irish restaurant's "café" resembled a giant patio on the sidewalk. This sparked a trend during the 1980s that caused restaurateurs to meet resistance from various city agencies and officials.⁵⁸ One of the first high-profile cases was Apropos. Opened in September 1984, Apropos filled the South Broad Street space vacated by Horn and Hardart, the Philadelphia-based automat chain. Gone now were elderly men drinking coffee from paper cups, eating pre-packaged pies, and reading leftover newspapers. With nouvelle sophistication, Apropos' "snappily attired" patrons sipped espresso, ate fruit tarts with *beurre noir*, and enjoyed entrees reflective of the "sunny cuisine of the West Coast."⁵⁹ In December Apropos opened its sidewalk café, which served owner Shimon Bokozva in two ways: he maximized his seating capacity and enticed his patrons with a view of South Broad Street. Less than two years later, tensions flared. City officials argued the structure did not qualify as a *temporary* structure. Rather than having easily-moved tables, Bokozva built a "greenhouse" that extended 7 and 1/2 feet beyond the set boundary between building and curb. He claimed his café, the roof of which was hoisted in good weather, promoted urban renewal by deterring prostitutes from gathering along Locust Street's "Barbary Coast." Yet many city groups did not share Bokozva's optimism; the CPC believed his glass enclosure hindered sidewalk passage, the Philadelphia Law Department stated it violated building codes and took him to Common Pleas Court, and the Art Commission felt it clashed with surrounding architecture.

Hopkins University Press, 2003), 146-148.

⁵⁸ "Future of Center City: it has regional role," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 5, 1985; While Downey's opened its patio addition in 1980, it was not officially approved via City Council until 1988. *Journal of the Council of the City of Philadelphia*, Vol. II, (July 1, 1988-December 31, 1988), 1844-1845.

⁵⁹ Gerald Etter, "At the site of Horn and Hardart, the latest from the west coast," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 14, 1984, B3; David Freeland, *Automats, Taxi Dances, and Vaudeville: excavating Manhattan's lost places of leisure* (New York: New York

Bokozva stuck to his guns, claiming he'd navigated the maze of cafe regulations, city agencies, and obtained all necessary permits. The CPC was equally steadfast; it claimed Bokozva knew from the beginning that his structure violated the law.⁶⁰

The volleying continued for two years. Bokozva found allies in City Council while the CPC lobbied the Goode Administration to declare Apropos' café illegal. Coming to Bokozva's aid was 1st District city councilman James Tayoun. Tayoun, not persuaded by the CPC's position, was well-versed in Philadelphia's sidewalk politics. He was a brash, outspoken opponent of street vendors in the 1970s and upon siding with Bokozva, himself faced a Municipal Court case regarding the sidewalk café (also an enclosed patio) at his Middle East restaurant in Old City.⁶¹ Tayoun opened the café despite the fact that four city agencies rejected the plan. Specifically, the CPC claimed Middle East's permanent concrete base violated the 1979 ordinance. Due to "ethical concerns," Tayoun stated he would not introduce legislation protecting his own sidewalk café. But when he learned of the CPC's plan to illegalize Apropos' café, he stated "my strongest opposition is to City Planning sitting in an ivory tower telling Philadelphia's little businessmen what they can and cannot do." CPC officials grew agitated during the protracted battle. In recommending legislation to outlaw Apropos' café, CPC deputy director David Baldinger announced "I think this is a wonderful story; how one of the best restaurants in town blatantly disregarded the law for five years!" CPC executive

University Press, 2009), 169-186.

⁶⁰ Roger Cohn, "Temporary café isn't, city says, and tells restaurant to remove it," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 17, 1986, B14; Ben Harvey, "Business meets brotherly love," *Advocate*, May 2009, 44-47.

⁶¹ The majority of City Council members voted against street vending in the 1970s. For example, in September 1978, Council delivered a vote of 15-1 outlawing street vending in Society Hill. *Journal of the Council of the City of Philadelphia*, Vol. II (July 1, 1978-December 31, 1978), 1844-1845.

director Barbara Kaplan personally lobbied Mayor Goode to intervene and stated Apropos' enclosure was "not a sidewalk cafe. It's an addition to a building where we are giving up the public sidewalk for private interests." To further prove her point, Kaplan refused to patronize Apropos.⁶²

In November 1988, City Council voted 13-4 in favor of Apropos' sidewalk café. According to the City Council journals, those four who voted "nay" did so more to protect "public property than to uphold building codes. Councilman Lucien Blackwell, voting "yea," remarked "this is just a case of the CPC once again wanting not to recommend, but *run* the city. And if they want to run the city, then they have to be elected to do that." Mayor Goode, whose political teeth were cut as a housing and community activist, vetoed the ruling immediately, arguing that "we must protect our public right-of-ways." During the first week of December, Council overrode Goode's veto, with Tayoun calling it a "statement by council that sidewalk cafes are an improvement to the city of Philadelphia." Other City Council members argued sidewalk cafes enhanced Philadelphia's image and made the city safer.⁶³ The owners of Apropos and Middle East did not install open-air French cafes, which Neil Stein argued "make the city safer." But in 1980s Philadelphia, feeling safe was a hard sell. Grisly home invasions in Society Hill, a garbage crisis, street crime, homelessness, and the MOVE debacle cast a dark shadow over the city, making its sidewalks undesirable spaces in which to dine. This climate

⁶² Vernon Loeb, "Council comes to aid illegal additions," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 21, 1988; Edward N. Eisen, "Streets warn police: hands off vendors," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, July 8, 1980; Howard Schneider, "City taking Tayoun to the wall," *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 7, 1987, 5; Thomas Ferrick, "Restaurants get a reprieve from Council," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 18, 1988, B1.

⁶³ *Journal of the Council of the City of Philadelphia*, Vol. II (July-December, 1988), 1111; Vanessa Williams, "Council flexes muscle, overrides veto on sidewalk café," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 9, 1988, B8.

influenced Bokovza and Tayoun, who decided to shield their patrons.⁶⁴

Apropos closed in 1989 with the new tenant Baci, an Italian restaurant, preserving the greenhouse. As of 2009, the structure remained part of The Italian Bistro restaurant. Viewing the structure today, one imagines dining behind the glass barrier of a professional hockey rink. Bokovza moved on, founding Sushi Samba, a trendy Japanese-Brazilian fusion chain with stores in New York, Miami, and Las Vegas.⁶⁵ Middle East restaurant retained its glass and masonry addition after it was made legal in 1991 (without Goode's signature). That same year, Tayoun resigned his council post amid political corruption charges.⁶⁶ Middle East closed and the space has since been home to a number of restaurants and bars; the patio's glass eventually was removed. Between 1983 and 1991, nearly thirty restaurants applied for sidewalk cafes. In several cases, Goode exercised his veto power; he repeatedly argued structural additions obstructed public right-of-way or violated zoning laws. In 1987 alone, Downey's, La Cucina, Bridget Foy's, and Montserrat saw their cafes denied by Goode.⁶⁷

In every case Council overrode Goode, allowing the restaurants to keep their cafés; the CPC remained adamantly opposed. In the wake of restaurateur Pete Antipas getting Council to back his café addition at New City Café (20th and Ludlow Streets), Kaplan claimed "these aren't 'sidewalk cafes' with tables and chairs. They're buildings on the sidewalk." The CPC argued café owners were getting use of free, untaxed land at

⁶⁴ Craig LaBan, "To the sidewalks: the city is warming to the café life," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 11, 1999, B4.

⁶⁵ Elissa Elan, "Having words with Shimon Bokovza: owner and founder, Sushi Samba," *Nation's Restaurant News*, January 12, 2009.

⁶⁶ Tayoun served a 40-month sentence in Federal prison in the early 1990s after pleading guilty to racketeering, mail fraud, and tax evasion charges. Emilie Lounsberry, "Vincent J. Fumo will be sentenced today," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 14, 2009, A9.

⁶⁷ *Journal of the Council of the City of Philadelphia*, Vol. I and II (January-

the expense of pedestrians. Opposition to the cafés was not solely the province of elected officials. Center City Residents Association (CCRA) board member Judith Eden lamented “why don’t we let all businesses push to the sidewalk and we can walk in the streets?” While Goode usually denied sidewalk café permits based on existing zoning laws (commercial operations in residential areas) or the specifics of the 1979 ordinance (temporary vs. permanent structures), he never publicly voiced opposition to the *idea* of cafes; in 1989, Goode explained that he “liked sidewalk cafes,” but added Apropos (and other café operators) “do not even meet the basic threshold requirement for sidewalk cafes since they are not outdoor dining areas and provide no opportunity for partaking of sun and air.” More, Goode often trumpeted Philadelphia’s wealth of restaurants and how they bolstered the urban economy. Praising the sixth annual “Book and the Cook” food festival in 1990, Goode stated “one-third of the exhibitors at the fair are small businesses from Philadelphia....my administration has made major efforts to assist small businesses in any way we can.” Surprisingly, there is no mention of sidewalk café debates in Goode’s autobiography, very likely the result of his second term being overshadowed by the MOVE tragedy of May 1985.⁶⁸

The 1980s stood as the most contentious period for the development of Philadelphia’s sidewalk cafes. Bokozva and Tayoun’s patios required entry *through* their restaurants, offered detached views of the streetscape, and minimized social contact. These spaces shielded patrons from elements (exhaust, panhandlers, noise, or pigeons)

December 1987), 1363-1365.

⁶⁸ Mark McDonald, “City’s becoming a sidewalk café society,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 19, 1991, 18; Vanessa Williams, “Won’t quit on Apropos, Goode says,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 6, 1989, B3; Ginny Wiegand, “Battle for café addition nears end,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 19, 1991, B1; “The Book and the Cook fair, featuring the fare of PA,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 20, 1990, 2C; W.

and introverted their urban experience. As Marc Cosnard, French cultural attaché in Washington D.C., explained to the *Daily News* in 1985, a true sidewalk café “must be exposed to the sky.”⁶⁹ While Center City in the late 1980s was a \$20 billion commercial area with nearly 300,000 jobs for 10,000 companies, these modified “patio cafes” became diamonds in the rough. As Allan Domb, a condominium developer and principal investor in Stephen Starr Restaurants explained, “at the end of the 1980s, the city started to deteriorate. A lot of Baby Boomers, concerned with things such as dirt, crime, and above all homelessness moved to the suburbs.”⁷⁰ Safety figured prominently in the minds of residents, workers, and visitors alike. Gauging the collective sense of the city often evoked negative opinions and apprehension; in 1989, *Inquirer* columnist Mark Bowden noted, “many of the stockbrokers, secretaries, and financial specialists....believe the streets are filled with lunatics.”⁷¹ City Hall, just three blocks north of Apropos, was routinely broken into by the homeless who slept in the hallways and defecated on floors. Though the Barbary Coast prostitutes moved on, high murder rates, bureaucratic gridlock, homelessness and panhandling continued to tarnish Philadelphia. It would not be until the late 1990s, when Rendellian optimism improved public perceptions of the city, that restaurateurs felt comfortable in developing true, “exposed to the sky” sidewalk cafes.

The 1990s represented a pivotal decade for Philadelphia and a cultural moment for its sidewalk cafes. With its economy hobbled by deindustrialization, its job base

Wilson Goode, *In Goode Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1992).

69 Stuart Bykofsky, “Dine and drink as the world strolls by,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 10, 1985, 20.

70 Interview with Allan Domb conducted by the author, Monday November 2, 2009.

71 Mark Bowden and Hank Klibanoff, “Nighttime in Center City, where two

shifted from manufacturing to service industries. A consumerist reinvention of the city followed, producing refurbished historic sites, new hotels, pricey retail chains, and hip restaurants.⁷² Between 1992 and 2007, fine-dining restaurants in Center City alone increased threefold to just over 200. And from 1993 to 1998 the regional economy added 11,000 jobs, with one out of every six in the restaurant industry. In 1993, *Money* ranked the city 11th on its “Finest Restaurant Towns” list; only three years prior, the same survey labeled Philadelphia “undiscovered.” Congruous with national trends, patronizing restaurants in Philadelphia reflected what historian Hal Rothman described as consumers’ desires turning from goods to experiences. More precisely, *Gastronomica* editor Darra Goldstein argued, “where we once placed our faith in so-called durable goods - furniture and appliances - we are now purchasing evanescent things.” In postindustrial Philadelphia, restaurant growth played a key role in this consumer shift; after decades of privatized development and suburbanization, people wanting to experience the city indulged in its sophisticated restaurants. In complimentary fashion, eager restaurateurs set up tables on the sidewalk. Remarking on sidewalk cafe growth, Domb stated “people like to eat and drink outside, *to be seen*. They want activity. They don’t want to just sit in their houses and not see anybody.”⁷³

worlds collide,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 27, 1989, A1.

72 David Grazian, *On the Make: the hustle of urban nightlife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)

73 Bob Fernandez, “Restaurants are fattening region’s economy,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 26, 1998, A1; Joseph Coyle and Amanda Walmac, “America’s Finest Restaurant Towns,” *Money*, vol. 22 (July 1993):120-130; Hal K. Rothman, *Neon Metropolis: how Las Vegas started the 21st century* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Darra Goldstein, “The way we live now,” *Gastronomica* 4 (Spring 2004): 1-2; Tom Belden, “Viewing what the Convention Center has delivered,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 19, 2007, B1; Jane Jacobs argues that the primary benefits of sidewalks are the safety and “casual social life” they encourage. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1961), 55; from the author’s interview with Allan Domb,

Many observers of Philadelphia's recent past credit Mayor Ed Rendell (1991-1999) with restoring the faded metropolis' image. Typical of many moderate Democrats during the 1990s, Rendell espoused a pro-growth agenda that included 10-year tax abatements and other policies to spur development. With a bootstraps managerial style and sense of urgency, Rendell embarked on a mission to make the city appealing. He was, according to Le Bec Fin chef George Perrier, "a businessman. He made people *believe* in the city."⁷⁴ To achieve his goal, Rendell attacked Philadelphia's chronic inefficiency. Upon entering office, he tapped his corporate connections (over forty CEOs, managers, and executives) and created the Private Sector Task Force. Designed to streamline the city's slovenly management, the force set out to improve various functions, from operating fleet vehicles and computerizing vital services, to privatizing the airport and scrutinizing employee benefits. The spirit of reform demonstrated by Rendell's task force was so wide-ranging it was dubbed "urban perestroika."⁷⁵ Regarding restaurants, the task force was a Godsend. Potential restaurateurs looking to open shop in Philadelphia, Perrier recalls, "could now pick up the phone and have all of their licenses and permits in 24 hours. *24 hours!*" Before Rendell, said Perrier, "Philadelphia was the hardest town in the country" in which to open a restaurant.⁷⁶ The streamlining extended to sidewalk cafes,

November 2, 2009.

⁷⁴ Interview of George Perrier conducted by the author, Monday October 26, 2009.

⁷⁵ "Hope in Philadelphia," *Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 1992, A10; Buzz Bissinger, *A Prayer for the City* (New York: Random House, 1997), 122; Ben Yagoda, "Ed Rendell: the Philadelphian's formidable energy has earned him a reputation as a miracle worker," *New York Times*, May 22, 1994, SM26.

⁷⁶ "Executive advice: can corporate types make sense of city hall?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 30, 1992, A10; Regarding the difficulty of opening restaurants in Philadelphia, Perrier was referring mainly to the Liquor Control Board (LCB), which for many years harshly imposed "blue laws" and high taxes on Philadelphia businesses. Typically, the bulk of a restaurant's profits come from alcohol sales. Interview with

with Rendell legalizing them *throughout* the city by executive order in 1995. And the contentious Apropos was one of Rendell's favorite restaurants in his years as District Attorney. Prior to 1995, such cafes were allowed only in precisely defined central areas.⁷⁷ In 1999, Stephen Starr considered a sidewalk café for Buddakan, his successful pan-Asian restaurant in Old City. Regarding the licensing process, Starr commented, "it used to be a real hassle. In the past year or two, Rendell has made it much looser."⁷⁸

While Goode and Rendell headed adjacent mayoral administrations, effectively bridging Philadelphia's economic transition, their politics regarding sidewalk cafes' legality differed sharply. Goode, when measured against Rendell, stood as the last mayor of Philadelphia's bureaucratic-slog era, a time of "gross mismanagement" and enmity-filled tensions among city agencies, labor unions, law enforcement, business owners, and citizens. Whether he was truly to blame, Goode led Philadelphia during one of the city's most unflattering (and deadly) episodes of mismanagement and neglect, the MOVE tragedy of 1985. In attempts to weed out MOVE members from a rowhouse in west Philadelphia during an exchange of gunfire, the city police department dropped a "satchel" bomb onto the home's roof. Once ignited, the fire quickly spread to adjacent

George Perrier conducted by the author Monday, Oct.26, 2009. In 1957, then-mayor Richardson Dilworth relaxed (but did not eliminate) the blue laws to attract visitors and conventions. For more on "blue laws" in Philadelphia (or "Sunday legislation"), see David Laband, *Blue Laws: the history, economics, and politics of Sunday closing laws* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1987), 123-124. In 1965, travel writer Nancy Love lamented Pennsylvania's blue laws "don't stimulate the growth of eating places and night spots." More, she stated "segments of the Philadelphia population prefer dining and entertaining at home." Nancy Love, *Guide to Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Greater Philadelphia Magazine, 1965), 198.

⁷⁷ The 1979 Sidewalk Café ordinance allowed cafes only from the Delaware to the Schuylkill Rivers and between South and Vine Sts. Philadelphia City Archives, *City Council Journals* "Ordinances 1979, Section 9-208 "Sidewalk cafes," 416-420.

⁷⁸ John McCalla, "Curbing diners' appetites," *Philadelphia Business Journal*, March 26, 1999; Lisa DePaulo, "How many Ed Rendells are there?" in *The Philadelphia*

homes. The city fire department, refusing to act until the bullets stopped, waited more than hour before extinguishing the flames. Several MOVE members perished in the blaze and an entire square block of homes was incinerated. The event polarized Philadelphia and Goode was portrayed as complicit in the tragedy. Though Goode vehemently denied authorizing the bombing, the inferno sealed his political fate. As Rendell's biographer stated of Goode, "the city, like a living creature, began to devour him." By the end of Goode's second term, his campaign promises to attack the city's bloated budget and slovenly politics were unrealized; Philadelphia ranked dead last on *City and State's* 50-large cities list of fiscal soundness.⁷⁹

Ed Rendell inherited this unsavory image of Philadelphia. Crime, fiscal disaster, and the city's relevance all were challenges for the new mayor. As a rehabilitative tool, Rendell was turned on to sidewalk cafes in 1992, when his fledgling administration instituted a City Hall "cleanup." The mayor showed his commitment by scrubbing a bathroom on his hands and knees for the cameras. When Rendell and his staff moved into the nearly 100-year old building, it had sunk into what Buzz Bissinger termed a "mockery of the majesty of government."⁸⁰ The pigeon droppings were knee-deep, rats were as large as beavers, and false fire alarms rang so often that no one bothered to exit. Yet for Rendell, scrubbing grime from the city's most splendid edifice was just the start. The mayor asked Public Property commissioner Joe Martz what else might be done to spruce up City Hall and its plazas. When deputy mayor Joe Torsella proposed the idea of a sidewalk café Rendell, an avid food lover, expressed delight and asked Martz to

Reader, ed. Huber Wallace, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 62-79.

⁷⁹ Jim Davis, "People see new day with Goode," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 3, 1984, 1; Bissinger, 23.

⁸⁰ Bissinger, 10

conduct a feasibility study. Following the study, the city solicited bids for City Hall's first-ever sidewalk café. The sole bidders were Rose Parotta and Eileen Dowd, both former managers of *Apropos*. On July 17, 1992, the *Politico Café* opened for business on Dilworth Plaza. Hibiscus plants and palm trees were imported for the occasion. The Savoy jazz trio was on hand to liven up the event. Parotta and Dowd offered sandwiches, vegetarian dishes, and Italian "street food" on paper plates. As per the Rendell Administration's request, *Politico* faced northwest, affording patrons views of the Ben Franklin Parkway and Art Museum. Martz indicated the important precedent being set by the first outdoor concession ever allowed on City Hall's grounds, stating *Politico* "will be the measure of our success. Success for us will be if people start coming in and filling the seats."⁸¹ The café operated July through October. Rendell's staff and other city planners hoped it would "ignite excitement" and generate a "Champs Elysees ambiance."⁸²

Emulating Paris was a Philadelphia tradition. From the colonial period, Philadelphia planners had an infatuation with things Parisian. French Second Empire and Beaux-arts architecture abounded in Center City. Signs along S.18th St. just north of Rittenhouse Square proclaimed the area the "French Quarter;" the designation resulted mainly from Philadelphia having more French restaurants (per capita) than any other U.S. city.⁸³ The design of the Ben Franklin Parkway borrowed directly from the Champs-Elysees. Conceived by transplanted French architect Paul Philippe Cret to mirror the Parisian thoroughfare with vibrant cafés and street culture, the Parkway was in the early

81 Doreen Carvajal, "Outside City Hall, the Champs Elysees where cars once parked," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 14, 1992, B1.

82 Dave Davies, "Call it a food court: sidewalk café set outside City Hall," *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 14, 1992, 7; Doreen Carvajal, "Serving up protests at City Hall café," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 17, 1992, A6.

83 Joseph L. Borkson, *Philadelphia: an American Paris* (Philadelphia: Camino

1990s an auto-traffic arterial without a single sidewalk café. In 1993 the city hosted the Philadelphia-Paris Forum, which brought three of Paris' top planners to the Bellevue Hotel to reveal the secrets of their city's success. While Philadelphia's 20th century urban planning took inspiration from Le Corbusier (whose notion of "speed equaling success" influenced Bacon) and Francois Mitterrand's *Les Grands Projets* redevelopment of Paris in the 1970s, David Slovic, a forum organizer, remarked that great cities were defined by their civic spaces and the amenities that surrounded them. Philadelphia, Slovic said, "should copy that most Parisian of amenities, the [sidewalk] café."⁸⁴

That same year, and under pressure from council members, the 1979 sidewalk café ordinance was amended for the first time. Not only was the PLCB licensing requirement abandoned, but the permissible boundaries of sidewalk cafes were extended. Championed by 1st District Councilman Joseph Vignola and 4th District Councilman Michael Nutter, they now were permitted in the city's gentrifying Manayunk neighborhood.⁸⁵ Once a gritty textile district on the city's northwest edge, Manayunk in the early 1990s was reborn as a pedestrian-oriented retail corridor. Art galleries, clothing boutiques, furniture stores, and bars took root along Main Street. Allen Newman, Derek Davis, and other restaurateurs came as well, bringing sophisticated cuisine and sidewalk

Books, 2002), 84.

⁸⁴ David Brownlee, *Building the City Beautiful: the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia: The Museum, 1989); Colin Jones, *Paris: biography of a city* (New York: Viking Press, 2004); Inga Saffron, "Le Grand Philly with the Convention Center and Avenue of the Arts," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 12, 1993, B3; Paris' café numbers were staggering: its first opened in 1643. By 1800, Paris contained 700, in 1967 13,977, and in 1989, a slight decrease to 12,500. For statistics on Parisian sidewalk café growth, see Noel Fitch, *Paris Café: the select crowd* (Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press, 2007), 12; John Gunther, *Twelve Cities* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 70.

⁸⁵ *Journal of the Council of the City of Philadelphia*, Vol. II (July 1, 1993-December 31, 1993), 1641-1645; Doreen Carvajal, "Restaurateurs go to council to ease

cafes. This combination of amenities was geared to attract the “right kind of people,” namely Main Line residents who now could cross underneath the Schuylkill Expressway (I-76) and indulge themselves in an urban village, with far greater convenience than accessing Center City.⁸⁶ By 1999, the neighborhood was thriving and its sidewalk cafes were integral to that success. Newman, whose Arroyo Grill and Sonoma restaurants both featured sidewalk cafes, remarked that despite the narrowness of Main Street, “people sit there and they drink and dine, regardless of the fact that they’re next to the street and there’s vehicles going by.”⁸⁷ Clearly, the appeal of sidewalk cafes had extended beyond Center City, proving their ability to generate a desirable urban setting. And Rendell, supportive of almost any idea that made venturing into Philadelphia more desirable, recognized the value in sacrificing sidewalk space to create something inviting; in 1995, the mayor legalized cafes throughout the entire city.

Rendell’s championing of sidewalk cafes set a new tone for the relationship between formerly warring entities. The enmity between the politically powerless CPC, the mayor’s office, and the City Council over the cafes eventually lessened. And while council’s lobbying for and Newman’s opening of sidewalk cafes aided Manayunk’s second coming, in the history of Philadelphia’s sidewalk café culture, few figures have been more influential than Neil Stein. At 67, he remained Philadelphia’s big kid, forever young in designer jeans, leather jacket, New Balance sneakers, and Porsche roadster. With well-known episodes of drug use, cash skimming, and tax evasion behind him, in 2009 he operated a consulting business called One on One and remained one of the city’s

sidewalk café laws,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 17, 1993, A19.

⁸⁶ Loukaitou-Sideris and Ehrenfeucht, 52.

⁸⁷ Erin Einhorn, “Dining Out[side]: taking it to the streets,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 30, 1999.

authorities for investors seeking restaurant advice.⁸⁸ He owned and/or operated some of the most notable restaurants in Philadelphia since the early 1970s. In 1973, he opened The Fish Market, a small grocery/restaurant in a 19th century building one block north of Rittenhouse Square. “I was young. I got up every morning at 4am, went to the food market, bought all the food, all the fish, brought it back and unloaded the truck. We had 18 seats and my wife was up front selling cheese, I was in the center by the fish case.” From these humble origins, Stein went on to found Marabella’s at the Academy House (later opening additional locations), the popular Rock Lobster on the Delaware River waterfront, and in 1994, Walnut Street’s celebrated Striped Bass. Along with Perrier’s Le Bec Fin and the avant-garde Susanna Foo, Striped Bass elevated the block to new heights. Towards the end of the 1990s, Walnut Street emerged as the city’s answer to Rodeo Drive, a destination for high-end retail and top-notch restaurants. In March 1997, Visa Credit Issuers called the block “one of the 10 best urban shopping streets in the nation.”⁸⁹

Rouge became one of Stein’s most influential concepts. Before its opening, Rittenhouse Square park had always attracted people and events in daytime. But at night, the silence on the Square was almost deafening. In the early 1990s, area residents confronted muggings, panhandling, “vent people” sleeping in the park, and burglaries. Two blocks away, Perrier had a \$25,000 painting stolen from Le Bec Fin’s lobby. With alarming frequency, neighborhood businesses installed steel “riot gates” to pull down

88 In 2005, Stein plead guilty to filing false returns for 1999, 2000, and 2001. More, he had directed employees to skim cash from his restaurants at the rate of \$200 per day and to funnel the money directly to him. He also displays candidness in reference to his past drug problems, though he has never faced charges. Michael Hinkelman, “Feds: ‘tax cheat’ Stein should get jail,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 18, 2006, 9.

89 Nathan Gorenstein, “Rittenhouse Row on Visa short list,” *Philadelphia*

over their storefronts, fortifying the streets after dark.⁹⁰ Stein, then living on Rittenhouse Square, recognized from his frequent travels to New York and Paris that sidewalk cafes brought people out at night and increased safety. “It was so much fun walking down Madison Avenue, in SoHo, or in Paris to see people in spring, summer, and fall sitting outside, under umbrellas, where the conversation was good, where *safety* was good.” While vacationing in St. Barth’s in 1997, Stein’s friend Susan Wasserman told him the wine store on the east side of the Square was closing. Wasserman, a commercial realtor in Philadelphia, had recently lured New York’s Le Colonial (French-Vietnamese fusion) to open a location in one of her other Rittenhouse properties. It was then that Stein had an epiphanous moment. “Regarding that wine store, I said ‘this is it....a little French-American bistro with an outdoor café on Rittenhouse Square would just be fantastic.’” Stein left the beach and immediately flew back to Philadelphia.⁹¹

After returning home, Stein spent hours in the park, glaring at the vacant space and visualizing his concept. Remarking on the wine store, he said “I think that the biggest issue was the space. I didn’t want to take it without doing an outdoor café. It wasn’t Rittenhouse Square to me; it was a *piazza*. And, there was no way to do volume without using the outside.” He collaborated with interior designer Marguerite “Meg” Rogers, who also designed the Striped Bass’ space. They envisioned a 1920s-style European bistro, with silk-curtained walls, distressed mirrors, egg-shaped tables, velvet banquettes, and leather chairs. Rouge became a slice of Paris imported to Rittenhouse Square, with *Inquirer* restaurant critic Craig LaBan calling it a “jewel box salon.” Stein hired French-

Inquirer, March 10, 1997, A7.

⁹⁰ “Community rights how to restore civilization in Center City,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 4, 1990, B2; Sheila Simmons, “They’re not nuts about Walnut Street,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 1, 1990, 3.

trained chef Peter Dunmire (formerly of Deux Cheminees and Brasserie Perrier) to oversee the kitchen. The “Rouge burger” (a \$16 entrée) quickly became the city’s most popular hamburger and Dunmire’s steak frites and tuna tartare two of Rouge’s highest-selling dishes. Philadelphia’s power brokers and urban hipsters flocked to Rouge in droves. Tourists and suburbanites quickly followed, making it *the* social attraction of Rittenhouse Square. The outdoor seating generated such demand that Stein eventually placed two rows of tables on the sidewalk, one at the curb and one against the façade. Because Rendell legalized sidewalk cafés three years prior (and himself became a Rouge regular), Stein initially had no troubles over his sidewalk café.⁹² But less than two years later, Rouge’s success came under fire.

While many hailed the congenial atmosphere Rouge created, other Philadelphians grew irritated. In previous decades, Rittenhouse Square lay at the center of various debates over its public usage, from wartime soldier drills and the building of underground garages to the removal of hippies and canine feces.⁹³ In the summer of 2000, one Rittenhouse Square resident explained “I think it’s [sidewalk café growth] wildly overdone. I don’t object to the concept; I’m objecting to the overuse and abuse.” The L&I Committee was particularly incensed by Rouge’s curbside tables, which similar to the structural additions of the 1980s, violated the original café ordinance. Between 1998 and 2000, the committee issued permits for more than 40 new sidewalk cafes, Rouge among them. While Stein maintained that he always instructed his employees to ensure fluid

91 As told to the author by Neil Stein, November 10, 2009.

92 Craig LaBan, “Superb bistro fare in a scene worthy of Fellini,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 16, 1998, SO1.

93 For a history of Rittenhouse Square’s public use and its role in public space debates, see Charles J. Cohen, *Rittenhouse Square: past and present* (Philadelphia: Privately Printed, 1922); and Nancy M. Heinzen, *The Perfect Square: a history of*

passage along the sidewalk, Dominic Verdi, the L&I deputy commissioner, stated that half of Rouge's eighteen sidewalk tables were illegal. Because L&I was granting more café permits than ever, Verdi's subordinates were spread thinly, traversing the city to make sure cafes were in compliance. Regarding Rouge, Verdi stated "I've received about ten complaints this summer."⁹⁴ The complaints came not from planning agencies or mayors, but from long-time Rittenhouse residents who in defending their neighborhood, worried about crowded sidewalks and the swelling crowds that Rouge attracted after dark. Pertaining to his neighbors, Stein said, "the complaints I got in the first few years were from older citizens who lived on the Square for a long time. They said 'there's too much noise on the square at 11:00 at night. It's not the way it used to be.' I used to fight back and say 'it's *safer*.'"⁹⁵

For its first decade of business, Rouge occupied the center of the universe for well-heeled and well-connected Philadelphians, many of whom "couldn't even remember what Rittenhouse was like" before its 1998 debut.⁹⁶ The restaurant symbolized not only Stein's entrepreneurial moxie but also fueled the transformation of Rittenhouse Square from a residential neighborhood into Philadelphia's premier shopping and gathering spot. Stein realized that people desired much more than a meal; they wanted a stage, they wanted to be seen. Rouge delivered on its promise by providing the ideal urban spectacle. Though not the first sidewalk café to grace Philadelphia, Rouge undeniably became the most influential. It seemed any opposition it generated regarding noise or crowded

Rittenhouse Square (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

94 Linda K. Harris, "Are they culture or clutter? Sidewalk cafes provide atmosphere - the real kind - but also debate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 2, 2000, B1.

95 As told to the author in interview on November 10, 2009.

96 Christine Speer, "Bistro Confidential," *Philadelphia Magazine*, April 2009,

sidewalks could not overcome public enthusiasm for the space. In April 1999, the *Philadelphia Daily News* announced “it’s taken this town a while to catch on, but at last, restaurants [throughout the city] are leaping on the streetside bandwagon.” Stein himself continued riding the wave, opening Bleu, a sister restaurant to Rouge, on Rittenhouse Square in the summer of 2000. Then-mayor John Street attended the opening to show his support for sidewalk cafes. In the new millennium, sidewalk cafes cropped up throughout the city, making clear that a desire for public socialization, waning fears about the city, and an easing of political gridlock fueled the growth. As 1st District City Councilman Frank DiCicco stated, “as a culture, we’ve really withdrawn and pulled ourselves indoors. Sidewalk cafes change the entire environment and they’re a major component to the revitalization of Center City.”⁹⁷ Rouge continued to attract crowds; during an Indian summer weekend in October 2009, the restaurant realized its highest Saturday gross on record.⁹⁸

In July 2009, the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation in conjunction with the Center City District (CCD) published its 8th annual sidewalk café report, claiming that they “multiply the possibility of chance encounters and enhance the friendliness of Center City.” The report concluded that between July 2001 and July 2009, the number of sidewalk cafes in Center City increased from 69 to 249. While the proof of their success was in the numbers (both in gross receipts and their mounting appearance around town), Philadelphia’s sidewalk cafes were not without limitations. First, given their density on certain blocks, unobstructed foot passage indeed proved difficult. Along

27; Jessica Pressler, “Rouge,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, September 2006, 31.

97 Linda Loyd, “Convention Center expansion spurs development,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 2008, A4; Harris, September 2, 2000.

98 Stein requested that the actual amount of sales remain confidential. As told to

stretches of Walnut Street (west of Broad), Market Street in Old City (between 2nd and 3rd Streets), and on Rittenhouse Square East, the high concentration of outdoor tables often forced pedestrians to walk in the streets. More, as much as Rendell's measures improved Philadelphia, the maligned urban features of homelessness and panhandling did not go away completely; for sidewalk cafes to be successful, minimizing such features was crucial. In 1998, the Philadelphia City Council passed an ordinance restricting both homelessness and panhandling. Led by then-Councilman John Street, the ordinance's key provisions expressly banned persons from lying on sidewalks or panhandling within eight feet of any building entrance. Though homeless advocacy groups protested the proposal as "labeling homelessness a crime," the ordinance passed Council 14-3.⁹⁹ It is no coincidence that sidewalk cafes grew spectacularly after the ordinance's passage. As Neil Smith claims, such legislation (in Philadelphia and elsewhere) emanated from the "revanchist" tone many U.S. cities assumed in the 1990s.¹⁰⁰

Whether contextualized as "revanchist," "gentrification," or what historian Jason Hackworth describes as "urban neocolonization," the coming of sidewalk cafes in Philadelphia undeniably signaled social and economic change. As Hackworth further illustrates, sidewalk cafes rode with the "third wave" of gentrification that swept through U.S. cities in the late 1990s. This wave, unlike those of the 1970s and 1980s, was "more state facilitated and less resisted," spreading to marginal areas that were bypassed in

the author in interview on November 10, 2009.

⁹⁹ Noel Weyrich, "Mean Sweeps or Clean Sweeps?" *Philadelphia Weekly*, June 17, 1998, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Neil Smith uses the term "revanchist," loosely meaning "revenge," to describe a fortifying of urban public spaces against elements of crime, vandalism, and illegal occupation. Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: gentrification and the revanchist city* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 44-47.

previous phases.¹⁰¹ In the case of Northern Liberties, a former factory district that first witnessed “pioneer” residents in the form of artists and other creative types in the 1990s, large-scale developments flooded the area in the early 2000s. In 2009, Northern Liberties boasted of its replicated Roman piazza on the site of the defunct Schmidt’s Brewery, a community anchor complete with apartments, retail stores, and numerous sidewalk cafes. In these contexts, Philadelphia’s sidewalk cafes appealed mainly to a middle- and upper-class/”yuppie” sensibility desirous of certain amenities (or what urban historian Ann Breen terms “hipness”) while simultaneously creating physical and psychological barriers for the former blue-collar/working-class residents who once called those neighborhoods home.¹⁰² For some, the very appearance of a sidewalk café indicated an impending rise of rents. But as Richard LeGates and Chester Hartman demonstrate, the “outmovers” of places such as Northern Liberties or nearby Fishtown (at present a formerly working class area undergoing a shift) are predominantly white, although within the third wave, have become increasingly non-white.¹⁰³ In this context, the spread of sidewalk cafes in Philadelphia could be viewed as culturally selective; one would be hard-pressed to find vibrant sidewalk cafes in statistically low-income or dangerous areas such as Olney, Strawberry Mansion, and Gray’s Ferry or in decidedly *un*-hip neighborhoods of Feltonville, Walnut Hill, or Mantua.

Thirdly, sidewalk cafés, while providing spaces in which to gather, are not truly

101 Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: governance, ideology, and development in American urbanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Loretta Lees and others, *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 178-179.

102 Ann Breen considers “hipness” (“something you know when you see it”) as integral to definitions of urbanity. See Ann Breen, *In Town Living: a different American dream* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 4.

