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Naming Power?: Urban Development and Contestation in the Callowhill Neighborhood of Philadelphia

Rachel E. Marcus
Oberlin College

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NAMING POWER?

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Philadelphia

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Rachel Marcus

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Sitting on a patio outside a restaurant nearby Seth Soffer's house we each ate a slice of

pizza while we talked about his years after college when he shared a

warehouse-turned-apartment-turned-showspace with his friends in the Callowhill neighborhood

of Philadelphia. He didn't call it "Callowhill," though—Seth was firm in his desire to call this

neighborhood "Trestle Town," after the raised railroad tracks that twist their way through the

streets and were instrumental in the once great locomotive manufacturing business that

dominated Philadelphia. Soffer was decisive: "I don't like any names except for Trestle Town."[1]

Despite Soffer's conviction regarding the name of the neighborhood, Callowhill's name
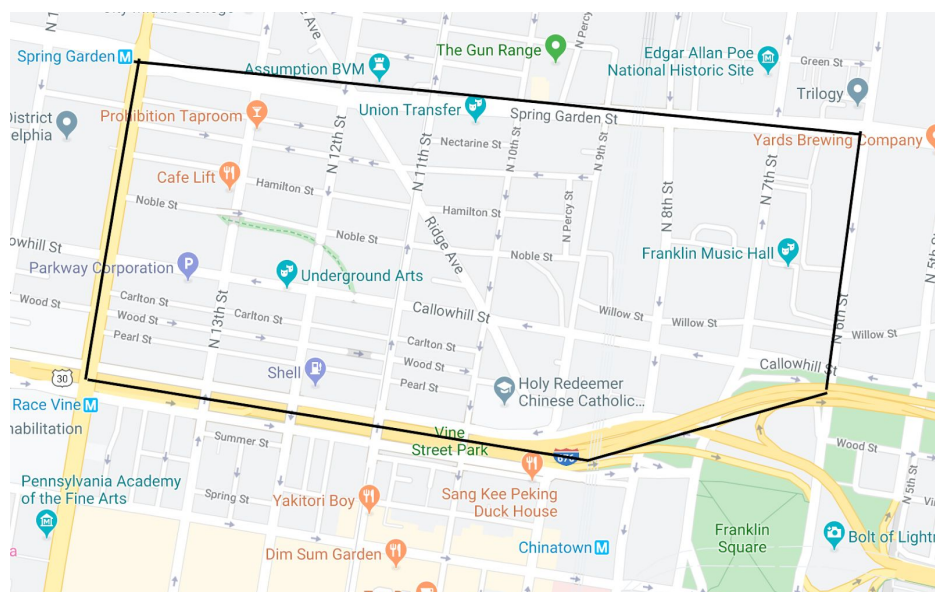
and corresponding identity are anything but stable. Callowhill, in most definitions, spans east of Broad Street, west of 6th Street, north of the Vine Street Expressway, and

south of Spring Garden Street. Despite these boundaries, there is little to foster cohesion or any

other identification for the neighborhood. Most strikingly, this bounded area has an excess of

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[1] Seth Soffer. In discussion with the author. August 29, 2019.

names that speaks to a profound confusion in its identity—each name corresponds to a different claim to the space.

To cite a few names in question: Callowhill, Chinatown North, Trestle Town, Spring Arts, the Loft District, the Donut Hole, Eraserhood—each of these names yield different explanations about the history of the neighborhood, the future of it, cultural connotations that have developed, and onward. Writing about gentrification, Sharon Zukin contends that identification with a neighborhood suggests a certain ownership over it: "Any group that insists on the authenticity of its own tastes in contrast to others' can claim moral superiority. But a group that imposes its own tastes on an urban space...can make a claim to that space that displaces longtime residents."[2] With this variety of names and claims, Callowhill is a neighborhood in the midst of an identity crisis.

Contestations over naming this bounded area are indicative of the power dynamics occurring in many American cities. The urban landscape has completely transformed over the past fifty years: capital has been poured into development, justified through a "frontier mentality" that defends potential displacement with calls for uplift.[3] Drawing a parallel between westward expansion in the 19th century and prevalent rhetoric that identifies deteriorating neighborhoods as sites of "untapped potential", Neil Smith explains that this mentality "rationalizes social differentiation and exclusion as natural, inevitable."[4] The disparities

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[2] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.
[3] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996) and Samuel Zipp, "The Roots and Routes of Urban Renewal," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 3 (May 2013): 366–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212467306.
[4] Smith, *The New Urban Frontier*, 17.

entrenched in the cityscape are clearly glimpsed in the negotiation over Callowhill's name, each one representing a different vision for the city and who belongs there.

Fundamentally the transformations of the American urban landscape in the postwar years are reflections of shifting distributions of power. Eminent spatial theorist David Harvey's writing about the "right to the city" postulates that the ability to "make and remake" the city is a human right.[5] Universally, though, the only actors able to make and remake the city are those who have access to wealth, power, and capital. This thesis takes Callowhill as a site that demonstrates how power and making/remaking space are inextricably entwined—the contestations over the name, aesthetic character, and decision-making power speak to how control is allocated in an increasingly inequitable urban landscape.

Naming Power?

Perhaps the names that are most contentious are Chinatown North and Spring Arts. The latter has been adopted by the real estate developer Arts + Crafts Holdings who have declared their dedication to Callowhill through copious development; in the past few years, they have acquired a plethora of properties in the bounds of the neighborhood. Arts + Crafts's website lists thirteen properties, but they have multiple unlisted buildings waiting on renovation and development.[6] Regardless of their massive presence in the neighborhood, Arts + Crafts is hesitant to claim credit for the "Spring Arts" branding move: in an interview with the

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[5] David Harvey, "The Right to the City." *New Left Review* 53 (October 2008): 23–40.

[6] "Properties." Arts + Crafts Holdings. Accessed March 23, 2020. https://www.artsandcrafts.holdings/properties. also Ryan Briggs, "'Spring Arts' remake dogged by tenant complaints, code violations," *WHYY,* December 27, 2018, https://whyy.org/articles/leaks-faulty-heating-and-shoddy-repairs-haunt-developers-dreamy-spring-arts-remake/

Philadelphia Inquirer Craig Grossman, one of the general partners of Arts + Crafts, explained, "We're helping to promote it, but it's not something we're taking ownership of...It's something that should hopefully be a little more organic."[7] Grossman articulates a dynamic between what is
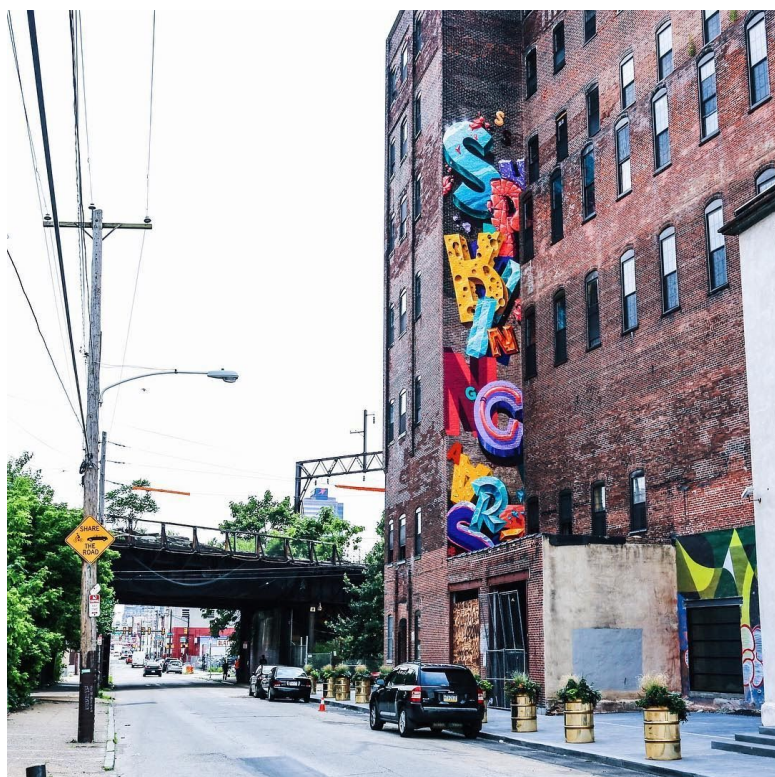
Arts + Crafts property in Callowhill with characteristic mural on the building. Photo via Arts + Crafts Holdings website.

organic and what is *imposed,* distancing himself and his company from "owning" the Spring Arts name and instead positioning himself as a steward guiding its adoption. Though Grossman claims that Arts + Crafts is organically fostering identification with the Spring Arts name, his language recalls Sharon Zukin's assertion that groups who insist on the authenticity of their own visions are suggesting moral superiority over the people already living in the neighborhood.[8] These notions of dominance are glimpsed through the visual differentiation of Arts + Crafts' properties in comparison to the rest of Callowhill, with their colorful murals and industrial chic aesthetic, as well as their stated mission for neighborhood revitalization. On their website: "We are urbanists

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[7] Samantha Melamed, "Where the Heck Is Spring Arts? Developer Commissions Mural Arts to Rename a Philly Neighborhood," https://www.inquirer.com (The Philadelphia Inquirer, July 22, 2016), https://www.inquirer.com/philly/home/20160722__Spring_Arts__murals_commissioned_to_rebrand_Callowhill_neighborhood.html)

[8] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

that reimagine historic buildings and the urban spaces between them."[9] This rhetoric implies a

desire to critically intervene in the fabric of Callowhill, directly in opposition to Grossman's

statement about promoting Spring Arts with the intention of organic change.