103 Richard Legates and Chester Hartman, “The Anatomy of Displacement in the United States,” in *Gentrification of the City*, eds., Neil Smith and Peter Williams (Boston:

public spaces. They are privately owned and controlled hybrid zones that spill onto what is *perceived* as public space. For instance, many sidewalk cafes do not allow people to occupy tables if they are not paying customers. Most establishments remove their tables after closing, storing them inside, or piling them on one another with chained locks to prevent theft. Within the urban landscape, these are not spaces for whimsical moments of respite but spaces for commercial transactions. Additionally, the tables positioned outside Rouge or the host of other restaurants do not permit public amusement, solicitation, or ideological posturing; it's a rare occasion to witness intense political debates or street performances occurring at a Philadelphia sidewalk café. More, as sidewalk cafés reflect preferences for relaxation and leisure, most patrons prefer not to experience a mixture of dining and unwanted or unsightly urban features. Lastly, while legal hassles have diminished in the last ten years, sidewalk cafes continue to incite debates about the overlapping of public and private realms. Chris Scarduzio, now chef de cuisine and part-owner of Table 31 (currently Philadelphia's largest sidewalk café), recalls his experiences with the sidewalk café at Brasserie Perrier: "although I think these cafes are part of cultural movement in the restaurant industry as a whole, Philadelphia was ignorant about their value for a long time. I had one major complaint about Brasserie [the café]." To complement the restaurant's atmosphere, Scarduzio played jazz over Brasserie's stereo system. "It echoed out onto the street and there was one politician (who Scarduzio insisted remain unnamed) that just brought me...almost to my knees. I almost had to shut the café down."¹⁰⁴ Scarduzio removed the stereo speakers that faced the sidewalk.

In postindustrial Philadelphia, sidewalk café growth was nothing short of

Allen & Unwin, 1986), 178-200.

104 Interview with Chris Scarduzio conducted by the author, November 11, 2009.

miraculous. What began as a Center City phenomenon, fraught with political and legal complexities, eventually spread beyond its perimeter in scattered fashion. By 2009, sidewalk cafes could be found throughout Philadelphia at coffee shops, pizzerias, pubs, gelato bars, French bistros, *tacquerias*, and even alongside food trucks moored to the city's college campuses. The CCD gauged that pedestrians in Center City encountered a sidewalk café every 155 feet and/or 75 seconds.¹⁰⁵ It seemed that restaurant operators (no matter their cuisine or price points) could throw a table and chairs on the sidewalk and generate a welcoming atmosphere. The spirit was contagious. In tandem with the expanding Pennsylvania Convention Center, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 2008 proposed closing Cherry Street between North Broad and 15th Streets to vehicular traffic and allowing for a outdoor plaza with sidewalk cafes. It seemed that everywhere one looked, sidewalk cafes were instrumental for the revitalization of Philadelphia. For a city that long-struggled through deindustrialization, suburbanization, and crime, sidewalk cafes emerged as a vital part of the urban form. And while not universally accepted, they became a magnet that pulled people out into the city.

¹⁰⁵ “Center City reports sidewalk cafes,” *Central Philadelphia Development Corporation*, July 2009. <http://www.centercityphila.org/pressroom/prelease070709.php> (accessed November 2, 2009)

CHAPTER 3

BROKERING BEEF: STEAKHOUSES AND THE RECLAMATION OF POWER ON
SOUTH BROAD STREET

“It began to grow on me that meat-eating was good, that it would make me strong and daring, and that, if the whole country took to meat-eating, the English could be overcome.”

-Mohandas Gandhi

In November 2009, the Del Frisco’s Restaurant Group opened its ninth steakhouse in Center City’s Packard Grande building. Though only blocks from several other restaurants specializing in cuts of beef, the Dallas-based chain entered the city prominently. The Packard Grande, a pre-Depression office tower that once housed the Pennsylvania Insurance Co. and First Philadelphia National Bank, saw its barren ground floors almost entirely transformed. The curved staircases and paneled ceilings were salvaged. While the main room had a grand Parliamentary aura, lined with massive marble columns and flags, the basement vaults were reborn as intimate private dining areas. Much of the original wood-paneled elevator shaft was converted into the “wine tower.” Steaks on the menu reached price points in the lower sixties, the tower’s most exotic bottles topped \$10,000, and an impressive selection of single malt scotch occupied the bar’s highest shelf. Emblazoned in gold above the bar was the proverb *“do right and fear no man.”* Even with these superlatives, the real attraction of Del Frisco’s Philadelphia was the renovation itself, a spectacular blend of classic and modern styles. Bill Aumiller, whose Chicago-based design firm oversaw the multi-million dollar project, remarked “there’s not a lot of use for these buildings....we don’t want people to think this was never a bank. We want them to think ‘how long ago was this a bank?’ and really get

into the history of it.”¹⁰⁶

Del Frisco’s entrée into Philadelphia reflected a trend, beginning in the late 1980s, in which conversions of vacant storefronts into steakhouses revitalized Center City’s core. Most opened along or adjacent to South Broad Street, once home to the city’s prominent banks, stock exchanges, brokerage houses, hotels, department stores, and corporate headquarters. After 1950, South Broad fell into neglect as urban renewal flowed to other areas of the city. By the 1970s, its building stock had ossified and retail decentralization thinned its storefront occupancies. That decade’s “restaurant renaissance,” enlivening other neighborhoods, passed by the area as chefs opened in smaller spaces far off South Broad. In 1981, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* lamented, “South Broad has been a developmental backwater for fifty years.” That same year, local businesspeople, led by Philadelphia National Bank (PNB) president Richard Ravenscroft, formed the Avenue of the Arts Council (AAC). The AAC called for revitalizing South Broad as an arts district, including the renovation of the Academy of Music and Shubert Theater as well as financing and constructing a performing arts center (PAC) for the Philadelphia Orchestra. Aesthetic improvements, such as tree planters and “classic lampposts,” also were recommended. Yet for nearly twenty years, the arts concept moved glacially. Though piecemeal improvement came, the PAC was mired in land disputes, design squabbles, and questions of how the project would be financed. It was not until the late 1990s, when the Rendell Administration’s privatization unchoked several city operations, that a feasible site (the SW corner of South Broad and Spruce Streets) and

106 Jon Fine, “Steak Chic,” *Business Week*, April 23, 2007, 24; Peter Van Allen, “Steakhouses sizzle on tasty strip of Avenue of the Arts,” *Philadelphia Business Journal*, November 4, 2005, 11; Peter Van Allen, “Sibling Steakhouse Rivalry,” *Philadelphia Business Journal*, April 18, 2008, 4; Elizabeth Licata, “Philadelphia’s Del Frisco’s unit

adequate financing were secured.¹⁰⁷

The Avenue of the Arts achieved some success refurbishing and bringing visitors to the area. But arts alone could not revitalize South Broad. In 1994, the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) warned that South Broad between City Hall and Bainbridge Streets contained “badly deteriorated properties, weak retail, and large abandoned buildings.” In its 1999 report, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) argued that “ground-floor retail continuity” must parallel bigger projects and “the best way to enliven the sidewalks within the [South Broad] area is to reestablish the stores, restaurants, and other activities on the ground floor of existing buildings.” The AAC agreed, citing the grandeur of South Broad’s architecture.¹⁰⁸ Of

blends modern, historic touches,” *Nation’s Restaurant News*, October 5, 2009, 10-12.

¹⁰⁷ Neil Harris, *Building Lives: constructing rites and passages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 164; Scott Raab, “The Esquire Almanac of Steak,” *Esquire* 150 (September 2008): 186-212; Zachary Paul Neal, “Culinary deserts, gastronomic oases: a classification of U.S. cities,” *Urban Studies* 43 (January 2006): 1-21, 6; Adam Erace, “Breaking the chain: Union Trust’s outsized independent steakhouse,” *Dining Out Philadelphia* (Summer 2009): 25-29; Julia Reed, “Served rare, with passion,” *Newsweek* 150, No.20, (November 12, 2007), 18; Thomas Hine, “Broad and Locust, where business could meet prosperity,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 14, 1981, B1; Thomas Hine, “Plan for concert hall at Spruce St. site is dropped,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 28, 1982, B4; Daniel Webster and Thomas Hine, “Orchestra board votes to pursue new hall,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 28, 1983, E1; Thomas Hine, “5 possible sites for concert hall listed,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 15, 1984, C1; Peter Dobrin, “Performing Arts Center moves to center stage,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 17, 1998, A1; the estimated costs of the Avenue of the Arts revitalization reached \$330 million. Theresa Conroy, “Avenue of the Arts vs. Tarts,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 8, 1998, 15; Buzz Bissinger, *A Prayer for the City* (New York: Random House, 1997), 270-271.

¹⁰⁸ “Center City redevelopment area plan,” Philadelphia City Planning Commission Records, 1976; John Haak, “Retail Strategy for Center City: concept paper prepared for the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1987,” located in Temple University Urban Archives (TUUA); “Broad Street,” *The Plan for Center City*. Philadelphia: City Planning Commission, 1988; “South Broad Street economic, cultural, and development plan: working memorandum #2 economic development recommendations,” Philadelphia: Kise, Franks, and Straw/Central Philadelphia Development Corp., 1991; *A Renewal Agenda for Off Broad East*. Philadelphia: City Planning Commission, 1996; “Avenue of the Arts and its neighborhoods: a work in progress,” *Central Philadelphia Development Corporation*,

primary concern was adaptability: what types of businesses could profitably reclaim these large, powerful spaces? Suburban malls, big box retail, and on-line shopping had made finding suitable tenants challenging. But with eighty per cent of the United States' built environment constructed after 1960, adaptive reuse in cities "seemed like the inevitable wave of the future." Following Philadelphia's shift from a manufacturing to a service economy and to remedy "storefront uncertainty," steakhouses recycled South Broad's architecture. Supplanting banks and brokerages that once dominated the area, they emerged as new institutions for displaying and imagining power.¹⁰⁹

This power reclamation manifested geographically, architecturally, and culturally. As Rudolf Arnheim argues, "the [city] center serves as a focus from which energy radiates into the environment." Historian Spiro Kostof describes central urban thoroughfares as "theaters of power" in which to display the workings of cities.¹¹⁰ South Broad's centrality dated to the 1890s, when the area became the financial and political center for a thriving industrial metropolis. Crowned by the new City Hall (1901) and extending south to Pine Street, South Broad (and adjacent blocks of Chestnut, Walnut, and Market Streets) contained the Girard Trust Co. Bank, the Philadelphia Stock Exchange, the Union League, Market Street National Bank, Philadelphia National Bank,

December 1994, 5; *Extending the Vision for South Broad Street: building Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts in the 21st century*, (Philadelphia: City Planning Commission, 1999), 32.

109 Stacy Mitchell, *Big Box Swindle: the true cost of mega-retailers and the fight for America's independent businesses* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 103; Inga Saffron, "Grade A prime locations," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 20, 2009, E2; Michael Kimmelman, "At edge of Paris, a housing project becomes a beacon," *New York Times*, March 28, 2012, C1.

110 Rudolf Arnheim, *The Power of the Center: a study of composition in the visual arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 4; Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: urban patterns and meanings through history* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1991), 179; Neil Leach, *The Hieroglyphics of Space: reading and experiencing the modern*

Atlantic Oil Refining, the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society (PSFS), Western Savings Bank, the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel, Wanamaker's, Caldwell Jewelers, and the Broad Street and Reading rail terminals, institutions that fueled or symbolized turn-of-the-century prosperity. After decades of mergers, consolidation, and decentralization, many of these institutions had by 1990 vanished. Owners found few businesses willing to fill their vacant properties. But steakhouses were an ideal match to maintain geographic power, paralleling Sharon Zukin's notion of "downtown [locations] legitimizing the assertion of power." By 2009, the majority of the aforementioned institutions' spaces contained steakhouses.¹¹¹

South Broad's pre-Depression skyline exuded architectural power, with many of the buildings housing financial institutions. During the Industrial Age, banks and brokerages required numerous workers and vast square footage to operate. Boards of directors and shareholders wished their buildings to radiate strength, power, and prominence. Architects, including Horace Trumbauer, Frank Furness, Daniel Burnham, and McKim, Mead, and White, employed neoclassical designs, transforming South Broad from a strand of low-rise saloons and boardinghouses into a powerful canyon of steel and stone. The public areas of the new towers were striking, containing Italian marble floors, domed ceilings, mahogany walls, balustrades, mezzanines, brass accents, and American iconography suggestive of power, notably eagles and stars.¹¹² Modern steakhouses were

metropolis (New York: Routledge, 2002), 39.

¹¹¹ Stanley Buder, *Capitalizing on Change: a social history of American business* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 357-359; Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: from Detroit to Disneyworld* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 179-215; Michael Klein, "Butcher and Singer: high-end beef brokerage," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 30, 2008, F2.

¹¹² William Cutler and Howard Gillette, eds., *The Divided Metropolis: social and spatial dimensions of Philadelphia, 1800-1975* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980),

similar: profitability relied on well-to-do clientele who through social legitimization, demanded with their meals lavish interiors and powerful imagery. Reviewing The Palm Steakhouse at the Bellevue Hotel, *Philadelphia Weekly* noted “practically everybody is on the make....the ambience is that of a very prosperous city.” In a 2004 annual report Rare Hospitality Inc., then-owner of the Capital Grille (formerly the Western Savings Bank), proclaimed “our steakhouses provide an atmosphere of power dining.”¹¹³ Competitors followed suit. Whether touting “relaxed elegance,” “rich African mahogany paneling,” “twenty-foot ceilings,” “warm lighting from Art Deco chandeliers,” or Del Frisco’s use of the bald eagle in its corporate seal, these steakhouses reclaimed architectural power.¹¹⁴

In various cultures, as Claude Levi Strauss and Jeremy Rifkin have opined, consuming steak “confers the most status.... and strength, aggression, passion, and sexuality.” In the United States steak has been, since the days of Chicago’s notorious Packingtown, “the most elite yet popular food.” As Marshall Sahlins and Nick Fiddes argue respectively, consuming steak “is the epitome of virility” and provides an “authentication of human superiority over the rest of nature.”¹¹⁵ On South Broad,

57-84; Roger W. Moss, *Historic Landmarks of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); *The Girard Trust Company: a century of financial activity, 1836-1936* (Philadelphia: Edward Stern Co., 1936); Richard J. Webster, *Philadelphia Preserved: catalog of the Historic American Buildings Survey* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); Robert Morris Skaler, *Philadelphia’s Broad Street: south and north* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2003); John H. Hepp, *The Middle-Class City: transforming space and time in Philadelphia, 1876-1926* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 152-155.

113 Myra Chanin, “A civic affair,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, May 17, 1995, 49; Rare Hospitality Inc. was acquired by the Darden Restaurant Group in 2007. See “Restaurant Analysis: The Capital Grille,” *Fine Dining - U.S. - March 2010*. Mintel Market Research Reports.

114 Ron Gorodesky and Eileen Madigan, “Restaurant Design: elements of successful restaurant interior design,” *Restaurant Report*, June 1993, 18-25.

115 Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Origins of Table Manners* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 489; Jeremy Rifkin, *Beyond Beef: the rise and fall of the cattle culture* (New

steakhouses solidified connections between power and cuisine. “When the Palm opened in 1989,” noted former *Philadelphia Style* publisher Dana Spain, “it was the see-and-be seen political place where ‘power people’ lunched.” Frank Rizzo, who before his death in 1991 tried mounting a mayoral comeback, kept a regular table “by the window.” Dana Lombardo, public relations manager for Morton’s Philadelphia explained “there’s a certain cachet to having a steak dinner. There are big corporate entities here in town and businessmen *love* steak.”¹¹⁶ Despite product recalls, “Mad Cow” scares, and nutritional warnings against beef, it remained totemic in the American restaurantscape. In 2001, *Food Arts* remarked that “steakhouses seem to be opening on every corner of every city.” According to an April 2009 U.S. fine-dining survey, 27% of respondents chose “American cuisine” (including steakhouses) as their preferred restaurant genre; another 27% selected “Italian,” while the third-place category was “Mexican” at a distant 8%. Steakhouses saw impressive growth in U.S. markets. Morton’s, the world’s largest high-end steakhouse chain, opened its first store in Chicago in 1978. By 2010, the company boasted of 76 stores, the majority of which opened after 1998.¹¹⁷

York: Dutton, 1992), 239; John A. Jakle and Keith Sculle, *Fast Food: roadside restaurants in the automobile age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 265; Marshall Sahlins, “Food as Symbolic Code,” in *Culture and Society: contemporary debates*, eds., Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steve Seidman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 94-101; Nick Fiddes, *Meat: a natural symbol* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 65-93.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Dana Spain conducted by the author, April 20, 2010; interview with Dana Lombardo of Cashman P.R. Associates conducted by the author March 17, 2010.

¹¹⁷ Michael Batterberry, “2009 in review,” *Food Arts Magazine*, December 2009, 39-44; Linda Kulman, “Steakhouse craze defies healthful eating edict,” *U.S. News and World Report*, March 12, 2001, 81; Bruce Yelk, “The Great Steak Debate,” *Philadelphia Gay News*, November 2009, 8; “Cuisine consumers order most,” *Fine Dining - U.S. - April 2009*. Mintel Market Research Reports; Rick Nichols, “Gauchos stride the range on Chestnut St.,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 21, 2007, M1; Phyllis Stein-Novack, “Chops,” *South Philly Review*, March 11, 2010, 17; “Restaurant Analysis: Morton’s,”

This trend appeared in Philadelphia. Between 1989 and 2009, nearly one dozen steakhouses opened in the South Broad area. Though in part catering to those seeking a special meal to compliment an evening in the city, the business traveler/ expense account niche, typically a more distinguished customer, was their target audience. Yet steak was just part of the appeal. John Urry comments that in postindustrial economies, workplaces have increasingly moved away from the traditional office building. Restaurants and cafes seconded as spaces where professionals held meetings and conferred with clients. Responding and catering to this shifting work culture, South Broad's steakhouses held lunchtime hours, allowing "places to supplant headquarters."¹¹⁸ Because steakhouse fare was comparatively straightforward and simple to prepare, patrons focused more on deal-making and less on navigating the menu. Priced for an up-market clientele, steakhouses (with central locations and lavish interiors) created atmospheres of power. Morton's, occupying the former Philadelphia Stock Exchange, promoted its private dining areas as "boardrooms," its happy hour as "power hour," and was recognized by *Philadelphia Magazine* as the city's "best place to seal the deal." Testing the Philadelphia market in 1998, Capital Grille, one of South Broad's most popular steakhouses, touted its atmosphere as a "cigar-smoke filled political hangout." Terry White, a former general manager noted "we want our customers to feel like they're coming to a club," justifying the restaurant's \$350 annual lease fee for a wine/spirits storage locker.¹¹⁹

Fine Dining - U.S. - March 2010. Mintel Market Research Reports.

118 Joanne Finkelstein, *Dining Out: a sociology of modern manners* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 10; John Urry, *Mobilities* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 166.

119 Keri Fisher, "Getting Down to Business," *Philadelphia Style*, January 2009, 137; "Morton's bar offers drinks and bites at power hour," Morton's Restaurant Group Inc. www.mortons.com/philadelphia/ (accessed April 14, 2009); Pat Ciarrocchi, "City's best steakhouses," *Philadelphia Magazine*, January 2009, 78; Tom Belden, "Intercontinental

By the mid-1990s, only the most elite steakhouse companies in the United States could afford, both financially and aesthetically, to occupy South Broad's powerful structures. This elite geography also resulted from restaurant industry changes. In 1996, the most popular U.S. steakhouse operators were Outback, Sizzler, Golden Corral, and Ponderosa, with hundreds of units nationwide (373, 404, 440, and 566, respectively). These were geared more towards families and other cost-conscious patrons. The high-end titans in 1996, Ruth's Chris, Morton's, and The Palm, had far less units, with 55, 34, 15, respectively. But as the 1990s drew to a close, Sizzler and Ponderosa filed for bankruptcy protection, indicating that dining out for steak had changed, from the "days when red meat was spurned as a controlled substance." Salad bars, buffet/cafeteria style dining, lack of alcohol, and average cuts of beef no longer enticed patrons. As Philadelphia's Union Trust Steakhouse owner Ed Doherty explained "with the resurgence of interest in red meat, people decided if they won't have it that often, they'd rather do it right with a better piece of steak." Despite the glut of high-end beef purveyors in Center City, steakhouses fused South Broad's architectural past with its postindustrial, amenity-driven future. They symbolized a more visible dining-out culture in a city where for decades "fine dining" was ensconced in private supper clubs and hotels. This chapter considers three distinct periods in the area's history and how steakhouses ultimately reclaimed elements of power: from 1900 to 1950, as South Broad grew into the city's CBD; from 1950 to 1991, as South Broad weathered ossification, demolition, and embarrassment; and from 1991 to 2009, when Philadelphia flirted with bankruptcy and South Broad emerged as a new amenity landscape. By examining over time the neighborhood's

Hotel planned for city," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 1998, D1; Eileen Smith, "Capital Grille makes debut," *Camden Courier Post*, June 16, 2001, B6.

institutions, the places in which people dined, and broader changes in urban development, a clearer picture of steakhouses' roles in Philadelphia's restaurant-led development will appear.¹²⁰

Historians have depicted Philadelphia between 1900 and 1950 as divided between elite areas of Center City and ethnic enclaves on its perimeter.¹²¹ Though partly accurate, this explanation obscures the middle-class in the "city of homes;" between 1910 and 1930, the city's home ownership rate grew from 27% to 51%, one of the highest in the nation. Employment was plentiful as well. While upper-classes worked in "counting rooms" and managed the railroads, middle class Philadelphians found employment in the clerical force in and around South Broad. Working classes and immigrants labored in factories, along the docks, and in restaurants.¹²² Yet where did Philadelphians eat? Tavern-going had long been a cross-class form of entertainment, though food was a token offering (and of questionable quality). The city's raucous boardinghouses offered menus of limited range and culinary imagination. For many in the city, the change from eating

120 "Leading U.S. Steakhouse Chains, 1996," *Restaurants and Institutions* 107 (July 15, 1997): 66; Glenn Collins, "Middle class feeding frenzy," *New York Times*, June 22, 1996, 31; Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 9.

121 John Lukacs, *Philadelphia: patricians and philistines, 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1981); E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: the making of a national upper class* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971); Mark Haller and Allen Davis, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: a history of ethnic groups and lower-class life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973); Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in its three periods of growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968).

122 Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: urban vision and the ashcan school* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 4; Kristen B. Crossney, "Is predatory mortgage lending activity spatially clustered," *Professional Geographer* 62 (May 2010): 153-170, 157; Judith Goode, "Polishing the Rustbelt: immigrants enter a restructuring Philadelphia," in *Newcomers in the Workplace: immigrants and the restructuring of the U.S. economy*, Louise Lamphere and others (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994): 199-230, 221.

out for sustenance to dining out as entertainment was a gradual process.¹²³ This began changing between after 1900. In *The Invention of the Restaurant*, Rebecca Spang notes “once a restaurant lulled him into a sense of prosperity, an ordinary worker...grew to hate his humble home.” Tiny ethnic eateries, serving Italian, German, and Irish food abounded south of Washington Avenue and north of Vine Street. In some cases, people operated restaurants out of their homes, catering to friends and neighbors. By 1900, a thriving Chinatown community with “chop suey joints” blossomed along Race St., east of Broad. Philadelphia’s upper classes, while viewing these eateries with skepticism, would occasionally venture in. In contrast, South Broad’s private supper clubs, hotel dining rooms, and department store restaurants catered to the well-heeled. A small number of luncheonettes and rathskellers (basement-level beer halls) operated there as well. Savoring their meals, the “Republican old guard” dined in the confines of the Union League and the politically connected met for dinner at the Vesper Club or Saxony, while the middle-classes frequented department store restaurants and lunch counters.¹²⁴

Before South Broad hosted the finest restaurants in town, the city’s institutions gravitated westward from Old City. Following consolidation in 1854, the city government

123 Carolyn Zalesne and Fred Catona, *A Taste of Philadelphia Cookbook* (Philadelphia: Taste of Philadelphia, 1983); Irina Smith, *The Original Philadelphia Neighborhood Cookbook* (Philadelphia: Camino Books, 1988), 3-4; Jerome P. Bjelopera, *City of Clerks: office and sales workers in Philadelphia, 1870-1920* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005); Inside Philadelphia, eds., *The Hungry Philadelphian* (Philadelphia: Hadley Group, 1974), 12-13; Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: tavern going and public life in eighteenth century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 53; Mary Anne Hines, *The Larder Invaded: reflections on three centuries of Philadelphia food and drink* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1987).

124 Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and modern gastronomic culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 235; Andrew Coe, *Chop Suey: a cultural history of Chinese food in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 169-170; Noah Feldman, “The Triumphant Decline of the WASP,” *New York*

had outgrown the old Pennsylvania State House. Proposals for a new City Hall began circulating. In 1870, Penn Square, the middle of the original city grid, was selected as the most appropriate site. When the structure opened in 1901, it stood as the largest and most sculpturally adorned public building in the world.¹²⁵ To be located near the new City Hall and the main transportation nodes of the day (the Broad Street and Reading rail terminals), Girard Trust, West End Trust, and Market Street National all left their original quarters on Chestnut Street's "Bank Row" for South Broad. In 1889, Girard Trust commissioned Addison Hutton to design its headquarters at the northeast corner of Broad and Chestnut. In just fifteen years, seeking even more space, the company moved into the McKim, Mead, and White "rotunda" across the street. In 1898, Frank Furness designed West End Trust's new home on Broad at South Penn Square. And in justifying its move to Penn Square in 1894, Market Street National's president stated "it [the move] was an outgrowth of the conviction of businesspeople in the neighborhood, that a new national bank...located on Market Street near the Public Buildings, was a public necessity." The financial institutions dominating South Broad earned its Chestnut Street intersection the nickname "the 100% corner."¹²⁶

Other commerce confirmed the area's centrality. In 1911, the Daniel Burnham-designed Wanamaker's opened across from Market Street National. The country's finest

Times, June 28, 2010, A17.

¹²⁵ Charlene Mires, *Independence Hall in American memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 118-121; Francis Morrone, *An Architectural Guidebook to Philadelphia* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1999), 9-12.

¹²⁶ Robert Wright, *The First Wall Street: Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, and the birth of American finance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 79; Michael J. Lewis, *Frank Furness: architecture and the violent mind* (New York: Norton, 2001), 230-231; *Trades League of Philadelphia, The City of Philadelphia as it Appears in the year 1894, 2nd Ed* (Philadelphia: Geo S. Harris & Sons, 1894), 148; "Expert urges long-range plan to restore Broad Street," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 16, 1960; "100% corner" stems from

shopping wonder at the time, the retail flagship occupied an entire square block and was the city's most-visited attraction after the Liberty Bell. South Broad was also becoming Philadelphia's "hotel row;" by 1910, it boasted of the city's finest including the Ritz-Carlton, the Stenton, the Walton, the Metropole, and the Bellevue. Below the hotels to Lombard Street lay Millionaire's Row, a strand of gilded mansions belonging to notable families, industrialists, and merchants.¹²⁷ To strengthen South Broad's power and prominence, beautification measures followed. In the early 1920s, the Broad Street Association (BSA) was founded to rid the thoroughfare of "sidewalk obstructions, hot dog stands, objectionable signs and billboards, foundries, and noise and smoke producers." As the Broad Street subway progressed in the 1920s, the BSA called for its future southern portion to resemble the London Underground's District Line, with uncovered track channels and ornamental flair.¹²⁸

South Broad contained various restaurants, from tawdry saloons to Escoffier-inspired dining rooms. However, for many Philadelphians, steeped in a culture of privacy, dining outside of the home was not a regular practice. Elsewhere in the U.S. during this period, dining out became a form of entertainment. Historians and food writers note that from the late 1890s through the 1910s, New York City saw a number of "spectacularly designed" restaurants open as nightlife along Broadway blossomed. In the era of "Diamond Jim" Brady and the Tammany machine, lobster palaces were particularly

interview with Inga Saffron conducted by the author March 25, 2010.

¹²⁷ Russell Wrigley, ed., *Philadelphia: a 300-year history* (New York: Norton Co., 1982), 485-486; Hebert Ershkowitz, *John Wanamaker: Philadelphia merchant* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Publishers, 1999); "Wanamaker's Store Records, 1861-1987," Box#45, Folder#2-5 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); Skaler, 2003.

¹²⁸ "Broad Street improvements," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1872, 2; "Plans to beautify South Broad St.," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 4, 1914; Richard J. Beamish, "Better Broad St. aim of new body," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 26, 1924.

popular, hosting an assemblage of stage actors, “big spenders, and the chorus girls they loved.” Though Philadelphia lacked over-the-top lobster palaces, South Broad’s central importance germinated restaurant growth. In 1904, a guide to Philadelphia announced “restaurants are most numerous and of the best quality within a short radius of the City Hall.” Philadelphia’s elite and upper-classes dined in private supper clubs and hotels. Most clubs lay in the shadows of South Broad, from 12th and 16th Streets and from Locust to Walnut Streets; notable establishments included The Vesper, The Embassy, Saxony Court, The Philadelphia Club, and The Penthouse. Along with lavish meals, the clubs showcased live entertainment. Banquet dining flourished on Hotel Row, with the Bellevue’s South Garden Room and the Hunt Room serving as the powerbroker restaurants in the city. The Continental Hotel’s dining room had bark-covered columns depicting a Tarzan theme. As Paul Groth explains, “dining rooms in [upper-class] hotels usually outshone all of the other public spaces except the lobby.” Middle-class men converged on the dining areas in the Broad Street Station and Reading Terminal. For Philadelphia’s upper- and middle-class women, the Bellevue opened the Ladies’ Dining Room while Wanamaker’s Crystal Tea Room catered to women seeking a refined meal after shopping.¹²⁹

129 Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin’ Out: New York nightlife and the transformation of American culture, 1890-1930* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 40; Cindy Lobel, “Out to Eat: the emergence and evolution of the restaurant in 19th century New York City,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 44 (Summer 2010):193-220; David Nasaw, *Going Out: the rise and fall of public amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); William Grimes, *Appetite City: a culinary history of New York* (New York: North Point Press, 2009), 135; Andrew F. Smith, ed., *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 499-501; *Rand McNally and Co. ‘s Handy Guide to Philadelphia* (New York: Rand McNally Co., 1904), 20-22; Nancy Love, *Guide to Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Greater Philadelphia Magazine, 1965), 42; Edgar Williams, “A feast fit for kings,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 6, 1984, B1; Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: the history of residential hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of

Working class Philadelphians patronized ethnic restaurants or street vendors, who sold pepper-pot soups, oysters, Italian water ice, and Delaware River shad. When factories appeared in neighborhoods surrounding Center City, the food and restaurant industries began experimenting with “mass eating” techniques. In the early 1900s, John T. Dorrance pioneered the mass-production of canned soup at the Campbell’s facility in nearby Camden. In 1902, Horn and Hardart Company opened America’s first “automat” at 818 Chestnut Street. Hailed by historians as proto-fast food, Horn and Hardart was an immediate sensation among Philadelphia’s working- and middle class population. Unlike sophisticated recipes found in supper clubs, hotels, and department stores, Horn and Hardart mechanized food with refrigerated vending boxes, drip-brew coffee machines, and “cherry pie, glossy with corn starch, ready to serve at the drop of a nickel.” Horn and Hardart, later opening its Philadelphia flagship at 211 South Broad Street, emerged as a clean, modern alternative for feeding customers on the go. Horn and Hardart eventually found competition on South Broad with Bain’s Deli, Harvey House, the Bellevue-Stratford’s coffee shop, and Linton’s, an all-night cafeteria chain whose menu items “rattled out of the kitchen on conveyor belts.”¹³⁰ Horn and Hardart and its competitors

California Press, 1994), 28-30; Hepp, 65; Susan Porter Benson, “Palace of consumption: the American department Store, 1880-1940,” *Radical History Review* (1979): 199-221.

130 Hines, 37; Daniel Sidorick, *Condensed Capitalism: Campbell Soup the pursuit of cheap production in the twentieth century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 22-23; Freeland, 186; Stephen Fried, *Appetite for America: how visionary businessman Fred Harvey built a railroad hospitality empire that civilized the Wild West* (New York: Bantam, 2010), 47-49; “King’s View of Philadelphia,” unnamed author. (TUUA), Philadelphia Streets, “Broad Street South,” Box #707, Folder #27; and “Bellevue-Stratford Hotel,” (TUUA), Philadelphia Hotels/Apartments, Box#275, Folders #8, #9, #10; David Taylor, “I was a nickel thrower for Horn and Hardart,” *The Sunday Bulletin Discover*, December 2, 1973, 4-8; George Chauncey, *Gay New York: gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 164-167; John Sherwood, “Is it the end for automats?” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, January 29, 1978; Carolyn Hughes Crowley, “Meet me at the

remained on South Broad through the 1970s as drive-thrus gained in popularity and the “food revolution” brought the city a restaurant renaissance.¹³¹

Through the 1950s, South Broad epitomized a prosperous industrial city. Its banks, hotels, theaters, offices of business and government, and restaurants blended commerce with entertainment. In 1910, a travel writer stated “this section of the city’s widest and finest thoroughfare is fast becoming a place of notable structures....real estate values here reach their high-water mark.” While mainly the province of the city’s elite and upper-classes, Philadelphia’s middle- and lower-classes came to South Broad to work, recreate, and dine. Yet what made this power landscape different from its future incarnation was the presence of business and finance. The arts and amenity landscape that appeared in the 1990s supplanted, rather than complemented, business with entertainment, a phenomenon Michael Sorkin terms “the Disney aura.” Architect Hyman Myers, who assembled a Philadelphia urban planning forum in 1989, remarked that “South Broad should, in the future, concentrate on how to bring in the public and glamorize their experience....it’s no different than Disneyland.” As architecture critic Inga Saffron explains, “by the 1990s, the Avenue of the Arts was quite effective as a branding strategy” and helped “culture and entertainment replace finance in Center City.”¹³²

During the Great Depression, South Broad’s titans reeled in a lack of confidence

Automat,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 2001, 18-19.

131 David Kamp, *The United States of Arugula: how we became a gourmet nation* (New York: Broadway Books, 2006), 3.

132 “King’s View of Philadelphia, 1910” unnamed author. (TUUA), Philadelphia Streets, “Broad Street South,” Box #707, Folder #27; Lucinda Fleeson, “Blueprints for a Renaissance,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 13, 1989, C1; Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: the new American city and the end of public space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 205; interview with Inga Saffron conducted by the author, March 25, 2010.

in the financial system. Savings and loans tenants were severely decimated and by the close of 1931, Philadelphia witnessed more than thirty bank failures. Yet gazing upon South Broad in the early 1930s belied the actual pain felt by the city: between 1918 and 1932, several notable structures has been completed. The Howe-Lescaze modernist PSFS tower opened on Market Street just east of South Broad; Girard Trust's rotunda building was complimented by a 30-story tower facing Penn Square; Atlantic Oil Refining (now Ruth's Chris Steakhouse) moved into their new headquarters at South Broad and Spruce; Wanamaker's opened a "gentleman's store" adjacent to PNB at Penn Square; and a host of other imposing buildings baring the cornerstone "1929" stretched down to South Street. Yet this would be South Broad's last building boom for decades; no new construction appeared between 1930 and 1981. After World War II, South Broad's big shoulders devolved into a canvas for free-associative urban planning and development without any unifying theme. The "civic spine" of the pre-Depression city, South Broad's power and centrality waned in the postwar years.¹³³

After WWII, there was a widespread sense that the city needed to meet postwar challenges. Walter M. Phillips, scion of an old Philadelphia family, explained in 1961 "about the beginning of the 1940s Philadelphia seemed to be in trouble....during the 1920s there had been a period of rapid development with inadequate planning. During the 1930s there had been a period of decay. What was needed was a period of

133 Weigley, 601-648, 602-605; William H. Jordy, "PSFS: its development and significance in modern architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 21 (May 1962): 47-83; *Girard Trust Company: a century of financial activity, 1836-1936* (Philadelphia: E. Stern Company, 1936), 165; John Keats, "There's the beautiful Champs Elysees...and then there is Broad Street," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, February 28, 1965; Joel Levinson, "Broad Street Boulevard," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 8, 1978.

resurgence.”¹³⁴ Resurgence often relied on extensive demolition. In a 1948 assessment of “the triangle” between City Hall, Presidential. (now JFK) Blvd., the Ben Franklin Parkway, and the Schuylkill River, the PCPC recommended “demolishing obsolescent industrial buildings” to maximize its “strategic central location.” Clearing prewar structures, or what architect Louis I. Kahn termed “bad slums,” would allow for a revitalization of Market Street West and removal of the “Chinese Wall.” In place of dilapidation rose the Penn Center office complex, regarded as postwar Philadelphia’s centerpiece. In a 1961 statement regarding Center City, the PCPC explained “we’re cutting off the redevelopment area at 15th, Chestnut, and South Penn Square because the area...is already well-developed with substantial buildings.” As new office space appeared, South Broad’s businesses headed west as they had two generations before. PCPC executive director Edmund Bacon and his commission sought corporate tenants, including Atlantic Oil, PSFS, Stouffer’s Restaurants, Philadelphia Electric, and the Statler Hotel, to occupy Penn Center. Regarding its new Penn Center property, the Sheraton Corporation stated “centrally located hotels constitute such an important factor in the development of our larger cities.”¹³⁵

Along with Penn Center, the Dock Street food markets were ripped out for

134 Phillips’ remarks were delivered to the Annual Meeting of the American Institute of Architects, April 27, 1961. Meeting minutes located in “Redesigning Downtown Philadelphia,” Albert M. Greenfield Papers, Box#303, Folder #9, (HSP).

135 “Certification of the Triangle Area for Redevelopment,” Philadelphia City Planning Commission, January 9, 1948, 1.; “The Philadelphia Cure: clearing slums with penicillin, not surgery,” *Architectural Forum* (April 1952): 112-119; Louis I. Kahn, “Toward a plan for midtown Philadelphia,” *Perspecta* 2 (1953): 10-27, 11; “Sheraton Corporation of America, 1961 annual report” and “The Sheraton Story Today” located in Albert Greenfield Papers, Box#330, Folder#39 (HSP); Edmund Bacon, “Dream of Penn Center being realized, planner feels,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, April 25, 1959; Francis J. Burke, “Plaza Plan is extended to part of Chestnut St.,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, October 5, 1961.

Society Hill, Skid Row was cleared for Independence Mall, and portions of Franklinton and Queen Village were sheared away for the Vine Street (I-676) and Delaware Expressways (I-95), respectively. In 1961, *Town and Country* remarked “we believe Philadelphia has accomplished more significant and progressive improvements than any other large city in America.” South Broad, meanwhile, did not appear in PCPC renewal plans or the white papers of design firms. In many cases, the area was identified as needing “more automobile entrances and places for people to park.” During the 1950s, as the city was abuzz with new construction, many prewar buildings (including hotels and the homes along Millionaire’s Row) were demolished or subdivided. This modernist sweep of the prewar city, a phenomenon visible from Stockholm to Brasilia, ultimately drew criticism for its “elimination of the street” and its “accommodations of the machine age.” With each passing year, parking lots, garages, gas stations, car dealerships, drug stores, and discount merchandisers appeared on South Broad. Electric signs and billboards, types of development once shunned by the BSA, grew in number in the 1950s and 1960s. Expressing frustration, John J. Herd, head of the Philadelphia Board of Realtors, stated that South Broad’s “parking lots and service stations....are examples of a polyglot strip of development that wouldn’t do credit to a second-rate town.” Herd longed for more “stately buildings” along South Broad rather than the low-rise structures common in postwar America.¹³⁶

136 John F. Bauman and David Schuyler, “Urban politics and the vision of a modern city: Philadelphia and Lancaster after WWII,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 132 (October 2008): 377-402; Jon C. Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: urban revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 98; Kahn, 17; correspondence between *Town and Country* editor Sell and Albert Greenfield, July 12, 1961, located in Albert Greenfield Papers, Box#303, Folder#39 (HSP); Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American cities* (New York: Vintage, 1961); Bacon, *The Design of Cities*, 1967; James Holston, *The Modernist City*:

Restaurants that operated in the South Broad area city before the 1960s were glacial to change. As local columnist Frank Brookhouser explained in 1957, “in their work or their hobbies or their social affairs, Philadelphians like the comfort of an old shoe.” The remaining hotels along South Broad saw during the Depression years “their social elegance and lavish meals fade.” Supper clubs continued to thrive, mainly due to their exemption from “blue laws.” Chains such as Horn and Hardart, Bain’s Deli, and Harvey House as well as independent diners catered to the “late-night crowds.” Diners, as Andrew Hurley indicates, were the quintessential restaurants of the immediate postwar decade. Appealing to the “newly-minted” middle-class with simple menu items, diners represented a middle-ground extension of the suburban home. They were inexpensive, modern, clean, fast, and in Quaker-infused Philadelphia, among the only restaurants open after 10pm. As Murray Dubin explained of the many diners south of Center City, “there was lots of food, not pretty food...substance, not appearance.”¹³⁷

While urban renewal materialized elsewhere, South Broad succumbed to the “deliberate speed” of postwar America. As with Baltimore Pike (U.S. 1) southwest of

an anthropological critique of Brasilia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 101; Jakle and Sculle, 1994, 14; “Expert urges long-range plan to restore Broad Street,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 16, 1960; “Green Thumb St.,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, July 17, 1959; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: the politics of mass consumption in postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003), 259.

¹³⁷ Annie Hauck-Lawson and Jonathan Deutsch, eds., *Gastropolis: food and New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Frank Brookhouser, *Our Philadelphia: a candid and colorful portrait of a great city* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 3; Hotel World Review: 75th anniversary edition (New York: Ahrens, 1950), 17; Laband, 123; “Stouffer’s,” “Horn and Hardart,” and “Harvey House,” (TUUA) - “Philadelphia Restaurants” Boxes 5 and 6, Folders #27, #20, and #44; Richard Pillsbury, *From Boardinghouse to Bistro: the American restaurant then and now* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: chasing the American Dream in the postwar consumer culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Murray Dubin, *South Philadelphia: mummies, memories, and the Melrose Diner* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 18.

Philadelphia and various arterials connecting the city to southern New Jersey, South Broad was retooled with parking lots, service stations, dealerships, and drive-thru restaurants. As the *Philadelphia Bulletin* lamented “the motorization of our city has caused the cuisine to follow suit....these ‘superhighway restaurants’ leave much to be desired.”¹³⁸ In a 1957 Pennsylvania Turnpike guide, restaurants were advertised as “efficient, convenient....and supervised by a nationally known caterer.” With the nation’s growing car culture, people spent less time at home. Their increased spending capacities also meant more vacations. The restaurant industry took notice, introducing new technologies that cut away human labor and minimized food costs. The number of fast food outlets increased in both cities and suburbs; with their “multicolored, airy, and clean structures,” they were making the “greasy spoon” diners obsolete. In Philadelphia, diners continued to operate along South Broad, though they faced stiff competition from McDonald’s, Gino’s, White Castle, and other fast food retailers. To obtain a better sense of how local restaurant preferences and urban renewal affected South Broad, Penn Center’s restaurant tenants provide examples.¹³⁹

Penn Center was the “showcase” development of postwar Center City. An ambitious project, it contained the first new hotel and office space constructed in Center City in twenty-five years. It increased adjacent property values nearly 500 per cent and streamlined the human and commercial flows in the area. The core of the development

138 Scott Knowles, ed., *Imagining Philadelphia: Edmund Bacon and the future of the city* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 58-59; W.T. Lhamon, *Deliberate Speed: the origins of a cultural style in the American 1950s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 6; Willard West, “Plastic, broiled!” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 7, 1964.

139 “Welcome to the World’s Greatest Highway: Pennsylvania Turnpike, 470 majestic miles serving the Keystone State,” 1957, 5, brochure located in Hagley Museum and Library Digital Archives; David St. Clair, *The Motorization of American cities* (New

was the Uris Bros.-designed towers that rose on the site of the old Broad Street Station. The tenants of the Uris buildings were IBM, Transworld Airlines (TWA), and PSFS. Complementing the corporate presence were chain restaurants, indicative of postwar dining preferences and the retail typology Penn Center's management deemed suitable. The first restaurant company to sign a lease was the Ohio-based Stouffer's, occupying the street-level space in Tower Two. Stouffer's, which operated stores in nearby Jenkintown and Wynnewood, contained "lamplight rooms where candles flicker" and had "the prettiest waitresses in the city." The restaurant also had separate dining rooms for men and women during the lunch hour as men were expected to be engaged in business and women conducting social affairs. Though a chain, the Penn Center location was South Broad's most sophisticated dining choice that did not require membership or great expense. Entrees on the dinner menu included Crabmeat Chablis, Lobster Newburg, Boston Strip Steak, London Broil, and Filet of Sole, lending Stouffers an air of elegance.

140

Horn and Hardart opened in Penn Center in 1958. With "uncomplicated meals in

York: Praeger, 1986), 46.

140 Edmund Bacon, "A living thing: Philadelphia takes its place in the megalopolis," *Breakthrough*, November 6, 1966, 23-32; Blanche Krause, "Experts predict a new face for downtown Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, April 7, 1959; "Chinese Wall lasted 71 years: called obstruction by many organizations," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, January 29, 1953; "Transit has key role in Philadelphia planning processes," *Railway Age*, March 4, 1968; Raymond C. Brecht, "700 on board as last train leaves Broad Street," *Evening Bulletin*, April 28, 1952; Ian L. McHarg, "A Plaza for Penn Center," document located in Albert Greenfield Papers, Box#377, Folder#40 (HSP); Guian A. McKee, "Blue Sky Boys, professional citizens, and knights-in-shining-money: Philadelphia's Penn Center project and the constraints of private development," *Journal of Planning History* 6 (February 2007): 48-80, 70; "Parks - Woodside, Penn Square, Box #441" and "Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Box #136" (TUUA); Love, 1965, 201-202; Shirley Maher, "The Stouffer Philadelphia Story: written for Stouffer's 50th anniversary, May 24, 1974," in Box #110 (HSP); "Stouffer's Lamplight Room Menu," in *The Philadelphia Menu Book* (Pittsburgh: Allied Publishers, 1977), 66.

home surroundings at reasonable prices,” Horn and Hardart symbolized middle-class dining sensibilities of the postwar years. Facing the complex’s submerged ice skating rink was an outlet of the Connecticut-based Savarin chain, whose cocktail lounge faced the action on the rink. Savarin originated along the nation’s newly constructed highway system; with stores along the Kansas and Connecticut turnpikes as well as the New York State Thruway, the cuisine was a far departure from namesake Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, the gastronome who fled France in 1794 due to political persecution. Savarin specialized in “continental breakfasts and smorgasbords” for rail commuters. Its parent company, Union News, also planned to install thirty bowling alleys in Penn Center. The below-ground concourse contained numerous luncheonettes, replacing the lunch stands and food vendors forced to vacate the sidewalks during construction. Penn Center contained no “signature” restaurants to make the complex a destination beyond business hours. Unlike New York’s Four Seasons, which when opened in 1959 was the world’s most expensive and that city’s premier power restaurant, the absence of a comparable restaurant at Penn Center revealed the unsophisticated palettes of Philadelphia’s diners. As Frank Brookhouser noted “Philadelphia is a city of homes and people generally like to stay in them.” Remarking on Philadelphia’s lack of being a “restaurant town,” Brookhouser opined that the city, unlike Chicago or New York, was not a “convention city that gets enough expense-account types.” More, its archaic liquor laws prohibited any “Saturday night action” from luring people into town after dark ¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Walter Voegele, *The Restaurant Business including all types of commercial food establishments* (Cambridge, MA: Bellman, 1956), 19-22; Mariani, 1994; Knowles, ed., 2009, 19; Joseph Wechsberg, “Tribute to a Prince of Gourmets,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1955, SM14; “American News elects three directors,” *New York Times*, March 27, 1958, 58; “The Four Seasons at Fifty,” *Hagley Museum and Library Newsletter*, October 16, 2009, 5; Brookhouser, 1957, 14; Laband, 123.

Philadelphia's steakhouses contained little of the grandeur found in the present-day. The city's "chophouses," which preceded modern steakhouses, were comparatively low-key. A 1965 *Guide to Philadelphia* mentioned only two chophouses; Arthur's, which before moving to Walnut and 15th Streets, opened in the 1930s as a tiny corner eatery in the Dock Street market. Dubbed the "Sultanate of Steaks," Arthur's was a "dim and elegant establishment" and was regarded as the "Morton's of its day," with its clubby atmosphere and location just steps from the Philadelphia Stock Exchange. Politicos, television and radio personalities, and celebrities stopped in for "the gigantic filet mignon and sirloin." Leibowitz's, once a "south Philadelphia bastion" for rib steaks, had in 1965 moved to "plush quarters in suburbia." Hotel dining rooms, including those in the Warwick and Barclay, where "Philadelphia doesn't come any closer to high cuisine," served steaks but also French cuisine inspired by Andre Soltner's Lutece in New York. Supper clubs, especially Frankie Bradley's, the Penthouse, the Vesper, and Mitchell's, not only served steak but also functioned as places for power brokering. As *Philadelphia Inquirer* food writer Craig LaBan explains, "before the corporate steakhouses arrived, the city was dominated by the supper clubs. That's where business got done." Chophouses and supper clubs, many located on or near South Broad, presaged corporate steakhouses.

142

The 1970s and 1980s were trying decades for Philadelphia. In 1975, Peter McGrath noted "on the surface, Philadelphia seems to be in the process of decay." In 1980, President Carter's Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties stated the nation needed to accept the "inevitable decline" of northeastern and Midwestern cities.

142 LaBan, "Memories to Savor," 2000; Love, 1965, 200; Rossant, 40; interview with Craig LaBan conducted by the author March 19, 2010.

While the renewal of the 1950s and 1960s was admired locally and nationally, by the mid-1970s, the postwar renaissance had “run out of steam.” A handful of neighborhoods within walking distance of South Broad, such as Queen Village and Fairmount, underwent small-scale improvement and structural rehab. Yet on South Broad, signs of decay were evident as City Hall was caked in layers of grime and the failed Chestnut Transitway led to a glut of abandoned storefronts east and west of Broad. Long one of the city’s most distinguished shopping areas, Chestnut Street by 1980 was filled with fast-food restaurants, pinball arcades, and “cheap shops” catering to low-income Philadelphians. In sharp contrast was the success of the Rouse Co.’s Gallery, a brutalist-style enclosed shopping mall situated at 9th and Market Streets. Center City’s first major retailing facility in nearly fifty years, by 1978 it was one the most financially productive malls in the country. Meanwhile, a “smut industry” had taken hold in the South Broad area. The Philadelphia City Council took steps to arrest and/or fine proprietors of adult bookstores and porn theaters. Many storied institutions, from banks and department stores to hotels and corporate entities, were nearing extinction. Though these businesses failed for various reasons, this sour age is exemplified through the business practices of Sam Rappaport.¹⁴³

From the late 1960s until his death in 1994, Rappaport dominated Philadelphia real estate, becoming synonymous with Center City’s physical decay. Over three decades, the New York-bred Rappaport amassed an empire in Philadelphia, eventually owning more than 100 buildings of various sizes. He bought them cheaply and allowed many to

143 Dennis Clark, ed., *Philadelphia, 1776-2076: a three hundred-year view* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1975): 67-98, 69; Stanley Newman, ed., *The Politics of Utopia: towards America’s 3rd century* (Philadelphia: Temple University Political Science Dept., 1975), 2; Roman Cybriwski, *Back to the City: issues in neighborhood*

rot before getting his asking resale price. The majority of his properties held close to the axis of South Broad and Market Streets. According to many in Philadelphia, he was for years singularly responsible for the area's rundown look. By 1980, Rappaport ceased speaking to the press about his acquisitions and generated among storefront owners animosity; they contended that if small businesses in Center City maintained their frontages, Rappaport should be prohibited from allowing his buildings to rot. The mogul raised such ire that a new term was invented for his process: "*Rappaporting*: the demolition of a building by neglect and decay." Restaurateur Dmitri Chimes later commented on Rappaport's Sansom Street properties near South Broad, held in "suspended animation" until 1994: "the idea was that I would go in first and then some young chefs are going to get into it." Following Rappaport's death, the *Philadelphia Weekly* remarked "he helped make [portions of Center City] such eyesores that something had to be done." Many of the architectural gems Rappaport kept in limbo for years have since seen new leases on life as retail, condos, and restaurants. While Rappaport contributed to the area's slide into obsolescence, other factors created a sea of vacancies along South Broad.¹⁴⁴

The highest-profile incident of South Broad's decline was the 1976 outbreak of Legionnaire's disease at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel. Long one of the city's grandest spaces and a top gathering place for its aristocratic establishment, nearly thirty guests attending a convention there in July succumbed to the mysterious plague. As medical experts tried desperately to pinpoint the cause, the death toll rose daily. Added to the poor

revitalization (New York: Pergamon, 1980), 138-155; Weigley, ed., 1982, 714.

¹⁴⁴ Michael McGettigan, "This land was his land," *Philadelphia Weekly*, July 19, 1995, 23; Andy Wallace, "Center City speculator Sam Rappaport dies," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 7, 1994, A1; Susan Warner, "When whole buildings go into storage,"

attendance to the Bicentennial and the city's failure to attract a World's Fair, the Legionnaire's outbreak caused not only hotel bookings to plummet but also stigmatized Philadelphia. Mounting a campaign to counter the negative publicity, the hotel staff gave out buttons and t-shirts proclaiming "I love the Bellevue." Yet the damage was irreparable; by the summer of 1977, Albert Greenfield, a local real estate titan, placed the building on the market. On July 7, 1978, the Bellevue held a public sale of its contents, from the glassware and bath towels to the light fixtures and pianos. Following the auction, the Rubin Group purchased the building, spending an additional \$25 million for renovations. During the early 1980s, Philadelphia had great difficulty attracting large conventions; there was no adequate convention facility within Center City. As a result, the hotel struggled to stay solvent. It was not until the mid-1990s, when the Hyatt Corporation assumed control and following the opening of the Pennsylvania Convention Center, that the Bellevue regained some of its former glory.¹⁴⁵

While South Broad suffered, Philadelphia's restaurantscape underwent momentous change. In 1973, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that "ethnic restaurants are being received enthusiastically by people who are bored with the standard meat-and-potatoes fare." The number of ethnic restaurants in the U.S. doubled between 1963 and 1973, countering the hamburger and chicken stands that dominated the auto-centric landscape. These establishments extended customers' culinary purview beyond the traditional restaurant fare. As *Philadelphia Weekly* later noted, those "kind of homey,

Philadelphia Inquirer, January 30, 1994, A1.

¹⁴⁵ Jill Gerston, "One final ball and then an era of elegance ends," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 1, 1986, C1; Robert Moran, "After a quarter-century, outbreak still holds mystery," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 13, 2002, A22; "Bellevue-Stratford Hotel," (TUUA), Philadelphia Hotels/Apartments, Box#275, Folders #8, #9, #10; Tom Belden, "Hyatt may take over management of the Bellevue," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 21,

intimate 40-seat Italian dining rooms flourished everywhere until the 1970s when the entire genre suddenly disappeared.” Before then, Philadelphia was a “restaurant desert populated by automats, corporate chains, hotel dining rooms, and tired places serving Continental fare.” Center City’s declining luncheonettes for example simply belonged to an older generation of taste; in 1969, common fare found at the Tom Thumb luncheonette (7th and Market) included hot dogs, hamburgers, pork roll, soup, fish cakes, and milk shakes. At Coffeeland (16th and Market), liverwurst, sardine sandwiches, and chopped sirloin appeared on the menu.¹⁴⁶

In the early 1970s, a group of restaurateurs and chefs including Peter Von Starck, Steve Poses, George Perrier, Neil Stein, and Judy Wicks opened small, intimate restaurants serving French nouvelle, Thai, and what would become known as “California cuisine.” Wicks’ White Dog Café became an East Coast outpost of the “buy local” phenomenon pioneered by Chez Panisse’s Alice Waters. On a local level, these actors mirrored tremendous growth for the restaurant industry; between 1972 and 1982, American spending in restaurants increased threefold. While these actors differed in many ways, they embodied Philadelphia’s first “restaurant renaissance.” Excepting Von Starck’s elegant La Panetiere and Perrier’s posh, silk-draped Le Bec Fin, many new restaurants lacked the formality of supper clubs and hotel dining rooms. With minimal décor, mismatched plate ware, and the “ubiquitous potted ferns,” they appealed to a younger and more adventurous crowd. As Craig LaBan notes, “because Philadelphia was

1996, C1; “Bellevue: images and memorabilia, 1940-1979,” Box#2 Folders#2,3 (HSP).

146 David Elsner, “Gyros and Goulash: travel, war, boredom spur rise in openings of ethnic restaurants,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 7, 1973; Myra Chanin, “Hearty Food and Song,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, September 27, 1995, 42; Peter W. Rees, “The Philadelphia Explorer, with a restaurant guide by Marilyn Silberfein,” prepared for the Association of American Geographers 75th Anniversary Meeting, Philadelphia April 22-

a bastion of the private, those first restaurants of late 60s and early 70s shook up the younger generation and got them out of the [supper] clubs.” Fritz Blank, formerly *chef-de-cuisine* at Deux Cheminees, recalled “when Perrier rolled out a \$25 prix fixe menu, all the Quakers in the Union League were having heart attacks.” In a 1974 commentary on restaurant openings, Dorothy Brown stated “enduring long waits, even on a Thursday night, has become part of Philadelphia’s growing ‘eat well but cheaply’ restaurant scene.”

147

The restaurant renaissance was the generational pivot between the supper club era and what became known as “ethnic,” “haute,” and later “fusion” cuisines; Perrier’s Le Bec Fin generated such buzz that New York foodies made monthly trips to his tiny restaurant via Amtrak’s Metroliner. While restaurants enlivened the neighborhoods surrounding South Broad, the old strand of power desperately needed a new image. Though well-intentioned, the AAC’s hopes for structural rehabilitation and a new PAC were seen by detractors as “pie in the sky” plans. Feasibility studies for the PAC building sites were expensive (\$30,000 on average in 1981) and for the 3,000-seat PAC itself, estimated costs landed in the \$40 million range. Given the dashed hopes of the Bicentennial and the city’s failure to attract a World’s Fair, these were costs that Philadelphia officials couldn’t conceive of shouldering. If the PAC was to be realized, it

25, 1979; 21-27.

147 Andrew F. Smith, ed., *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 501; Bill Collins, “Fine restaurants in Philadelphia starve for customers,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 3, 1976, B2; interview with Craig LaBan conducted by the author, March 19, 2010; *The Official Philadelphia ‘76 Bicentennial Guidebook* (Philadelphia: Pearl Pressman Liberty, 1976), 44-69; Nels Nelson, “Restaurants revitalize Old City,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 1, 1972; Dorothy Brown, “Good food, long wait at chummy St. Francis Room,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 17, 1974, 12.

would require private funding.¹⁴⁸

Despite difficulties in financing and a shortage of visitor facilities to entice large conventions, South Broad's potential as an arts district was cited as an aesthetically responsible way to revitalize the area. As the *Inquirer's* Thomas Hine opined, "it is important that the first new development [on South Broad] since the Depression set a standard for what will follow." In May 1978, South Broad was renamed the "Avenue of the Arts" for a one-day festival featuring food vendors, dance troupes, operatic singers, and an al fresco performance by the Philadelphia Orchestra. Dubbed a "Lincoln Center without walls," the festival showcased South Broad's artistic pursuits for the public and represented a cooperative spirit between the business and cultural communities. The following year, the effort between the city, arts, and business leaders resumed to "put the spotlight on South Broad Street." The festivals attracted thousands of revelers. Ultimately, the festivals pointed to a brighter future for the city's once-premier stretch for commerce and activity. As executive director of the Philadelphia Orchestra Stephen Sell explained some years later, "the consensus all along has been that Philadelphia has tended to think of South Broad Street as the place to come for concerts, and the orchestra would rather be there."¹⁴⁹

Selecting PAC sites was a contentious process. When the southeast corner of South Broad and Locust Streets was suggested, the William Green Administration (1979-1983) argued that instead of a new cultural venue, the city needed more hotel rooms and parking space. Though there was consensus that a PAC would be beneficial to

¹⁴⁸ April White, ed., *Philadelphia Magazine's Ultimate Restaurant Guide* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 35.

¹⁴⁹ "Second arts festival planned," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 14, 1978, A25; Thomas Hine, "Orchestra takes step on new hall," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 25, 1985,

Philadelphia, many businesspeople and developers believed hotels and garage space would be cheaper and could deliver a faster financial return. Norman Wolgin, who owned the contested parcel, allowed the Hershey (now the Doubletree) Hotel to rise on it in 1981. The hotel was the first new construction project on South Broad since the 1930s. Wolgin, whose hotel plans were caught in the crossfire over the PAC studies, remarked “look at the pyramids; they’re gorgeous but they have no economic value.” In the end, hotel development triumphed over a new PAC along South Broad. In 1982, the Green Administration tried luring the Democratic Party to hold their 1984 convention in Philadelphia. The city had not hosted a nominating convention since 1948. After visiting the city in the summer of 1982, Democratic leaders decided on a West Coast venue, where the party’s electorate was stronger. But they also cited the infrastructural shortcomings of Philadelphia in influencing their decision, namely the minimal amount of hotel rooms (which would force many delegates to find rooms in the suburbs) and restaurants and lack of a Center City convention center.¹⁵⁰

During the late 1980s and early 1990s restaurants, enveloped in the cultural largess of the age, assumed new meaning in American life as status symbols and markers of class identity; food awareness, restaurant brands, and industry trends developed into a “sport-like pursuit.” Menu items, from water to steak, was rebranded and marketed to specific consumer niches; “tap water” with ice fell out of favor as the ubiquitous “still or sparkling” became a greeting mantra of wait staffs. As John Mariani notes, the 1980s saw the emergence of an “you are *where* you eat” ethos. Steak moved beyond the traditional

A1.

150 Walter Naedele, “Pros and Cons: they liked Philadelphia, but obstacles to presidential conventions remain,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 29, 1982, A2; Jan Schaffer, “Art vs. Commerce: a tug of war over a parcel of land in Center City,” *Philadelphia*

sirloin cuts once offered in hotel dining rooms, chophouses, and at Stouffer's and Arthur's. Now, exotic cuts of beef, such as Kobe and Wagyu, were served with inventive "rubs" and marinades.¹⁵¹ In a refurbished Bellevue Hotel, The Palm Steakhouse opened in 1989. For the Palm's parent company, opening a Philadelphia branch required a leap of faith. The company reasoned that the South Broad area lacked a convention center, other chain restaurants, and "a consistent source of business." Ron Gorodesky, whose Wayne, PA-based restaurant consulting firm conducted feasibility studies for the Philadelphia Palm stated "I was very bullish about the Palm's opening. I thought it would be a place for the business leaders and politicians to hang out because there was no such place."¹⁵²

The Palm was a major success. Though steaks were high-quality and the martinis stiff, the real attraction was the concept and its timing. *Philadelphia Daily News* food writer Maria Gallagher described The Palm as "more of a formula than a restaurant." Combining "steaks...minimally adorned, in giant or mammoth proportions" with "seeing and being seen," Philadelphia's first high-end steakhouse forged new ties between cuisine and sociability. The timing was opportune as The Palm represented a breaking away from the city's tradition of private dining and power brokering; here women and men dined together. As *Philadelphia Weekly* commented, "the Palm has become a dining club for those who could afford to but choose not to join a private club." While conducting the feasibility studies, the Cunard Company (then-operator of the Bellevue and historic operator of cruise ships) commissioned Gorodesky to examine the possible opening of a

Inquirer, March 16, 1981, D1.

151 David Brooks, *Bobos in Paradise: the new upper class and how they got there* (New York: Random House, 2000); Katy McLaughlin, "Steakhouse confidential," *Wall Street Journal*, October 8, 2005, 4; Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: how luxury lost its luster* (New York: Penguin, 2007).

152 Interview with Ron Gorodesky conducted by the author, March 23, 2010.

private club on the hotel's upper levels. Tentatively named "The Founders Club" to evoke the bygone Hunt Club's mahogany walls and cigar smoke, a select group of 500 Philadelphians would pay a \$1,000 initiation fee and \$1,000 in annual dues to access a "world-class dining room." The Founders Club faltered within a year. Though the bill of fare was prohibitively expensive for the late 1980s (prix-fixe meals began at \$45 per person) and its items *haute cuisine* (foie gras hors d'oeuvres and sweetbreads), cost was not the problem; the concept failed to attract meaningful attention when compared with the more democratic and pared-down formula of The Palm. "The Founders Club failed miserably," explained Gorodesky, "because people at that point were looking to the restaurants. The town thought, as I thought, that the city was really crying for a national-level steakhouse." As the *Orlando Sentinel* proclaimed in 1992, "if you're looking to impress clients while in Philadelphia, go to The Palm."¹⁵³

The Palm marked initial stirrings for South Broad's transformation from a withered civic spine into a postindustrial amenity landscape. Under the deregulation of the 1980s, Philadelphia's financial giants breathed their last gasps under savings and loan scandals, bank mergers, and consolidations. In 1950, the city claimed eight major banking institutions; by 1993, it contained just one, the now-defunct Core States Bank. The magnificent buildings that housed their headquarters and branch offices were mothballed. As the Palm debuted, South Broad weathered its nadir; as Inga Saffron explains, "a lot of [South Broad's] buildings were banks until the 1980s. Afterwards, the

¹⁵³ Maria Gallagher, "A taste of New York quality, arrogance go hand-in-hand at Palm," *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 8, 1989, 17; Myra Chanin, "A Civic Affair," *Philadelphia Weekly*, May 17, 1995, 49; Sam Gugino, "Steakhouse makes prime effort," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 21, 1988, 30; John Corr, "Posh private club is planned to top off the new Bellevue," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 17, 1988, D1; interview with Ron Gorodesky conducted by the author, March 23, 2010; Jane Lasky, "Doing

properties sat there and languished.” Until Del Frisco’s resuscitated the Packard Grande, the property changed developers’ hands several times. Starting in the mid-1980s, various proposals (from pharmacies to parking garages) were announced. Attempts by companies such as CVS, Thrift, and Rite Aid to open pharmacies met significant resistance. In what became known as the “drug store wars,” corporate pharmacy companies plunged into Center City, killing off “neighborhood” operations and sterilizing the grandeur of movie palaces’, banks’, and theaters’ interior space. Though the city imposed an ordinance in 1983 limiting their spread, the heaviest concentration was along Chestnut and Walnut Streets just west of South Broad. When the Rite Aid Company attempted to open a store in the old Jacob Reed Clothiers’ space (adjacent to Del Frisco’s), PCPC director G. Craig Shelton lamented it as “a crime....discount pharmacies have been one of the worst offenders [in Philadelphia] in terms of schlocky facades.”¹⁵⁴

Further complicating South Broad’s future was a fire in 1991 at One Meridian Plaza, an office tower adjacent to Girard Trust on South Penn Square. On a February evening, a pile of chemical-soaked rags spontaneously combusted on the 24th floor. Within hours, the fire spread to upper floors and gravely weakened the tower’s structural integrity. Three firefighters perished in the blaze and the tragedy cast a pall over South Broad. For nearly ten years, the charred remains languished on the square, resembling an apocalyptic scene. The ominous hulk spread a contagion of neglect as the 1400 block of

business in Philadelphia is easier than ever,” *Orlando Sentinel*, August 23, 1992, H2.
¹⁵⁴ Rose DeWolf, “Name that bank: tangled tales of buy and sell,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 20, 1993, 7; interview with Inga Saffron conducted by the author March 25, 2010; Terry Bivens, “Chain drugstores are ingesting neighborhood pharmacies,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 27, 1984, D1; Sara Kelly, “Pass the Popcorn,” *Welcomat*, March 22, 1995, 12; Carrie Rickey, “An era fades farther away,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 12, 1994, A1; as of 2010, the former Jacob Reed Clothiers (1420 Chestnut St.) was occupied by CVS drugstores.

Chestnut Street withered into a dead zone. As Inga Saffron explains, “for this charred building [One Meridian Plaza] to sit across from City Hall was just mind-blowing. The buildings behind it, on Chestnut, were also damaged and unoccupied. That had tremendous effect on the neighborhood.” It was not until 1999 that a lengthy and costly demolition process began. For South Broad, the One Meridian Plaza debacle was the final straw in a long series of setbacks and misfortunes. Its decline, and that of the city itself, was waiting for Ed Rendell when he assumed the mayoralty in 1992. Pledging to “save the city” by way of spending cuts, bureaucratic reform, tax abatements, and pro-growth initiatives, Rendell steered Philadelphia into the twenty-first century; just two years before, the city’s bonds were downgraded to junk status. While Rendell did not single-handedly remake South Broad (though he pledged over \$230 million for the Avenue of the Arts), his politics and version of urban management produced an optimism in and about Philadelphia that lasted beyond the end of his second term in 1999. Local real estate developers such as the Binswanger Group, the Michael Salove Group, and Larry Steinberg actively courted steakhouse companies to open shop in the street-level spaces of South Broad’s historic buildings.¹⁵⁵

By 2010, the steakhouses of South Broad, with their opulence, décor, and pricey menus, had become culinary theme parks within the larger Avenue of the Arts amenity landscape; customers enjoyed hearty aged steaks, seafood “towers,” fine scotches, and bold varietals of red while receiving attentive and professional service. The Capital Grille added power touches such as private wine vaults, Art Deco-inspired chandeliers, and a wall of clocks indicating the time in London, New York, Tokyo, and San Francisco.

155 Gil Troy and Vincent J. Cannato, *Living in the Eighties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 70-84; “Back from the Brink,” *The Economist* 327, April 17,

Whether conducting business or pleasure, South Broad's steakhouses offered plentiful amounts of the good life. The Palm, the first steakhouse to plant its flag, seemed to fulfill a need in Philadelphia's restaurant sphere and certainly filled a void in terms of providing a power brokering spot removed from the restrictions of supper clubs. More elegant than the city's chophouses, The Palm fashioned a new level of sophistication in Philadelphia, one based more on meritocracy than lineage; as Craig LaBan noted "no place in Philadelphia embodies the political meat market more than the Palm." After the \$523 million Pennsylvania Convention Center opened northeast of Penn Square in 1993, giving the city a much-needed advantage in attracting corporate events (some 1.4 million visitors annually), competitor steakhouses arrived. Morton's, once situated on Logan Square, relocated to the Philadelphia Stock Exchange in 2000; in 2001, the Capital Grille opened in Western Savings Bank space at Broad and Chestnut; and between 2005 and 2010, Fogo de Chao, Del Frisco's, and Butcher and Singer appeared, all in spaces once central to South Broad's "old heart." In 2001, Center City District (CCD) executive director Paul Levy described South Broad as a "restored downtown, a mecca for arts and entertainment." With the arrival of more convention space, a flourishing arts district, a high-end retail corridor along Walnut Street, renovated hotels, residential growth, and the broader climate of Rendellian optimism, prominent steakhouse companies believed that the South Broad area (and its architectural magnificence) was worthy of investment. With more than ten in number, steakhouses were an integral part of Center City's recreated amenity landscape.¹⁵⁶

But in Philadelphia's rapidly changing restaurantscape, the future of steakhouses

1993, 3.

156 Craig LaBan, "The Roundup," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 30, 2000, M4; Paul R.

in the South Broad area remained questionable. While their presence was universally regarded as a better option than drug stores and parking garages, it is unlikely that all stores will survive the Great Recession of 2008-2009. Some critics felt that the arrival of several high-end steak restaurants mirrored the “invasion of the upscale afflicting every other major American city.” Steakhouses, as the “last bastion of expense account-dining,” found it difficult to maintain steady inflows of customers as convention bookings dropped off, smaller and more affordable BYOBs opened in the Washington Square West and Rittenhouse neighborhoods, and Americans in general cut back on leisure spending. In this regard, South Broad’s steakhouses suffer the whims and vagaries of broader economic forces. As Philadelphia has long been referred to as a “city of neighborhoods” and that “most walkable of American cities,” South Broad’s steakhouses appeal to an entirely different stripe of customer. As *Inquirer* restaurant critic Craig LaBan explains, “with very few exceptions, they’re [steakhouses] all out-of-town corporate chains. They’re looking for a certain kind of space, it has to be grand, it has to lavish. And in that regard, I’m not sure these companies are aware or attuned to the needs of Philadelphia.” The majority of South Broad’s steakhouse customers do not reside in the neighborhood, let alone within the city of Philadelphia.¹⁵⁷

As with many amenity landscapes in the United States, the most salient feature is their relative sameness; here, South Broad Street’s steakhouses found a tremendous asset. As Fabio Parasecoli explains, the globalized economy of the twenty-first century has created new avenues of cultural exchange, especially regarding foodways and consumer

Levy, “Making downtowns competitive,” *Planning* 67 (April 2001):16-20, 16.

¹⁵⁷ Regina Schrambling, “In Philadelphia, a new taste of freedom,” *New York Times*, March 13, 2002, F1; Interview with Craig LaBan conducted by the author, March 19, 2010.

tastes. In an increasingly diverse restaurantscape then, steakhouses offer comparatively few surprises; “exotic cuisines” from “faraway lands” rarely appear on the bill of fare, making steakhouses bastions of the predictable *within* amenity landscapes that mirror one another. While South Broad has institutions unique to Philadelphia (the Kimmel Center, Union League, and the grandeur of City Hall), it also contains similar retail, dining, and lodging opportunities found in Pittsburgh’s Gateway Center, Milwaukee’s Water Street area, Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, San Diego’s Gaslamp Quarter, Louisville’s Fourth Street, and Miami’s Bayfront/Coconut Grove. The primary difference for Philadelphia is the architectural casing; while the latter cities’ amenity landscapes relied heavily on new construction, Philadelphia’s culture of (and laws enforcing) historic preservation ensured that exterior features would remain untouched by steakhouse companies. Once inside the steakhouses, despite some incorporation of the buildings’ “past lives,” notions of brand recognition and predictability take over.¹⁵⁸

Setting aside predictions about the success or failure of South Broad Street’s steakhouses, some facts remain clear: as manifestations of geographic, architectural, and cultural power, they have resuscitated numerous historic buildings and maintained for the area notions of centrality and strength after both qualities waned for nearly a generation. As emblems of the broader trend to create amenity landscapes in American downtowns, they also represent how people living in postindustrial economies conceptualize and engage urban centers. Finally, the striking proliferation of steakhouses within a 2-square mile area of central Philadelphia indicates that for a city trying to reinvent itself and

158 Fabio Parasecoli, *Bite Me: food in popular culture* (New York: Berg, 2008), 128; Evan McGlinn, “Urban Renewal,” *Forbes* 145, February 19, 1990, 168-169; Daniel Campo and Brent Ryan, “The Entertainment Zone: unplanned nightlife and the revitalization of the American downtown,” *Journal of Urban Design* 13 (October 2008):

maximize use of its storefronts, there is some consensus that power, whether imagined, viewed, felt, inhaled, or tasted is indeed vital to the future of cities. As the *Philadelphia Daily News* proclaimed in 1998, “a city knows it has truly arrived when big-name steakhouses come to town.”¹⁵⁹

291-315.