Other names associated with Callowhill reveal a similar dynamic of negotiation.

Chinatown North has become a central component of the Philadelphia Chinatown Development

Corporation's 2017 Neighborhood Plan intended to spur economic development for the

neighborhood.[10] The Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) is a prominent

organization in the city and has long been fighting for Chinatown's right to autonomy. PCDC

began advocating for Chinatown with their opposition to the Vine Street Expressway in

1966—an urban renewal effort seeking to "modernize" Philadelphia—a project that threatened to

destroy multiple cultural centerpieces of Chinatown.[11] The historical connection to the Vine

Street Expressway binds PCDC to the neighborhood directly north of the Expressway:

Callowhill represents how the highway stunted Chinatown's growth, preventing northward

expansion. Kathryn E. Wilson, a professor of history at Georgia State University and author of

Ethnic Renewal in Philadelphia's Chinatown, explained to Philadelphia's local NPR radio

station, "Connecting Chinatown North to the historic core has always been the challenge for this

Chinatown...There was always Chinatown North [of Vine Street], but the expressway really cut

off the top part of that community. A lot of what neighborhood planning has done since then is

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[9] "Overview," Arts + Crafts Holdings. Accessed March 23, 2020.
https://www.artsandcrafts.holdings/overview

[10] Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, "Chinatown Neighborhood Plan Including Callowhill, Chinatown and Chinatown North" (city planning document, Philadelphia, 2017).

[11] "History," Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation. Accessed March 4, 2020
http://chinatown-pcdc.org/about/history/

try[ing] to bridge that."[12] Mary Yee, a former member of the Save Chinatown Movement that protested against the Expressway, describes development proposed for the area around Chinatown as "a noose" that threatened to cut off the neighborhood from everything around it.[13]

The power struggle over Callowhill has largely played out between PCDC and Arts + Crafts. Both groups have strong visions for the future of Callowhill: PCDC seeks to loosen the noose that has choked Chinatown since urban renewal through bridging the Expressway and establishing a welcoming business environment for Chinatown residents in Callowhill; Arts + Crafts sees Callowhill as a space replete with "untapped potential." Arts + Crafts has rehabilitated disused warehouses and emphasized industrial heritage as a method to draw investment to Callowhill. With each of these distinct identities and competing interests inhabiting the same space, Callowhill is a neighborhood that is able to speak to how possession, ownership, allegiance to urban space is negotiated with such disparate and incohesive goals.

Methodology

Foundational to my project is the understanding that urban space is imbued with meaning which both shapes and is shaped by social interactions—in this case, Philadelphia's Callowhill is physically impacted by the contestations that are happening over it. In order to study the ways that urban space is negotiated in Callowhill, I look to a cadre of critical urban theorists who explore the relationship between space and power.

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[12] Jake Blumgart, "A new plan for Chinatown," *WHYY,* November 9, 2017
https://whyy.org/articles/a-new-plan-for-chinatown/

[13] Yee, Mary. "The Save Chinatown Movement: Surviving against All Odds." *Pennsylvania Legacies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 24–31. https://doi.org/10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0024.

Edward Soja has coined the term "socio-spatial dialectic" based around the works of Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, and David Harvey (among others).[14] He explains the socio-spatial dialectic as: "the spatiality of whatever subject you are looking at is viewed as shaping social relations and societal development just as much as social processes configure and give meaning to the human geographies or spatialities in which we live."[15] The reciprocal relationship between space and social interaction furnishes my methodological approach to this project: in conducting interviews with individuals who hold some stake in the spatial negotiation of Callowhill, I hope to assert the inextricable relationship between power, development, and contestation.

Power sits at the crux of this project. In employing the socio-spatial dialectic as the epistemological underpinnings of my research, I argue that the ability to change, develop, or occupy space is fundamentally an assertion of power. Soja states that it is imperative to enact a "critical spatial perspective" in order to carefully examine the ways that privileges are distributed across space.[16] Very simply: "location in space will always have attached to it some degree of relative advantage or disadvantage."[17] I approach my interviews with the knowledge of the inherent power that comes with position in space. These interviews allow for an in depth conversation about how positionality in regard to questions of ownership and agency are intrinsically tied to space.

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[14] See: David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53 (October 2008): 23–40, Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), and Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias.," Michel Foucault, Info., accessed December 18, 2019, https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en/.

[15] Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, Globalization and Community Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[16] Ibid, 49.

[17] Ibid, 73.

In thinking about geographic allocations of power and privilege, Wendy Cheng speaks about geographic racial formation, explaining that focusing on this allows for "a level of analysis that focuses on everyday actions and movements, which are formed temporarily and shift more quickly and subtly than at a large scale."[18] She identifies the quotidian as being a site ripe for negotiations of power since it displays a complex interplay of dynamics that cannot be reflected from a top-down approach. In Callowhill, though there are institutional measures being taken to solidify power structures, the information gleaned through interviews elucidates often obscured motivations behind conflicts over ownership. Additionally, the gestalt, Cheng explains, is "the 'feeling' people have living in a particular area that feeds into their general satisfaction and long-term investment in the area despite existing tensions or conflicts."[19] Naming and *investing* in this human inclination to identify with space, I use interviews to dissect where this investment comes from and how these tensions are addressed and played out through "the production of local, daily knowledge."[20]

Building on Edward Soja and Wendy Cheng's epistemological and methodological foundations, I selected preliminary interviewees associated with the most visible entities in Callowhill—PCDC and Arts + Crafts, Then, using a snowball method, I conducted eight interviews with current and former residents of Callowhill, representatives of Arts + Crafts and PCDC, the architect of the Rail Park, and various other players in Callowhill's current transformation. Centering the importance of the everyday, questions to interviewees focused on people's connections to the neighborhood, how they have seen it change, and what they think

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[18] Wendy Cheng, *The Changs Next Door to the Diazes: Remapping Race in Suburban California* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 11.
[19] Ibid, 19.
[20] Ibid, 11.

about those changes. Along with information gleaned from direct answers to questions, these casual interviews allowed interviewees to shift the conversation to topics that further illuminated their investments to Callowhill.

In addition to the interviews, observing how individuals interact with or move through Callowhill speaks to the reciprocal relationship between the space and its users. In this rapidly changing neighborhood, how people decide to use public space or the businesses that they patronize indicates the changing geography of the neighborhood. Susanna Schaller and Gabriella Modan assert that *who* uses public space and *how* they use it is a salient indicator of power distribution within a neighborhood—in their case study they explain that nonwhite residents socializing in public often leads to "those who don't tend to socialize in such spaces tend[ing] to link appropriate use of public space to whether or not people have a legitimate goal."[21] Returning to Soja's critical spatial perspective, dynamics such as this demonstrate that participant observation elucidates the operation of power and draws connections between space and social interaction.

Finally, there is a historical lens to this project. In order to illustrate the ways that Callowhill and the rest of Philadelphia has changed over time necessitates the use of city planning documents and some archival materials. Specifically, and most substantially, I am looking to the 1960 Comprehensive Plan, the 2035 Citywide Vision, and the 2017 Chinatown Neighborhood Plan because they have the ability to illuminate the *future* vision of Philadelphia. The spatial negotiation of Callowhill today asks how urban development imagines the future of the neighborhood, bringing into question the larger imaginary to which this change is

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[21] Susanna Schaller and Gabriella Modan, "Contesting Public Space and Citizenship: Implications for Neighborhood Business Improvement Districts," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24, no. 4 (June 2005): 394–407, https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X04270124.

contributing. Writing about postindustrial Pittsburgh, Tracy Neumann contends, "The power to control material space was bound up with the representational authority over the city's image."[22] The imagined neighborhood and its material space are inextricably bound together, and these plans delineate the power dynamics bound up in this relationship.

Literature Review

My research looks to investigate the ways that space is managed in a neoiberal city and the subsequent contestations that arise. I see this study intervening at the intersections of gentrification studies, critical urban geography, and the abundant writing about urban renewal and the postindustrial city. Additionally, I am drawing on and adding to the emerging field of scholarship on business improvement districts and other urban spatial management methods.

Establishing the connection between space and justice is vital to this project as I am asserting that the changes to Callowhill threaten human agency. I am, again, returning to the body of critical urban theorists—Soja, Lefebvre, and Harvey—and looking to intervene in their scholarly conversation about the relationship between space, capital, and social interactions.