¹⁵⁹ Peggy Landers, “Primed for beef, the public is stampeding into steakhouses,”

CHAPTER 4

AT DISNEY'S ALTAR: STEPHEN STARR, EXPERIENCE DINING, AND THE
CULTURAL REBRANDING OF PHILADELPHIA'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In early 1995, Stephen Starr often drove past Old City's Continental Diner at the desolate intersection of 2nd and Market Streets. On a recent trip to Hollywood, Starr had noticed a resurging appreciation for cocktail culture, a retro-assemblage of Rat Pack crooners, big bands, and martinis. Fixating on the Continental, he at first "wanted to open a bar with a little bit of food and make a little money." But for a man who knew the value of creating memorable experiences, he envisioned something special for the workaday diner. Using proceeds from the sale of his concert-promoting business, Starr replaced its grit with a global tapas menu, lamps shaped like tooth-picked olives, Dean Martin on the stereo, and "slinky servers" in cat suits pouring cosmopolitans. On opening night in October, the line to enter the Continental stretched down 2nd Street. For older patrons, the revamped diner became a nostalgic passport to the 1950s; for the younger set, who according to the *Philadelphia Daily News* "looked as if they just signed some movie, modeling, or microchip deal," Starr's sleek eatery represented shorthand for fashionable urbanity. Yet for both generations, the Continental stood as a high-concept restaurant in what had long been a low-concept town. And in what was judged a "lifeless" neighborhood, Continental's success spurred the creation of a new entertainment zone in Old City.¹⁶⁰

Philadelphia Daily News, November 20, 1998, 14.

160 Gerald Etter, "To a young crowd, this spot and its 15-martini menu are cutting

Stephen Starr's restaurants performed vital functions in postindustrial Philadelphia. Beyond providing food, they embodied a broader maturation of urban space, a shift from rotting industrial landscapes to pulsating areas of hip consumerism. In certain neighborhoods, they helped remediate what William Cronon termed "second nature," the human-built infrastructure placed atop the "inconvenient jumble" of the nonhuman landscape. Starr's restaurants also redefined the city as a site of the experience economy. Within these transitions, new flows of human traffic (customers, employees, suburbanites, and tourists) and nonhuman traffic (construction materials, interior design objects, and foodstuffs) entered Philadelphia's ecological system. As Gary Holthaus notes, ecosystems contain not only "environments," but social, cultural, and historical contexts as well. Through the recycling of the Continental diner (1995), the creation of a "techno-fantasy" with University City's Pod (2000), and the opening of Talula's Garden on Washington Square Park (2011), Starr fused together these contexts. By providing patrons with multisensory ways to reimagine the city, he used "experience dining" to culturally rebrand postindustrial Philadelphia's second nature.¹⁶¹

Starr never judged himself a "restaurateur" nor referred to his patrons as "customers." He instead thought of his restaurants as stages, his staffs as actors, and his patrons as audiences. Paralleling the city's optimism during the Edward G. Rendell

edge," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 12, 1996, 31; Maria Gallagher, "Where the 60s meet the 90s," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 11, 1995, F1; Don Russell, "Martini madness moves in," *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 27, 1995, 48; Silvia Rief, *Club Cultures: boundaries, identities, and otherness* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 20; Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: art and commerce in the postindustrial city* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 13-14.

¹⁶¹ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991), 56; Dell Upton, "Architecture in everyday life," *New Literary History* 33 (2002): 707-723, 711; Gary Holthaus, *From Farm to Table: what all Americans need to know about agriculture* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 118.

Administration (1991-1999), Starr's "theaters" appealed mainly to middle- and upper-middle class audiences that had forsaken Philadelphia as dangerous, drab, or undesirable. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore explain that restaurants operating in the experience economy use food "to provide a stage for layering on a larger feast of sensations that enchants consumers." Market analyses show that patrons highly value "atmosphere" and "ambience" in their dining experiences, second only to food quality. In Philadelphia, Starr's experience dining became a crucial force for both rebranding and reshaping the city. In Old City, the Continental spurred new development in a once-industrial neighborhood. Across town, the University of Pennsylvania, engaged in a multimillion-dollar revitalization of University City, courted Starr to open Pod, cementing his legitimacy in restaurant-led development. Finally, as the farm-to-table phenomenon grew in popularity, Talula's Garden fashioned new connections between urban and hinterland ecologies, effectively bridging Cronon's first and second nature.¹⁶²

Though Starr did not create amusement parks, he knelt at Disney's altar. Michael Sorkin states that Disneyland "is a mingle of history and fantasy, reality and simulation....the highly regulated, completely synthetic vision provides a simplified, sanitized experience that stands in for the more undisciplined complexities of the city"

¹⁶² "Restaurant emperor actually a very appetizing guy," *Chestnut Hill Local*, June 10, 2010, 25; Lucas Conley, *Obsessive Branding Disorder: the illusion of business and the business of illusion* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 85; Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: work is theater and every business a stage* (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), 4; "Fine Dining - U.S. March 2008, March 2009, and March 2010," *Mintel Market Research Reports*; Larry Platt, "The Reincarnation of Stephen Starr," in *Philadelphia Magazine's Ultimate Restaurant Guide*, ed. April White (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 45; Rick Nichols and Craig LaBan, "Changing Tastes," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 31, 2009, F1; Mark Grief, "The Hipster in the Mirror," *New York Times*, November 14, 2010, BR27; Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo, eds., *Selling Places: the city as cultural capital, past and present* (New York: Pergamon, 1993).

while Eric Avila suggests that Disney built a “controlled landscape that orchestrated the movement and vision” of visitors. This Disney altar became the touchstone of experience economies, replicated in Times Square, Las Vegas, and Dubai. Starr emulated Disney on points of fantasy, simulation, and orchestration. David Grazian explains that Starr’s restaurants were “designed as elaborate stage sets...and theatrical spectacles of global cosmopolitanism.” In describing Starr’s effect on the city, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* claimed, “there’s enough big-concept ambience to stoke excitement even by the mere mention of [his] next project.” Yet Disney and Starr differed in crucial ways. While Disney built entire cities from scratch (paving over orange groves in southern California and later draining swamplands in central Florida), Starr refurbished portions of an *existing* city. Secondly, Disney derided older urban centers while Starr refurbished portions of them. Thirdly, Disney created idealized interiors and exteriors while Starr reconfigured only interior spaces. The transactions within those interiors had psychological and physical effects on Philadelphia’s exteriors. From a psychological angle, Starr made portions of the postindustrial city refreshingly appealing to the senses. Physically, his restaurants increased the flows of capital, goods, and people into the city.¹⁶³

Beginning in the mid-1990s, Starr helped rebrand Philadelphia, a city weathering difficult transformations. Many U.S. cities shared a similar fate in the postindustrial era.

¹⁶³ Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: the new American city and the end of public space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 208; Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 106; David Grazian, *On the Make: the hustle of urban nightlife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 31-32; Craig LaBan, “Memories to savor: a rebirth of the fine dining the city was long known for,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 9, 2000, M1; John Findlay, *Magic Lands: western cityscapes and American culture after 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 52-103.

To salvage a bankrupt New York in the late 1970s, Miriam Greenberg argues “the standpoint of the out-of-towner and the imagination of the average tourist became overwhelming preoccupations” for the established leadership of the city. Comparatively, when Rendell won Philadelphia’s mayoralty in 1991, the former attorney general inherited “the city that bombed itself.” His predecessor, W. Wilson Goode, oversaw the MOVE debacle of 1985, which pitted the city police against a radical back-to-nature group. The showdown in a west Philadelphia neighborhood ended with a conflagration that engulfed more than sixty homes, killing eleven MOVE members. With the erasure of the city’s financial industry (via banking consolidations and S&L scandals) and rising crime, MOVE drove Philadelphia into “a civic funk.”¹⁶⁴ Entire blocks of Center City and beyond lay vacant. The funk filtered into cultural depictions of the city, from Bruce Springsteen’s ominous “Streets of Philadelphia” (1993) to Terry Gilliam’s apocalyptic *12 Monkeys* (1995). Rendell’s top priority was to improve the city’s image. Through tax abatement programs, privatization of municipal services, and the tireless promotion of Philadelphia’s entertainment potential, the city Rendell left to his successor in 1999 hardly resembled the unforgiving metropolis of the late 1980s, one that “no longer exported goods to the world...instead, it produces experiences.” In this context, Stephen Starr brought experience dining to Philadelphia.¹⁶⁵

A process not unique to Philadelphia, restaurants have resuscitated many urban

¹⁶⁴ Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York: how a city in crisis was sold to the world* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 8; W. Wilson Goode, *In Goode Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1992); Larry Eichel, “The MOVE disaster: May 13, 1985,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 8, 2005, A1.

¹⁶⁵ Michael Klein, “A decade chronicling spots that sizzled and fizzled,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 10, 2003, F1; Carolyn Adams, “The Philadelphia Experience,” *Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science* 551 (May 1997): 222-234.

neighborhoods. Describing how in 1980 the famed Odeon jumpstarted development in New York's TriBeCa, Frank Bruni states "restaurants can wind up being so much bigger than themselves. Many of them mirror - and a few even mold - the communities around them." From TriBeCa to Detroit's Corktown, where Le Petit Zinc and Slow's BBQ function as counterpoints to the nearby ruins of the Michigan Central Station, certain restaurants generate a cultural forcefield, pulling people into the city. No other chef or restaurateur in Philadelphia proved more successful in this dynamic than Starr. Before opening night, the Continental appeared to him as a "deviant space" while Old City, with empty storefronts and cosmetic sores gave off the effect of "a slum." Though in the 1970s Old City's warehouses and factories were converted into lofts and later condominiums, the process slowed at the end of the 1980s. Starr's recycled diner, removed from this "back-to-the-city" trend, fulfilled a different need. Rather than encouraging Baby Boomer residency or increasing a shrinking tax base, Continental began Old City's transformation from an industrial area into a restaurant/nightlife district, luring in new people and products.¹⁶⁶

Starr's rebranding coincided with broader changes in the urban-suburban dynamic. Following the decades-long pattern of what historian Kevin Kruse describes as "urban separatism and suburban secession," Philadelphia relied on improving the balance

¹⁶⁶ Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: the death and life of authentic urban places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 224; Frank Bruni, "Keeping it Kosher: Hasids, West Indians, hipsters, and pizza," *New York Times Magazine*, October 10, 2010, 66; Toby Barlow, "It takes a village to open a bistro," *New York Times*, October 25, 2009, 10; Melena Ryzik, "Renewal, slow cooked," *New York Times*, October 20, 2010, D1; Kristen Shamus, "Let's give Detroit credit," *Detroit Free Press*, October 10, 2010, A5; Bernadine Watson, *The New Old City: the recycling of a Philadelphia neighborhood* (Philadelphia: Temple University [M.A. Thesis], Templana Book Collection, 1997); Rick Nichols, "City's artisans," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 23, 1981, C1; Thomas Hine, "Architecture: a look at the surge towards loft living," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September

between these two disparate spheres. In the 1990s, Rendell's tactic was regionalization, or "a city for the suburbs" plan. The mayor argued that suburban areas with a healthy, vibrant city at the center performed better economically than suburban areas around a stagnant or dying core. Under his administration's watch, Philadelphia witnessed a wave of new openings in retail stores, hotels, convention space, and restaurants. By the early 2000s, Philadelphia, along with other U.S. cities, resembled what urban geographer Paul Knox terms "metroburbia;" as cities were reshaped with amenities that appealed to suburbanites and tourists (such as the Old City and Manayunk districts), outlying areas turned to New Urbanism with sanitized recreations of city centers. The result was a "new, center-less world" of recognized retail stores, heavily patrolled public areas, car-friendly infrastructure, and in the dining realm, themed restaurant chains. In Philadelphia, chains found themselves torn between locating in Center City or its competing center of gravity at King of Prussia. The city received its share of chain outlets (Hard Rock Café, Olive Garden, Applebee's, Chili's, Rainforest Café, et al.), concentrated mainly near the Pennsylvania Convention Center (opened 1993).¹⁶⁷

Within the city's restaurant industry, Starr provided something unique. Themed restaurant chains such as Hard Rock Café and Applebee's relied on visual and gastronomic sameness, preferring "pragmatic and safe" designs. Smaller restaurants, such as the city's dozens of BYOBs, contained minimalist décor and atmospheres. Yet no two

19, 1982, N9; Jerry Adler, "Performance Cuisine," *Newsweek* 134, August 16, 1999, 26. 167 Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the making of modern conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 234; Rich Henson, "Rendell rekindles the debate on regionalization," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 9, 1994, MC01; Paul L. Knox, *Metroburbia, USA* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008); Jon C. Teaford, *The Metropolitan Revolution: the rise of post-urban America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 262; John McCalla, "Hypertheme restaurants hyped out," *Philadelphia Business Journal*, January 25, 1999, 3; Gottdiener, 82.

Starr restaurants were alike. For inspiration, Starr skimmed magazines, album covers, the cinema vault, old television shows, and thematics from other restaurants. A mishmash of cultural artifacts, such as vintage photo booths, shag carpets, Danish modern tables, and hanging bamboo chairs merged with staff uniforms (usually plain white or black) and menu items, coalescing into what Starr termed the “wow factor.” As he explained, “the common thread in all of [the restaurants] is great food and spirit....but we always want the design to be different.” More, Starr never opened restaurants in the suburbs. This was precisely Starr’s rebranding success: while his restaurants enlivened certain Philadelphia neighborhoods, suburbanites and tourists comprised the bulk of his business. The ancillary benefit was a newly kindled interest in the postindustrial city. Speaking about his Manhattan restaurants, Starr mentioned “regular people are the ones who will ultimately pay the bills, like the lawyers from Long Island.”¹⁶⁸

Starr grew up in Woodbury Heights, NJ, just south of Philadelphia. He admired sci-fi films, was an avid Beatles fan, defended Phillies’ outfielder Richie Allen against racial slurs, and participated in antiwar rallies. Later, he made fake *Melody Maker* press passes and sporting a British accent, snuck into concerts at the Spectrum and Electric Factory. In those venues, he noticed that music alone did not make a great concert. In his words, success came from “the spectacle, the energy, the vibe.” After graduating from college, he opened Stars at 2nd and Bainbridge Streets, where rising comedians such as Jerry Seinfeld and Bob Saget honed their skills. He closed in 1980 under competition

¹⁶⁸ Regina Baraban and Joseph Durocher, *Successful Restaurant Design* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 14; Ken Alan, “What’s new and hot within the regional hospitality scene,” *The Pottstown Mercury*, December 30, 2004, 3; Scott Cronick, “Starr’s Attraction,” *The Press of Atlantic City*, October 11, 2007, 39; Florence Fabricant, “With 420 new seats to fill, restaurateur banks on buzz,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2006, F1; Jane Levere, “Visitors free to eat well in Philadelphia hot spots,” *Boston Herald*, July 1,

from the other clubs in town. Then, turning to concert promotion, he booked events at the Walnut Street Theater and the Academy of Music. After being bought out in 1991 by his competitors, he parlayed his knowledge into the “little diner” at 2nd and Market.¹⁶⁹

Before Starr, the Continental was a holdover from when diners held a higher place in America’s cultural firmament. In his examination of the postwar diner, Andrew Hurley argues that while in the 1950s diners “helped millions of Americans translate material prosperity...into some measure of social success,” fast food chains and the fragmentation of a “theoretically homogenous” market caused the industry as a whole to decline sharply in the mid-1960s. By the late 1970s, diners devolved into greasy spoons unfit to compete with ethnic restaurants and broadening consumer tastes. Philadelphia’s diners, including the Continental, maintained degrees of customer loyalty (usually from the immediate neighborhood) and nostalgic cache. But they were culinary relics. When 90-year old William B. Curry, Sr., the third-generation owner of an Old City stationery store was profiled by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1987, he spoke of his then-20-year old breakfast ritual. Descending the spiral staircase from his home above the store, he would amble one block north along S. 2nd Street to the Continental. There, he would order “the usual” fare of eggs, bacon, and Scotch and water (the Scotch self-brought). In 1989, the Continental received no mention in an *Inquirer* guide to the city’s diners. The omission, and Curry’s imbibed morning routine, were emblematic of the diner’s cultural rust.¹⁷⁰

2001, 49.

¹⁶⁹ White (ed.), 45-47; “Why do foodies love Stephen Starr?” *Philadelphia Magazine*, April 2010, 18-19; Steve Cuzzo, “Brotherly Shove,” *New York Post*, January 4, 2006, 33.

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Hurley, *Diners, Bowling Alleys, and Trailer Parks: chasing the American dream in the postwar consumer culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 103-104; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: the politics of mass consumption in postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003), 331; Krishnendu Ray, “Ethnic succession

Through the 1970s, large-scale development became an article of faith in many Center City neighborhoods. Large corporations occupied newer office space along Market Street West, creating a citywide glut of vacancies. Old City, left out of the City Planning Commission's (CPC) purview, saw artist pioneers and what local builder Carl Dranoff called "sandlot developers" converting vacant factories and warehouses into lofts. Between 1973 and 1976, according to one former resident, "only artists moved into [Old City]. There were no stores. For three years, it was really desolate." Until 1971, such conversions were illegal under Philadelphia's zoning codes. In that year, the CPC surveyed 800 buildings in the area, finding more than half in poor, vandalized, or vacant condition. Instead of issuing a white paper similar to its Independence Park and Market East plans, the CPC encouraged loft conversions to resuscitate the tax base that Old City's industrial firms couldn't sustain. To accelerate the process, the CPC and City Council allowed for a major zoning change, reclassifying Old City from industrial to residential/commercial. As Thomas Hine argued, both the CPC and the city government recognized that "loft living was a way to make the city appealing to the middle-class." As evidenced by transformations in New York's SoHo and London's Docklands districts, artists by the 1970s assumed a pivotal role in urban landscapes. A process replicated in Philadelphia, Old City's artists were not seen "as cultural servants but cultural trendsetters," becoming the wedge that drove out old industrial firms.¹⁷¹

and the new American restaurant cuisine," in *The Restaurants Book: ethnographies of where we eat*, eds., David Beriss and David Sutton (New York: Berg, 2007); Michael Vitez, "Almost 90 and a man to keep up with," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 13, 1987, I1; Gerald Etter, "Can anything be finer than to try a local diner?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 21, 1989, FG26.

¹⁷¹ Stephan Salisbury, "Learning to battle for home, livelihood," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 18, 1983, D1; Thomas Hine, "Architecture: a look at the surge towards loft living," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 19, 1982, N9; Andrew Cassel, "Unsung

By the close of the 1980s, Old City's loft-condo makeover ran out of steam. As the *Philadelphia Inquirer* lamented in 1989, "age, neglect, abuse, fire, bulldozers, greed and just plain bad taste slowly disfigured Philadelphia's most historic district, particularly its first major commercial street, 307-year-old East Market Street." Under the federal Tax Reform Act of 1986, the 1981 Historic Rehabilitation tax credit that spurred many of Old City's conversions was reduced from twenty-five to twenty per cent. Though seemingly small, the reduction, along with depopulation and a spate of banking scandals, curbed firms' ability to raise money for new projects. Many existing Old City buildings lost money and an eight per cent city tax on condo conversions, instituted in 1983, was a further detriment. The slowdown also resulted from the Old City Civic Association (OCCA), which adamantly fought "certain types of commercial development" and in 1990 pushed for an amendment to "eliminate nightlife and severely regulate the location of new restaurants and other public businesses." Fearful that too many bars and restaurants would devalue Market Street, the OCCA hoped to avoid the noise, vandalism, and public drunkenness that plagued nearby South Street, then the city's premier nightlife area. After the amendment was passed, developers looked increasingly to Penn's Landing. During the 1980s, more than \$200 million was spent along the river in the way of restaurants, nightclubs, and apartments. This process continued into the 1990s as developers, hoping to emulate Baltimore's successful Inner Harbor, wished to create a "platinum playground" at the waterfront. Second and Market streets, meanwhile,

army alters face of Center City," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 21, 1986, I1; Thomas Hine, "Eager developers meet cautious city in an old district," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 19, 1981, B2; Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: the rise and fall of an artists' colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 50; Neil Smith, "New city, new frontier: the Lower East Side as wild, wild West," in *Variations on a Theme Park*, ed., Michael Sorkin, 1992: 61-93; Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: culture and capital in urban change* (Baltimore: Johns

remained dark.¹⁷²

A number of factors were critical to the Continental's success. Its location on Market Street's south side did not conflict with the OCCA's zoning amendment. Bernadine Watson indicates that with "the conversion of the Continental diner to the considerably more upscale martini bar....and given its upscale profile....the OCCA voted not to oppose the liquor license application." Secondly, the Continental was a risky investment. When Starr approached the previous owner about selling, he replied "are you crazy? What can you gross in a place like this? Four thousand a month if you're lucky?" Thirdly, Philadelphia had never seen anything in the likes of the new Continental. While the shell of the diner remained, its original sign refurbished, the new interior became a trendy draw. The *Philadelphia Daily News* praised the recycled diner as "a chic, Manhattan bistro amid Old City's wonderfully eclectic grunge. Its waitresses are fantastically gorgeous, its tapas plates are delicious, and the martinis are bourgeois drinks in a shot-and-beer town." The dining room contained plush red leather booths while the bathroom corridors were lined with porthole-glassed walls. Menu headings were printed in the cursive Murray Hill font, reminiscent of the 1950s. Chef Raul Baccardo's lemongrass spring rolls, Thai chicken skewers, and lobster/Gruyere macaroni and cheese attracted fashionistas, lawyers in pinstriped suits, and urban hipsters, elite people whom in the experience economy Richard Florida remarks "increasingly act like tourists in their

Hopkins University Press, 1982), 19.

¹⁷² Hank Klibanoff, "Putting the old in Old City's east Market Street," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 8, 1989, B1; Gene Austin, "Tax credit for rehab is in danger," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 10, 1985, K1; Barbara Demick, "Some tax shelters remain for hardy and well-heeled," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 16, 1988, C1; Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: governance, ideology, and development in American urbanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 122; Watson, 1997, 104; Margaret O. Kirk, "River of Dreams," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 28, 1990,

own cities.” Shortly after opening night, Starr remarked “there’s a large pocket of people in Philadelphia in the arts and fashion who have no place to go. They feel intimidated by the Delaware Avenue scene, which to anyone with real sophistication, you’d be appalled to go down there....I want a clientele that’s upscale, hip, trendy.”¹⁷³

For Old City, the Continental delivered more than just a fashionable hangout; it propelled a wave of redevelopment, which the *Philadelphia Inquirer* dubbed “luxury lounge action.” The redevelopment proved so inviting that Old City, exchanging vacant factories for velvet ropes, trumped South Street as the city’s premier entertainment zone. As a local bartender explained, “now the only people who go to South Street are tourists; it got too young. This is the new hot spot.” Streams of high-end sports cars and limousines clogged the intersection of 2nd and Market Streets. Celebrities, local politicians, athletes, and the well-heeled from various professions converged on the Continental for tuna tartare and Tang-rimmed martinis, while other nearby establishments, such as Cuba Libre, Red Sky, Glam, and 32 Degrees (with private “vodka lockers” starting at \$300) catered to those seeking an upscale experience. By 2003 Old City, from Front to Sixth Streets and Walnut to Wood Streets, contained ninety-one restaurants and bars with more than seventy south of Market Street. The opening of restaurants and bars grew with such ferocity that in 2003, the OCCA lobbied City Council (unsuccessfully) to extend the 1990 zoning ordinance south of Market Street.¹⁷⁴

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¹⁷³ Watson, 110; White (ed.), 51; Don Russell, “Martini madness moves in,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 27, 1995, 48; Aliza Green, “That’s using your noodles,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 8, 1997, 32; Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 224; Erin Einhorn, “The making of a Philly hot spot,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 15, 1999, 59.

¹⁷⁴ Michael Klein, “Table Talk,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 23, 2003, F1; Wendy Tanaka, “Mastermind behind high-concept eateries,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May

Starr's success with the Continental reverberated beyond Philadelphia and the popularity of experience dining helped propel the city's image into then-uncharted territory. In 2004, Philadelphia placed bids to become the fifteenth host city for the MTV network's popular reality show *The Real World*. As a branding strategy, the city's boosters hoped that if selected, *The Real World* would give Philadelphia an undeniable "coolness factor." Philadelphia had for several generations lingered in New York's shadow when competing for those seeking urban sophistication and cultural capital. Secondly, some boosters felt that over time, the presence of *The Real World* might offset more than 50,000 college grads from being part of the city's ongoing "brain drain" problem; if MTV gave Philadelphia a stamp of pop culture approval, the thousands of twentysomethings might elect to remain in the city after graduation. Under the proposals, Starr would have contributed significantly as his second (and larger) Continental diner at 18th and Chestnut Streets was chosen as the workplace of *The Real World's* cast members. Yet the historic intransigence of Philadelphia's unions threatened to derail the entire plan. Local painting, carpentry, and construction unions demanded that MTV grant contracts to organized labor for the work on the Seamen's Institute, an Old City building that later served as the cast members' living quarters. When non-union labor was chosen, organized labor members picketed at the 3rd and Arch Streets site. Campus Philly, a local non-profit, sponsored a counter rally with a young crowd waving placards proclaiming "show Philly to the Real World!" MTV pulled up stakes and Starr, noticeably disappointed, stated the city missed out on a "pop culture milestone," one akin to "when the Pope was here." In the wake of the deal's collapse, Mayor John Street and Rendell (then Pennsylvania's

26, 2002, E1; Linda K. Harris, "Hot spot Old City tries to keep its cool," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 24, 2003, B1.

governor) made several calls to *The Real World's* producers in southern California apologizing for the unions' behavior. By April 2004, a deal was reached between the city's unions and *The Real World's* producers. The show itself, filmed during the summer, left a divided legacy in both Old City and Philadelphia. While college students and other Gen-Xers hailed the show as a successful vehicle for Philadelphia's coolness factor, older residents and merchants lamented the increase of late-night debauchery in Old City and the televised overexposure of their beloved "private city."¹⁷⁵

In 2005, *National Geographic Traveler* heralded Old City as "the liveliest urban neighborhood between SoHo and South Beach." Starr himself received impressive accolades; he was named *Bon Appetit's* 2005 restaurateur of the year while *USA Today* hailed Continental as "a seminal event in the city's transformation." Between 1995 and 2000, Starr opened Buddakan, Tangerine, Jones, Blue Angel, and Morimoto. Whether modeled on Paris' Budda Bar (Buddakan), an Arabian nights fantasy (Tangerine), the "comfort food" of Hollywood's Roscoe's (Jones), a French bistro (Blue Angel), or a futuristic chamber bathed in blue and orange light (Morimoto), Starr's experience dining hit notes of chic taste and fantasy. Jones, Blue Angel and Morimoto, located within feet of one another, revitalized the boarded-up 700-block of Chestnut Street into a new restaurant row with nearby apartment rents rising "commensurately." Starr's model had

¹⁷⁵ "Hip-O-Meter," *Philadelphia Weekly*, September 15, 2004, 9; Dan Deluca, "For many, MTV show proves city's cool factor is climbing," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 29, 2004, A1; Michael Klein, "Union protest at 'Real World' site," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 4, 2004, B4; Maureen Tkacik, "In Philadelphia, trying to keep it real," *New York Times*, March 21, 2004, ST12; Wendy Tanaka, "The image makers: can these people make Philadelphia cool?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 14, 2003, T3; Sam Bass Warner described Philadelphia's social heritage as "of such private associations" in that Philadelphians of various economic means and ethnic backgrounds "rushed into clubs and associations." Sam Bass Warner, *The Private City: Philadelphia in three periods of its growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 60-62.

blossomed into a syndrome. He could simply announce plans for a new restaurant and generate excitement. In real estate circles, Starr became known as the “space junkie,” with his phone constantly receiving calls from agents announcing potential locations. This success led Starr to cultivate what was in 2000 his most ambitious (and expensive) project to date: University City’s Pod.¹⁷⁶

By the mid-1990s, University City had degenerated into a crime-ridden district. At the end of WWII, the neighborhood lay geographically isolated by the Schuylkill River, railroad lines, and a cemetery. By the early 1950s, many older families moved out to the Main Line suburbs and the demographics of University City shifted mainly to African-Americans and Irish immigrants fleeing the depression in their homeland. By the 1980s, the University of Pennsylvania campus was surrounded by a neighborhood where one in five residents lived below the poverty line. The physical landscape of University City was equally forbidding. Most of the main thoroughfares were dominated by parking lots and Brutalist architecture, giving the area an asphalt wilderness look while the blocks west of 40th Street were considered “no-mans land.” Former Penn president Judith Rodin recalled, “the nearest grocery store was many blocks away...there were few restaurants, and the dark, empty streets made everyone jumpy.” Until the late 1990s, the area’s restaurant options were limited mainly to Chinese food, pizzerias, and the food trucks

¹⁷⁶ “Philadelphia: America’s next great city,” *National Geographic Traveler*, May 2005, 20-22; “From Rocky to rockin,” *USA Today*, November 11, 2005, C3; Rick Nichols, “Adventure awaits,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 6, 2002, 21; Jennifer Weiner, “Food fight,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 20, 2000, F1; “Hot Chestnut: once seedy street lures condos, clubs, and restaurants,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 26, 2004, 31; “Starr treatment for classic Italian cuisine,” *Delaware County Daily Times*, December 3, 2003, 15; Hal K. Rothman, “Selling the meaning of place: entrepreneurship, tourism, and community transformation in the twentieth century American West,” *Pacific Historical Review* 65 (November 1996): 235-255; Amy Cortese, “Putting capital at the top of the menu,” *New York Times*, February 1, 2009, 14; Fabio Parasecoli, *Bite Me: food*

moored to the Penn and Drexel campuses. With the universities appearing as fortresses amidst one of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods, University City occupied the intersection of "high culture and devastating poverty."¹⁷⁷

The blight proved an obstacle for Penn. Touting itself as a world-class research and academic facility, the crime rates in the neighborhood deflected talented applicants away from the Ivy League school, whose parents were fearful of the surrounding urban misery. The problems continued into the 1990s, with nearly thirty armed robberies on or near the Penn campus in September 1996 alone. University officials were desperate to give the campus and adjacent neighborhood a facelift. The general plan was to capitalize on University City's existing attributes (education, health care, scientific research, and transit hubs), combine them with new retail, restaurants, and residential buildings, and eliminate the vast expanses of asphalt and replace them with "green spaces." Alternately termed the "Cambridge" or "Georgetown" visions, recalling the redevelopment of the areas surrounding Harvard and Georgetown Universities, the comprehensive plan for Penn was entitled the "Agenda for Excellence." Taking cues from Jane Jacobs' seminal *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and informed by New Urbanism, Penn wished to resuscitate vibrancy and walkability in a neighborhood that had given way to parking lots and a palpable fear of the streets. By constructing new public spaces in a heavily privatized area, the Agenda for Excellence was in theory an ambitious blueprint

in popular culture (New York: Berg, 2008), 128.

¹⁷⁷ David Brownlee, *Building America's First University: an historical and architectural guide to the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 41; Judith Rodin, *The University and urban revival: out of the ivory tower and into the streets* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 10; Elizabeth Berlin, *Race and Redevelopment: the consequences of urban renewal in west Philadelphia, 1950-1970* (Philadelphia: Temple Book Collection, 2005), 22-27; Harley F. Etienne, *University/Community Relations: public rhetoric and private interests*

for allowing students, faculty, residents, and tourists to interact.¹⁷⁸

The Agenda centered on the student real estate market, the courting of which depended on the development of new amenities. As long-time resident Mary Ann Craig explained in a letter to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* about the proposals, “we were aware that Penn always had ‘plans’ for our area. Life took on a provisional quality for us...how long would we stay? This not only caused depressed property values but also a sense of disconnection.” While the student market proved lucrative, many long-time residents feared that an upscale transformation would create a generic city center, one no longer reliant on homeownership and the “niceties that make communities pleasant.” Rodin, her colleagues, and the Bailey Design Group of Plymouth Meeting, PA recognized that the sterile dormitory towers and windswept plazas divided the campus from the area. To help resuscitate the sense of community, Penn opened new parks along Chestnut Street and revised its “100% Mortgage Program” to help new residents and faculty restore and upgrade the historic homes in nearby Powelton.¹⁷⁹

The University City District (UCD), the body charged with carrying out the Agenda, gave firmer shape to the neighborhood’s renewal. The lion’s share of the UCD budget came from Penn and Drexel. Proclaiming University City as “a center of the new economy,” sprucing up the area with new retail and restaurants was a primary goal. Yet the Agenda relied less on encouraging independent retailers and more on recruiting

(Philadelphia: Templana Book Collection, 2002), 49.

¹⁷⁸ Brownlee, 135; Florida, 292; Peter Key, “Science center’s Cambridge vision develops hazy future,” *Philadelphia Business Journal*, February 8, 2008, 10; Anastasia Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht, *Sidewalks: conflict and negotiation over public space* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 39; Robert H. Kargon, *Invented Edens: techno-cities of the twentieth century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).

¹⁷⁹ Mary Ann Craig, “Growing up near Penn,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 12, 1998, 13; Mark Clarke-Pearson, “U. Penn administrators unveil strategic plan,” *The Daily*

corporate tenants such as The Gap, Urban Outfitters, East Coast Sports, Starbucks, Hilton, and Ann Taylor Loft. With recognized corporate tenants, the UCD felt the area would be made safer, clean, and desirable. Regarding restaurants, the UCD had a particular issue with the food trucks. Rodin explained that they “presented another significant problem....their presence on the streets was detrimental to a quality retail atmosphere and contributed especially to the lack of restaurants.” To maintain the food truck tradition, one beloved by students and faculty, Penn executive John Fry suggested the creation of fresh-air food plazas. In the process, though not without protest, the trucks were cleared from Sansom, Walnut, 36th, and 37th streets.¹⁸⁰

Sansom Commons, a \$120 million mixed-use development, became the new anchor of University City. The most expensive commercial investment in west Philadelphia’s history, Sansom Commons was not universally accepted as the best choice for revitalizing University City. Being that the neighborhood was populated mainly by black residents and that Penn and Drexel had largely white student bodies, the Agenda faced racial discrimination issues. Particularly incensed were food truck operators and street vendors. For them, and many long-time residents, Sansom Commons appeared as a way for the UCD “to turn Penn into a shopping center.” Rodin viewed the project as improvement on the quality of life, arguing “if we could make this a destination for

Pennsylvanian, April 2, 2002, 3; Brownlee, 137.

¹⁸⁰ Mark Davis, “University City gets a big boost,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 19, 1997, A1; Blake Gumprecht, “The American College Town,” *American Geographical Society* 93 (January 2003): 51-80, 64; Rodin, 113; Larry Fish, “Penn, reexpanding, hopes it learned a lesson,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 4, 1998, A1; Rodin, 116, 127; *The West Philadelphia Landscape Plan: a framework for action* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Dept. of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, 1991), 3-6; *West Philadelphia Initiatives: a case study in urban revitalization* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); “Introducing John A. Fry, our 14th president,” *Drexel Magazine* 20, Spring 2010, 1-3.

tourists and campus visitors, or bring in shoppers from other areas, well, better still.” To generate goodwill, the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition (GPUAC) announced that Penn was “very committed to providing west Philadelphia residents with a chance [for employment]” in the construction of or operations in Sansom Commons. Beginning in 1998, several Commons businesses sponsored the “Go West” arts and restaurant festival to connect residents with the new project.¹⁸¹

Given Starr’s track record in rebranding Philadelphia, he appeared a sound choice for Sansom Commons. But the selection of Starr, along with national corporate tenants, indicated that his experience dining had reached mass appeal and perhaps lost some of its uniqueness. Urban sociologists have described projects such as Sansom Commons as “the universal rhetoric of upscale growth.” Sharon Zukin, Joel Kotkin, and others contend that a downside of amenity-driven development is that vestiges of the old city, or the “old heart,” increasingly give way to upscale condos, trendy boutiques, and pricey restaurants. Describing this transformation in San Francisco, Rebecca Solnit warns of “a new American economy in which....everything will be more homogenous and more controlled or controllable.” The UCD pursued this strategy in revitalizing University City with Rodin, Fry, and others seeing the potential in up-market amenities. Their reasoning stemmed from large amount of “sophisticates” in University City and their tendency to gravitate towards ethnic restaurants or those with edgy aesthetics.¹⁸²

181 David J. Wallace, “Penn planning to build hotel and a commercial hub,” *New York Times*, September 21, 1997, 7; David Perry and Wim Wiewel, eds., *Global Universities and Urban Development: case studies and analysis* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 9; Rodin, 116; Mensah Dean, “Not always academic,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 29, 1998, 8; Randy Kraft, “New hotel opens on campus of University of Pennsylvania,” *Allentown Morning Call*, September 12, 1999, F4.

182 Zukin, 2010, 2; Joel Kotkin, *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 59-61; Colin Amery and Daniel Cruickshank, *The Rape of*

While Starr recognized the target demographic for his latest venture, he initially was unsure of the restaurant's concept and theme. He walked the Penn campus, quizzed passersby, and then discussed options with his creative team. At first, Starr envisioned a family-style Italian restaurant. But his team advised him to think bigger, to be "edgy, hip, and do something high-concept." The end result was Pod, a futuristic Pan-Asian eatery inspired by space age décor and technology reminiscent of Automats. Wedding this cultural nostalgia with consumer taste, Pod's aesthetics were a blend of cinematic set design and automation combined with the artistic vision of the David Rockwell Group. An internationally recognized design firm headquartered in New York, the Rockwell Group had by 2000 assembled an impressive resume of restaurant interiors, including Manhattan's Nobu, Adour Alain Ducasse, and Ruby Foo's.¹⁸³

Pod's interior contained *Star Trek*-like shimmering white walls with the bar surface emanating amber lighting. The dining room was unlike any other in Philadelphia, with yellowtail Ponzu and various tempura items placed on color-coded plates, streaming out of the kitchen on conveyor belts. Barstools glowed in red and blue when patrons sat down. The main dining room, with its escalator handrails and curvaceous white chairs, took cues from Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal. Wavy red and white booths recalled the Corova Milk Bar from Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* while the private "dining pods" resembled the circular spaces of the modular Pan Am capsules in his *2001: a space*

Britain (London: P. Elek, 1975); Rebecca Solnit, *Hollow City: the siege of San Francisco and the crisis of American urbanism* (New York: Verso, 2000), 14.

¹⁸³ "Food for Thought," *Main Line Ticket*, August 7, 2008, 9; Monica Geran, "Mod Pod," *Interior Design* 72 (March 2001): 174-180; Michael Klein, "A new stage for Stephen Starr," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 3, 2000, D1; Rockwell Group Restaurant Portfolio, <http://www.rockwellgroup.com/> (accessed June 3, 2010); Francesca Chapman, "Next course; these top restaurateurs haven't had their fill," *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 6, 2001, 30; Tom Belden, "Keeping Penn campus vibrant," *Philadelphia*

odyssey. Closed-circuit TV cameras beamed the interior happenings of Pod onto monitors facing Sansom Street, adding a voyeuristic element to the experience. One critic noted “it’s a total sensory experience....I just had lunch on the Mothership” while another opined that “the *Lost in Translation*-esque interior is a cross between Disneyland and a four-star restaurant.” Rodin cited Pod as her favorite place to take “out-of-towners.” Pod’s aesthetics interiorized the luminous spectacles found in Tokyo’s Electric Town or shown in Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* in a city whose laws forbade large electric signage on built exteriors. Starr played off Philadelphia’s unassuming nature and by creating a “closed ecology” at Pod, he lent University City a sanctuary-feel.¹⁸⁴

The arrival of Stephen Starr in both Old City and University City generated new flows of activity. However, the end results for the two neighborhoods differed significantly. By the mid-2000s, Old City was viewed in dubious terms. With some praising the nightlife development and others loathing it, its once-celebrity guests made way for the “bridge and tunnel crowds.” Though Continental led the charge, bars outnumbered legitimate eating establishments. Starr commented, “a lot of bars opened that disguised themselves as restaurants....when they become predominant, it becomes South Street.” With the proliferation of bars and cocktail lounges came the very elements

Inquirer, September 9, 2002, C1.

¹⁸⁴ “Two Ps in this Pod,” *Chestnut Hill Local*, April 23, 2009, 25; Jerold J. Abrams, *The Philosophy of Stanley Kubrick* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 247-266; Klein, “A New Stage for Stephen Starr,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 3, 2000, D1; Ed Lordan, “Slip into a pod for futuristic Asian dining,” *Delaware County Daily Times*, April 11, 2001, 11; Patricia Mack, “Independent Eats,” *New Jersey Record*, July 4, 2001, F1; Gato Toninas, “Reality TV exhumes Philadelphia’s styles,” *The Badger Herald*, September 7, 2004, 4; Sabrina Rubin Erdely, “Judith Rodin: my Philadelphia story,” in *The Philadelphia Reader*, ed., Huber Wallace (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 142-143; Stephen Mansfield, *Tokyo: a cultural history* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 251-252; Francesca Chapman, “Next Course,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 6, 2001, 30; Peder Anker, “The Ecological Colonization of Space,”

that had long-plagued South Street: drunkenness, public urination, graffiti, and occasional drive-by shootings. In profiling Old City's declining high-end image, *Philadelphia Magazine* noted Starr "was the neighborhood's official Pied Piper...attracting the cocktail crowd, foodies, and boldface names." While many wondered what precipitated Old City's fall, the zoning restrictions put in place via the OCCA in the early 1990s more or less sealed the fate of the blocks below Market as a "drinking ghetto." As Inga Saffron explains, "no one really *prefers* those types of clubs, but Old City became de facto designated." Because Old City never fell under the comprehensive purview of the CPC, the area always lacked a definitive renewal plan. In a sense, Old City developed more organically than the planned boulevards and windswept plazas elsewhere in Philadelphia.

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After Pod, University City's fortunes changed considerably. Sansom Commons became the area's new focal point while the UCD developed the slogan "University City - left of center." Displayed on colorful lamppost banners, it touted the neighborhood as a commercial and cultural alternative to Center City. The changes were highly noticeable in the neighborhood's restaurants as well. Sidewalk cafes sprouted on once-empty streets. From 2001 to 2007, eight new upscale restaurants appeared in what the *Philadelphia Business Journal* termed "an historically underserved culinary area." Pod was held responsible for "bringing an edgier mix" of restaurants to the blocks between the Schuylkill River and 40th Street. Following Pod, celebrity chef Bobby Flay, local chef Jose Garces, and several others came to University City. After 2005, the blocks west of

Environmental History 10 (April 2005): 239-268, 241.

185 Linda K. Harris, "Hot spot Old City tries to keep its cool," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 24, 2003, B1; Richard Rys, "What the hell happened to Old City?" *Philadelphia Magazine*, August 2010, 27; interview with Inga Saffron conducted by the

40th Street emerged as fertile restaurant ground with Marigold Kitchen, Distrito, and Abbraccio complementing the ethnic eateries of Dahlak and Gojo on Baltimore Avenue. The restaurant renaissance jumpstarted by Pod attracted what Penn executive director of public affairs Anthony Sorrentino termed “destination diners,” or those seeking a taste of the exotic. In a sense, the makeover of University City relied on a process of culinary colonization.¹⁸⁶

By 2010, Philadelphia exhibited the sustainable food trend. Rooted in the buy-local ethos of Alice Waters’ Chez Panisse and the slow food movement, farmer’s markets and organic groceries complemented eateries such as The Farmer’s Table, Honey’s Sit and Eat, and Farm and the Fisherman, which used regional bounties to fashion an ecological sensitivity within the dining experience. Though localism and slow food had existed for decades, the farm-to-table craze carried them into the restaurantscape. As Carlo Petrini notes, such establishments “promote local identity, the proper use of raw ingredients, and [revive] simple, seasonal flavors.” Yet until 2011, the area’s most popular restaurant in this genre was located some 45 minutes from Center City. At Talula’s Table, with a tiny a 12-seat dining room in Kennett Square, the “mushroom capital of the world,” owners Bryan Sikora and Aimee Olexy had for years sold out their \$100-a-piece seats several months in advance. With artisanal cheeses, seasonal produce, and firm connections with local farmers, Sikora and Olexy created “a haven for foodies.” Their success caused Starr, ever mindful of trends, to take notice.¹⁸⁷

author, March 25, 2010.

¹⁸⁶ David Faris, “West Philadelphia is poised for a restaurant renaissance,” *Philadelphia Business Journal*, January 5, 2007, 9; Josee Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 101.

¹⁸⁷ Ann Karlen, *Grid Magazine’s Local Food Guide to Philadelphia, 2011-2012*

Starr imagined a larger version of Talula's Table to occupy his former Washington Square restaurant fronting the park, which had closed in 2007. Yet what distinguished the space from its namesake counterpart was the outdoor deck area adjacent to the dining room. Here, Starr created a garden paradise with walls of daffodils and kudzu sandwiched between two residential towers on the western side of Washington Square Park. Spherical and teardrop-shaped lights were strung across the space while the bar was accented by flowerboxes. Dismantling the frosted glass façade of his previous restaurant, Starr erected a wrought-iron fence with mini-birdhouses. Through a kind of "apartmental nature," fusing together the city and countryside, the Talula's Garden restaurant combined flora, food, and urban space with eyes trained towards sustainability. In warmer months the deck space filled with people, who ordered vegetable and herb-infused cocktails and enjoyed a serene nook set off of Washington Square Park. Talula's Garden, when compared with the park, was the tried-and-true Starr method of a controlled and scripted interior, devoid of the panhandlers and canine waste found across the street. This was imported nature to be sure, but Starr's imagineering provided patrons a foodie respite from the urban bustle. On opening night 2011, high-end cars lined up at the valet podium while residents of Washington Square streamed out of their buildings to sample the garden's offerings.¹⁸⁸

Named by *Bon Appetit* as one of the nation's best new restaurants, Talula's Garden represented a small-scale Arcadian reshaping of the postindustrial city. By

(Philadelphia: Red Flag Media, 2011), 2; Kamp, 2006, 64-69; Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food: the case for taste* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 51-52; Sandy Farnan, "Talula's Table is set for diners in Kennett Square," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 1, 2007, L12.

¹⁸⁸ Derek Lee, "Farmhouse Dinner at Talula's Table," *Saveur*, December 23, 2009, 13-14.

greening a vacant concrete space, the Garden emerged as *third* nature, a place to consume the products of the first while enjoying the urbanity of the second. Philadelphians and their visitors, latching onto the localism and slow food trends, praised Talula's Garden for incorporating the Chester County farm belt into the menu. While enjoying their oxtail consommé or bone marrow dumplings, patrons took solace in their sustainable consumption. Talula's Garden recalled the urban-rural schism described by Peter J. Schmitt by bridging the cultural and spatial gaps between city and hinterland. As David Schumway posits, intellectual traditions stretching back to Thoreau have positioned landscapes such as Kennett Square's as *natural* and those in places such as Philadelphia "as lacking nonhuman life." But as Schmitt carefully reminded his readers, urbanites' appreciation for nature did not indicate their automatic rejection of the city. Talula's Garden then became a conduit through which Starr's patrons could sample the countryside while remaining in the urban ecology and not disturbing their "cosmopolitan sense."¹⁸⁹

Examining Continental, Pod, and Talula's Garden reveals both the attractions of experience dining methodology and how Starr's cultural imagineering rebranded portions of Philadelphia's built environment. Through a nostalgic updating of the postwar diner, the creation of a space-age Pan-Asian restaurant, and the opening of a third nature space, he combined food, materials, and human socializing, a synthesis that Henri Lefebvre likens to "connecting systems that might appear to be distinct." In the process, Starr

¹⁸⁹ Andrew Knowlton, "The Best Restaurants in America, 2011," *Bon Appetit*, September 2011, 17; Cronon, 266-267; Rick Nichols, "Intimacy writ large," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 21, 2011, F1; Carl Bode, ed., *The Portable Thoreau* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 609; Michael Bennett and David W. Teague, eds., *The Nature of Cities: ecocriticism and urban environments* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999), 257; Peter J. Schmitt, *Back to Nature: the Arcadian myth in urban America* (New York:

merged historic, social, and cultural ecologies into multisensory experiences. Regardless of the stage, Starr's actors portrayed and his audiences ingested a city striving to shed its rust and emerge as an experience-producing metropolis. Yet even with his success, Philadelphia did not completely outrun its postindustrial past. Starr's restaurants, with the exception of his Frankford Hall *bier garten* in Port Richmond, were located in Center City. Beyond the center of town, Philadelphia still contained countless abandoned factories, vacant lots, and outmoded buildings. But his ability to rebrand portions of the city in both physical and psychological capacities allowed certain groups of people to reimagine Philadelphia not as an urban mausoleum but as a place for entertaining experiences. As Starr commented in 2005, "I believe we really changed the way the city dines and goes out at night...and that's great, and I'm very happy about it, and it's a little scary."¹⁹⁰

Oxford University Press, 1969), 3.

¹⁹⁰ Jamie Horowitz and Paulette Singley, eds., *Eating Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 259; Henri Lefebvre, "The everyday and everydayness," in *Architecture of the Everyday*, eds. Steve Harris and Deborah Berke (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 33; Marie Dale, "Stephen Starr aims for hip and playful legacy," *Doylestown Intelligencer*, March 11, 2005, 11D.

CHAPTER 5

THE HIPSTERS AT THE CANTINA: CREATING “CAFE SOCIETY” ON EAST
PASSYUNK AVENUE

“People don’t think anything is real anymore.”

-Meryl Levitz,
CEO, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation

In June 2006, Cantina Los Caballitos opened on East Passyunk Avenue. After gutting a closed *trattoria* down to the studs, Stephen Simons and Dave Frank (proprietors of the grungy Khyber Bar and the Royal Tavern gastropub) created a Mexican eatery with sidewalk tables, an indie rock jukebox, and candles flickering in brick alcoves. Christmas lights adorned the bar and dining room. Tattooed servers in vintage rock t-shirts, while mispronouncing menu items, exuded a relaxed cool. Fusing Latin cuisine with a leisurely vibe, “the Cantina” became one of the most popular restaurants in the city, with *Philadelphia Weekly* deeming it the “clubhouse for the ‘New People’” and *City Paper* noting its “prime location for the elusive hipster.” In contrast, East Passyunk native Desiree Raucci commented in *Metropolis* “we’ve been invaded by aliens. I can’t even go to [the Cantina] without waiting in line while hipsters sit and discuss how they live in the ‘ghetto’ and drink \$5 ‘specials.’” Her observation revealed more than impatience with a crowded restaurant; it exposed a cultural shift. The Cantina’s debut at first did not seem a watershed; a 2009 report indicated that Mexican restaurants were “increasing faster than any other segment of the industry.” But in a neighborhood long known for organized crime and Italian gravy, the presence of mango margaritas,

threadbare Vans, and Dinosaur Jr. blaring from the stereo suggested this old Philadelphia ward was in the throes of change.¹⁹¹

The Cantina's arrival was assisted by a local effort to revitalize East Passyunk's commercial core. Leading that effort was the Citizens Alliance for Better Neighborhoods (CABN), a non-profit redevelopment agency that formed in 1989. The brainchild of former state senator Vincent Fumo and his one-time aide-turned city councilman Frank DiCicco, CABN purchased, promoted, and marketed portions of its neighborhood, reshaping the former ethnic area into a hipster enclave. Both men grew up in East Passyunk and for decades had watched its decline. Though the Ninth Street Market and Cheesesteak Triangle remained draws, the once-bustling avenue steadily lost residents and businesses to the suburbs. By the 1980s, its vigor had withered. Remaining merchants kept irregular hours and residents routinely complained of the city's failure to deliver basic services. Using political acumen and implementing a specific vision, Fumo steered vast sums of money into CABN's coffers while DiCicco imagined a "café society" to attract new residents and businesses. The group assumed control of street sweeping and lighting while also acquiring plots and several properties along East Passyunk. With installation of their "Singing Fountain," the conversion of second-floor storage into loft apartments, and the opening of several restaurants, CABN seeded new life on the old avenue, with the *Philadelphia Daily News* declaring "this is what it took to

191 Michael Klein, "Mexican cantina replaces trattoria on East Passyunk," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 8, 2006, F2; Kirsten Henri, "A Foodful Year," *Philadelphia Weekly*, December 20, 2006; "Cantina's throwing a party for the gays tonight!" *City Paper*, September 20, 2011; Desiree Raucci, "The Hipster Commandments," *Metropolis*, June 28, 2010. <http://www.phlmetropolis.com/2010/06/the-hipster-commandments.php> (accessed July 9, 2010); Stephen Franklin, "Change catches up with the myth of South Philly," *Chicago Tribune*, September 29, 1992, 5; Michael Boland, "Authentic Mexican Food: the next organic trend?" Report conducted by the Agricultural Marketing Research

bring back this part of south Philadelphia”¹⁹²

In Europe and America, “café society” entailed public overlappings of dining, imbibing, and discussion, or what W. Scott Hatne terms “vibrant, conversational social spectacles.” DiCicco imagined café society as more than socialization and *al fresco* dining; in interviews and press releases, he explained it as instrumental in revitalizing East Passyunk. To legitimize a café society, authenticity was important. CABN recognized value in distinguishing the neighborhood through its ethnic and culinary histories. Fellow councilman Jim Kenney, an admirer of Roman piazzas and the socialization they encouraged, devised the Singing Fountain to anchor a gathering site. And as former head of the Italian Market Civic Association (IMCA), DiCicco supported the vendors in Ninth Street’s food bazaar. By the late 1980s, dilapidated storefronts, uncollected garbage, and swarms of flies kept customers away. But as perceptions of cities slowly changed with the demise of manufacturing and rise of the global economy, former industrial centers such as Philadelphia were known less for rotting factories and more for consuming authentic urban experiences. Within this shift, explains Sharon Zukin, East Passyunk provided the “charms of old ethnic foods and at least a simulation of an old ethnic neighborhood.” Capitalizing on those charms, CABN touted the area’s Italian, Latino, and Asian vendors and restaurants as offering experiences unattainable in suburban malls or even in Center City. As DiCicco explained, “malls are malls, but outdoors, things are different and more exciting....as a culture, we’ve really withdrawn and pulled ourselves indoors....East Passyunk has a rustic image where people can come

Center, Iowa State University, 2009.

¹⁹² Phyllis Stein-Novack, “Cantina Los Caballitos,” *South Philly Review*, June 29, 2006, 21; Carla Anderson, “Pols have big plans for Passyunk Ave.,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 18, 2002, 3.

and shop and have a pleasant experience.” The Passyunk Square Civic Association (PSCA), an HOA counterpart, noted “we need to reinforce our authenticity....and embrace our *urban* marketplace.”¹⁹³

Authenticity is less a tangible object and more an imagined feeling. Doug Rossinow identified the pursuit of authenticity as “venturing beyond the mortifying conventions of social life.” Bryant Simon has described pursuers as those looking “for products and places that appear more textured and less mass-produced.” Since the 1990s, older ethnic neighborhoods like East Passyunk acquired new salience for those scaling what Jim Leland termed the “pyramid of cool.” A relatively young, urbanite, educated class defined by anti-conformist principles, hipsters gravitated to edgy, off-center cafes, restaurants, and neighborhoods. Cultural theorists have argued that since the 1970s, central cities were reoriented and privatized to attract visitors while warding off unpredictable or undesirable elements. In Pittsburgh’s Gateway Center, Santa Monica’s Third Street Promenade, and West Palm Beach’s City Place, organic communities and what Jane Jacobs famously called “the sidewalk ballet” yielded to sterilized, semi-private spaces. This trend appeared in Philadelphia with Independence Mall (1960s), The Gallery (1970s), Liberty Place (1980s), and Sansom Commons (1990s). But East Passyunk’s

¹⁹³ W. Scott Hatne, *The World of the Paris Café: sociability among the French working class, 1798-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 23; Lawrence C. Rubin, ed., *Food for Thought: essays on eating and culture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), 153-154; Juliet B. Schor, “In defense of consumer critique: revisiting the consumption debates of the twentieth century,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 611 (May 2007): 16-30, 20; Dennis Judd and Susan S. Fainstein, eds., *The Tourist City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 158; Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: the death and life of authentic urban places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4; April Adomson, “Now that’s Italian,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 25, 2002, 38; Linda K. Harris, “Are they culture or clutter?” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 2, 2000, B3; “Lower Italian Market Revitalization Project Summary,” Passyunk Square Civic Association (Philadelphia: Interface LLC,

transformation, emphasizing local attributes and without reliance on chain stores and new construction, appealed to those seeking authenticity in urban places.¹⁹⁴

For those visiting East Passyunk, eating pumpkin empanadas at the Cantina, twirling Mr. Martino's *linguine pescatore*, or browsing Ninth Street's cheese shops and shellfish stalls not only meant consuming food, but also imagining a food authenticity that distinguished the neighborhood. This strategy became increasingly important for urban neighborhoods striving for distinction in a flattening, global economy. In greater Philadelphia, the predictable fare in mall food courts, fast food outlets, and chain restaurants lacked the adventure of East Passyunk's various offerings. In the 1980s, Latino and Southeast Asian immigrants, fleeing homeland crises, added new layers; complimenting the Reggiano, prosciutto, and olive oils were banh mi, cactus tacos, bibimbap, and carne asada, creating what the *New York Times* called "an idiosyncratic food showcase." Revolting against mainstream taste, or what Lucy Long called "culinary conformity," hipsters (and later foodies) recolonized an area once viewed as a place from which to escape. The built environment also lent an air of authenticity. John Urry states that postindustrial cities often ignored the "Baudelarian *flaneur*," catering more to the "train-passenger, car driver, and jet plane passenger." East Passyunk's narrow streets,

2008), 3.

¹⁹⁴ Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 205; Bryant Simon, *Everything but the Coffee: learning about America from Starbucks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 26; Jan Lin, "Ethnic places, postmodernism, and urban change in Houston," *American Quarterly* 49 (December 1997): 866-873, 868; Jim Leland, *Hip: the history* (New York: Ecco Books, 2004), 10; Frederic Jameson. *Postmodernism: or the cultural logic of late capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 46; Vincent Leitch, *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 112; Michael Peter Smith, "Postmodernism, urban ethnography, and the new social space of ethnic identity," *Theory and Society* 21 (August 1992): 493-531, 497; Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage,

exposed trolley rails and cobblestones, nineteenth-century buildings, and market-feel required abandonment of mechanized mobilities and application of the senses.

Ultimately, the combination of exotic foods and the built environment made the neighborhood an emblematic place for seeking authentic experiences.¹⁹⁵

Some observers likened East Passyunk's changes to those on New York's Lower East Side. Indeed, after CABN's reclamation, property values, while lower than those in Center City, increased substantially. The arrival of hipster-friendly restaurants, as evidenced by Raucci's lamentation, in part echoed the fate of the Lower East Side. Starting in the 1980s, the once-impooverished Manhattan enclave was "regenerated" with trendy restaurants, condos, and art galleries catering to hipster sensibilities. The actual metamorphosis was more sinister, as minorities, the elderly, and squatters routinely battled developers, the city of New York, and the police department over the reshaping neighborhood. While the Lower East Side was rife with gangs, structural decay, and a rampant drug trade, East Passyunk, largely due to the vigilance of its Italian-stock

1961), 96.

¹⁹⁵ I.L. Celimli, "Postindustrial City and Bifurcation of Labor: the case of the New York City restaurant industry," presented at the annual American Sociological Association meeting, Philadelphia (August 12, 2005) http://research.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/2/2/5/8/p22585_index.html (accessed December 10, 2011); Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 22; Kathryn E. Wilson, "Building El Barrio: Latinos transform postwar Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Legacies* 3 (November 2003): 17-21, 20; Mark E. Pfeifer, *Vietnamese Community Development in Philadelphia and Chicago* (M.A. Thesis, Philadelphia: Temple University, 1994), 23-24; Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: business culture, counterculture, and the rise of hip consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 139; Lucy Long, *Culinary Tourism* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 8; R.W. Apple, Jr., "In Hoagieland, they accept no substitutes," *New York Times*, May 28, 2003, F1; Paul Knox, "The restless urban landscape: economic and sociocultural change and the transformation of metropolitan Washington, D.C.," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81 (June 1991): 181-209, 183; John Urry, *Consuming Places* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 141.

residents, warded off corner dealers and corporate developers. Many residents who remained kept their homes tidy. And without taxpayer funds, aid from the city, or succumbing to the wrecking ball, CABN orchestrated renewal on terms satisfactory to many long-time residents. For decades, “mayoral neglect” fueled complaints that Philadelphia’s leadership did little regarding infrastructural repair or economic vitality. During the Rendell Administration (1991-1999), when centrist, tourist-friendly policies turned Center City into a vast experience economy site, East Passyunk received no such largess. As Fumo noted of CABN’s stewardship: “it was a way for us to get stuff done...it [got] frustrating waiting for government.”¹⁹⁶

CABN did not shape nor drive these changes alone. Restaurateur Francis Cratil (owner of Le Virtù) explained that the “hipster quotient” was equally significant. Hipsterism, as an ethos, emerged from nineteenth century bohemianism, a renegade dynamic that thrived in Paris and London. Rejecting convention, bohemians gathered in artists’ studios, writers’ homes, cafes, and enclaves set apart from those associated with upper classes and tourists. In the United States, “hipster” first was applied to the Beats who populated the “subterranean Bohemia” of 1950s New York. The term later clung to the 1970s “pioneers” who spearheaded urban loft living. Forsaking modern conveniences and residing in drafty industrial spaces, these pioneers, in places such as New York’s

¹⁹⁶ “East Passyunk revitalization in full effect,” *Philadelphia Real Estate News*, January 7, 2011, 2; Sharon Zukin, “Gentrification: culture and capital in the urban core,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 13 (1987): 129-147, 130-131; Christopher Mele, *Selling the Lower East Side: culture, real estate, and resistance in New York City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); Roger Simon and Brian Alnutt, “Philadelphia, 1982-2007: toward the postindustrial city,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 131 (October 2007): 395-444, 397; Roger Biles, *The Fate of Cities: urban America and the Federal government, 1945-2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 359-360; Miriam Hill, “\$11 million to Fumo non-profit,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 16, 2003, A1.

SoHo, marked an early stage of gentrification before the coming of developers and white-collar professionals. In terms of their most recent recolonization of older ethnic areas, such as Los Angeles' Silver Lake or Brooklyn's Williamsburg, those neighborhoods emerged, explains Leland, as "theme parks in the key of hip." As this development cycle swept over Philadelphia's Old City, Northern Liberties, and Spring Garden districts, East Passyunk held to tradition. Its residents were skeptical of urban renewal, historic preservation, and especially, penetration by outsiders. When Center City restaurants became flashier, trendier, (and predictable) by the late 1990s, those seeking more authentic food experiences began gravitating to the "salad bowl suburb" of the avenue.¹⁹⁷

Given its history of resistance, East Passyunk once seemed an improbable site for café society. The *Philadelphia Daily News* noted in 1985 "what the neighborhood is today, it was yesterday. What the neighborhood is today, it will be tomorrow." The avenue itself cut diagonally through a warren of alleys and row homes interspersed with churches, schools, auto body shops, and family-run restaurants. Few structures rose over four stories. While "proper Philadelphians" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries settled above South Street, East Passyunk teemed with immigrant populations. The diversity brought a hardscrabble edge not regularly found in Center City. Church burnings, labor strikes, and race riots were commonplace in the 1800s while gangs

197 Joanna Levin, *Bohemia in America, 1858-1920* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 13-15. Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: culture and capital in urban change* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 71; Loretta Lees and others, eds., *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 178-179; Leland, 2004, 10; Jennifer Baumgardner, "Williamsburg, Year Zero," in *What was the Hipster? A sociological investigation*, eds., Mark Greif and others (New York: N+1 Foundation Press, 2010), 94-95; "Salad Bowl suburb" refers the trend of portions of the inner city and first-generation inner-ring suburbs that since the 1990s have experienced new flows of ethnic and cultural in-migration. See Tom Hanchett, "Salad Bowl Suburbs," in *Charlotte, NC: the global evolution of a new south city*, eds., William Graves and Heather Smith (Athens, GA:

dominated the streets and fire companies battled each other instead of actual blazes. During the Iron Age, North Philadelphia and the riverwards received factories and shipping facilities while East Passyunk remained mainly residential. Not even after consolidation in 1854, when the area was incorporated into the city proper did any “beneficent municipal hand welcome the poor neighbor from the south.” As Sam Bass Warner noted, these factors long kept East Passyunk isolated from the “main flow of Philadelphia life.”¹⁹⁸

But East Passyunk contained a vibrant retail and restaurant culture. In the Progressive Era, East Passyunk was noted for its “tobacco emporiums, pure liquors, carpets, hardware, and cabinetmakers.” Among Italian immigrants (the neighborhood’s largest ethnic group), Robert Orsi notes “food was both symbol and sacrament, integrating the home, the streets, and the sacred.” Many newcomers entered Philadelphia’s economy through food, working in restaurants, groceries, or as vendors. The production and consumption of food provided them an economic foothold while allowing retention of their native cultures. Over time, a nexus of food and identity defined East Passyunk, with its Italian restaurants offering “a Neapolitan atmosphere for local residents while providing a continental adventure for visitors.” Writing in the 1920s, Christopher Morley praised East Passyunk’s “Italian genius for good food.” Guidebooks, travel writers, journalists, and historians often equated the Italian cuisine with

University of Georgia Press, 2010), 247.

¹⁹⁸ Stuart Bykofsky, “Broad and Snyder is South Philly’s heartbeat,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 20, 1985, 53; E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: the making of a national upper class* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), 192; Mark Haller and Allen Davis, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: a history of ethnic groups and lower-class life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 261; Murray Dubin, *South Philadelphia: Mummies, memories, and the Melrose Diner* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 7; Thomas Hine, “A neighborly view of neighborhoods,”

authenticity. A 1930s WPA guide noted “picturesque patches populated by foreign groups give East Passyunk Avenue an old world flavor.” John Lukacs noted that in the 1950s, the “colorful Italian neighborhood existed in the otherwise drab industrial climate of the city” and praised its “unpretentious Italian restaurants ringing with the arias of Verdi.” In 1979, the *New York Times* stated the city’s “gastronomic renaissance” had made central (though not south) Philadelphia a gourmet destination. Even in 1999, cookbooks and tour guides claimed “if you want Italian, South Philadelphia is an entire section of the city where the ‘red gravy’ flows.” Not until the mid-2000s did tones change, with Fodor’s noting “the avenue’s restoration has attracted *chic* restaurants and interesting shops.”¹⁹⁹

After World War II, many Italian families migrated to southern New Jersey or Delaware County seeking cleanliness and space. In 1950, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) examined renewal options for East Passyunk and found “a vast majority of the [neighborhood] structures have neither adequate light, air, nor yard space; in addition, no public park is located within or near the area.” Yet high rates of home ownership led the PCPC to recommend “preserving the quality of these units....and

Philadelphia Inquirer, February 8, 1981, L3; Warner, 1968, 183-185.

¹⁹⁹ “Down Southeast: the storekeepers who make Passyunk Avenue a business mart,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 15, 1894, 26; Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: faith and community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 173; Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish foodways in the age of migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 82; Richard N. Juliani, “The social organization of immigration: the Italians in Philadelphia,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1971), 206; Christopher Morley, *Travels in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: David Mackay, 1920), 17; *Philadelphia: a guide to the nation’s birthplace, compiled by the Federal Writer’s Project* (Philadelphia: William Penn Assoc., 1937), 441; John Lukacs, *Philadelphia: patricians and philistines, 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), 332; Steven V. Roberts, “A foot in Philadelphia on a car-less weekend,” *New York Times*, May 27, 1979, XX1; Celeste Morello, *The Philadelphia Italian Market Cookbook: the tastes of South 9th Street* (Philadelphia: Jeffries and Manz, 1999), 83; *Fodor’s Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Dutch Country, 14th edition* (New York: Fodor’s, 2006), 62.

[preventing] further encroachment of blight.” With these findings, and excepting demolition of the Moyamensing Prison (1964), East Passyunk avoided the postwar bulldozer. In the 1970s, new urban retail (such as New Market and The Gallery) and suburban malls reduced the avenue’s shoppers to “a trickle.” But the Italian restaurants held to tradition. In 1976, the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* announced “one thing that is never faked on East Passyunk is the food.” Fumo, who then-resided in the neighborhood, remarked that he often took his wife to its restaurants. In 1978, the *New York Times* opined “you go to South Philadelphia to eat and save money.” While checkered-tablecloth Italian eateries such as Roma, Dante and Luigi’s, Ralph’s, and Ozzie’s still attracted patrons, Philadelphia’s premiere restaurants, such as Bookbinders, La Panetiere, Arthur’s, and the venerated Le Bec Fin, were located in Center City.²⁰⁰

Nostalgia for Italian restaurants would obviously not revamp East Passyunk. In 1981, Fumo proposed eliminating car traffic and building a pedestrian mall, an idea that failed on Center City’s Chestnut Street. He commented that there were two developmental issues facing his neighborhood. First, federal, state, and city funds too often gravitated toward projects in Center City or the suburbs, leaving East Passyunk to fend for itself. Secondly, suburban malls were formidably appealing, as “South Philadelphians love to take their cars and get easily to the new malls.”²⁰¹ Meanwhile,

200 Mitchell Davis, “Eating out, eating American: New York restaurant dining and identity,” in *Gastropolis: food and New York City*, eds., Annie Hauck-Lawson and Jonathan Deutsch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009): 294; *Passyunk Square Area: Philadelphia Housing Quality Survey* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1950), 2; Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: a critical analysis of urban renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), 17; Inside Philadelphia, eds., *The Hungry Philadelphian* (Philadelphia: Hadley Group, 1974), 18-19.

201 James Smart, “Dialogue with a man from Menachtin,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 11, 1965, 4B; Kiki Olson, “Passyunk!” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, October 31, 1976, 10; Jane Shapiro, “Market for all Seasons,” *New York Times*,

East Passyunk merchants and their customers complained about parking enforcement, cramped quarters, inventorial obsolescence, and what Guian McKee described as “capital flight due to an aging neighborhood.” South Jersey was fertile ground on which to remedy those problems. The area’s premier retail project, the Cherry Hill Mall, opened with great fanfare in 1961. Designed by Victor Gruen and modeled on his Northland Mall in Detroit (1954), Cherry Hill’s sleek modernism contrasted with the avenue’s age and congestion. The largest indoor mall on the Eastern seaboard, its climate-controlled walkways, tropical plants, exotic birds, and fountains represented “perpetual springtime.” A cinema, continental-style sidewalk cafes, child-friendly atmosphere, and 4,500 parking spaces made the mall a continual success.²⁰²

Cities struggled when competing with suburban centers of gravity. As such, ambitious redevelopment schemes were proposed to keep Philadelphia appealing. Sam Zipp explains that many plans of the 1950s and 1960s walked a thin line between “ridding urban ills and gesturing towards promise.” In Philadelphia, structural demolition and residential displacement were touchstones for renewal. Starting in the late 1940s, the prewar city was replaced with open plazas, office towers, and expressways. While not

March 19, 1978, XX3; Walter Naedele, “Passing Passyunk by: merchants seek help to ground flight to New Jersey,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 18, 1980, 1.

²⁰² Stefano Luconi, *From Paesani to White Ethnics: the Italian experience in Philadelphia* (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 2001); Richard Hooker, *Food and Drink in America: a history* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1981), 336; Bob Fernandez, “Restaurants are fattening region’s economy,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 26, 1998, A1; Ann Marie Cammarota, *Pavements in the Garden: the suburbanization of southern New Jersey* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson Press, 2001), 165-66; M. Jeffrey Hardwick, *Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, architect of an American dream* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 13-15; Stephanie Dyer, “Designing community in the Cherry Hill Mall: the social production of a consumer space,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 9 (2003): 263-275; Guian McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: liberalism, race, and deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3; Cammarota, 166.

attributable to a single vision, the overhaul of Penn Square, Society Hill, and the Far Northeast typically is associated with architect Vincent Kling and Edmund Bacon. As PCPC executive director from 1949 to 1970, Bacon took cues from *Futurama* as well as from renewal overseen by Robert Moses and Edward J. Logue in New York and New Haven. Several PCPC proposals never materialized but those that did (particularly Penn Center and Society Hill) heralded the direction older American cities followed after 1950. Yet East Passyunk remained outside their purview; as a suburb within the city, an immigrant enclave, and an insular Italian ward, large-scale renewal projects never took root.²⁰³

By 1980, Philadelphia's residential outflows reached a staggering twenty-seven per cent while Center City had lost over thirty per cent of its stores. Malls such as New Market, The Bourse, and The Gallery, while ambitious, failed to outshine their suburban counterparts. East Passyunk fared worse. The 1970s restaurant renaissance bypassed the avenue, with the *Philadelphia Inquirer* calling it a "distant echo on East Passyunk." Measured against inventive French and Asian newcomers, East Passyunk's restaurants "served more meat and potatoes cuisine than experimental." Merchants crammed their upper floors with flotsam and at night, pulled down steel riot gates. Shoppers vanished due to parking enforcement, lackluster wares, and even a sense the neighborhood had grown unsafe. While violence was comparatively lower than in other parts of

²⁰³ Sam Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: the rise and fall of urban renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 158-159; Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: the transformation of New York* (New York: Norton, 2007), 22; Lizabeth Cohen, *Ed Logue and the Struggle to Save America's Cities* (forthcoming, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2013); Scott Knowles, ed., *Imagining Philadelphia: Edmund Bacon and the future of the city* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 42-45; *Army Piers Redevelopment Area Plan* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia City Planning Commission, 1963), 2-3.