The Callowhill neighborhood of Philadelphia has a history similar to many postindustrial urban neighborhoods: prosperous industry, decline, urban renewal, and revitalization—scholarship chronicling the postindustrial city provides frameworks to understand the social, spatial, and economic changes that accompany development. Historically situating these post-World War II urban shifts—from the success of industry in the early 20th century, to urban crisis in the 1950s and 1960s and the following urban renewal efforts, to, finally, the long

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[22] Tracy Neumann, "Reforging the Steel City: Symbolism and Space in Postindustrial Pittsburgh," *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 4 (July 2018): 582–602, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144218759026.

revitalization period that has followed—shed light on the processes that have created the cities we live in today. This is an especially rich area of scholarship that has had multiple iterations; spurring one of the more recent strains, Thomas Sugrue's *The Origins of Urban Crisis* has been a foundational text for many scholars writing about the postindustrial city and its precipitous decline.[23] He argues that institutionalized racism and deindustrialization were instrumental in the urban crisis in Detroit. Scholarship exploring urban renewal also involves extensive discussion about how city planners proposed development resulting in the destruction of non-white neighborhoods; additionally, this literature provides a foundational understanding of how racist reviatalization projects have permanently entrenched spatial inequality in our cities.[24] It would be remiss to exclude Sugrue from this review, but my research speaks more closely to Samuel Zipp and Tracy Neumann's scholarship about the symbolic aspects that accompany the "ethic of city rebuilding."[25] Thinking about Callowhill and the visual markers that Arts + Crafts have inserted into the cityscape, for example, research on the *imagined* futures of cities provides a vocabulary to analyze these interventions. These works also speak to *who* is included in the imagined cities, explicating the ways in which urban space has become amenable to fewer and fewer people.

Zipp and Neumann speak to the commercialization of American cities and the ways in which public and private entities have come together not only to rehabilitate failing cities, but to rebrand cities to more "desirable" populations. My study continues to explore how public/private

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[23] Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit: With a New Preface by the Author*, 1st Princeton Classic ed, Princeton Studies in American Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[24] John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987) and Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, First edition (New York ; London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W. W. Norton & Company, 2017).

[25] Zipp, Samuel. *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

partnerships have dominated how cities are developed as well as how these interventions have deeper implications for residents of Philadelphia, particularly non-white Philadelphians. Neumann speaks about Pittsburgh's marketing campaign in the 1970s: "The eclectic and often uncoordinated images and symbols that characterized traditional boosterism gave way to urban branding, a well-coordinated, capital-intensive marketing model for place promotion adapted from corporate strategies."[26] The intensive *corporatized* effort by city government and private interests to project a successful and dynamic city has the intention of inviting young, white professionals to the city. Callowhill has seen a similar phenomenon over the course of its history. Zipp echoes the importance of state and corporate powers working together to create a rehabilitated urban environment—he especially emphasizes the ways that supporters of modernist housing and urban renewal proponents were not necessarily opposed to one another, but worked in tandem to intervene in the cityscape.[27] The discussion about public-private partnerships lends itself to understanding how power structures are formalized in regard to development in Callowhill.

Many of the conflicts in Callowhill center around a fundamental worry of gentrification. In the literature on gentrification, there is a rich debate that aims to establish a unified and comprehensive definition of this process in response to the often nebulous way in which the term is deployed. Neil Smith's *The New Urban Frontier* introduces a theory of gentrification that has continued to be discussed by scholars up to today.[28] Important to his intervention is an

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[26] Tracy Neumann, "Reforging the Steel City: Symbolism and Space in Postindustrial Pittsburgh," *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 4 (July 2018): 582–602, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144218759026.

[27] Samuel Zipp, "The Roots and Routes of Urban Renewal," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 3 (May 2013): 366–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212467306 and Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[28] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996).

exploration of what the postmodern city looks like and where gentrification falls in this new

urban order, emphasizing fragmentation and rampant inequality. Using a frontier framework to

establish a basis for the rest of his study, Smith moves on to develop a theory of gentrification

that prioritizes the economic factors rather than the social ones: people are not moving to areas

because they are "cool," instead they are moving because real estate developers/other entities are

redeveloping poor, non-white neighborhoods and incentivizing movement. Though my project

prioritizes everyday interactions (and not economic processes) as key sites of negotiating urban

change, Smith's work is a foundation of the succeeding work on gentrification.

In tandem with scholarship on gentrification is a robust writing on the neoliberal city that

looks to dissect the impact of privatization and deregulation on cities. Central in my exploration

of Callowhill is the understanding that urban space is first and foremost a commodity that is to

be packaged, marketed, and sold—an axiom inseparable from neoliberal logics. Works such as

Jason Hackworth's *The Neoliberal City* and Julian Brash's *Bloomberg's New York* describe how

the neoliberal turn has not only boosted private involvement in shaping the city, but how the city

government itself looks to emulate a corporate structure.[29] For the purpose of this project, these

texts illuminate the mechanisms that have entailed an inherent exclusivity in cities, furthering the

divisions established during urban renewal and rooting inequality more deeply in urban space.

Arlene Davila's *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos and the Neoliberal City* provides a

framework through which to understand the relationality between space, race, and neoliberalism.

She argues that, though neoliberalism espouses a colorblind ideology, gentrification and urban

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[29] Jason R. Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism*, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007) and Julian Brash, *Bloomberg's New York: Class and Governance in the Luxury City*, Geographies of Justice and Social Transformation 6 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

development is inseparable from race.[30] For this thesis, Davila's work is in conversation with my

discussion of PCDC: her discussion on "marketable ethnicity" speaks to how culture becomes a

tool of the entrepreneurial state.

I engage these scholars in my exploration of Callowhill in order to foreground the

scholarly conversations over space, power, race, and urban development alongside the present

battle over urban space in this Philadelphia neighborhood.

What Lies Ahead…

This project looks to understand how urban space is contested and what methods are used

to assert power and decisionmaking authority in order to shape a neighborhood's identity. I use

the Callowhill neighborhood of Philadelphia as my case study, as a space that is currently being

claimed by a number of players with many different visions for its future. Through interviews,

participant observation, and the analysis of various primary sources (chiefly city planning

documents), I will explore how space is negotiated through everyday interactions and social

interplays.

The subsequent thesis is broken up into four chapters organized primarily by geographic

landmarks in Callowhill in order to ground the study in space. The first chapter will provide

background on the history of urban development in Philadelphia, focusing specifically on

Callowhill and Chinatown. There is also discussion of the neoliberal city, a necessary component

in understanding the circumstances that have facilitated the power struggle in Callowhill.

Chapter two is centered around the Rail Park, a public park built on the railroad trestle, similar to

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[30] Arlene M. Dávila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

the High Line in New York City. This site is a point through which to understand who feels welcome to public space as well as introducing a key site of contestation in the neighborhood. The Rail Park allows for discussion about PCDC's oppositions to development, in addition to how aesthetics impact neighborhood belonging. Chapter three looks at the Trestle Inn, a Callowhill bar that was once a working class drinking spot for factory workers and now operates as a trendy bar. The Trestle Inn's transformation mirrors the surrounding neighborhood's transition from industrial and unappealing to industrial and hip—"seedy" or "sketchy" areas are marketed through packaging of their "authenticity." The final chapter is about the Crane Chinatown, a luxury multi-use building funded by PCDC, and explores the tensions between Chinatown and other entities vying for control over Callowhill.

CHAPTER ONE: 1960 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO 2035 CITYWIDE VISION

> *"In the pages that follow is a blueprint for the Philadelphia of tomorrow."*
> *1960 Comprehensive Plan*

> *"The future begins now."*
> *2035 Citywide Vision*

Bookending Philadelphia's urban development between two far-reaching comprehensive planning documents gives an insight into the contrasts between the imagined, idealistic city and the casualties of growth. The history of postwar urban renewal in Philadelphia, as in most American cities, is one defined by deepening racial and class inequalities resulting from uplift efforts by city government and private actors. Urban renewal projects begun as a result of the 1960 Plan, such as in the Society Hill neighborhoods, serve as salient examples of how development undertaken by the city and adjacent private actors supposedly intended to "uplift" these neighborhoods in fact displaced and further disadvantaged the existing residents, who were predominantly low-income people of color. Though the 1960 Comprehensive Plan and the 2035 Citywide Vision enumerate different physical improvements and methods of development, both chase the "Philadelphia of tomorrow": a city that is imbued with symbolic meaning around growth and progress.

The 1960 Comprehensive Plan

The visionary outlook set forth in the 1960 Comprehensive Plan framed development as a method to form the future city, and subsequently played a massive role during urban renewal of the mid-to-late 20th century. The *imagined* city, though frequently deviating from reality, informed very real actions by developers that had a resounding impact on residents—demolition,

construction, and removal displaced many from their homes, mostly targeting poor Black

neighborhoods and areas that had little access to political agency. Urban renewal represented a

total remaking of Philadelphia both physically and symbolically: neighborhoods were

transformed through development projects that changed the city's urban fabric in service of

achieving planners' goals of shaping a modern, forward-looking Philadelphia. These

transformations, though, were further commentary about *who* makes up this modern city—urban

renewal gained the colloquialism "negro removal" for the disproportionate targeting of Black

Philadelphia residents.[31] The 1960 Plan reinforced planners' "progressive" goals while obscuring

the destruction that these aims would inevitably inflict.

Edmund Bacon served as executive director of the Philadelphia City Planning

Commission (PCPC) from 1949 to 1970—overseeing the vast majority of urban renewal in

Philadelphia—designing and implementing some of the city's most prominent development

initiatives. While lauded for the construction of renewal projects, much of the attention Bacon

received came from the *vision* that he chased: Bacon spent much of his career promoting his own

ambitious ideas, manipulating public and private interests into supporting his proposals.[32]

Bacon's biographer, Gregory Heller, comments that Bacon achieved many of his goals by

"repeating the same concept in numerous speeches and interviews, over and over, until the idea

he was promoting began to seep into public consciousness."[33] Bacon's approach to promoting his

own beliefs around city planning manifested in urban renewal methods that prioritized

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[31] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) and John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987).
[32] Gregory L. Heller, *Ed Bacon: Planning, Politics, and the Building of Modern Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812207842.
[33] Ibid, 11.

rehabilitation over the typical clearance of "blighted" neighborhoods. The "Philadelphia cure,"

as it came to be called, involved treating the city with "penicillin, not surgery" and is best

exemplified in the historic preservation of the Society Hill neighborhood.[34] Philadelphia's

piecemeal renewal reflected Bacon's belief that "the city was a living, breathing entity that could

grow, be injured, and could heal," and the solution to urban problems was "never to amputate,

but always to cure and nurture."[35] While this approach was considered innovative and unusual

for the period, it still resulted in the displacement of many Philadelphia residents. The extent of

Bacon's role in urban renewal for all of Philadelphia is debated, but in exploring its impact on

Society Hill, the Vine Street Expressway, and the Independence Mall, he is a central figure who

speaks to the future city and the adverse impacts of implementing it.

Following the publication of the 1960 Plan, Bacon relied more and more on private

funding as a primary source of capital for renewal projects, making these entities prominent

stakeholders in the development of Philadelphia. The Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM)

was a group of influential businessmen who advocated for a pro-growth development agenda

that included remedying the declining Philadelphia. These businessmen had strong ties to City

Hall—the director of the organization, Robert Sawyer, was a member of the City Policy

Committee—making their voices unable to be ignored.[36] Neil Smith, writing about GPM,

identified that they "operated very much as pressure groups to manipulate local and federal

initiatives in such a way that private-market operators would receive subsidies for rehabilitation

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[34] Architectural Forum. 1952. "The Philadelphia Cure: Clearing Slums with Penicillin, Not Surgery," April 1952.

[35] Gregory L. Heller, *Ed Bacon: Planning, Politics, and the Building of Modern Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812207842, 8.

[36] Ibid, 55

and redevelopment while bearing very little of the risk."[37] While GPM had a wide scope of influence, the organization is of interest to this project due to its persistent interest in the physical development of Philadelphia. The Society Hill neighborhood drew special interest from GPM, who saw the deteriorating area as an opportunity to court upper and middle-class homeowners into the city. In order to achieve their ambitions for Philadelphia, GPM established organizations to do their bidding, financed by businesses and private donors—in the case of Society Hill, the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC) spearheaded the project.[38] Acting alongside the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA), a government agency, OPDC was given development rights to homes seized through eminent domain in Society Hill to market to potential homebuyers.[39] Historically a Black and immigrant neighborhood, the redevelopment of Society Hill instigated the displacement of these residents and, adding insult to injury, ushered in a wealthy, white population.

In order to justify the development of Society Hill, OPDC and PCPC invoked a sentiment that framed the area as falling into an inevitable obsolescence. The 1960 Plan marked the neighborhood for renewal, noting that a strikingly small number of residences were occupied by owners and a similarly small percentage had central heating or private bathrooms.[40] These deteriorated conditions prompted Philadelphia planners to designate several buildings to be razed, but, contrary to other renewal projects, the planners also selected properties to rehabilitate.

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[37] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996), 135.

[38] Carolyn T Adams, "Greater Philadelphia Movement," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, 2016, https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/greater-philadelphia-movement/)

[39] Stephanie R. Ryberg, "Historic Preservation's Urban Renewal Roots: Preservation and Planning in Midcentury Philadelphia," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 2 (March 2013): 193–213, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212440177.

[40] Francesca Russello Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification Amid Historic Preservation: Society Hill, Philadelphia, and the Fight for Low-Income Housing," *Change Over Time* 8, no. 1 (2018): 8–31, https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2018.0001.

[41] Following the "Philadelphia cure," OPDC and PCPC looked to "heal" the "unsafe, unsanitary, inadequate, or over-crowded condition of certain buildings" through conservation.[42] While Philadelphia gained praise for the apparently more humane approach to rehabilitation, especially compared to the typical method of total clearance, the underlying reasoning was based much more in financial pragmatism than in reducing destruction. Despite Bacon's belief about the humanity of cities, preservation in Society Hill "was not based on a sense of historic value, but rather a pragmatic desire to ease plan implementation and use limited funds to make the greatest impact in a struggling city."[43] The incongruity between the idealism of Society Hill's preservation and the motivation behind it characterized much of Philadelphia's renewal efforts.

Renewal of Society Hill displaced many Black households in pursuit of an "uplifted" neighborhood as well as a racially "balanced" Philadelphia population. The 1960 Plan enumerates: "A basic objective of the Plan is a healthy balance of families resident in the City: non-white and white; high, low and middle income; professional, craftman, and laborer."[44] Though ostensibly the Plan calls for a "healthy balance," in reality the understanding of racial balance had nothing to do with equality, but with comfort for white Philadelphians. The planning of Eastwick, another of Bacon's famed Philadelphia urban renewal projects, strove for a racially integrated neighborhood; in the eyes of the white PCPC and existing white residents of Eastwick, "integrated" meant that the Black residents of the neighborhood composed 20.8% of the

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[41] Francesca Russello Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification Amid Historic Preservation: Society Hill, Philadelphia, and the Fight for Low-Income Housing," *Change Over Time* 8, no. 1 (2018): 8–31, https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2018.0001,13

[42] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "Independence Mall Redevelopment Area Plan," (city planning document, 1962), 3.

[43] Stephanie R. Ryberg, "Historic Preservation's Urban Renewal Roots: Preservation and Planning in Midcentury Philadelphia," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 2 (March 2013): 193–213, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212440177.

[44] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "1960 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Philadelphia," (city planning document, 1960), 26.

population.[45] In fact, Black people made up a third of the entire population of Philadelphia.[46] Though Bacon and PCPC espoused racially tolerant rhetoric, the implementation of the Plan was very much discriminatory toward Black Philadelphians, adhering to the common portrayal of urban renewal as "negro removal."

During the 19th and 20th centuries Society Hill was a "notoriously poor, disease- ridden area" with a prominent African-American and poor immigrant population.[47] In the 1960 Plan, the neighborhood was targeted due to the deteriorating housing stock; the Octavia Hill Association (OHA), a housing association that provided low-income housing in Society Hill, was asked by the PRA to "restore and rehabilitate the premises" of twelve properties.[48] Though OHA originally allowed the residents to remain in their housing, in 1973 they evicted nearly twenty families from all twelve properties.[49] Seven of the twelve evicted households came together as the Octavia Hill Seven to fight against their removal. The removal of these families, six of which were Black, is especially notable in light of the supposed "preservation" of Society Hill: the historic demographics of the neighborhood reveals that it was a Black area. It is this dissonance between *what* and *whose* history is being preserved that makes Society Hill an essential example of the harms of preservation: though planners claimed "historic preservation" as a central

[45] Guian A. Mckee, "Liberal Ends Through Illiberal Means: Race, Urban Renewal, and Community in the Eastwick Section of Philadelphia, 1949-1990," *Journal of Urban History* 27, no. 5 (July 2001): 547–83, https://doi.org/10.1177/009614420102700501, 565

[46] James Wolfinger, "African American Migration," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, 2013, https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/african-american-migration/)

[47] Francesca Russello Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification Amid Historic Preservation: Society Hill, Philadelphia, and the Fight for Low-Income Housing," *Change Over Time* 8, no. 1 (2018): 8–31, https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2018.0001, 11.

[48] Agreement Between Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia and Octavia Hill Association, Inc. for Washington Square Redevelopment Area, Washington Square East Urban Renewal Area, Unit No. 2 Premises, 619 Lombard Street, Philadelphia, PA, March 29, 1960, CAD Book 1445, Page 422, City Archives of Philadelphia.

[49] Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification."

directive for the neighborhood, the Black and immigrant residents who comprise its history were displaced to make way for new residents who are white and wealthy.