Philadelphia, the stigma of organized crime kept outsiders away. After Mafia dons Angelo Bruno and Philip Testa were assassinated in 1980 and 1981, respectively, residents were questioned by police, with one memorably stating of Bruno's killing "nobody is going to tell you anything. A hundred people were out here, and nobody saw a thing." Yet Philadelphia's crime families faced changing times in the 1980s. Soldiers and capos were less bound to *omerta* and increasingly prone to involvement in narcotics rackets. Many associates of the Scarfo, Testa, and Merlino crews, when arrested, turned against their own. Mob violence petered out in the mid-1990s as federal enforcement of RICO legislation escalated. With the sun setting on the Philadelphia Mafia, changes were in store for East Passyunk.²⁰⁴

Storefront vacancies increased into the 1990s. Realtor Anthony Criniti explained that long-time merchants "got content and refused to change with the times....retail dropped off and the next generation didn't pick it up. People would come in at noon and leave by 4 p.m." Italian restaurants still were attractions. Local bartender Joseph Gargiulo remarked that "sons and daughters still take over the restaurants on Ninth Street from their fathers and grandfathers." But sharp reluctance to change defined East Passyunk. In 1989, DiCicco helped prevent White Castle Hamburgers from opening a drive-thru at Ninth and Wharton Streets. At a zoning board meeting in October, he stated "our residents already have enough restaurants in their neighborhood; they don't need another

204 Bill Collins, "Say cheesesteak and say a mouthful of true Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 15, 1981, D14.; Rick Nichols, "Stirrings on the Avenue: a rebirth for East Passyunk?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 15, 2006, M1; Thomas H. Keels, *Forgotten Philadelphia: lost architecture of the Quaker City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007), 217; "Organized Crime in Pennsylvania: a decade of change, 1990 report," *Pennsylvania Crime Commission* (Conshohocken, PA: The Commission, 1991); Ron Goldwyn, "Testa's last rites and mob tradition," *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 21, 1984, 32.

one.” Arguing the narrow streets could not support a suburban-style drive-thru, DiCicco defended his neighborhood until White Castle chose another site in Hawthorne just off South Broad Street. In the summer of 1992, residents bemoaned the late-night, out-of-town crowds in the Cheesesteak Triangle. Pat’s King of Steaks and Geno’s Steaks were open twenty-four hours, seven days a week, drawing hundreds from the bars and nightclubs in Center City. Loud music, drunkenness, vandalism, sexual exposure, and public urination rattled residents’ nerves. On Sunday mornings, used condoms and discarded drug paraphernalia littered the sidewalks. When Pat’s and Geno’s refused to close between 2am and 5am, DiCicco requested the police erect barricades to minimize the late-night revelry. In 1995, Philadelphia’s first Wal Mart opened less than two miles away on the Delaware riverfront. Though some retailers expressed little concern, the Passyunk Avenue Merchant Association (PAMA) published a pamphlet celebrating the neighborhood’s charms, including “authentic Italian restaurants” and “old-fashioned lampposts with hanging flowerpots.” Wendell Young, a neighborhood resident and president of United Food and Commercial Workers local 1776, stated “they’re [Wal Mart] destroying the avenue’s small businesses....we’ll do everything, even if it includes people outside giving out literature and asking them not to shop there.”²⁰⁵

These vigilant grievances persuaded Fumo and DiCicco to form CABN. From his senatorial perch, Fumo’s reach extended well beyond the neighborhood. Before being

205 Tom Ferrick Jr., “City Blocks: how East Passyunk got hot,” *Metropolis*, June 27, 2010. <http://www.phlmetropolis.com/2010/06/post.php> (accessed September 4, 2010); Wendell Rawls Jr., “Colorful area bedecked with photos and flags,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1979, B6; Jane Von Bergen, “Ready for Action in South Philadelphia,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 7, 1994, G1; Kathy Sheehan, “No relish for burger operation,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 22, 1989, 2; Laurie Hollman, “One steak,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 7, 1992, B1; Jane Von Bergen, “Pickets show up at store opening,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 1995, D1.

convicted and imprisoned on corruption charges, he was hailed as “the prince of South Philadelphia.” Along with former mayor Frank Rizzo, U.S. ambassador to Italy Thomas Foglietta, and state senator Buddy Cianfrani, Fumo was a “neighborhood guy” who amassed considerable power and influence. East Passyunk regularly struggled with repairing broken streetlights, sweeping streets, and cleaning public restrooms. As chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, in 1992 Fumo secured tens of thousands of dollars to buy street cleaning equipment, fix lights, and restore a private cemetery. Later, through connections with the Philadelphia Electric Company (PECO), Penn’s Landing Corporation (PLC), the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), and other donors, CABN amassed an impressive war chest. Between 1999 and 2003, Fumo steered more than \$7 million into its accounts. In 2003, the group received an \$11 million contribution from an anonymous donor. The following year, PECO made a \$17 million donation. According to Fumo, the funds “fill in the cracks....we tackle problems that politicians have let languish.” The group funded charter schools and low-income housing, purchased meals for low-income families, and helped pay for police equipment. While the FBI and Fumo’s enemies routinely questioned how he legally acquired the money, local merchants relished in the largess. Al Masino, restaurateur and chairman of the East Passyunk Business Improvement District (EPBID) stated “how they [CABN] spend their money is entirely up to them.”²⁰⁶

DiCicco articulated CABN’s mission to “enhance the public health, sanitation, and general quality of life of East Passyunk.” From 1997 to 2002, the group filled

206 Noel Weyrich, “Citizen Compliance,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, April 13, 2000, 16; Kevin Haney, “Taking a second look at the issues,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 28, 1993, NE1; Dave Davies, “City trying to do better on less,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 17, 1992, 3.

potholes and repaired Ninth Street's market stalls while cracking down on the garbage that kept customers away. As the nation's oldest outdoor market, DiCicco argued its revitalization would bring people and investment to the neighborhood. The \$4 million makeover precipitated "Mercato," an outdoor food festival to be held on the final Sunday of each month. Promoted as the "largest block party in Philadelphia," Mercato attracted visitors and new residents to the "decades-old food and dining culture" of East Passyunk. The councilman announced it as "a food-driven shopping spree....a promenade where restaurants can put their tables out." The 2002 Mercato was the first festival held on Ninth Street in over five years. Many who'd attended previous festivals noticed the differences in food offerings; along with broccoli rabe, cannoli, and *paisano* wine, attendees sampled Jamaican oxtail stew, Nicaraguan tacos, Vietnamese Pho, and Korean barbeque. In drumming up support for the 2003 Mercato, DiCicco claimed "forget the malls, forget King of Prussia, South Philadelphia is where it's at." Mercato was renamed The Italian Market Festival for 2006. The affair expanded in size and was held once annually in May. By 2010, the festival boasted of live music, a Mummer's softball tournament, and more than one hundred food vendors. But the greater success of the festivals was drawing people to East Passyunk to overcome culinary isolation.²⁰⁷

In 1999, CABN started amassing properties for "provision of housing or to be used directly in the furnishing of services." The group purchased sixteen buildings between the 1500- and 1900-blocks of East Passyunk, from South Broad to Dickinson Streets. CABN paid in cash (roughly \$1.5 million), held no mortgages, and then rented

207 April Adomson, "Now that's Italian," *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 25, 2002, 38; Gaiutra Bahadur, "Italian market festival has sense of the old and new," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 1, 2003, B3; Donna Gabaccia, *We are what we eat: ethnic food and the making of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 105.

them at below-market rates. Upstart businesses found the spaces attractive due to affordability; chef Lynn Rinaldi received free rent while rehabilitating an old appliance store for her Paradiso restaurant. Young hipsters seeking urban living, some of whom could not afford Center City rents, occupied apartments above or purchased and rehabbed older homes. Realtor Greg Damis described the hipsters as “usually carrying a computer and doing business at cafés and corners. I have never seen them out of sneakers and shorts, but they are not broke.” The restaurant-residential mix strengthened the marketplace feel of East Passyunk. CABN adorned lampposts with banners proclaiming “shop, stroll, dine.” From 2002 to 2009, twenty-seven new businesses opened in or adjacent to their properties. More than one hundred new jobs were created on the avenue between January 2009 and November 2010. And in December 2010, CABN’s East Passyunk properties contained a healthy four percent vacancy rate.²⁰⁸

DiCicco admired the cohesion of community around the Italian Market, as his support for the Mercato festival showed. Yet he desired something more permanent. He had eagerly watched Tony Goldman, a developer credited with New York’s SoHo and Miami’s South Beach, purchase and revitalize properties at 13th and Sansom Streets in Center City. Long in the grip of magnate Sam Rappaport, who notoriously neglected his properties, Goldman acquired them from his estate in 1994. Goldman planned “to reinvent 13th Street...it needs more galleries, more great restaurants. More restaurants,

208 “Citizens Alliance for Better Neighborhoods: redevelopment proposals and assessments” white paper (2001), viewed with permission from East Passyunk Business Improvement District, December 19, 2011; “PECO explains donation to Fumo charity,” *Doylestown Intelligencer*, December 21, 2003, 6B; Jeff Shields, “DiCicco-Dougherty feud thwarts South Philadelphia woman’s plan to rent store,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 12, 2010, A1; Paul Groth, “Marketplace vernacular design: the case of downtown rooming houses,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 2 (1986): 179-191, 188; Robert W. Bailey, *Gay Politics, Urban Politics: identity and economics in the urban*

period.” What was once an epicenter for vice and prostitution in the late 1990s was by the mid-2000s colloquially referred to as “the Green Light District.” Mexican cantinas, high-end cocktail lounges, dumpling houses, gelato bars, sushi restaurants, and Italian bistros populated the intersection while seedy, nocturnal characters gave way to hipsters and smartly dressed urbanites. Goldman refurbished spaces above the restaurants into smartly appointed apartments, providing continual streams of activity. DiCicco admired Goldman’s vision, imagining East Passyunk would someday include “artists’ galleries, fine food stores, bakeries, and even an espresso stand with cafe tables in a small park at Cross Street.”²⁰⁹

DiCicco noted that CABN’s real estate strategy was “by acquiring several properties, we can require tenants to keep regular hours and stay open at night....the concept [is] to get a critical mass, enough so that we could have control over the tenant mix. That way we could function more like a landlord does in a mall, and make sure that stores stay open and have attractive window displays. That could help East Passyunk compete with malls.” Though renovations were expensive, the cost of the first fourteen properties totaled \$1.2 million, or roughly \$85,000 each. DiCicco insisted on putting apartments above each store. Goldman noted that while restaurants generated after-dark traffic, apartments above them “keep the streets populated at all hours.” CABN courted new restaurants and retail, denying only a proposed adult video store. Their new tenants included Karina Restaurant, the Cantina, Black 'n Brew Cafe, 1540 Hardware, B2 Café, Izumi, Jimmy's Scooters, and Aci Nae, a woman's clothing boutique. To anchor their

setting (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 251-252.

²⁰⁹ Kirstin Lindermayer, “There’s no open restrooms in Philadelphia’s Italian Market,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, November 10, 2010, 18; Jane Von Bergen, “He wants to rescue Center City,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 25, 1999, F1.

four-block expanse of East Passyunk, the group funded the Singing Fountain, an illuminated sculpture beset by park benches that played Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett songs. The fountain at Tasker Street became a new centerpiece for the neighborhood, a symbol of café society.²¹⁰ Restaurateurs, some of whom hailed from the neighborhood, were enticed by the changes. Lynn Rinaldi grew up two blocks from Paradiso and, “tugged by nostalgia,” decided on the former appliance store for her restaurant. Other chefs who trained in Center City’s restaurants came to the avenue to open their own. Fond’s Lee Styer and Jessie Prawlucki, alumni of Le Bec Fin and The Fountain Room, were drawn by the area’s “fertile soil.” Critics praised the Cantina’s “south-of-the-border authenticity” while others remarked how the avenue’s arriving chefs were “carving out a niche” for the neighborhood.²¹¹

With pool halls and taprooms giving way to new eateries, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called the resurgence a “taste of the city’s soul and tradition...with a strong pulse on its diverse ethnic flavors.” On one level, this was a natural progression. Mark Bittman explains that “tourist-laden neighborhoods become more crowded and expensive, so the areas where one can find a great meal [have to] expand.” The new restaurants redefined

210 Gerald Etter, “At this South Philly restaurant, food and décor both have flair,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 3, 1984, F38; Miriam Hill, “Changes in store for East Passyunk,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 6, 2002, B1; Tom Ferrick Jr., “Making it happen on Passyunk,” *Metropolis*, June 26, 2010.

<http://www.phlmetropolis.com/2010/06/city-blocks-making-it-happen-on-passyunk.php> (accessed September 20, 2010)

211 John Hartley, ed., *Creative Industries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 261; Craig LaBan, “A transformed storefront is the most elegant new restaurant in South Philly,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 3, 2005, M6; Dan Packel, “Helmed by a trio of experienced restaurateurs, Fond classes up East Passyunk Ave.,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, November 10, 2009. <http://www.philadelphiaweekly.com/food/Threes-Company.html> (accessed November 3, 2010); LaBan, “Cantina Los Caballitos,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 12, 2006, M5; Johnston and Baumann, 86; Anne-Mette Hjalager and Greg Richards, eds., *Tourism and Gastronomy* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

the neighborhood. Adam Erace, co-owner of the Green Aisle Grocery, stated “the old Italian guard has made way for Asians and Latinos, hipsters and yuppies, and their respective culinary traditions.” The Cantina’s sidewalk tables remained packed late into the night while Paradiso’s bay windows opened in good weather to foster interaction between diners and passersby. Fond, offering tuna *crudo* and passion fruit crepes, was hailed as a “surprisingly youthful New American bistro.” Black and Brew, its façade sheathed in Isaiah Zagar mosaic, promoted a “simple way of life” and “homey, yet hip” vibe. Adorned with local artwork, chalkboard menus, and preparing squash omelets and pumpkin pancakes, the cafe encouraged “neighbors, couples, artists, and business folk” to partake in “refreshingly pleasant experiences.” Le Virtu, occupying the offices of a defunct Italian-language newspaper, touted its “authentic Italian dining experiences” and its “bold, honest, and unpretentious” menu items. In 2009, Izumi, the first sushi restaurant to grace East Passyunk Avenue, opened its doors just steps from Paradiso. Meaning “fountain” in Japanese, Izumi hugged the southwest edge of the Singing Fountain plaza at Cross Street.²¹²

But the Cantina best reflected the hipster influx, while also revealing how the pursuit of authenticity set it apart from flashier, trendier Mexican eateries in Philadelphia.

²¹² Fodor’s *Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Dutch Country* (New York: Fodor’s, 1996), 4; Rick Nichols, “Night market vendors in South Philadelphia satisfy a hunger for community,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 14, 2010, F1; Tom Ferrick Jr., “City Blocks: how East Passyunk got hot,” *Metropolis*, June 27, 2010. <http://www.phlmetropolis.com/2010/06/post.php> (accessed September 15, 2010); Mark Bittman, “In Paris, farther-flung for taste and value,” *New York Times*, April 3, 2011, TR10; Craig LaBan, “Red gravy, sure, but lots more,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 16, 2005, G2; Adam Erace, “Next Food: what’s on Philly’s food horizon,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, February 27, 2009, http://www.philadelphiaweekly.com/food/next_food-38465214.html (accessed October 21, 2010); Craig LaBan, “Options grow as Walnut Street dining fades,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 10, 2009, A1; “East Passyunk Avenue Business Improvement District Directory,”

Cantina Los Caballitos, which translates to “the young gentlemen’s café,” indicated the proprietors’ target demographic. Unlike Stephen Starr’s Disneyfied El Vez, Jose Garces’ modish Distrito, or the Qdoba and Chipotle fast food chains, the Cantina was an incongruous mash up of hipster cool. The differences were apparent in location, décor, and customer/employee interactions. Whereas Starr and Garces opened in well-heeled areas of Center City and Qdoba and Chipotle could easily afford prime corners, Simons and Frank chose a less-assertive location. Their décor was an assemblage of bright orange hues, distressed wood window frames, low-slung Christmas lights, neon liquor signage, chalkboard menus, and rickety tables equipped with Sriracha sauce. There were no prefabricated Aztec murals (a la Qdoba), Mexican cultural kitsch, or boldly contemporary lighting concepts. Customers in the dimly-lit restaurant engaged in conversation rather than constantly turning away to see the latest arrivals to the bar. Many sported flannel shirts, skinny jeans, and faded canvas messenger bags. Unlike Starr’s preprogrammed wait staffs, servers at the Cantina approached guests with informal ease. Higher-end items were not relentlessly pushed and rarely were guests rushed. All were covered in visible sleeves of tattoo ink, exposure of which was discouraged in El Vez or Distrito.

In restaurants such as the Cantina, hipsterism and the authentic were reinforcing notions. Charles Lindholm explains authenticity as “natural, original, and real....and authentic cuisine [is] expected and valued by visitors.” For over a century, East Passyunk’s Italian restaurants drew those seeking authentic culinary tastes. In the wake of CABN’s efforts, newcomers to the area were identified less by ethnicity and more by their cultural aspirations. For the new arrivals, cafés and restaurants were primary attractions; as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu notes “eating remains one of the few areas in

which to challenge the legitimate art of living.” Drawn by affordable rents and a blossoming café society, locals and the media attached the “hipster” label to the new arrivals. The *South Philly Review* announced “there really isn’t one label of people in this neighborhood. There is a really great mix of everybody.” But the hipster label stuck. While Raucci was “overwhelmed by the great influx,” other longtime residents welcomed the changes. Stogie Joes’ owner Kristian Leuzzi, who grew up near his restaurant at East Passyunk and Moore Streets noted, “I see a great influx of all kinds of people and an opportunity to cater to them.” Even Raucci admitted that the hipsters allowed East Passyunk “[to become a] new South Street, where it’s permissible to be seen during the day.” In 2009, *Philadelphia Magazine* reported, “food critics are *actually* coming down here to test the restaurants and gastropubs....calling the neighborhood ‘newly vibrant.’” Nicknames such as “the Brunch Belt” and “Philadelphia’s new Restaurant Row” were announced by the local press. By the close of the 2000s, the growth seeded other restaurants to the north along South 11th Street with nodes east to Moyamensing Avenue and Jefferson Square.²¹³

While highly varied as a group, East Passyunk’s restaurants lay beneath the popular, prominent eateries in Center City. Through interplace competition, the avenue

213 Charles Lindholm, “Authentic Cuisine and National Identity,” in *Culture and Authenticity*. Malden. MA: Blackwell, 2008, p.80; Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste*. (New York: Routledge, 1984), 187; B.J.L. Berry, “Islands of renewal in seas of decay,” in P.E. Peterson (ed.). *The New Urban Reality*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1985), 69-98; Samantha Krotzer, “Trend Setting,” *South Philly Review*, September 10, 2009. http://www.southphillyreview.com/news/features/trend_setting-79697692.html; Raucci, “The Hipster Commandments,” *Metropolis*, June 28, 2010; Jessica Remo, “Go South, Young Homo,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, June 2009, 54; Elisa Ludwig, “The Brunch Belt: South Philly is the heartland,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 29, 2010, F1; Robert Croan, “Philadelphia Story,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 15, 1994, G1; Michael Klein, “Vietnamese restaurant mixes old and new,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 15, 2010, F35.

emerged as an alternate dining strip. Patronizing Mr. Martino's, Black and Brew, Tre Scalini, Izumi, Stogie Joes, Le Virtu, or the Cantina reflected a brand of cultural capital, cognizant of the trendiest restaurants in Center City while lamenting their controlled environments, "over-theatrics," and high prices. On the other side of the coin, hipsters and non-hipsters alike imagined the restaurants along East Passyunk delivered a more authentic, less manufactured affair. But even hipster-ready restaurants such as the Cantina, with their low-pressure ambiance, provided a specific experience, one based on artifacts and beliefs to claim cultural legitimacy. In the restaurants, "artifacts" ranged from blackboard menus, French cinema posters, body piercing, and Vans worn by servers to the laptops and bicycles used by patrons. Beliefs such as iconoclasm, do-it-yourself (DIY), localism, no-frills, and culinary adventure informed those seeking authenticity. Linking cultural legitimacy with the urban landscape, hipsters found East Passyunk attractive, mirroring what Mark Grief terms their "white re-colonization of ethnic neighborhoods." ²¹⁴

Within and paralleling the hipster influx came a nascent LGBT community. Since the colonial period, gays and lesbians fled persecution and took up residence in the welcoming "sexual terrain" of Philadelphia. By the 1940s, Philadelphia contained dozens of predominantly gay bars and restaurants. While scattered around town, the majority of these establishments were located near the "Locust Strip" in Center City. Marc Stein demonstrates how in an age of sexual discrimination against gays, these bars and restaurants were themselves segregated within the LGBT community along lines of race,

214 Anatole Broyard, "Portrait of the Hipster," *Partisan Review* 10 (June 1948); Mitchell Davis and Anne McBride (eds.), "The State of American Cuisine," *James Beard Foundation*, 2008, 1-13; Jonathan Vatner, "Beyond the cheesesteak wars in Philadelphia," *New York Times*, March 25, 2010, TR9; Zach Furness. *One Less Car: bicycling and the*

class, and gender. By the 1990s, American culture grew more accepting of and receptive to gay lifestyles as evidenced by their depiction and participation in television, film, and on the political stage. While the Locust Strip increasingly gentrified and became more family-oriented, the neighborhood's bars remained visibly gay. On East Passyunk, the bars and restaurants were less segregated by sexual orientation and few were known explicitly as "gay bars." Many of the new restaurants and food-oriented businesses were operated by gay people, lured to the avenue by its affordability and oppositional history. The in-migration forced a new take on the neighborhood. Jimmy Contreras, an East Passyunk gift shop owner noted, "the artists are here, the hipsters, and the gay people." Contreras and his partner even moved into an apartment directly above his store. In profiling the Cantina, the *Philadelphia Gay News* announced "the crowd is mostly straight hipster types and queer couples.....but there's even a sense that East Passyunk is the 'new Gayborhood.'" ²¹⁵

Prior to its infamous decline, CABN was among the best-funded non-profit neighborhood organizations in Philadelphia; in 2008, the group owned more than \$15 million in East Passyunk real estate and controlled tens of millions in donations. Comparatively, the American Cities Foundation (ACF), headed by councilman Chaka

politics of automobility (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010) 143-144.

²¹⁵ Clare Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble: an intimate history of gender and power in the age of revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Scott Herring. *Another Country: queer anti-urbanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010) 18; Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: lesbian and gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000) 69-80; Daniel Rubin, "Three coins won't be nearly enough," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 16, 2009, B1; Troy Petenbrink, "48 hours in gay-friendly Philadelphia," *Washington Examiner*, July 2, 2009; Jen Coletta, "The Avenue sees continued LGBT growth," *Philadelphia Gay News*, http://www.epgn.com/view/full_story/8845536/article-%E2%80%98The-Avenue%E2%80%99-sees-continued-LGBT-growth? (accessed May 3, 2010)

Fattah and based in west Philadelphia, had total funds of \$8,500. In the northwest section of the city, the Ogontz Avenue Revitalization Corporation (OARC) had a war chest of nearly \$385,000. Even the Italian Market's Businessmen's Association (IMBA), with its minimal capital, sought to preserve the historic integrity of Ninth Street. But CABN was a powerhouse. Following Fumo's sentencing to federal prison in Kentucky, CABN fell into disrepair. It quickly was reborn as the Passyunk Avenue Revitalization Corporation (PARC). Paul Levy, director of the Center City District (CCD), was charged to ensure PARC would continue maintaining the cosmetics of the avenue. Levy, citing the blowback from Old City residents after the arrival of Starr's Continental, suggested many East Passyunk residents, while welcoming the hipsters, did not want to see their neighborhood become an "entertainment zone." He proposed to continue Fumo and DiCicco's plans, noting the key to maintaining the right balance were "restaurants that serve local residents and draw customers from across the area." To ensure PARC's legality, an eleven-member board of supervisors, headed by developer Samuel Sherman and containing four members of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), promised greater financial transparency and to maintain the quality of services once delivered by CABN.

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Using and improving existing attributes, CABN brought new energy to a steadily declining neighborhood. With Fumo's political muscle, DiCicco's vision, the

216 Miriam Hill, "Politicians' non-profits proliferate," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 23, 2004, B1; Jeff Shields, "DiCicco-Dougherty feud thwarts South Philadelphia woman's plan to rent store," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 12, 2010, A1; Craig R. McCoy, "Street gives Fumo flak over gifts," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 11, 2004, B1; Amanda Snyder, "There goes the neighborhood," *South Philly Review*, April 9, 2009. http://www.southphillyreview.com/news/features/there_goes_the_neighborhood-79697207.html; Craig McCoy, "Fumo's former civic fund gets new direction," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 9, 2011, B1.

determination of restaurateurs, and for many, a pursuit of authenticity, the avenue's gravity was recentered. Families of various backgrounds pushed their children in strollers, stores remained open after 5:00pm, and restaurants burst with activity late into the night. As emphases on food and restaurants in the United States grew more pronounced, those emphases, as related to urban renewal, gained equal importance. In a broader context, the hipsters at the Cantina reflected trends occurring in other cities. As Jinna Tay posits, cities struggled "being creative by highlighting consumption-led economics, cultural production, and the design of urban space." The new East Passyunk revealed that Philadelphia, like other regional metropolises, was emerging as a creative city. From Austin to Nottingham, cities the world over followed the path of regeneration using design, media, architecture, and food as their guides. Considering the avenue's restaurant scene prior to the 1970s juxtaposed with that of the early twenty-first century, East Passyunk's revitalization was impressive.²¹⁷

In 1981, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted "with historians interested only in great men and turning points, East Passyunk is the model for the way we will understand the urban past from now on." Given urban America's fate since then, the statement seemed prescient. In 2007, the CABN and the PCPC published a white paper detailing the future of East Passyunk. The report aimed to re-densify the neighborhood, catering more to pedestrians than drivers. One of the report's chief complaints stated "accommodation of the automobile has in many instances hollowed out the fine grain of the neighborhood." Sidewalk parking and the large lots surrounding the triangular intersection of East

217 John Hartley, ed., *Creative Industries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 221; Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Louise Crewe and Jonathan Beaverstock, "Fashioning the City: cultures of consumption in contemporary urban spaces," *Geoforum* 29 (August 1998):

Passyunk, Reed, and 10th Streets were of special concern. Car dominance in a place where a café society was rising represented a “problematic interface.” Retail should “be approachable by pedestrians” and the troublesome triangular intersection required a “new plaza and plantings” to humanize a car-centric landscape and place it “on a measure of human scale.” Most revealing about the report was not its utopian language (often woven through urban planning proposals) or its nostalgic pining for resumption of the Route 23 Trolley. Instead, it was the goal of resulting East Passyunk for pedestrians, a neighborhood essentially left for dead in postwar automania. This goal emerged from the revitalization efforts of the CABN and the people who breathed new life into the avenue.

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CABN’s café society management saw an ironic finale. While the neighborhood avoided the top-down surgery so popular after WWII, CABN did not wholly embrace “mediating consensus,” or the act of consulting residents and businesses in the neighborhood. Some resisted the group’s proposals, worried that an influx of hipsters would drive up rents. Others found objectionable the surcharges that CABN required of participating businesses. When he wanted to extend café society along South Broad Street, Concetta Varallo, owner of E Tu Ristorante, stated “we’ve done fine....we don’t need anybody’s help.” Nearby card store owner Marie Ciminera complained “we’re not Center City, we’re working people. We don’t have restaurants with the valet parking outside.” Secondly, despite years of lamenting suburban malls, CABN managed their share of the avenue as an outdoor mall. Victor Gruen noted that “shopping malls are the

287-308.

218 Thomas Hine, “A neighborly view of neighborhoods,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 8, 1981, L3; *Passyunk Square Village Center: urban design recommendations*. (Philadelphia: City Planning Commission, 2007), 9.

banding together of individual businesses in cooperative fashion with the aim of creating greater commercial effectiveness through unified endeavor.” Yet control was key. Malls relied on security personnel and uniform aesthetics for each storefront. The possibility of controlling the built environment (and to some extent its populations) inspired CABN, for the group saw control as a remedy for inconsistent hours, poor infrastructure, and sagging retail. Gone were the riot gates, potholes, piles of uncollected trash, and dark streetlamps. While the avenue’s restaurants appeared as organic developments, there was less organic quality than met the eye. CABN had in mind the *types* of restaurants it hoped would open on East Passyunk. As Tom Ferrick explained “CABN bought a strategic mass of properties, redid them as retail storefronts with apartments upstairs, recruited tenants to appeal to the New People, and gave them reduced start-up rents so they could get off the ground.”²¹⁹

Easily assumed is that with the outdoor environment, age of the neighborhood, and the uniqueness of storefronts, drawing parallels to an enclosed mall could be difficult. Considering how CABN courted restaurateurs, grocers, and other tenants, and how they attracted residents and visitors, East Passyunk mirrored what Andrew F. Wood labels the “post-mall era.” Unlike the Cherry Hill, King of Prussia, or Christiana Malls that propelled people to the edges of greater Philadelphia, CABN shaped a human-scale

219 Gregory Heller, *The Power of an Idea: Edmund Bacon’s planning method, inspiring consensus, and living in the future* (M.A. Thesis, Dept. of American Studies, Wesleyan University, 2004), 141. Published online. http://www.edbacon.org/bacon/pdf/greg_heller_thesis.pdf; Angela Couloumbis, “Councilman seeks to give South Broad Street a lift,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 27, 2004, B1; Victor Gruen, *Shopping Town USA: the planning of shopping centers* (New York: Reinhold, 1960), 140; Tom Ferrick Jr., “Making it happen on Passyunk,” *Metropolis*, June 26, 2010. <http://www.phlmetropolis.com/2010/06/city-blocks-making-it-happen-on-passyunk.php>; Tom Ferrick Jr., “City Blocks: how East Passyunk got hot,” *Metropolis*, June 27, 2010. <http://www.phlmetropolis.com/2010/06/post.php>.

version of Main Street that helped revitalize the neighborhood's physical appearance. Rather than a smattering of old school Italian places, East Passyunk's restaurant scene resembled an international food court. The cheesesteaks and Italian restaurants were complemented with Korean, Mexican, Vietnamese, Nicaraguan, and Japanese offerings. Restaurants did not stand alone in the revitalization as salons, yoga studios, appliance stores, clothing boutiques, art galleries, and gyms complemented the new restaurants. While CABN did not own or manage all of the businesses in the neighborhood, they did set in motion a larger pattern of recolonization. The *Philadelphia Daily News* opined the group "filled in the cracks of East Passyunk's decades-long economic demise."²²⁰

Long an ethnic area, East Passyunk contained the skeletal structure for those seeking authenticity. The hipsters had arrived and, desiring more authentic urban experiences, opened and/or patronized the new restaurants, bars, and cafes. Ethnic diversity was present as well, though within hipster-attracting restaurants, minorities often held back-of-the-house positions. But festivals such as the Italian Market, 2nd Saturdays, Flavors of the Avenue, Queer on the Avenue, and Easter Egg Hunts encouraged cross-ethnic socialization and countered the demise of public festivities in American cities. Indeed, hipsters were attracted to the ethnic diversity, co-opting it as corrective to mainstream sameness. Yet the same year the Cantina opened for business, a different type of authenticity appeared. Joey Vento, the Italian-American owner of Geno's Steaks, posted small placards near his takeout windows, which read: "This is America - when ordering, speak English." Aimed at immigrant residents who had discovered the cheesesteak, Vento's sign was seen less as a way to speed up customer flow and more as

220 Andrew F. Wood, *City Ubiquitous: place, communication, and the rise of omnitopia* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2009), 142; Dave Davies, "City trying to do

native disaffection for changing demographics. What became known as “the cheesesteak controversy” split East Passyunk up the middle. The support for and barbs thrown at Vento came not only from within the neighborhood and the city, but from around the country. Newspapers large and small carried the story while Vento became a right-wing media personality, rigorously defending his signage on CNN and Fox News. Some neighborhood residents requested that the “sign be made a little bigger” while newer generations, notably college-educated hipsters and minorities, condemned Vento for being a “close-minded racist.”²²¹

Vento’s intransigence merged with Raucci’s ire over the hipster crowds in the Cantina; upon witnessing intrusions of different languages or pretentious displays of cultural taste, they feared the loss of the ethnic homogeneity that once defined its streets. Their commentary in print and on air contained a sense of siege, that in fact their beloved neighborhood was under invasion. Yet Vento and Raucci faced social and economic forces well beyond their control. After the late 1980s, consumption pursued in postindustrial cities stoked a rebirth of old ethnic areas and a rekindled interest in their foodways. With the rising appeal of food authenticity among hipsters, efforts of the CABN, the in-migration of Latinos and Asians, the upscaling of Center City dining, and the guarded history of East Passyunk rolled into one, new generations of consumers were attracted to a neighborhood long considered frozen in time. The renewed interest did

better on less,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 17, 1992, 3.

²²¹ Angela Coulombis, “Councilman seeks to give S. Broad Street a lift,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 27, 2004, B1; Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Renia Ehrenfeucht, *Sidewalks: conflict and negotiation over public space* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 78; Christoph Grafe and Franziska Bollerey, eds., *Cafes and Bars: the architecture of public display* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 3; Gaiutra Bahadur, “The world weighs in: Geno’s debate draws controversy,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 14, 2006, A1.

propel increases in tax valuation and property costs, causing many longtime residents to rail against both DiCicco and CABN. Some restaurant owners and merchants felt a “second act” for East Passyunk was grossly wishful thinking. Slow lunchtime hours, the Philadelphia Parking Authority, and the pull factors of other neighborhoods had owners in disbelief over the hype of a café society. But even after Fumo’s incarceration and DiCicco’s 2011 retirement from City Council, few observers could deny that their efforts allowed for new gravity to take root in one of Philadelphia’s most insular neighborhoods.²²²

²²² Rick Nichols, “Stirrings on the Avenue: a rebirth for East Passyunk?” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 15, 2006, M1. David Butwin, “Good Eats: the streetwise and sophisticated surprises of Philadelphia,” *Washington Post*, April 28, 1996, E1.

CHAPTER 6

ZONES OF CERTAIN TASTE: CONSUMING PHILADELPHIA'S BYOBS

In July 2005, Daniel Stern finalized plans to open his first restaurant. After stints under Daniel Boulud in New York and at Philadelphia's Le Bec Fin, the 35-year old chef chose a space on Third Street just off Bainbridge Square. When quizzed on his intentions, Stern replied that he would abandon French cuisine and opt for "unexpected, creative American in a casual atmosphere." He called the project "Gayle," after his wife's middle name. But the well-pedigreed chef was downsizing. Gayle, barely larger than a living room, held just thirty-five seats. While awaiting his liquor license's approval, Stern honored the city's popular "bring your own bottle" (BYOB) policy. Patrons carted in their own wine to complement his dishes, which included Moroccan chicken wings with butternut squash glaze, salmon mousse in puff pastry, and basmati rice ice cream. From cheap Beaujolais to haughty pinot noir, nearly every table was graced with bottles. For those admiring culinary oddities, Gayle was a gastro-oenophile's paradise: price points were reasonable given Stern's bizarre sophistication while wine-savvy customers provided their own varietals. And with Gayle's three-course tasting menu costing \$70 per head, the BYOB policy saved patrons considerable money. After his November opening, Stern won praise for his restaurant; critics compared it to the radical WD-50 in New York and described dishes that "go from dubious to memorable."²²³

²²³ Michael Klein, "Chef Stern opening Queen Village spot," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 15, 2005, F3; Susan Kalan, "Philadelphia chef visits NCC," *Easton Express-Times*, October 22, 2008, D1; Maxine Keyser, "Gayle's a true original....once you translate the menu," *City Paper*, Apr.5, 2006, <http://archives.citypaper.net/articles/2006-03-30/food.shtml> (accessed December 5, 2011)

When his Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board (PLCB) license finally was approved, Stern spent many hours crafting Gayle's wine list. To encourage customers to purchase wine in-house, Stern instituted a \$35 corkage fee for those bringing their own. Reactions were immediately hostile. In early 2006, he glumly noted "quite a few people tell us they're not coming back, even though they love the restaurant. We were a little naive about how strongly people felt about BYOB." Corkage was necessary Stern argued, for among other things, it covered the costs of buying, washing, and replacing wine glasses. Though *Bon Appetit* named Gayle one of the country's best new restaurants, it closed two years later. Calling the passing "bittersweet," Stern followed up with Midatlantic, a gastropub at 37th and Market Streets as well as R2L, a posh restaurant atop Liberty Place in Center City. Yet Gayle's demise raised a question: did the steep corkage fee spell its end? Other factors, such as a spotty Queen Village location, Stern's "culinary juggling," lawsuits by his purveyors, and stiff competition certainly contributed as well. But the fuss over corkage had unfolded in restaurants from Chinatown to the Main Line; the *Philadelphia Inquirer* described a "brown bag revolt" over restaurants that surcharged for BYOB, *Chowhound* offered Philadelphians BYOB tips, such as pairing suggestions and lower-cost wines to offset corkage, and Open Table Reservations regularly published an online listing of more than sixty Philadelphia BYOBs "offering free corkage, everyday."²²⁴

224 James Scarpa, "Bring-your-own-wine promos bring in the customers," *Nation's Restaurant News*, August 19, 2010, <http://nrm.com/article/bring-your-own-wine-promos-bring-customers>; Victor Fiorillo, "Dining out with Daniel Stern," *Philadelphia Magazine*, November 3, 2009, 39; Paul Nussbaum, "Bring your own backlash," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 12, 2006, A1; Lettie Teague, "On wine: outrageous corkage fees," *Wall Street Journal*, May 2, 2011, <http://blogs.wsj.com/wine/2011/05/02/outrageous-corkage-fees-your-turn/>; Open Table Reservations, "Free Corkage and BYOB," <http://www.opentable.com/promo.aspx?m=13&pid=370>; *Philadelphia Chowhound*, "BYO

In Philadelphia, BYOB was not just a policy. It was an institutional part of the city's dining out culture, one hard-fought and for many years, shrouded in legislative uncertainty. The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC) in 2006 estimated the city contained more than 200 such restaurants; the *Zagat Restaurant Survey* published a separate BYOB section in its Philadelphia guide; and *Philadelphia Magazine's* version included a companion map of state-run wine stores. BYOBs operated in other cities and states, but Philadelphia contained far more per capita than anywhere else in the country. According to a 2007 Open Table survey, sixty-three per cent of Philadelphia-area respondents had brought their own wine to at least one of their last ten restaurant meals. Comparatively, New Yorkers hit only twenty five per cent while the national average topped out at twenty seven per cent. But the brown bag revolt raised still more questions: why did people in metropolitan Philadelphia vociferously defend the BYOB policy? What factors, other than saving money, made it appealing? What did it mean to *experience* a BYOB? And, how were BYOBs distinctive from other types of restaurants in the city? ²²⁵

In many of Center City's most popular restaurants, food was just one aspect of the overall dining experience. BYOBs were different. They were found in Center City as well as in peripheral neighborhoods, including Fairmount, Northern Liberties, Bella Vista, East Passyunk, and Queen Village. Most were minimal in décor, occupying tiny

Etiquette," <http://chowhound.chow.com/topics/810742> (accessed February 5, 2012)

225 Kirsten Henri, "Port in a Storm," *Philadelphia Weekly*, March 28, 2007; "Brown Bagging is chic at Philadelphia's 200+ BYOB restaurants," *PR Newswire*, December 11, 2006; *Zagat Survey: Philadelphia Restaurants 2008* (New York: Zagat Survey LLC, 2008); "Philadelphia's BYOB restaurant guide," *Philadelphia Magazine*, http://www.phillymag.com/byob_restaurant_guide/index.html; Lettie Teague, "The benefits of

storefronts and containing limited seating. They formed a sub-tier of restaurants where chefs, free from mainstream constraints and corporate oversight, could experiment. Few BYOBs accepted credit cards or took reservations. And without liquor profits to sustain them, food quality was for chefs much more important. For patrons, BYOBs were sites for niche consumption, places where they could demonstrate their tastes in slightly unconventional ways. They appealed to those seeking lifestyle affirmation and distinction through knowledge of food and wine. Audrey Claire Taichman, whose BYOB at 20th and Spruce Streets was one of Center City's oldest, noted that "a lot of our customers spend time consulting our online menus, thinking about food and wine pairings before they even walk in the door....they don't really shoot from the hip." In BYOBs, unlike in their licensed counterparts, the customer was empowered by such personalization. Yet lower cost was indeed a draw: depending on varietal and vintage, patrons might pay 300 to 400 per cent *less* for wine. Whereas Philadelphia's licensed restaurants commonly charged \$12-18 for a single glass of wine, BYOB patrons could spend the same amount for a full bottle.²²⁶

The prevalence of BYOBs in Philadelphia is in large part a legacy of Pennsylvania's effort to control liquor sales after the repeal of Prohibition. In 1933, Pennsylvania Governor Gifford Pinchot created the PLCB to control the sale and distribution of alcohol. The governor, a Progressive turned Republican and an ardent Prohibitionist, was "repelled by the sight and antics of those who drank deeply." Under

BYOB," *Food and Wine*, February 2008, 11-14.