As Society Hill struggled to balance the outward innovation of historic preservation with the underlying pragmatic motivation, there was a similar tension in the drive for an intricate expressway system. Urban historian Samuel Zipp observes that urban renewal was both "a practical, market-minded attempt to restore order and prosperity to cities," while "many of its proponents were also inspired and motivated by the more abstract sense that it was 'modern.'"[50]
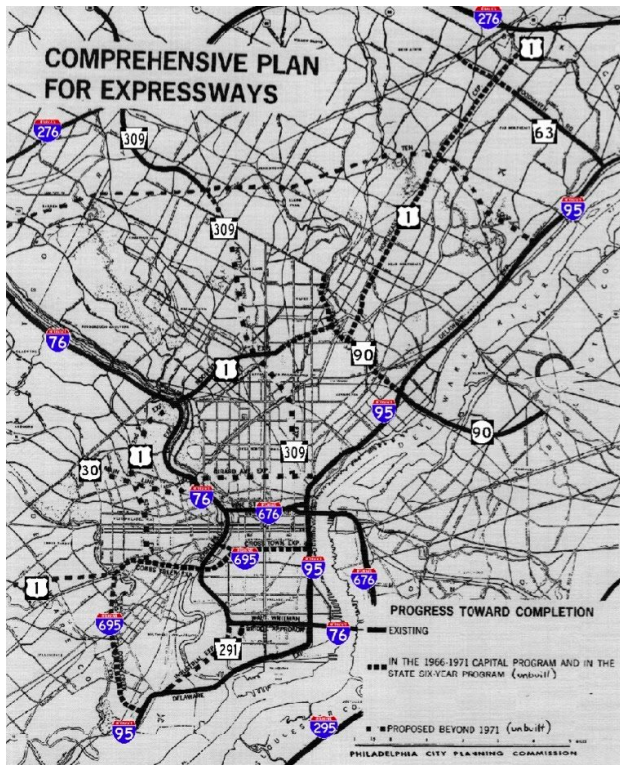
This disparity was no better represented in Bacon's ongoing desire for the construction of a network of highways in Philadelphia. A pronounced component of the 1960 Plan, the "Plan for Transportation" presents "95 miles of expressway within the City" that is "designed to provide high-speed high-volume connections between and around major destination areas."[51] Creating a web of highways that connected Philadelphia both with surrounding regions and allowed for easy access within the city was not just a plan of convenience, but one that had the intention of demonstrating Philadelphia's modernity and

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[50] Samuel Zipp, "The Roots and Routes of Urban Renewal," *Journal of Urban History* 39, no. 3 (May 2013): 366–91, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144212467306.

[51] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "1960 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Philadelphia," (city planning document, 1960), 97

amenability. PCPC saw the expressway system as an avenue that would allow "social and economic life to flourish in the decongested downtown" and establish Center City "not only as an attractive location for business but also for middle-class residence."[52] These ambitions for the potential highways were not without casualties: in order to actually facilitate construction, entire neighborhoods faced destruction. The proposed construction of the Vine Street Expressway (Interstate 676 in the figure), which features throughout this project, prompted a nearly 35 year battle between the City and impacted communities.

The Vine Street Expressway first came into conversation in 1957, following the 1956 Interstate and Defense Highway Act, but faced sustained vitriol in the 1960s as PCPC began to actually implement the full network of expressways for Philadelphia. Plans for construction began to materialize, entailing the clearance of many buildings; a *Philadelphia Inquirer* article from February 1966, titled "Expressway to Level Scores of Buildings," read: "The completion of the Vine Street Expressway will cut a swath through scores of office, hospital, church and mission buildings, route relocation plans revealed."[53] March of 1966 brought numerous community meetings held by the Department of Highways that devolved into expressions of frustration by residents who were not properly notified that their properties lay in the path of the Expressway. Another article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that residents expressed "bitterness" that they were given "no voice in the planning process."[54] Chinatown and Skid Row

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[52]John F. Bauman, "The Expressway 'Motorists Loved to Hate': Philadelphia and the First Era of Postwar Highway Planning, 1943-1956," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 115, no. 4 (1991): 503–33.

[53] "February 18, 1966 (Page 25 of 42)." *The Philadelphia Inquirer Public Ledger (1934-1969),* Feb 18, 1966. https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/1841461343?accountid=14707.

[54] "March 10, 1966 (Page 35 of 50)." *The Philadelphia Inquirer Public Ledger (1934-1969),* Mar 10, 1966. https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/1841465920?accountid=14707.

represented the most heavily impacted communities: the Holy Redeemer Church, a major

community center for the Chinatown neighborhood, was slated for clearance, while the entirety

of Skid Row, an area with a disproportionate number of low-income, disabled residents, was to

be leveled. Once again, in the mission for a "modernized" Philadelphia, marginalized residents

were pushed aside to facilitate PCPC's ambitious urban renewal projects.

While the Vine Street Expressway was certainly a planning endeavor with the goal of

bringing Philadelphia into the future, it also served as an avenue to heal the city of supposed *social* ills in calling for the clearance of Skid Row and Chinatown: both neighborhoods associated with vice and social degeneration. A more in-depth history of Philadelphia's Chinatown will be provided in the third chapter of this thesis, but for the purpose of this section it is essential to convey the commonly held stigma of Chinatown as a space of filth and depravity. Writing about San

Map of Philadelphia's Skid Row from *What About Philadelphia's Skid Row?*, 1952. Image courtesy of the Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, via Hidden City Philadelphia.

Francisco's Chinatown, Nayan Shah explains that widely circulating information described "the

horrors of percolating waste, teeming bodies and a polluted atmosphere in Chinese habitations"

that "underscored the vile and infectious menace of Chinatown spaces."[55] In portraying

Chinatown as not only dirty, but as a danger to the surrounding city—a threat unable to be

contained—city officials saw Chinatown as an area to be eliminated for the good of the city.

Similarly, both the physical conditions of Skid Row *as well as* the residents of the neighborhood

were seen as a threat to Philadelphia. The large homeless population of Skid Row, containing a

disproportionate number of disabled and elderly men, were seen as the "purveyors of blight" that

necessitated relocation: Philadelphia took an abnormal approach that prioritized *rehabilitation*

over the typical and more punitive measures.[56] Stephen Metraux writes that the city implemented

"a program of relocation with rehabilitation, concluding that the goal of dispersing the Skid Row

population throughout the citywide population after providing them with extensive rehabilitation

was the best means to eliminate Skid Row as a social and physical entity."[57] While these two

populations faced displacement as a result of the Vine Street Expressway, the homeless men of

Skid Row were deemed worthy of rehabilitation and assimilation, but the residents of Chinatown

received no such treatment. The predominantly white population of Skid Row could shed their

moral degeneracy and join the "healthily balanced" residency of Philadelphia, while Chinatown

continued to represent an "infectious menace" whose residents required quarantining.

Ultimately the Vine Street Expressway was not completed until 1991. Spanning 35 years,

the project represents the convergence of physical, societal, and cultural contestations that speak

to Philadelphia's urban development. For Bacon and PCPC, the Expressway was part of a much

larger symbolic effort linked to the economic and social improvement of Philadelphia. But for

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[55] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, American Crossroads 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 18.

[56] Stephen Metraux, "Waiting for the Wrecking Ball: Skid Row in Postindustrial Philadelphia," *Journal of Urban History* 25, no. 5 (July 1999): 690–715, https://doi.org/10.1177/009614429902500503.

[57] Ibid.

impacted communities, especially Chinatown, it sparked a push for self-determination and demands for respect from a frequently neglectful city government.

2035 Citywide Vision

Planning in Philadelphia happening today has a direct institutional legacy coming from urban renewal of the 1960s. Though the names of these organizations may have changed, Philadelphia's public/private development institutions have maintained a solid throughline from urban renewal until today—OPDC, so influential in the Society Hill redevelopment plan, has become Center City District (CCD), an organization that is currently leading the push for development in Center City. As they did in Society Hill, OPDC continued to market Philadelphia to the middle-class by investing in transportation infrastructure and other urban amenities.[58] In 1985, OPDC became Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC) that later merged with CCD in 1997.[59] Paul Levy, the current executive director of CCD, wrote about this change: "OPDC became CPDC and while it remained the sole, major business organization focused exclusively on Center City, it had become by the mid-1980s one of several organizations speaking for Philadelphia's business community...."[60] Through urban renewal, OPDC occupied the role of redeveloper; in Society Hill, they financed and sold the "revitalized" neighborhood, selling the vision of historic preservation to upper and middle-class homebuyers. The 1985 rebranding as CPDC entailed a mission that revolved around advocating for businesses in Center

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[58] Central Philadelphia Development Corporation, "Remaking Center City: CPDC 50 Years," (organization materials, 2006).
[59] Goktug Morcol, "Center City District: A Case of Comprehensive Downtown Bids," Drexel Law Review 3, no. 1 (Fall 2010): 271-286
[60] "Remaking Center City," ix.

City and ensuring "orderly development and operations in the downtown area."[61] Indicative of the changing economic environment of American cities, CCD follows an urban growth mentality that looks to make cities safe, clean, and accommodating to businesses, retail, and consumers—but, as a result, exclude low-income, non-white Philadelphians who are unable to appropriately engage in a business-oriented Center City.

The 1980s brought a significant restructuring of urban development, as the federal government under the Reagan administration stripped away social services and funding to local governments. Turning toward neoliberal policies that favored deregulation, privatization, and the withdrawal of the public sector, the robust urban development that pervaded the urban renewal period fell away. Instead of government facilitating and implementing projects, the public sector recedes and private actors both fund and execute these endeavors. David Harvey explains the role of government in a neoliberal regime is to "create and preserve an institutional framework" that allows private entities to carry out their own projects.[62] For Philadelphia, the rise of neoliberalism entailed the retreat of city government, to be superseded by real estate developers, development corporations, and wealthy investors.

For Philadelphia, private interests like CCD epitomizes corporate involvement in development and exacerbates existing racial and class inequalities through privatization of urban space. CCD describes their mission to be to "enhance the vitality of Center City Philadelphia as a thriving 24-hour downtown and a great place to work, live, and have fun…[and] to enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity of downtown Philadelphia."[63] In employing "quality of life" rhetoric in their mission statement, CCD engages in thinly veiled regulation of behavior in

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[61] Ibid, 45.

[62] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

[63] "About Us," Center City District, accessed April 15, 2020 https://centercityphila.org/about-us

public space. CCD has made very clear statements on *who* is included in the "public" space that they have redeveloped: CCD was instrumental in Philadelphia's implementation of the 1998 Sidewalk Behavior Ordinance that "prohibits various forms of inappropriate public behavior."[64] Not surprisingly, this prohibition almost exclusively targets people experiencing homelessness, as this "inappropriate public behavior" includes "certain types of panhandling, obstruction of public sidewalks and highways, aggressive solicitation."[65] Mirroring Skid Row, where the elderly and disabled men were displaced by the Vine Street Expressway and "rehabilitated" in order to facilitate assimilation into the general population, the regulatory measures this ordinance imposes forces those experiencing homelessness into compliance with "appropriate" public behavior. Edward Soja observes that human movement has become so tightly intertwined with and dictated by property ownership that a "finely grained netting of recorded but usually invisible boundaries" has enveloped our space: perpetuating and normalizing spatial inequalities. [66] These invisible boundaries are further solidified in the development proposed in the 2035 Citywide Vision—the 21st century counterpart to the 1960 Comprehensive Plan.

Published in 2011, the 2035 Citywide Vision orients many of its goals around outward-looking measures that look to boost Philadelphia's economy through attracting businesses and shaping the city into a consumable unit. Published by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission—at this point, an exceedingly familiar character—the 2035 Plan sets forth a path for the next 25 years of planning; broken into the three categories of RENEW, THRIVE, and CONNECT, the proposals in the 2035 Plan echo the idealism of the 1960 Plan in their

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[64] http://www.phillypolice.com/assets/directives/D3.6-CodeViolationNotices.pdf
[65] Ibid
[66] Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, Globalization and Community Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 45.

pursuit of ushering in the future Philadelphia. Of course, the future Philadelphia of 2011 is

distinctly different than that of the 1960s. While urban renewal saw the physical destruction of

entire neighborhoods, wide-scale clearance to make way for massive projects like the Vine Street

Expressway, the city today executes a far more insidious clearance. CCD and other pro-business

organizations have become inextricable from Philadelphia governance; in an article profiling

Paul Levy, the executive director of CCD, the author describes Levy's "SimCity-esque reshaping

of downtown, his provision of basic public services, his command of the bully pulpit" as ample

reason "why many consider Levy the unelected, de facto mayor of Center City."[67] Considering

CCD's previously stated mission to "enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity of

downtown Philadelphia," Levy's position as "de facto mayor" elevates the influence of

businesses in shaping the future Philadelphia. A city that prioritizes economic prosperity is not

one that has the interests of all its citizens in mind: those who are unable to be adequate

consumers or those who do not adhere to an acceptable code of conduct in public space are not

welcome members of the privatized, business-focused Philadelphia.

Though the 2035 Plan is the ostensible counterpart of the 1960 Comprehensive Plan, it

does not hold the same power to shape Philadelphia's future. Returning to Soja's assertion that

all space is dictated by invisible boundaries "creating a perpetual tension between private and

public ownership and between private and public space that is played out in everyday life all

over the world."[68] This tension is displayed no better than in the 2035 Plan: CCD is not

mentioned in the document, but has been responsible for implementing development and

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[67]Patrick Kerkstra, "How Paul Levy Created Center City," Philadelphia Magazine (Philadelphia Magazine, February 13, 2014), https://www.phillymag.com/news/2013/11/22/paul-levy-created-center-city/
[68] Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, Globalization and Community Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 45

initiatives to bring Philadelphia into the "future" laid out in the Plan. The disconnect between the proposals made by Philadelphia government and who executes these projects indicates that *private* interests wield the most power in shaping the cityscape.

The uneven distribution of development in cities has been described by many scholars as a "fragmentation" of space resulting from exploitative capitalism: cities contain a condensed ecosystem where extreme wealth and poverty are geographically overlapping.[69] Neighborhoods adjacent to one another receive inconsistent services, access to resources, and physical conditions, a consequence of spatial injustices that have become normalized to the point that they are unrecognizable.[70] Called the "City of Neighborhoods," Philadelphia has come to operate under informal and discrete governance, semi-independent from the City of Philadelphia; as Paul Levy has been crowned the "de facto mayor" of the city, each neighborhood is essentially run by its own cadre of private organizations. Whether these are real estate developers, public-private partnerships, companies, or some combination of all, those who exist outside these invisible boundaries are forced to fend for themselves.

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[69] Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001).Rita Schneider-Sliwa, "Urban Geography," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Elsevier, 2015), 800–806, https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.72073-3.Colin McFarlane, "Fragment Urbanism: Politics at the Margins of the City," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36, no. 6 (May 22, 2018): 1007–25, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775818777496.

[70] Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, Globalization and Community Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO: THE RAIL PARK

"In Philadelphia, land of the tri-cornered hat, the Reading Viaduct could change perceptions about the city's history and thus the city's identity."[71]

Jessica Vivian Chiu

With the sun setting and the October evening growing cooler, Kevin Dow, the executive director of Friends of the Rail Park, took to the podium to introduce Site/Sound's inaugural event to a crowd of people. A combination of mostly white art students, young families, and older patrons of the arts from the adjacent Fairmount neighborhood milled around the carefully manicured Matthias Baldwin Park located behind the Community College of Philadelphia at north 19th street. Behind Dow was a depressed area with defunct railroad tracks now adorned with mirrors and artfully arranged gravel. The "Moon Viewing Platform" was the opening installation performance of the two-week long Site/Sound festival that aimed to "reveal the Rail Park" through site-specific art.
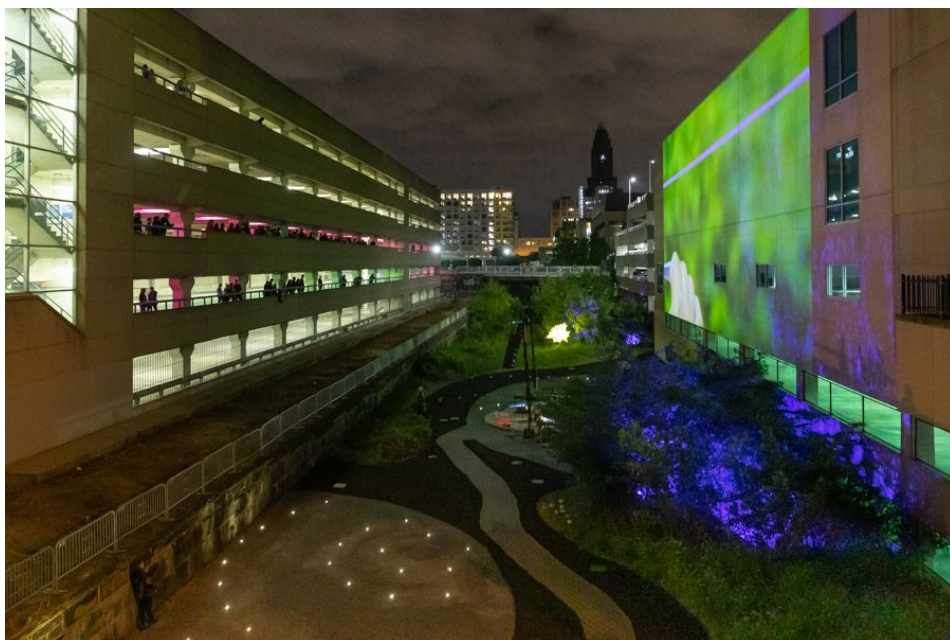
Moon Viewing Platform by Nadia Hironaka, Matthew Suib & Eugene Lew, October 5, 2019. Photo by Steve Weinik. From https://www.muralarts.org/

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[71]Jessica Vivian Chiu, "Reading the Viaduct," The Paris Review, December 5, 2012, https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2012/12/04/reading-the-viaduct/)

Running from October 5 to 19, 2019, the Site/Sound Festival looked to "activate the Rail Park's current quarter-mile of elevated green space" while inviting Philadelphians "to envision its future path, both above and below the cityscape."[72] Explaining the mission of Site/Sound, Dow spoke for only a few moments but emphasized the "hyper-local nature" of the Rail Park and the desire to foster a "community-based and neighborhood-based" park that serves the needs of the surrounding neighborhood. In "revealing" the park through installation and other place-based events, Friends of the Rail Park intended to establish themselves as a Callowhill institution: not only a park, but a dynamic cultural organization able to offer a wide variety of events and programming.