²²⁶ Brain Freedman, "Grape Escape," *Philadelphia Weekly*, August 2, 2011, 7; Audrey Claire Taichman, as told to the author, October 12, 2011; "Do restaurants and bars charge too much for wines by the glass?" *Wine Spectator*, December 3, 1998, http://www.winespectator.com/webfeature/show/id/Do-restaurants-and-wine-bars-charge-too-much-for-wines-by-the-glass_752 (accessed January 19, 2012)

the PLCB, restaurant owners required licensing to serve liquor. The PLCB issued its first licenses in 1933 at a cost of \$500. Four years later, there were more than 10,000 restaurant licensees statewide. New licensing was discontinued in 1939 to reduce the number of retail liquor outlets. The *Philadelphia Bulletin* noted “too much competition in the [liquor] business is an inducement to lower the tone of respectability with which the State sought to invest the traffic.” With new licensing terminated, a supply-and-demand system emerged. Instead of the \$500 fee, applicants purchased existing licenses whose owners demanded thousands of dollars. This put licensing out of reach for many would-be restaurateurs. More, the PLCB and Philadelphia police department lacked the resources to monitor the city’s thousands of bars and restaurants while patrons, from small Italian restaurants to hotel dining rooms, carted in their own beer, wine, and hard spirits.²²⁷

The regulation of liquor sales was something of a compromise between the state and the Pennsylvania Restaurant Association (PRA), which suggested that liquor sales “can best be done by dispensing liquors through high-taxed retail establishments such as restaurants and cafes.” The PRA warned Pinchot that if liquor were sold only in state stores, bootlegging would not cease and restaurants “would be merely stopping-off places for those who would carry their bottle with them.” The dry lobby objected to “the consumption of liquor in restaurants because women and children and those personally dry should not be compelled to sit by the side of those drinking liquor.” Attempting to

²²⁷ Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the making of modern environmentalism* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2001), 252; Michael Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 30-32; Sherri Cavan, *Liquor License: an ethnography of bar behavior* (Chicago: Aldine, 1966), 67; “Tuner seeking views on control,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, October 17, 1933; “Men and things,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 13, 1937, 3.

clarify this dispute, the PLCB defined restaurants as “businesses with responsible owners of good reputation for the purpose of providing meals for the public.” Those serving liquor could not be within 300 feet of “churches, schools, playgrounds, hospitals, or charitable institutions.” Dining rooms required at least 500 square feet with seating for at least sixty persons at once. Kitchens were to be separate from the dining room, employing a minimum of three people for meal preparation. Licensed restaurants could sell liquor noon to midnight except on Sundays and Election Day. Those hours later were extended from 7:00am to 2:00am, six days a week.²²⁸

Philadelphia’s restaurant scene long lagged behind New York’s due to “draconian” liquor laws. Without Sunday sales, restaurants found it hard attract weekend patrons. Lawmakers, restaurateurs, and citizens often weighed modifying the system. Proponents explained the PLCB would “outlaw the saloon” and keep “politics and the liquor traffic apart.” Detractors preferred privatization, especially for job creation in a state with forty per cent unemployment. As Philadelphia competed with expanding suburbs after WWII, many reform mayors supported privatization to attract business and investment. Local columnist Frank Brookhouser blamed liquor control for the city’s “lack of Saturday night action.” A 1960 assessment of the PLCB noted barring Sunday sales “is painfully and expensively effective. It drives away a great deal of business from restaurants. Philadelphia on Sunday, it is said, may be a fine place to live but a poor place to visit.” For decades, PLCB agents reportedly accepted bribes. The board was ridiculed for fining certain businesses while allowing other violators to operate. In 1981, the

228 David A. Schell, *Keeping Control: Gifford Pinchot and the establishment of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board* (Philadelphia: Temple University (Ph.D. thesis), 2006), 149, 185-186; M. Nelson McGeary, *Pennsylvania and the Liquor Business: a study of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board* (State College, PA: Penn’s Valley, 1948),

Evening Bulletin scathingly declared “PLCB officials long have conducted themselves with the peculiar blend of incompetence and arrogance normally associated with veteran petty thieves.”²²⁹

In 1970, with the Bicentennial approaching, the *Evening Bulletin* declared “it is inconceivable that the same interests which defeated Sunday sales in the past could prevent Philadelphia from offering a ’76 visitor a drink with his Sunday meal.” Efforts to grant Sunday sales to restaurants reached Mayor James Tate, who judged the move “would be a natural extension.” As the *Philadelphia Bulletin* opined in 1971, “bona fide restaurants, where people go primarily to eat...are not likely to present any enforcement problems.” The *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted that if Sunday sales were permitted in restaurants, regulations should “encourage genuine restaurants without opening every taproom door on a Sunday afternoon.” In August 1971, Governor Milton Shapp signed Sunday sales into law, effective Labor Day weekend. The bill, which passed the House 103-93, was a sensation. Philadelphia restaurant owners staffed extra workers. Local newspapers and TV stations sent reporters and photographers to numerous restaurants throughout the city, capturing many Philadelphians enjoying their first legal Sunday drink in over fifty years. The PRA anticipated the new law “will open a lot of restaurants that were closed on Sundays. It will help keep a lot of business here that had been going to Delaware and New Jersey” and “will boost tourism...and increase jobs.”²³⁰

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229 At odds on state liquor stores,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, November 3, 1933; Paul Beers, *Pennsylvania Politics Today and Yesterday: the tolerable accommodation* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 96; Frank Brookhouser, *Our Philadelphia: a candid and colorful portrait of a great city* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), 3; Bruce Boyle, “Never mess with a plant, potted or sober,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 1, 1981.

230 David LaBand, *Blue Laws: the history, economics, and politics of Sunday*

Following passage of Sunday sales, liquor in restaurants still raised concerns. Shapp continued to push for privatization, which he argued would pave the way for competition and entrepreneurship. But he soon discovered that the state legislature had “cozy relations with the existing government monopoly” and that revenues collected by the PLCB were too great to dismiss. Along with Shapp, mayor-elect Frank Rizzo and District Attorney Arlen Specter argued that “bars breed crime.” After 1971, encouraged partly by the extended weekend crowds, Philadelphia’s restaurant renaissance began. Because license prices reached into the six-figures, many restaurants followed the BYOB route. High concentrations of BYOBs appeared in East Passyunk and Chinatown. Between 1971 and 1974, several Chinatown owners commented on the effects that BYOB customers had on their bottom lines. Donald Tang, owner of Mayflower Restaurant on N. 10th Street, indicated “Chinatown is no longer a place to eat, but a place to dine.” Many Chinatown restaurateurs noticed “a better class of people these days” and that the BYOB policy was attracting more of them.²³¹

closing laws (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1987), 133; Russell Wrigley, ed., *Philadelphia: a 300-year history* (New York: Norton, 1982), 576-578; Garrett Peck, *The Prohibition Hangover: alcohol in America from Demon Rum to Cult Cabaret* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 120; “The Corkage Issue,” *Nation’s Restaurant News* 36 (May 2002): 4; Randolph W. Childs, *Liquor Under Control: report of the Pennsylvania Alcoholic Beverage Study, Inc., 1940-1960* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Alcoholic Beverage Study, 1960), 57; “Sunday liquor sales by ‘76?” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, March 15, 1971; “Sunday liquor sales,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 8, 1971; “Restaurants yes, bars no,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 13, 1971; “Sunday liquor sales by ‘76?” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 15, 1971; H. James Laverty, “Spirit of state innkeepers is high as Sunday liquor sales start today,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, August 8, 1971; Forrest L. Black, “State house defeats bill for Sunday liquor,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 3, 1971; “Liquor referendums denied,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 22, 1968.

²³¹ William Ecenbarger, “Who would get liquor licenses - and how?” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 20, 1973; William Ecenbarger, “State liquor board hollering ‘when’ on bars here,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 4, 1972; Vernon Loeb, “Want a liquor license?” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 23, 1981; Laura Murray, “Chinese restaurants

But efforts to ban BYOB persisted. The primary reason for their growth was the escalating cost of a license; by 1979 licenses, depending on location and size of the establishment, commanded between \$70,000 and \$250,000. In May 1977, the state senate approved a bill barring diners from bringing hard liquor into unlicensed restaurants by a vote of 24-1; the measure still permitted beer and wine. In 1980, State Representative John Alden (R-Wayne) authored House Bill 2416, known as the “Brown Bag Bill.” The bill would criminalize patrons bringing their own liquor (of any kind) into unlicensed restaurants, causing BYOBs to disappear. Alden fought hard for the bill, believing that “unlicensed eating places” held unfair advantage over restaurateurs who endured the expense to obtain a liquor license. He stated “many restaurants, including the majority of Chinese restaurants and a lot of the cozy little storefront bistros that have been such a part of Philadelphia’s restaurant boom, have been operating under the BYOB system for years.” Alden noted BYOB should be illegal under the state’s liquor code, for “the PLCB has said it can’t act because there is no clarification of this in the code....my bill provides that clarification.”²³²

Though Alden was unsuccessful, official disapproval of BYOBs continued into the 1980s. Under a new campaign to eradicate the practice, several unlicensed restaurants in the city were cited for illegally allowing or providing liquor to patrons and/or “concealing the cost” in the check. The state senate formed a committee to address the grievances of license holders, who had grown weary of BYOBs’ marketplace advantage. The campaign was spearheaded by State Senator William Stewart, who represented Cambria County in central-western Pennsylvania and by State Senator Frank Salvatore

seek liquor licenses,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, December 22, 1974.

232 “No BYOBs,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 3, 1977; Bill Collins, “Debating

whose district included Philadelphia. Salvatore argued that his primary targets were BYOBs illegally selling alcohol. Because enforcement fell more on the Philadelphia police than the PLCB, Salvatore believed the practice should be abandoned altogether. Additionally, the PRA and the Pennsylvania Licensed Beverage Association (PLBA) lobbied for the bill, again citing the unfair advantage that BYOBs held in the industry. Since BYOBs lacked licensing, the PLCB could not subject them to regulatory inspection.²³³

Though Salvatore's district had the most BYOBs in the state, senators representing Philadelphia's suburbs adamantly opposed the proposal. Earl Baker of Chester County agreed that illegal sales of liquor in BYOBs should cease, but called Stewart and Salvatore's bill "too broad....it would cheat the consumer." Stewart Greenleaf of Montgomery County stressed that "law-abiding BYOBs" would be saddled with "new offenses" and that "our cumbersome liquor laws will be further complicated." The *Inquirer* opined that the bill would "kill one of the simple pleasures of city life, the intimate BYOB." Unsurprisingly, the loudest opponents were BYOB owners who would endure financial pressures without the incentive of personalized liquor. Donna Consorta, owner of the Umbria Italian restaurant in Mt. Airy, stated "we would probably leave" while Beverly Breakfield, proprietor of a Mexican restaurant in Chambersburg, complained "I resent in their [state senate] telling me I'm not responsible in what I do." Salvatore admitted surprise with the outcry over his bill, stating "I didn't realize it was going to create so much controversy." The Senate saw through on banning illegal sales in

brown-bag bill," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 1, 1980, B2.

²³³ Carmen Brutto, "Senate panel supports bill to outlaw BYOB eateries," *Harrisburg Patriot-News*, December 6, 1989, A1; "Panel backs bill to halt BYOB restaurants," *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal*, December 6, 1989, B9.

BYOBs, though Salvatore and Stewart conceded that any BYOB operating within the law could allow customers to maintain the practice. Before the bill traveled to the House floor, where it was approved 47-2, the clause eliminating all BYOBs was dropped. Greenleaf announced that had the bill passed in its original form, Pennsylvania would “take a step back towards Prohibition and make our restrictive system even more restrictive.”²³⁴

By the 1990s, the long legal fog over the BYOB policy finally cleared. Though there were occasional violations, many BYOB owners could not recall the last time they had been subjected to inspection or fines. However, license costs continued to rise. At the same time, the city’s restaurantscape swelled in size, generating unprecedented demand for licensing. BYOBs moved into neighborhoods previously lacking quality eateries or in close proximity to licensed restaurants. Geographically, license costs rose the closer one came to Center City. Therefore, they were less expensive in places such as Fairmount, East Passyunk, Northern Liberties, or Queen Village, where the majority of BYOBs opened after 1995. With more than two hundred BYOB restaurants in Philadelphia by 2006, determining which restaurants best represented the genre, its deviations from the mainstream, and patrons’ desires for fulfilling niche consumption did not depend solely on location. Examining BYOBs in Center City and in peripheral neighborhoods provided a firmer sense of how as a genre, they were represented a unique niche consumerism in the city’s restaurantscape.

Since the mid-1990s, Philadelphia had gained national recognition for the

²³⁴ “BYOB under fire,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 10, 1989, E8; Kathy Brennan, “Boo-ze for BYOB prohibition,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 6, 1989, 5; “Liquor bill, without BYOB ban, is backed” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 15, 1989, B9.

theatricality of Stephen Starr and “Phil-ebrit” chefs such as George Perrier, Marc Vetri, Jose Garces, and Michael Solomonov. Its cheesesteaks and soft pretzels remained popular draws as well. Even the food truck craze swept through town, with the Philadelphia Food Trust sponsoring the first annual “Vendy Awards” in 2011. With such variety, the city’s restaurants catered to a spectrum of tastes. But the growth also indicated that over the last several decades, as Americans’ palettes grew more sophisticated and their choices expanded, “eating out” matured into “dining out.” In a cultural sense, explained the food historian Mitchell Davis, “people *are* the last restaurant they ate in.” Many scholars have debated the precise origins of this consumer shift. Gael Greene and John Mariani cite the 1950s imagineering of Joe Baum, the creator of legendary Four Seasons restaurant in New York. Juliette Rossant and David Kamp have suggested that French- and Italian-trained chefs (Andre Soltner, Alice Waters, Michael McCarty, Wolfgang Puck, and others) who opened restaurants in New York and California in the late 1960s and early 1970s launched the “trend-chasing and compulsion to dine out” that later defined American restaurant-going. Restaurants became places more for affirming social identity and indulging in a cultural experience, not simply venues for sustenance.²³⁵

In Philadelphia, explained the critic Maria Gallagher, the shift from sustenance to experience “really was a rebellion by young people who were bored with staid steakhouses, shopworn oyster bars, and hotel dining that churned out predictable fare.”

235 Helen G. Kunda, “Philadelphia Vendy Awards finalists,” *Plan Philly*, July 6, 2011, <http://planphilly.com/news/notebook/philadelphia-vendy-awards-finalists>; John Jakle and Keith Sculle, *Fast Food: roadside restaurants in the automobile age* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Gael Greene, “Remembering Joe Baum,” *New York*, October 26, 1998, 40; John Mariani, *The Four Seasons: the history of New York’s premier restaurant* (New York: Crown, 1994); Juliette Rossant, *Super Chef: the making of the great modern restaurant empires* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 17-19; David Kamp, *The United States of Arugula: how we became a gourmet nation* (New

Eating in a Starr restaurant, indulging in Garces' paella, or savoring Vetri's wild boar ragú indeed were dining experiences. So too were queuing at taco trucks in Love Park or eating pizza slices on South Street. Sandwiched between high-end formality and street corner casual were BYOBs, a genre that *Saveur* contended "Philadelphia's concierges and guidebooks often skip over." As Daniel Stern noted in 2007, "Starr's done a lot to get people to come out to the city. But for awhile, it was all one-dimensional. All of these new BYOBs are coming up....and so it's not just one or two people dominating the city anymore." BYOBs satisfied a specific niche, one shunning popular tastes while maintaining refinement. Their cuisine often was described by chefs or in blogs and reviews as "refreshingly simple," "deconstructed," "eclectic," "authentic," or "using only the freshest ingredients." They emerged as zones of certain taste, allowing wine lovers to conspicuously display their potables, the food-adventurous to sample challenging dishes, and all patrons to visit streets or neighborhoods off the beaten path. The Philadelphia Convention and Visitor's Bureau proudly hailed the city the "BYOB capital of North America," where patrons, while "saving money on wine and spirits, can sample extraordinary fare from around the world." The *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted of BYOBs that "flavors were sometimes odd, the locales occasionally unfamiliar, but we were in search of authenticity, food as close to the real thing as possible."²³⁶

York: Broadway Books, 2006).

²³⁶ April White and Maria Gallagher, eds., *Philadelphia Magazine's Ultimate Restaurant Guide* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 6; Drew Lazor, "City Dozen," *Saveur*, August 15, 2011, 17; Patricia Talorico, "For fine dining, Philly no longer takes a back seat," *The Wilmington News Journal*, June 22, 2007, B2; Mike Featherstone, ed., *Global Culture* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990); Donald Sloan, ed., *Culinary Taste: consumer behavior in the international restaurant sector* (Boston: Elsevier, 2004); "Expensive restaurants in Philadelphia," *Fodor's Travel Intelligence*, http://www.fodors.com/world/north-america/usa/pennsylvania/philadelphia/restaurants-nam_price:5.html; "Philadelphia restaurants," *Frommer's*,

Legal history of the policy aside, the allure of Philadelphia's BYOBs lay in broader contours of consumption. Lizabeth Cohen noted that after WWII, U.S. citizens faced a "mass consumer market delivering [to them] mass-produced goods." In the 1960s, she continued, segmentation developed among producers and consumers seeking to identify themselves apart from the masses. This strategy applied to things from cars and television sets to clothes and restaurants. By the 1980s, as Dana Thomas explains, manufacturing's demise sapped the purchasing power of working- and lower classes, leading marketers toward upscale consumers, placing less emphasis on race or gender. Richard Peterson states that since the 1990s, segmentation and upscaling have been augmented by "cultural omnivorousness," an adoption of eclectic taste in food, music, art, film, and other cultural products. Omnivores in the global economy devoured forms and practices of both high and low culture. Regarding American restaurants, the "commonplaceness" that defined the industry in the immediate postwar decades gave way to specialization and what historian Richard Pillsbury defined as a shift from "body food" (restaurants for sustenance) to "soul food" (restaurants where the ingredients, preparation, and authenticity principle were central to success).²³⁷

Where did BYOBs fit within these consumer vertices? The linkages between them, as sites of niche consumption, and cultural capital, the social valuation of that

<http://www.frommers.com/destinations/philadelphia/0023010028.html>; "BYOBs: taste the trend," <http://www.philadelphiausa.travel/PwRuWg>; Michael Klein, "A World of Flavors," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 5, 1996, 18.

²³⁷ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: the politics of mass consumption in postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003), 292-301; Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: how luxury lost its luster* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007); Richard Peterson, "The rise and fall of highbrow snobbery as a status marker," *Poetics* 25 (1997): 75-92, 82; Jeremy Strong, "The Modern Offal Eaters," *Gastronomica* 6 (spring 2006): 30-39, 33; Richard Pillsbury, *No Foreign Food: the American diet in time and place* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 144.

consumption, revealed why their popularity stemmed less from cheaper wine and more from principles of taste. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described consuming food and wine as “acts of deciphering [and] decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code.” Eating at Starr’s Buddakan or a Vetri restaurant revealed one as trend-conscious and well-heeled, but opting for Audrey Claire or Tre Scalini required deeper knowledge and navigation of food, wine, and the city itself. Regarding Bourdieu’s categories of class (“legitimate,” “middlebrow,” and “working-class”), BYOBs offered symbolic capital for the legitimate, “dominant classes,” those derisively referred to as “foodies” and “wine snobs.” While expression of taste propelled certain people into BYOBs, income levels were less vital in making those decisions than their acquisition/display of food and wine knowledge. Being cash-rich” allowed one to eat in *any* restaurant, but BYOBs’ distinction required patrons be *taste*-rich in food and wine and to seek out unfamiliar streets and neighborhoods. In many BYOBs, fashionable, well-to-do patrons were seen dining alongside middle-class families or even rugged urban hipsters, with all segments bridged by their expressing taste in a realm beyond mass consumption.²³⁸

Sharon Zukin described mass consumption as “the eclipse of small merchants and peddlers by large, well-capitalized firms.” In Philadelphia, this consumption occurred in restaurants such as steakhouses (Morton’s, Del Frisco’s etc.), national chains, or those owned by Stephen Starr. Nominally independent chefs including Garces and Vetri usually were backed by wealthy investors, received considerable attention via media outlets and

238 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 55; Adrienne Lehrer, *Wine and Conversation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 231; Donald Sloan, ed., *Culinary Taste* (Boston: Elsevier, 2004), 113.

industry awards, and owned restaurants with month-long waiting lists. Their establishments benefited from public relations promotions, expensively designed settings, well-crafted dishes, and the means to occupy the city's highest-rent areas. Liquor licensing was a mere formality. While locals patronized these restaurants, the Capital Grille, Amada, The Palm, Osteria, Parc, and El Vez depended mainly upon business travelers, tourists, and suburbanites to be successful. More than food, service, or décor alone, customers were drawn to the promise of sensory experience. The sociologist David Grazian, who analyzed Starr's restaurants, noted that food was one ingredient in the "synthetic excitement" he used to attract tourists, conventioners, and elite college students. BYOBs filtered out experiential synthetics, placing food quality and wine knowledge front and center. Menus often were small and did not cater to popular tastes. And for those who'd grown tired of flavored vodka martinis, blood orange frozen margaritas, or the extortionate costs of wine by the glass, BYOBs allowed for a simpler personalization of the dining experience.²³⁹

BYOBs were orchestrated creative, upstart chefs and entrepreneurs. Ian Moroney and Hillary Bor, owners of Pumpkin, a BYOB in the Graduate Hospital neighborhood, began with less than \$50,000. "We didn't have financial backing," noted Moroney, "and we don't have rich parents. If times get tight, I can cook, Hillary could run the front, we

²³⁹ Sharon Zukin and Jennifer Maguire, "Consumers and Consumption," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 173-197, 176; Susan Strasser, "Making consumption conspicuous: transgressive topics go mainstream," *Technology and Culture* 43 (October 2002): 755-770; Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 7 (1990): 295-310; "Best of the Main Line and western suburbs, 2008," *Main Line Today*, <http://www.mainlinetoday.com/Main-Line-Today/July-2008/COVER-STORY/>; Craig LaBan, "The bistro at the sign of the pig," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 13, 2008, http://articles.philly.com/2008-01-13/news/24988944_1_bistro-pig-pork-shoulder; David Grazian, *On the Make: the hustle of urban nightlife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 10.

could hire a dishwasher, and we'd be okay." With minimal capital, chefs who apprenticed elsewhere carved out their own niche. Stern fled the high-profile worlds of Daniel Boulud and George Perrier to create Gayle. Pierre Calmels too left Le Bec Fin to open Bibou, a tiny French bistro in Bella Vista, where he mingled and imbibed with diners. Peter McAndrews, owner and chef of nearby Monsu, took Italian staples (such as sausage and lasagna) and injected them with unconventional ingredients from cinnamon and raisins to cocoa. "I wasn't going to open [Monsu] in an area with connotations," stated McAndrews, "I wanted to do something cutting edge....the rent's not as steep, then you can do more adventurous cuisine." Others, such as Tre Scalini's Franca Di Renzi, brought only family recipes and a fondness of cooking to their tiny restaurants. Stern, Calmels, McAndrews, Di Renzi, and others were concerned more with experimentation (or tradition) and less with earning Michelin stars or spots on the Food Network. They and their staffs could break free from corporate rigidity. In many cases, servers wore t-shirts and jeans or, if dressier outfits were needed, all-black ensembles. There were no designer martinis made by snobby "mixologists," no scripted greetings from hostesses, no pricey parking valets, and little of the cultural imagineering that dictated the city's restaurant mainstream.²⁴⁰

Mainstream restaurants, while offering enjoyable atmospheres and decent food, adhered to a certain standardization. Starr's restaurants looked, sounded, and tasted different but were all managed by principles of mass production and control. His business

²⁴⁰ Rick Nichols, "A French-style hideaway in South Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine*, October 7, 2001, 51; Michael Klein, "French flavor in a small space," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 14, 2009, F2; Steven Sansone, "Chef's Forum: Peter McAndrews," *University City Review*, April 21, 2010, <http://ucreview.com/chefs-forum-chef-peter-mcandrews-modo-mia-restaurant-p2060-86.htm>; interviews with Franca and Francesca Di Renzi conducted by the author, July 7, 2011.

model consistently guaranteed the same overall experience regardless of the actual restaurant. From his high-end Barclay Prime steakhouse to his casual Stella pizzeria, Starr catered to a McDonaldized consumer mentality. Customers returned believing that they would find their expectations met: good food, reliable service, attractive staffs, kitschy décor and thematics, carefully selected music and lighting, and in some cases, engagement with history to authenticate a fabricated experience. BYOBs attracted those not seeking such enticements. For instance, *Philadelphia Magazine* praised Konstantinos Pitsillides' Kanella, popular Greek BYOB in Washington Square West, for its "exposed brick, unvarnished wood, mishmash of neighbors and foodies....and unfussy fare."

William Roseberry cites a similar consumer divide in discussing coffee. He noted that greater availability in the U.S. of gourmet beans since the 1990s (e.g. Blue Mountain, Sumatra, or Maracaibo) revealed a distinct break from the past, when "mass-produced brands such as Maxwell House and Folgers" dominated American kitchens. When people consumed "yuppie coffees," a specific desire was fulfilled, reinforcing their refinement, cosmopolitanism, and heightened taste. Specialty coffee drinkers were not of the Starbucks masses, but were customers who wanted to distinguish themselves in a *venti* "no-whip" latte world. Benjamin Wurgaft recalled an episode from his Boston neighborhood when locals protested the arrival of Starbucks. He explained that while Starbucks and a nearby independent café served similar beverages to ostensibly similar demographics, choosing one over the other (the mass-produced vs. the independent) "was tantamount to voting." Likewise, Starr faced mild resistance in working-class Fishtown when siting his 400-seat Frankford Hall *biergarten*. Many long-time residents worried about increased traffic, late-night noise, and further gentrification of the area. Fishtown

restaurateurs, such as the owners of the Memphis Taproom and Johnny Brenda's, were skeptical of Starr's arrival: what effect would his mainstream establishment and customers have on their more independent efforts? In contrast to Starr and Starbucks, BYOBs offered alternatives to niche consumers by dividing the masses from the sophisticated within the restaurantscape.²⁴¹

Along with food, wine appreciation was a critical aspect of the BYOB experience. Though the policy also allowed beer, and was later relaxed to allow grappa or tequila, wine was by far the accompaniment of choice. The preference for wine resulted from a number of reasons. First, wine typically paired better than beer or other spirits with food. This was slightly ironic in Philadelphia, a city that until the late 1970s, had a rich brewing tradition with the Schmidt's, Ortlieb, and Gretz companies employing hundreds of workers. Beer underwent a craft/microbrew revival in the 1990s and 2000s in response to what the founder of Dogfish Head, a New Jersey craft brew, explained was "the sheer magnitude and sameness of mass-produced and mass-marketed goods." In Philadelphia, beer and food pairings were common events in gastropubs such as Monk's Café, Varga, and the Standard Tap. But even with specialty beers gaining popularity, it never achieved the class distinctions of wine. Historically, wine consumption denoted a social elitism. As

241 Jason Wilson, "Philadelphia's BYO revolution: how budget-minded brown baggers have energized a dining scene," *Washington Post*, March 7, 2007, F1; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); George Rizter, *The McDonaldisation of Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2000); Joy Manning, "Kanella: it's Cypriot to me," *Philadelphia Magazine*, September 2008, 40; William Roseberry, "The Rise of Yuppie Coffees and the Reimagination of Class in the United States," *American Anthropologist* 98 (December 1996): 762-775, 763; Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, "Starbucks and rootless cosmopolitanism," *Gastronomica* 3 (Fall 2003): 71-75, 71; Bryant Simon, *Everything but the Coffee: learning about America from Starbucks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Craig LaBan, "Frankford Hall: nice Fishtown beer garden vibe," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 20, 2011, http://www.philly.com/philly/columnists/craig_laban/20110821_Frankford_Hall.html;

Steve Charters noted, wine and food “have long been linked explicitly to serve as a marker of advanced refinement.” While some BYOB patrons chose inexpensive wines, toting them in brown bags, others used ornate carrying cases for their up-market bottles. Local critic Craig LaBan called bringing high-end wines into BYOBs “the culinary equivalent of driving to the mall in your Hummer.” Cochon chef Gene Giuffi recalled an “older couple,” unwrapping a 1986 Chateau Margaux (easily valued over \$600) from an Hermès scarf, who also carried their own Riedel glassware. They explained to the server that the “house glasses” were unworthy of their premier vintage. This “wine snobbery” in America hardly was new; Thomas Jefferson was considered the country’s foremost expert on wine. His wealth and political positions allowed him to buy and sample wines from anywhere on Earth. Jefferson believed that serving fine wines at dinner parties had a “positive social effect.” Adversely, Patrick Henry found Jefferson’s oenophilia objectionable, noting he had “abjured his native victuals” for fancy French wines. From the early republic through the mid-twentieth century, wine consumption was relegated to the upper reaches of America’s class structure, associated with prestige and wealth. Consumed in New York’s rarefied French restaurants during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wine became, when dining out, a potable province of the elite.²⁴²

This elitism started thinning in the 1970s when along with the country’s restaurant

Jess McCuan, “Rebirth along the river,” *New York Times*, January 13, 2008, TR4.

²⁴² “Suddenly, a beer scene in South Philly,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 3, 2008, 49; Sam Calagione, *Brewing Up a Business: adventures in entrepreneurship from the founder of the Dogfish Head craft brewery* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2005), 72-75; Adrienne Lehrer, *Wine and Conversation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Steve Charters, *Wine and Society: the social and cultural context of a drink* (New York: Elsevier, 2006), 177; Gene Giuffi, as told to the author Nov.3, 2011; John Hailman, *Thomas Jefferson on Wine* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 13; Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and modern gastronomic culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 22.

renaissance, a “wine revolution” trickled down to the middle classes, providing them a new stage for displaying luxury consumption. Others credit lawyer *cum* oenophile Robert M. Parker’s highly enthusiastic 1980s publication *Wine Advocate* for creating “a whole new generation of wine lovers.” By the 1990s, more Americans were consuming wine than ever before. And when paired with food, stated Adrienne Lehrer, middle class customers “became part of gourmet society without really *belonging* to it.” The average wine drinker usually was college-educated, relatively affluent, and over twenty-five years of age. Unlike beer or hard spirits, wine generally was not consumed in large groups or in bars. Appreciation of the highly nuanced drink took years to develop while pairing (matching the wine’s characteristics with certain food flavors and textures) typically was “the prerogative of the aficionado.” By 2010, wine was the most popular alcoholic beverage among American men and women, with all fifty U.S. states containing at least one commercial winery.²⁴³

Wine drinking, a pursuit that the historian Robert Fuller likened to religiosity, included specific behaviors and rituals. Contemporary oenophiles pored over Parker’s *Wine Buyer’s Guide*; debated color, aroma, “old vines,” or “reserve bottles;” discussed *terroir*; or weighed the merits of Viognier. Rituals included tastings, food pairings, vacations to Napa or Bordeaux, and in the opinion of the novelists Jay McInerney and Rex Pickett, an extravagance “sometimes solely to impress your friends.” The surge in wine’s popularity aligned with Philadelphia’s changing restaurantscape. Sampling French, Asian, or *nouvelle*-inspired restaurants in 1970s and 1980s Philadelphia

243 Eric Asimov, “The line drawn by the ‘82 Bordeaux,” *New York Times*, March 20, 2012, D5; Lehrer, 155; Ronald S. Jackson, *Wine Tasting: a professional handbook* (Boston: Elsevier, 2009), 427; George M. Taber, *In Search of Bacchus: wanderings in the wonderful world of wine tourism* (New York: Scribner, 2009).

distinguished one as adventurous and sophisticated. Demonstrating their refined taste, people consumed wine to augment their lifestyle. Yet for decades, a reputable variety of wine in Pennsylvania was hard to come by. In 2002, to improve their “dreadful” selections and to prevent residents from traveling out of state to purchase wine, the PLCB increased the variety and quality of wines available in their stores. Lawyer Jonathan Newman was chosen by then-governor Mark Schweiker to head a three-member board to “cultivate Pennsylvanians’ palates” by featuring “‘Premium Collection’ wines and under-publicized vintages.” In 2003, *Wine Enthusiast* hailed Newman as “Man of the Year” for successfully “turning around [Pennsylvania’s] Prohibition-era legal wine machinery.” Newman explained that the upscaling resulted from an “increasingly demanding drinking public [that] had developed a taste for more sophisticated wines.” Even with rising numbers of consumers, wine maintained an aura of dignity, restraint, and uniqueness. Far less democratic than beer or hard spirits, wine emerged as the United States’ most “heterogeneous alcoholic beverage.”²⁴⁴

Competing with licensed restaurants did not deter some BYOB restaurateurs. In some cases, the competition paid off. After Starr opened his El Vez Mexican restaurant in Washington Square West, Marcie Turney, an Audrey Claire alumnus, selected a ground-

244 Robert Fuller, *Religion and Wine: a cultural history of wine drinking in the United States* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 97; Jay McInerney, *A Hedonist in the Cellar: adventures in wine* (New York: Knopf, 2006); Rex Pickett, *Sideways* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004), 30; “Wine consumption - U.S.,” *Mintel Market Research Reports*, Oct.2011, http://academic.mintel.com/sinatra/oxygen_academic/my_reports/display/id=542988&anchor=atom/display/id=599144; Joel M. Podolny, *Status Signals: a sociological study of market competition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3-4; Charters, 197; Marion Demossier, “Contemporary lifestyles: the case of wine,” in Donald Sloan, ed., *Culinary Taste* (Boston: Elsevier, 2004), 93-107, 95; David Raskin, “In Pennsylvania, rethinking the state liquor store,” *Governing*, September 30, 2009, 40; “2003 Wine Star award winners,” *Wine Enthusiast*, Mar.2004, <http://www.winemag.com/Wine-Enthusiast->

floor space across 13th Street for a Mexican BYOB, Lolita. At first, she believed that only El Vez's overflow crowds would sustain her miniscule establishment. Ultimately, the reverse happened. While the menu items were popular, Turney's idea to sell pitchers of "virgin margaritas" gave Lolita an edge. Along with Argentine malbecs or six-packs of Modelo Especial, Lolita's patrons brought their own tequila and saved considerable money in the city's first "BYOT" ("T" for tequila). *Philadelphia Weekly* noted that one margarita at El Vez *equaled* the cost of a virgin pitcher at Lolita. Those bringing their own could control the strength of their margaritas. The differences did not end with margaritas. Jose Garces was the first executive chef at El Vez, but had since launched a city-wide empire of his own. El Vez resembled a spruced-up nightclub that served Mexican fare as an added attraction. Lolita's narrow space, with exposed brick walls and ventilation ducts, simple track-lighting, and unhindered views of the kitchen, created warmer feelings of intimacy and reduced the see-and-be-seen ethos of its cross-street rival. While dining at Lolita in the fall of 2011, I noticed that the pitchers of margaritas were more than containers of fruit, spices, and agave; they served as points of unison and camaraderie among patrons. For guests, this helped redirect the focus to food. Turney, a James Beard award semi-finalist and one of *Philadelphia Style's* "10 Hottest Chefs" in 2009, also placed heavy emphasis on obtaining local ingredients whenever possible. "We do get many of our ingredients from Mexico. But I've been committed to the local aspect for much of my career," explained Turney, "the dairy goods come from farms in Lancaster County, and when Barbuzzo [a nearby Mediterranean concept] opened last year, all of our seasonal produce came from independent purveyors in Pennsylvania and New Jersey." Though Garces brought traditional Mexican recipes to El Vez, few

gourmands labeled El Vez as “authentic” when compared to Lolita; press releases touted El Vez as “Mexican-American meets East L.A. in a Tijuana taxi” while *Zagat 2008 Philadelphia* called Lolita “convivial...imaginative, and capable of putting flashier places to shame.” Even the menus varied in concept. El Vez used kitschy, gimmicky terminology to describe items; cocktail names included the “Zapata” and the “Chi Chi Rodriguez” while edibles included “Nacho Mamma” (nachos with black beans), “Indian Red Lopez” (guacamole with spicy crab and red salsa), and “Red Snapper ala Veracruzana” (to summon an exotic imaginary). Lolita refrained from fabricating authenticity, with many menu items presented in Spanish with English translation: “*fundido con queso y chorizo*” (fondue with various cheeses and sausage), “*borega con budin de huitlacoche*” (grilled loin of lamb with corn-mushroom stuffing), and “*jericalla con calabaza*” (pumpkin crème brulee).²⁴⁵

Many industry experts and locals believe that Italian restaurants, whose early twentieth century immigrant owners often included *vino paisano* in their dining rituals, were among the earliest BYOBs. As such, a large percentage of the city’s BYOBs served Italian cuisine. Opened in 2000, Radicchio Café, a BYOB on the northern edge of Old City, could easily be passed by in a blink. The roar of traffic on the nearby 676 Freeway and Ben Franklin Bridge seemed to further isolate the one-room restaurant. Boasting that it provided patrons “one of the most authentic Italian restaurants” in the city, Radicchio Café was the sole commercial enterprise on an otherwise quiet residential street. Judging

²⁴⁵ Lauren McCutcheon, “Mouth of the Border,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, April 28, 2004; “America’s best BYOB restaurants,” *Travel and Leisure*, March 2011, 19; Marcie Turney, as told to the author, Sept.20, 2011; “Starr Restaurants press releases, 2009-2010,” courtesy of Cashman and Associates Public Relations; “Lolita,” *Zagat Philadelphia Dining Guide*, 2008, 89; “El Vez Dinner Menu,” <http://www.elvezrestaurant.com/pdf/dinner.pdf>; “Lolita Dinner Menu,”

authenticity in restaurants is a relative pursuit. In the case of Radicchio, authenticity was its primary marketing tool: the menu. Scanning their bill of fare, with its *Insalata di Farro*, *Langostine*, and *Farfalle Delizia*, was a mouthwatering exercise. At the same time, the simplicity and traditionalism of the appetizers, entrees, and desserts was a fresh respite from the overly trendy dishes celebrated on food blogs and in upscale magazines. The wait staff was comprised not of college students or hipsters (a la Stephen Starr) but of Italian-born men and women who treated their vocations with respect and precision rather than with the aloofness rampant elsewhere.