While Site/Sound centered art and performance, the programming also included multiple homages to the historical origins of the Rail Park and the Callowhill neighborhood. This relationship to history has been essential for the construction and popularization of the park. Entering the park, you are greeted by a large plaque that announces that the trestle and the surrounding neighborhood was once known as the "workshop of the world." It goes on to say that "the area north of Vine Street" was home to a large population of "innovative and influential businesses." In invoking this historical memory, the Rail Park draws a romantic connection to the industrial heyday of Philadelphia which is subsequently utilized by Callowhill stakeholders, such as the real estate developer Arts + Crafts Holdings and Friends of the Rail Park, to market the neighborhood as an "authentic" space that will attract young, hip professionals. As in Society Hill, the history being "preserved" and marketed is heavily revised as to be more consumable to potential homebuyers or businesses. While this is not a unique phenomenon, with New York and

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[72] "Site/Sound Festival," https://sitesoundphl.org/

the High Line as the most prominent example, the Rail Park has served as a vital component in

negotiating who identifies with Callowhill.

In the redevelopment of Callowhill and the battle over ownership, the Rail Park is a space

that represents a confluence of factors playing into the negotiation over the neighborhood. This

chapter explores the formation of identity that Friends of the Rail Park and other supporters

hoped the Rail Park would supply both Callowhill and Chinatown, in response to the dire lack of

green space in the two neighborhoods. The absence of parks in the area speaks to a lack of

investment by the city, as well as an avenue that developers have glommed onto as a way to

develop and build up the neighborhood. The construction of the Rail Park raised fierce

opposition from the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC), which has

informed their larger battle over self-determination and ownership over Callowhill.

Constructing the Rail Park

The idea of the Rail Park has long been a dream simmering amongst some Callowhill

residents, but it took nearly twenty years to materialize. After trains stopped running through

Reading Terminal and moved out of the city in 1984, the trestle that now houses the Rail Park

lay abandoned for many years before gaining the attention of Sarah McEneaney, a longtime

Callowhill resident.[73] McEneaney moved to the neighborhood in 1979, after graduating from

Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and became one of the few residents in a largely industrial

area. To her own admission, it took her 20 years before getting involved in the neighborhood

because she "didn't have any neighbors to get involved with."[74] The aughts saw the growth of the

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[73] "Rail Park," Center City District, accessed April 2020
https://centercityphila.org/ccd-services/streetscape/rail-park
[74] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.

residential population in Callowhill, but more than that, between 1990 and 2010 there was a

38.2% increase in the white population of the neighborhood.[75] It is no coincidence that the

emerging white residency coincided with the establishment of the Callowhill Neighborhood

Association (CNA). In 2000, McEneaney founded CNA; it states its goal as promoting "a

cohesive community of residents, businesses and institutions while retaining the diversity and

character of the area."[76] CNA's current board is almost entirely composed of white residents and

other neighborhood stakeholders—it is from this constituency that the sustained push for the Rail

Park emerged.

Abandoned trestle pre-Rail Park via
Reading Viaduct Project website

View of trestle pre-Rail Park in 1959, from
12th St. looking south. Via PhillyHistory.com

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https://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/philadelphia_research_initiative/PhiladelphiaPopulationEthnicChangespdf.pdf
76 "About Us," Callowhill Neighborhood Association, Accessed April 2020
https://www.callowhill.org/about-cna

McEneaney and other residents saw the abandoned railroad trestle running through Callowhill as an untapped asset for the neighborhood. A group of "25 neighbors and concerned citizens" came together in support of transforming the overgrown railway into a functioning amenity.[77] Dubbing themselves the Reading Viaduct Project (RVP) in 2003, this group advocated for "the preservation and adaptive reuse" of the trestle east of Broad Street, in the Callowhill neighborhood.[78] Beyond interested Callowhill residents, RVP reached out to University of Pennsylvania students to imagine what the trestle could look like as a reimagined park. McEneaney comments that, though there was no preconceived vision of what the park would look like, "it was always great to have to have people dream about it and come up with ideas."[79] Critically, the cadre of "dreamers" during this early period was limited to a specific subsection of Callowhill that was predominantly comprised of white creatives.

By 2010, RVP's efforts around rehabilitating the trestle gained attention from Paul Levy of CCD. Executive director of one of the "most comprehensive" BIDs in the United States, Levy's interest held significant power in galvanizing RVP's vision.[80] In pulling the Rail Park into their orbit, CCD's stamp of approval indicated a decisive direction for the future of Callowhill. In a 2012 article in support of the project, Levy explains that Philadelphia's "design ethos...values authenticity and industrial funk," and continues that the Rail Park will welcome joggers, cyclists and visitors, "But most successful tourism destinations start as valued local assets….With 32% of local land still vacant, [RVP] envision a mixed-use, mixed-income

[77] "Timeline," Reading Viaduct Project, accessed April 2020 https://www.readingviaduct.org/timeline/
[78] "About Us," Reading Viaduct Project, accessed April 2020 https://www.readingviaduct.org/aboutus.html
[79] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.
[80] Goktug Morcol, "Center City District: A Case of Comprehensive Downtown Bids Case Studies on Philadelphia Business Improvement Districts," *Drexel Law Review*, no. 1 (2011 2010): 271–86.

neighborhood like none other near downtown."[81] Even so early in the redevelopment process of

Callowhill, Levy and CCD had an aesthetic and economic vision for the neighborhood that

centered its industrial, gritty character. CCD's vision was backed by ample access to financing:

following their attachment to the Rail Park, RVP was awarded funds from two prominent

Philadelphia-based foundations with the help of CCD.[82] McEneaney comments that "when

[Levy] has an idea or [is] working with people [who] have an idea ...he just starts doing stuff and

getting it done."[83] With the blessing of CCD, the Rail Park project commenced in earnest.

Reading Viaduct via Reading Viaduct Project website. Viaduct Green advocated for the "City Branch" to the west of Broad, and RVP were interested in the sections to the east of Broad.

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[81] Paul Levy, "Think Neighborhood Park," Hidden City Philadelphia, April 8, 2012, https://hiddencityphila.org/2012/04/think-neighborhood-park/)
[82] Ibid and "Rail Park," Center City District, accessed April 2020 https://centercityphila.org/ccd-services/streetscape/rail-park
[83] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.

Simultaneously, a group called Viaduct Greene was focusing on the "City Branch" of the viaduct to the west of Broad Street. The path of the Reading Railroad wove across Philadelphia, traversing many different areas of the city; Viaduct Greene concentrated their efforts on the underground and street-level portions of the disused railroad stretching west. Together, RVP and Viaduct Greene organized Rally for the Rail Park, a fundraising block party, on the elevated trestle with beer donated by Yards (a local brewery), catered by local restaurants, and featuring live entertainment.[84] The event on September 14, 2013 raised $24,000 toward the park's development.[85] The next month RVP and Viaduct Greene came together as Friends of the Rail Park, merging their two endeavors into a joint project for the three-mile long Rail Park that encompasses both the eastern and western branches of the viaduct.[86]

As the group of early Rail Park supporters came together in a solid coalition with support from CCD, the intentions for what the park would offer Callowhill in terms of identity also solidified. The members of Friends of the Rail Park saw the abandoned trestle as an indicator of a robust history in the neighborhood that required preservation, and CCD viewed the elevated park as an invaluable marketing tool. Though Philadelphia has its own unique relationship to urban development, the Rail Park's potential impacts on Callowhill have precedence in the High Line in New York City. Throughout the planning process, Friends of the Rail Park have been adamant that the Rail Park is not simply Philadelphia's rendition of the High Line: it is not only physically larger, but larger in scope. The Rail Park website answers the question "How is the

[84] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.
[85] Nathaniel Popkin, "Official 'Marriage' Of Reading Viaduct Advocates," Hidden City Philadelphia, October 18, 2013, https://hiddencityphila.org/2013/10/official-marriage-of-reading-viaduct-advocates/)
[86] Nathaniel Popkin, "Saturday's Party For The Viaduct Underscores Progress, Exposes Challenges," Hidden City Philadelphia, September 12, 2013, https://hiddencityphila.org/2013/09/saturdays-party-for-the-viaduct-underscores-progress-exposes-challenges/) and "Reading Viaduct Project,"https://www.readingviaduct.org/

Rail Park different from the High Line," by saying that "Our site is twice the length and twice the width of the High Line and our vision includes pedestrian pathways, dedicated bicycle lanes, programming spaces, and gathering places for residents and visitors alike."[87] Distancing the Rail Park from the contested legacy of the High Line is intentional: though New York's High Line has been deemed a success in terms of drawing visitors and capital to the Chelsea neighborhood where it is located, it has been criticized for the dramatic increase in property value for the surrounding area that has come with it.[88] As the Rail Park planning process moved forward following the emergence of Friends of the Rail Park in 2013, there was a fine line to walk between emulating the success of the High Line and learning from its mistakes. This tightrope walk was not always successful.