In Queen Village, a neighborhood populated by young families, well-to-do retirees, and a crop of students and hipsters, was the forty-five seat Cochon. Situated at the intersection of Passyunk, Catherine, and Sixth Streets, the small restaurant owned by Gene Giuffi (alumnus of several Center City kitchens) was an experimentation with all things porcine; “Cochon,” according to Giuffi, was the French equivalent of “oink.” At once a quaint neighborhood restaurant and a dining-out destination, *Philadelphia Weekly* described Cochon as “full of understated flourishes” and its patrons as “retired Society Hill MDs and yuppie parents in jeans and cable knits.”²⁴⁶ Opting for a swine-centric menu, Giuffi noted, “it’s very difficult to sell poultry or beef when most of your menu is filled with pork.” Looking over Cochon’s dinner menu, the selections were at first sparse: a rotating and/or changing list of six appetizers and six entrees. Upon closer inspection, each dish combined multiple cooking styles and ingredients, including Cajun, Italian, and French. “I’d say my cooking style borrows heavily from Provencal methods, though

<http://lolitabyob.com/lolita/>.

²⁴⁶ Adam Erace, “Pig Tale,” *Philadelphia Weekly*, December 26, 2007, http://www.philadelphiaweekly.com/food/pig_tale-38463494.html (accessed August 1, 2011)

being eclectic certainly has its advantages....I have found ways to incorporate this city's love of bacon into some of the desserts." Cochon was the only restaurant (BYOB or otherwise) in the city that served almost exclusively pork dishes, a testament to the genre's creative possibilities. Regarding Cochon's décor, Giuffi explained, "I wanted to maintain a bistro feel, but avoid the typical bistro look that I saw so much of elsewhere." Instead of zinc bars, Art Deco lighting, distressed mirrors, hexagonal floor tiles, and Lautrec posters, Cochon's interior contained triangular and spherical lights, yellow and purple-hued walls, several pots of fresh flowers, and various drawings, posters, and figurines of pigs. With dishes such as potato-herb gnocchi with pork cheek *confit*, escargots with pancetta and *concassé*, and Milanese pork chop with bacon mashed potatoes, typical French bistro fare (mussels, oysters on the half shell, steak frites, and chicken paillard) were left up to the ritzier Parc, Rouge, and Varga in Center City. Cochon was not an average attempt at a French bistro, but a project in elevating and experimenting with a popular restaurant theme. Confirming the centrality of wine and the refinement of his customers, Giuffi in 2009 hosted the "Ides of March," a multiple-course food and wine pairing dinner co-sponsored by the Delaware Valley chapter of *Chaîne des Rôtisseurs*, the world's oldest international gastronomic society. Founded in Paris in 1258 by the meat roasters guild and later revived globally in the 1950s, *Chaîne des Rôtisseurs* had in 2009 more than 120 chapters in the United States alone. The Ides of March event was a closed occasion, open to *Chaîne* members only. With one a BYOB as the host, the event indicated the taste distinctions that defined lay within the genre.²⁴⁷

Philadelphia's BYOB restaurants were products of both legal and cultural factors.

²⁴⁷ Gene Giuffi, as told to the author on December 1, 2011; Percy Nikora, "Jewels of the Rhone," *Gastronome* 3 (2009): 40.

In trying to maintain control and order after Prohibition, the PLCB was entrusted with licensing and inspecting the state's restaurants that wished to sell alcohol. With thousands of licensed restaurants in the first six years of the board's existence, it was clear that alcohol revenues were far more profitable than any other in the restaurant industry. When the board terminated new licensing in 1939, they simply became too expensive once beholden to the whims of private owners. Prices would only rise in subsequent years. In economic and legal contexts BYOB, as a policy, seemed a justifiable result of the complicated landscape created by the PLCB. And for decades afterwards, the policy divided many interests in the city and state. Dry sentiments lingered after Repeal, and when law and order became a primary issue in the postwar city, efforts to curb the availability of liquor warranted clarification of the PLCB's rules; just where and where not was liquor allowed to be sold? As congressional battles over the policy confirmed, many parties desired the delegitimizing or total erasure of BYOB. Opponents claimed BYOB restaurants had unfair advantages at the expense of licensed establishments while BYOB owners and proponents declared their legitimacy and necessity in a strictly controlled state. Social and political stigmas over alcohol, some held over since more conservative times, needed to dissolve. Until the policy was finally clarified in the 1980s, legal uncertainty kept these debates alive.

But legal history only partly accounted for BYOBs' appeal and why they became something beloved by Philadelphians. After legal clarification inspired more chefs to open BYOB restaurants, a strong tide of cultural forces pushed what was once a curious, roguish novelty into a full-fledged dining phenomenon. The restaurant renaissance and the wine revolution that began in the 1970s, spread in the 1980s, and matured in the

1990s affected how patrons viewed their dining experiences and what components of those experiences they most desired. With the pursuit of experiences came the segmentation of the restaurant market, divided by themes, concepts, cuisine, and target demographics. In many ways, and as previous chapters demonstrate, the change from eating as sustenance to dining out as experience had a direct, and largely, positive effect on postindustrial Philadelphia. Led by early players such as Steve Poses, Judy Wicks, and George Perrier, perfected by Stephen Starr, and followed by numerous imitators, food emerged as just one ingredient in the more complicated, multisensory experiences that patrons of and to Philadelphia came to expect. But as dining experiences became formulaic and emphases on food quality and originality lessened, a specific niche of patrons, informed by savvy taste, gravitated to BYOBs to both personalize and distinguish their dining experience. In the process, places such as Pumpkin, Tre Scalini, Lolita, Cochon, Radicchio Café, Audrey Claire, Monsu, Bibou, and dozens of other creative BYOB restaurants emerged as zones of certain taste in Philadelphia's diverse restaurantscape.

CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE: VETRI'S GAMBLE ON NORTH BROAD STREET

"Post-industrial America turned out to be a bust."

-Washington Post, Sept. 4, 2011

A central dynamic of this study is urban renewal, a complicated and contentious process of revitalizing cities. It is my hope that the preceding chapters, by focusing on specific genres and certain neighborhoods, demonstrated the vital roles restaurants played in resuscitating the urban landscape and allowing people to reconceptualize the city. In postindustrial Philadelphia, restaurants brought vitality to vacant spaces, forlorn intersections, and entire neighborhoods. Along the way, the city became more attractive, appealing, and at times, adventurous. Just three decades ago, combing Bella Vista for pho or savoring monkfish in Port Richmond were activities hard to conceive. Even labeling Philadelphia a "restaurant town" prior to 1970 was almost unthinkable. While soft pretzels, cheesesteaks, and Sunday gravy remained totemic in the local culinary pantheon, they were complemented (and at times challenged) by hundreds of diverse restaurants. Even the *New York Times*' haughty food writers revised their "outdated notions about the range of Philadelphia cuisine." From an urban renewal standpoint, restaurant-led development existed on a scale less intrusive and more accessible than the "big ticket" projects in the decades after World War II. Yet the dynamic, in which so many Philadelphians placed faith and funding, did not achieve immediate or universal success.²⁴⁸

248 Ingrid Williams, "Philadelphia evolves its palette," *New York Times*, January 23,

In his recent study about the revitalization of Brooklyn, Suleiman Osman notes that when “brownstoners” first arrived in Park Slope and Boerum Hill in the late 1950s, press coverage was generally positive, heralding the comeback of abandoned neighborhoods and praising their rehabilitation of once-grand homes. Yet when evidence surfaced of racial minorities (largely black and Puerto Rican) being evicted and harassed, public tones changed dramatically. What was once hailed as revival devolved into gentrification. Those in Brooklyn opposing the changes lobbed their anger not just at the new homesteaders but also towards the restaurants and retailers arriving to cater to them. While minority residents relied on large chain stores and cheap restaurants for their livelihoods, the mainly white middle class brownstoners argued such businesses “destroyed the healthy diversity of the area....and created anomie.” Underlying this spatial conflict were cultural divisions, ranging from taste in coffee to preferences in films. One Manhattan resident commented after walking through Brooklyn Heights in 1957: “I’d like to see [in Brooklyn Heights] a Café Espresso shop or two....and a theater devoted entirely to foreign pictures.” A major question raised by Osman was: how can competing tastes be reconciled in places of racial and class diversity? In tandem, Elijah Anderson, examining race in modern Philadelphia, asked: what forces allowed certain kinds of people to lay claim to specific areas? Blending Osman and Anderson with restaurant-led development, other queries might be: does an upscale restaurant in an abandoned factory in a low-income neighborhood stand as a case of gentrification or an example of adaptive reuse? What, if any, were the connections between duck *confit* pizza and what the historian Steven High termed the “deindustrial sublime?” After relating Osman and Anderson’s work to my own, I wondered about restaurant-led development’s

limitations in Philadelphia. My analyses of sidewalk cafes and steakhouses revealed that while both were stages for displaying sophistication and/or social power, they were not “publics” or all-inclusive spaces. Stephen Starr’s experience dining, while a constant and successful draw for Center City, rarely appeared in peripheral neighborhoods and BYOBs, perhaps the ultimate expression of refined dining-out, symbolized a niche consumption foreign to many Philadelphians. Knowing of and patronizing these establishments required a certain degree of cultural capital, itself a divisive concept. Even in socially diversifying neighborhoods such as East Passyunk, there were in its restaurants noticeable divisions between old ethnic and new “hipster” residents. In trying to flesh out this questions of limitations, recent developments along North Broad Street provided a possible answer.²⁴⁹

By the late 1950s, many Center City areas either were made over or awaiting what urban historians derided as “bulldozer renewal.” While millions of dollars, untold tons of equipment and materials, and thousands of people were invested in the rebuilding of Philadelphia’s center and suburbs, neighborhoods along North Broad (Franklin Town, East Poplar, and Yorktown) spiraled into neglect, crime, and structural decay. Gone was the sprawling and environmentally dangerous Baldwin Locomotive Works, once bounded on its eastern edge by North Broad. The mansions, factories, theaters, and automobile

²⁴⁹ Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: gentrification and the search for authenticity in postwar New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) 120, 260-271; Elijah Anderson, *The Cosmopolitan Canopy: race and civility in everyday life* (New York: Norton, 2011), 4-5; Steven High, *Corporate Wasteland: the landscape and memory of deindustrialization* (Ithaca, NY: IRL Press, 2007); for other recent works that discuss gentrification and the city, see Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: governance, ideology, and development in American urbanism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); and Sharon Zukin, *The Naked City: the death and life of authentic urban places* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); on the notion of “publics,” see Setha Low and Neil Smith, eds., *The Politics of Public Space* (New York:

showrooms along North Broad between Vine Street and Temple University's main campus were demolished, abandoned, or rendered obsolete. Through the 1970s and 1980s, a pernicious stigma grew on parts of these neighborhoods, with the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1988 gloomily proclaiming them "urban ghost towns."²⁵⁰

The ghost town pathos was not entirely without basis, as shuttered factories and their graffiti-soaked walls would confirm. But there were other factors as well. In August 1964, a riot erupted on Columbia (now Cecil B. Moore) Avenue following rumors that the police had beaten a black woman. The mayhem lasted three days, resulting in the quarantining of North Philadelphia by mayor James Tate, who along with district attorney Arlen Specter, cited the area's many taprooms and glaring poverty as root causes. Tate initiated regular liquor licensing crackdowns, declaring that "at four to a corner, taprooms only serve to exploit the area's Negro residents." Philadelphia was the seventh Northeast city to witness unrest that summer, following passage of the Civil Rights Act. The "Jump Street Riot" was symptomatic of both racial discrimination and the aging, decrepit conditions of North Philadelphia. Local residents accused the city leadership "writing off" the area, complained that police routinely brutalized them, and mocked the "nigger renewal" process of tearing down (but not replacing) old housing stock. The expansion of Temple University also was resented by many locals for spurring residential displacement. Commercially, much of the neighborhood never rebounded from the riot. Residential outflows were staggering; between 1950 and 1990, North Philadelphia lost

Routledge, 2006).

²⁵⁰ Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: a critical analysis of urban renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1964); James Wolfinger, *Philadelphia Divided: race and politics in the city of brotherly love* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Thomas Ferrick, "Urban ghost towns haunt the city's rehab efforts," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 10, 1988, A1.

roughly sixty-five per cent of its residents, while the city overall lost 23.4 per cent.²⁵¹

By the 1990s, the winds on North Broad started to change. In 1993, the federal government and the city of Philadelphia spent a combined \$113.9 million to build or renovate more than nine hundred housing units in the area. Soon after, the Philadelphia Department of Commerce (PDC) sought tenants for new strip malls along North Broad, namely “restaurants, stores selling records, sporting goods, and clothing.” The North Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce (NPCC) noted that between 1960 and 1985, there was virtually no new investment in the area. Tax breaks were offered to developers and businesses who would move into North Philadelphia, including “Jump Street” at North Broad and Cecil B. Moore, a key intersection on the Temple campus. Yet few takers were found. Between 1980 and 1994, Temple had invested more than \$20 million in the neighborhood. In the summer of 1984, Temple purchased and renovated thirty homes on Park Avenue between North Broad, 13th, Norris, and Montgomery Streets. Designed to “breathe new life into the campus and provide an economic boost for the surrounding neighborhood,” this area eventually became the pedestrian Liacouras Walk.²⁵²

During the early 2000s, Temple University steadily consumed the neighborhoods on its edges, razing forbidding apartment towers and rehabbing vacant homes into dormitories. Starbucks Coffee, Barnes and Noble Booksellers, Qdoba Mexican Grill,

251 Valeria Russ, “20 years ago, riot on Columbia Ave.,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 31, 1984, 8; John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: urban planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); John McCullough, “Ward by ward taproom quotas proposed by Tate,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, January 10, 1965; Matthew Countryman, *Up South: civil rights and black power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 155-161.

252 Michael Janofsky, “Philadelphia neighborhood reborn,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1998, A12; Jerry Byrd, “Philadelphia has plenty of room for new stores,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 11, 1994, D1; Leon Taylor, “Temple starts renewal of Park Mall row homes,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, July 5, 1984, 17.

Foot Locker, and AMC Theaters arrived to generate commerce and activity while also helping make students feel safe. Common of urban universities in the early twenty-first century, Temple became North Philadelphia's biggest landlord, a force of redevelopment or, depending on one's point of view, an agent of gentrification. In 2010 after demolishing the University Services building at the northeast corner of North Broad and Oxford Streets, Temple began work on a \$216 million, 660,000-square foot project including high-rise dormitories, dining halls, a recreation center, and retail space. Placards depicting contemporary towers, shimmering in blue and white, adorned the fences around the worksite. Temple CFO Anthony Wagner noted that the new buildings "will be unlike any current Temple residential complex." The university's Facilities Management further described the project as a "signature complex that will help define a dramatic southern gateway to the campus."²⁵³

The blocks south of Temple's proposed gateway told a different story. Starting in the late 1970s, Philadelphia's "growth coalition" (boosters, civic associations, and mayoral administrations) spoke of revitalizing North Broad between Temple and City Hall. One of the first overtures came in 1985 when Historic Landmarks for Living, a Philadelphia-based firm, purchased the former Packard Automobile plant at 317 North Broad. The firm converted the seven-story space into luxury apartments. Later purchasing the nearby Harrington Machine Works and old Wills Eye Hospital, which also were transformed into apartments, the company seeded a "loft district" amidst North Broad's industrial wreckage. Citing proximity to Center City and the Vine Street Expressway (I-

253 *Extending the Vision for North Broad Street* (Philadelphia: City Planning Commission, 2005); Bruce Buschel, *Walking Broad: looking for the heart of brotherly love* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 46; Ray Betzner, "New main campus vision taking shape," *Temple News*, March 17, 2010, <http://news.temple.edu/news/new-main->

676), Landmarks' CEO Carl Dranoff noted "this is a fantastic location....you'll see the opening of retail and convenience shops and restaurants. We'll bring life to an area that's been dormant for many, many years." By 2007, the Spring Garden Loft District included the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Community College of Philadelphia, a massively expanded Pennsylvania Convention Center, Hahnemann Hospital, and a satellite campus of Drexel University's medical school. For the remaining stretch of North Broad between Spring Garden and Oxford, politicians, developers, and investors imagined a continuing strip of exhibition spaces, condominiums, retail stores, and restaurants. Many compared this vision to the Avenue of the Arts that blossomed along South Broad nearly two decades prior.²⁵⁴

Dranoff's prediction about restaurants failed to materialize. For many years, vacancies proliferated along North Broad. Panhandlers and the homeless loitered on sidewalks. Post offices, health clinics, and schools lay shuttered. Renovations of the Divine Lorraine Hotel at Fairmount Avenue sputtered when the Great Recession deepened, its towering edifice marred with graffiti and jungle-like weeds. Mansions saw second lives as plasma clinics and storefront churches. "For Lease" signs adorned empty car showrooms and the theaters at Wallace, Mt. Vernon, and Green Streets. Riot gates gave the area a "fortress city" look after dark. Some in Philadelphia likened North Broad

campus-vision-taking-shape (accessed March 17, 2012)

²⁵⁴ Roger Biles, *The Fate of Cities: urban America and the federal government, 1945-2000* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2011); Roger Cohn, "Showplace for autos reclaimed for housing," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1985, B6; Gregory Byrnes, "An industrial zone is facing a challenge," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 6, 1984, K1; Joe Feagin, *The Urban Real Estate Game: playing Monopoly with real money* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1983); "Avenue of the Arts and its neighborhoods: a work in progress," *Central Philadelphia Development Corporation*, December 1994, 5; Theresa Conroy, "Avenue of the Arts vs. Tarts," *Philadelphia Daily News*, January 8, 1998, 15.

to Harlem in the 1960s. Comparisons between Harlem and North Broad increased in 1995, when both were designated Economic Empowerment Zones (EEZ). With EEZ status, the neighborhoods became tax havens, hoping to lure businesses that would hire local residents. In 1998, Grid Properties Inc. announced plans for “Jump Street U.S.A.,” a mixed-use complex modeled on their \$56 million Harlem U.S.A. complex. First envisioned in 1992, and hampered by commitment delays and questions of financing, Harlem U.S.A. included a nine-screen multiplex, record shop, health club, ice skating rink, and a 6,000-square-foot Disney store. Grid Inc. touted it as a new center of gravity and the largest commercial employer in Harlem, bringing in an estimated 500 jobs. By 2000, EEZ-related projects increased Harlem’s employment by seventeen per cent. While some residents worried about the erasure of small businesses, the *New York Times* indicated many Harlemites under fifty approved of the project, with one noting “we are the Baby Boom generation and we want first class stores here.”²⁵⁵

Philadelphia mayor Ed Rendell, his city’s biggest cheerleader, noted of Grid Inc.’s North Broad proposal: “people around here are dying to eat in some first-class restaurants right here, instead of going downtown. This is going to be a true destination.” North Broad’s restaurant offerings long were limited to pizza, luncheonettes, Chinese, and fast food. More, the neighborhood had seen no large commercial development since Progress Plaza (southeast corner of North Broad and Oxford) opened in 1968. The city abetted Grid Inc. by condemning several buildings on their one square-block parcel. By May

255 Eric Schneider, *Smack: heroin and the American city* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Derek Hyra, *The New Urban Renewal: the economic transformation of Harlem and Bronzeville* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 74; Thomas Lueck, “Disney plans to open store in Harlem,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1996, B1; John Holusha, “Around 125th Street, new interest and optimism,” *New York Times*, April 12, 1998, RE7.

1999, Jump Street U.S.A. had yet to secure a single tenant. Grid Inc. was undeterred, explaining that their plot bound by North Broad, Oxford, Cecil B. Moore, and 15th Streets, generated only \$189,000 in annual tax revenues for the city. After completion and with full occupancy, Grid Inc. projected a \$3.2 million annual return. But without committed tenants, residents and some city council members doubted the hype. Residents worried that a number of small businesses, such as check cashing centers, welfare agencies, furniture showrooms, and insurance offices would close or be displaced while council members, watching developments in Harlem, feared corporate chains would take over the neighborhood. The *Philadelphia Tribune* warned that “this development brings with it rising property values, opportunistic landlords, and big businesses eager to take over locally owned storefronts.” City Councilman Darrell Clarke felt that while Grid Inc.’s redevelopment might benefit North Broad, the project was geared almost wholly towards upper-middle income residents. Temple officials, eager to simulate Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania’s successful Sansom Commons in west Philadelphia, hoped Jump Street U.S.A. could anchor their school’s “Georgetown look” while improving the quality of life for students and area residents.²⁵⁶

Jump Street U.S.A. (renamed “The Shops at Avenue North”) opened in 2006. That April, the PCPC unveiled its redevelopment plan for “Avenue of the Arts North,” along North Broad from City Hall to North Philadelphia Station on Glenwood Avenue. The report aimed to make the strand safe for pedestrians and motorists and pleasing to the

²⁵⁶ Herbert Lowe, “Jump Street gets the spotlight,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 7, 1998, B1; Rita Giordano, “A jump start for Jump Street,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 31, 2000, B1; Juleyka Lantigua, “Urban renewal forcing low-income families out,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, November 6, 2001, 7A; Judith Rodin, *The University and Urban Revival: out of the ivory tower and into the streets* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

eye. First commissioned by Rendell in 1999, the PCPC's long-awaited plan "will reestablish North Broad Street as an exciting urban thoroughfare where arts, culture, entertainment are celebrated, supported, and expanded; a mix of institutional, commercial, and residential uses promotes and encourages pedestrian activity and a safe environment day and night." On opening weekend, gunshots were fired near Avenue North's multiplex entrance while the police broke up an ensuing melee. The violence that long defined the neighborhood called into question the true benefits of retail development. Shortly after, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted "North Philadelphia is plagued by problems that arts and culture alone cannot solve." By 2010, the Avenue North complex housed beauty supply, discount cellular phone, and logowear shops; a short-lived Starbucks and vegan café had fled.²⁵⁷

But 2006 also marked the first stirrings of redevelopment on North Broad between Temple and the Loft District when Eric Blumenfeld's EB Realty purchased the Mulford Building at 640 North Broad (at Wallace Street). Once housing a garment factory, Blumenfeld renamed the Mulford "640 Lofts" and converted its upper floors into luxury apartments. Many of his peers and business colleagues thought him crazy. Given the immediate surroundings (not a coffeehouse, boutique, or fashionable restaurant in sight), asking potential residents to pay \$1200-\$2500 a month was a challenge. Yet Blumenfeld was undeterred. When asked about his ambitions, he noted optimistically "I see Paris....everybody says its impossible to do retail on North Broad because there's no pedestrian traffic." More, while some North Philadelphia residents felt Blumenfeld's

257 Alexander Von Hoffman, *House by House, Block by Block: the rebirth of America's urban neighborhoods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Sarah Watson, "North Broad St. is looking up," *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 13, 2006, 7; Inga Saffron, "Vision is limited in city's plan for North Broad Street," *Philadelphia*

move a bad omen, he did not think of himself as a gentrifier, but a “rehabilitator who buys only vacant buildings.” The 640 Lofts’ sales brochure offered the following description: “SoHo style living that allows one to escape from the orthodox conventionality of bourgeois space into an alternative world of creativity, aesthetic choice, and purposeful self-definition.” In shorthand, the apartments were to be populated not by local residents, college students, or artist “pioneers,” but by young, educated people with considerable disposable income, a demographic foreign to the overgrown weeds and pockmarked buildings nearby. Praising Blumenfeld’s project, *Philadelphia Style* noted 640 Lofts “was designed with the goal of consolidating all the needs of the urban tenant into one facility.”²⁵⁸

Yet even with their secure garage and modern appliances, 640’s tenants would demand external amenities worthy of steep rents. Corner bodegas with Plexiglass barriers, empty showrooms, dimly lit ATMs, and urine-scented sidewalks would not suffice. To meet these lifestyle needs, Blumenfeld approached Philadelphia chef Marc Vetri, persuading him to open Osteria, a casual eatery and pizzeria, on the first floor. Vetri, moving to a neighborhood far off foodie radar, was taking a gamble. But previous successes with restaurant-led development (notably Starr’s Old City Continental in 1995) indicated that chefs and restaurateurs of his caliber could attract patrons (and more restaurants) to areas of the city previously judged irrelevant ghost towns. After visiting Osteria in 2007, restaurant critic Karen Feldman noted “Philly’s government seems to

Inquirer, April 28, 2006, E1.

²⁵⁸ Valerie Russ, “Developer sees a little city of light in North Broad Street,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, April 4, 2011, 3; “Condo craze on North Broad Street,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 19, 2006, <http://lofts640.reachlocal.com/?scid=762778&kw=985987:17402> (accessed March 5, 2012); Amanda Williamson, “The Philly Lovers Loft,” *Philadelphia Style*, March /April

understand that it needs to help its restaurateurs and, to that end, I spotted several police cars cruising slowly by the place before we entered and while we dined.”²⁵⁹

Given Vetri’s standing in the restaurant world, he seemed an unlikely candidate to land anywhere near North Broad. Though born in Philadelphia, he hardly was a “marinara and Caesar Salad” Italian chef. In 1998, after apprenticing under Wolfgang Puck in California and spending a year at Taverna Colleoni del’ Angelo in Bergamo, he opened his eponymous “Vetri,” a thirty-five-seat restaurant in the same row house where George Perrier opened the original Le Bec Fin in 1971. Vetri introduced well-heeled Philadelphians (dinner for two easily exceeded \$300) to “rustic Italian cooking....the *real* Italian experience, like how Italians really eat when they go out and kill a wild boar.” In 1999, *Food and Wine* named him one of the ten best chefs in the United States while famed New York chef Mario Batali called “Vetri” “the best Italian restaurant in the country.” Accolades poured in from *Bon Appetit*, *The New York Times*, the James Beard House, *Gourmet*, and *Philadelphia Magazine*, which in 2008 hailed Vetri as the “top restaurant in the region.” Concierges throughout the city complained that non-hotel guests called them “months in advance” to get a reservation. Even Stephen Starr approached Vetri several times about a possible collaboration. On each occasion, Vetri respectfully declined.²⁶⁰

2005,.17.

²⁵⁹ John Marchese, “The Rebirth of North Broad,” *Philadelphia Magazine*, June 2007, 123-130; Frank Bruni, “A chef to the few heeds a call to the many,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2007, F1; Craig LaBan, “A luscious Italian newcomer to North Broad,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 20, 2007, M1; Karen Feldman, “Florida Weekly cuisine,” *Florida Weekly Ft. Myers*, August 16, 2007, AE1.

²⁶⁰ Bryan Miller, “The revival of Philadelphia’s well-fed core,” *Trenton Times*, July 15, 2001, 18; Marc Vetri, *Il Viaggio di Vetri: a culinary journey* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2008), 6-7; Craig LaBan, “Marc Vetri: bringing real Italian to a red-gravy town,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 25, 2008, F1; Eileen Daspin, “Up from Cheesesteak,

Osteria opened just after Valentine's Day in 2007. The buzz was immediate. Rather than a larger outpost of his Center City jewel, Osteria was simpler, a spacious dining area with a "wine bar and wood-burning oven." For Vetri and area foodies, accessibility to the Vetri name was vital. North Broad, easily reached from the Vine Street Expressway, was less congested than Center City and patrons from throughout the Delaware Valley could drive to Osteria, where the cost of valet parking (\$12 in 2011) was less than the \$20 charge for Center City restaurants. Along with their rooftop pool and fitness center, 640 Lofts' tenants gained immediate cultural capital with a James Beard chef's restaurant on the first floor. And for several years, despite glowing reviews of Osteria, Vetri and Blumenfeld had minimal success in attracting new development to this stretch of North Broad. While patrons did come, confirming the historian Hal Rothman's "Field of Dreams" theory, most who visited Osteria were white, upper-middle class people who drove to the restaurant, valet parked, and never wandered beyond the storefront. Rather than offering sidewalk seating (a highly popular trend in Center City), Osteria instead contained a fenced-in dining courtyard shielded from North Broad. This was hardly a rebirth akin to what the PCPC hoped for, a modern landscape updated and tailored to the whims of Charles Baudelaire's wandersome *flaneur*. Area residents, mainly black families in Yorktown and East Poplar, typically did not have the cultural capital (or the financial means) for octopus-topped pizzas or braised rabbit with polenta. After visiting Osteria in March 2008, I could not help imagine how Vetri's sophisticated cuisine would mesh with one of the most disadvantaged parts of Philadelphia.²⁶¹

Philly joins a growing list of foodie destinations," *Wall Street Journal*, September 10, 2004, W4.

²⁶¹ Michael Klein, "For Vetri, North Philadelphia is cooking," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 23, 2006, B2; Hal K. Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: tourism in the twentieth*

But the loneliness of Osteria would not last. In 2011, councilman Clarke called North Broad “the next hot corridor.” Osteria continued to entice Philadelphians and their visitors with pan-fried veal tongue, chicken liver rigatoni, and what *Food and Wine* judged to be among the twenty-five best pizzas in the United States. The previous year, the James Beard Foundation awarded Osteria’s executive chef Jeff Michaud the “Best Chef - Mid Atlantic” honor, bestowing upon the restaurant near-divine approval. Blumenfeld too proved his naysayers wrong; as of 2011, all 266 apartments at 640 were filled. By the close of that same year, more than \$500 million in new development was planned for the immediate area: Blumenfeld neared completion of one hundred more apartments in an old dress factory across North Broad; the Pennsylvania Ballet fashioned a \$17.5 million headquarters at Wood Street; Bart Blatstein of Tower Investments was in negotiations to convert the *Inquirer* and State buildings (both just to the south on North Broad) into mixed-use properties; and in the former Wilkie Buick showroom, Blumenfeld (who originally planned more condos there) courted the upscale Vie Catering Hall, Stephen Starr’s Route 6 (a casual seafood house), and Vetri’s Alla Spina gastropub to move in.²⁶²

In dollars and cents, the growth seeded by Blumenfeld and Vetri in 2007 had four years later matured into a small revival, a collective \$500 million commitment to an

century American West (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).

²⁶² “Avenue of the Arts headed in the right direction,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 26, 2011, 14; Ratha Tep, “Interview with Marc Vetri,” *Food and Wine*, <http://www.foodandwine.com/articles/chef-guide-marc-vetri-philadelphia> (accessed March 23, 2012); Michael Klein, “Cuing up a center city bank shot,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 10, 2010, B2; Jennifer Lin, “North Broad Street gets a new look,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 18, 2011, A1; Solomon Leach, “\$43M project on North Broad,” *Metro Philadelphia*, February 8, 2011, 3; Craig LaBan, “Dining along Broad Street,”

urban ghost town. Rather than being dismissed as an obsolete wasteland, restaurant-led development now made possible the reclassification of North Broad as an urban enclave, next in line to receive an acronymic designation (“NoBro”). While additional condo conversions were promising, the arrival of Starr’s Route 6 meant Osteria, by attracting middle and upper-class patrons to a virtual restaurant desert, legitimized a stretch of North Broad as Philadelphia’s new frontier for restaurant-led development. Granted, Starr already had penetrated the far-flung riverwards in 2010 with the opening of his Frankford Hall *biergarten* and at one point considered rehabbing the shuttered Broad Street Diner at Ellsworth Street. But his move to a vacant Buick showroom on North Broad, surrounded by vacant buildings, raised eyebrows among his legions of followers. This consumption-driven reinvestment in the postindustrial city fit within the larger mold of urban development since the 1970s. With empty factories and car showrooms reborn as condos and chic restaurants, Philadelphia was trending with what Sharon Zukin called the “universal rhetoric of upscale growth.”²⁶³

Behind fashionable patrons and their high-line cars at the valet stand, the revival of North Broad was mainly cosmetic. Tension still existed between the polished properties adjacent to Osteria and the nearby ruins of the Divine Lorraine, blending Sheeler’s industrial Precisionism with Camilo Jose Vergara’s *American Ruins*. Henri Lefebvre has posited that reorientations of postindustrial cities often were “planned with the greatest care: centralized, organized, hierarchized, symbolized, and programmed.” It seemed the planning and organization of these new restaurants was inspired by fortification and safety. While patrons at Osteria or Route 6 may have thought theirs was

Philadelphia Inquirer, September 11, 2011, H11.

²⁶³ Zukin, 10.

an urban experience, they instead were subjected to hermetically sealed dining spaces with vibrant activity inside but a cold, windswept streetscape outside. Route 6's outdoor café was placed not on the sidewalk but in a fenced-in enclosure on the south side of Mt. Vernon Street. Walking south on North Broad one evening in February 2012, I noticed both Osteria and Route 6 were quite busy but had their shades drawn, possibly to prevent peering in. At the Vie Catering Hall, the windows facing North Broad were tinted as dark as a limousine. And ambling around 640 Lofts, I could not help noticing the steel fencing and wire mesh installed to protect tenants' "SoHo style living." The only human activity on the sidewalk as I passed was two parking valets engrossed in their smartphones.²⁶⁴

The contrasts between industrial remains and postindustrial prophecies were evident in nearly every American metropolis. From Detroit and Providence to New York and San Diego, consumption-based redevelopment, or what Joel Kotkin recently labeled "glamour zones," was the primary tool for closing the gap between decay and revitalization. American cities manufactured less in the way of tangible goods and instead relied on the creation of sensory experiences to remain relevant. With factories converted to lofts, banks reborn as steakhouses, and decrepit riverfronts transformed into marketplaces, urban renewal, utopian in design but at times dystopic in practice, continued to perplex city officials and fascinate observers. Passing judgment on its successes and failures was equally challenging, for different generations viewed the same events in competing ways. By and large, renewal efforts in twentieth century Philadelphia (such as Penn Center, Society Hill, and the Sports Complex) received mixed reviews: Penn Center, while ushering in an era of modern fluidity and Manhattanization, also rid

264 Lily Hoffman, ed., *Cities and Visitors: regulating people, markets, and city space* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 23; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*

the city of a magnificent railway station and produced empty, windswept plazas; Society Hill, while an internationally praised preservation project, succeeded in uprooting one of Center City's historically black communities; and the erection of the Sports Complex, while providing easy freeway access to and from ball games and concerts, demonstrated just how much Philadelphia relied on suburbanites. But restaurant-led development in Philadelphia, for all of its inconsistencies, privatizations of urban space, continual upscaling, cultural elitism, and class-specific accessibility, emerged as an appealing and broad-ranging method to fill architectural vacancies, enliven normally staid or lifeless streetscapes, attract investment, and most of all, present a deindustrialized metropolis in terms other than perpetual decline and irrelevance.²⁶⁵

(Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 384.

²⁶⁵ Joel Kotkin, *The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), 59-61.

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