View of the High Line: "An aerial shot looking down on the Washington Grasslands section of the park." Photo by Rick Darke from High Line website

[87] "FAQ," Rail Park, accessed April 2020 https://www.therailpark.org/faqs/#faq-191
[88] C.J. Hughes, "The High Line: A Place to See and Be Seen" (The New York Times, December 12, 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/12/realestate/the-high-line-a-place-to-see-and-be-seen.html)

High Line as Precedent to the Rail Park

The High Line is popularly cited as a successful example of "community" development, as a project nurtured by two neighborhood residents, and served as a template for advocates of the Rail Park early in the planning process. In 1999, Joshua David and Robert Hammond founded Friends of the High Line after meeting at a Chelsea community board meeting about demolishing the abandoned railroad tracks.[89] Bonding over their mutual affinity for the "beauty of this hidden landscape," Hammond and David spent the next years promoting their vision for an elevated park in the style of the Promenade Plantée in Paris.[90] The two imagined a green space that deviated from the Olmstedian "green escape from urban bustle," and, instead, offered a mediated experience of the city from above.[91] Despite any initial desires for the High Line to be a park for the surrounding community, it is now a major tourist attraction and generates nearly $1

Promenade Plantée in Paris, a precursor to the High Line. Photo via The Guardian

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[89] Steven Lang and Julia Rothenberg, "Neoliberal Urbanism, Public Space, and the Greening of the Growth Machine: New York City's High Line Park," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 49, no. 8 (November 24, 2016): 1743–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X16677969 and "History," The High Line, accessed April 2020 https://www.thehighline.org/history/

[90] "History," The High Line, accessed April 2020 https://www.thehighline.org/history/

[91] Witold Rybczynski, "Bringing the High Line Back to Earth" (The New York Times, May 14, 2011), https://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/opinion/15Rybczynski.html)

billion in tax revenue per year.[92] For the Rail Park, comparisons to the High Line are a

complicated combination of aspiration and careful distancing.

In 2003, the High Line garnered immense attention with a competition arranged by

Friends of the High Line searching for a winning design for the emerging park. 720 plans were

submitted by both domestic and international architects with proposals on how best to adapt the

abandoned tracks.[93] With the enormous number of submissions, the High Line received

widespread attention that subsequently accelerated its construction—the growing popularity

provided a platform for Friends of the High Line to receive a bevy of public and private funding.
[94] Much of this financing came from New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg's vocal support:

when elected, Bloomberg appointed High Line supporters to prominent government positions.[95]

Additionally, Friends of the High Line developed a "sophisticated marketing campaign targeting

local celebrities, the gallery community, wealthy philanthropists and high-level decision-makers

in the governmental and corporate world."[96] The High Line began with the intention of evoking a

"spirit of transgression," but quickly became a project closely aligned with the New York City

political establishment.

At the same time the High Line gained publicity from the 2003 design competition,

McEneaney and members of RVP gave David a tour of the Philadelphia viaduct during the very

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[92] Laura Bliss, "The High Line's Biggest Issue-And How Its Creators Are Learning From Their Mistakes," CityLab, February 28, 2017,
https://www.citylab.com/solutions/2017/02/the-high-lines-next-balancing-act-fair-and-affordable-development/515391/)

[93] Karen Cilento, "The New York High Line Officially Open," ArchDaily, June 9, 2009,
https://www.archdaily.com/24362/the-new-york-high-line-officially-open)

[94] LEON A MORENAS, "Critiquing Landscape Urbanism: A View on New York's High Line," *Economic and Political Weekly* 47, no. 7 (2012): 19–22.

[95] Lang and Rothenberg, "Neoliberal Urbanism, Public Space, and the Greening of the Growth Machine: New York City's High Line Park."

[96] Ibid.

early imaginings of the Rail Park. McEneaney relayed David's encouragement to Callowhill residents supporting the Rail Park: "[David] said, 'you guys can do it. We were just a couple guys from the neighborhood and we started'….So that's when we officially [decided] we're going to do it."[97] Despite the words of support from the High Line founder, the Rail Park took very deliberate measures to differentiate itself from the NYC park.

Key in drawing a distinction between the High Line and Philadelphia's project is Friends of the Rail Park's insistence that the park is first and foremost for the community—tourists are second priority. Shawn Sheu, director of community engagement for the Rail Park, reflects that her initial exposure to the park was through residents' concerns over how the park would transform Callowhill. Sheu says, "I remember hearing about the Rail Park when I moved here and being very skeptical of it and very much fearful that it would turn into the High Line. I started seeing the conversation change, though: seeing efforts from Friends of the Rail Park to be a part of that conversation, wanting to be a different type of public space and wanting to be a part of the conversations happening in their neighborhood."[98] The High Line has become a metonym for the disruption that industrial reuse projects can bring to cities—the complete transformation of Chelsea and the adjacent neighborhoods has served as a template for how reuse projects become easily detached from the communities that they were originally intended to serve. Sheu's insistence that Friends of the Rail Park approached the Philadelphia park with awareness for potential impact on Callowhill indicates not that the Rail Park has learned from the High Line's shortcomings, but that "elevated park" has become a dog-whistle for rapid neighborhood change.

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[97] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.

[98] Shawn Sheu. (Director of community engagement, Friends of the Rail Park), in discussion with author. July 9, 2019.

Negotiating the Rail Park

Beyond the repurposing of the neglected railroad trestle, the Rail Park was intended to remedy the lack of parks in Callowhill and the surrounding neighborhoods. PCDC was the most vocal organization in the contingent that opposed the Rail Park; they cited the lack of open space and elevation as physical barriers for the older residents of Chinatown—among the most frequent users of green space.[99] Since elevated parks are linear and therefore narrow, there is little space for congregation. PCDC also criticizes Friends of the Rail Park for their insufficient community engagement with the Chinatown community, particularly noting that there was not Chinese language access which greatly limited the participation of residents. Rail Park advocates see the park as a marker of community that was previously nonexistent in Callowhill: McEneaney and Bryan Hanes, the architect of the Rail Park, emphasized that, despite PCDC's objections, community input was the driving force behind all features of the Rail Park. The crux of this conflict lies in the struggle for claiming identification with the urban landscape; each entity sees the Rail Park as a symbol of what is to come in Callowhill—not just a park that fulfills long-needed public space, but a harbinger of the neighborhood-to-be.

Cognizant of the importance of community input, Hanes made attempts to include both PCDC constituents and Callowhill residents in the planning process to be sure that the park ultimately reflected their desires. Despite a dedication to community collaboration on the Rail Park's design, there were multiple organizational disagreements between the parties involved in the process; additionally, with so many stakeholders in the park's future, there were prominent power dynamics at play. For PCDC, the community engagement by the Rail Park architects was

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[99] Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, "Chinatown Neighborhood Plan Including Callowhill, Chinatown and Chinatown North" (city planning document, Philadelphia, 2017).

not just ineffective, but indicative of a broader disregard for their desires for Callowhill. While

Friends of the Rail Park had plans for a park that paid homage to Callowhill's industrial history,

PCDC saw the abandoned trestle as a waste of valuable land that could be utilized for affordable

housing.[100] The ensuing community planning process raised concerns for PCDC that the Rail

Park would replicate the same upscaling that occurred in New York with the High Line.

PCDC and Friends of the Rail Park jockeyed to have their interests realized in the final park

design. Hanes organized community meetings to gauge important criteria for the park, asking the

group to describe, "what do you want, not want, what are the issues that you're worried about."[101]

McEneaney was complimentary of this approach, explaining that "He came to the first

community meeting with, you know, a total blank slate. And he showed examples of parks and

other places. Former industrial sites of all kinds turned into parks. And then he said, what do you

want? And he wrote down everything that everybody said."[102] She describes a process that felt

inclusive to everyone's input, especially noting that everyone's thoughts were recorded.

Obviously, though, not all voices were heard equally—especially when some people were not

even in the room.

At the start of planning the Rail Park, Hanes strongly advocated for a broad collection of

input from the community, but received pushback from CCD. From the beginning of their

involvement with the Rail Park, CCD had much more development-centric reasoning for

supporting the project. Levy was originally drawn to the endeavor after seeing how the High

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[100] Ashley Hahn, "Rail Park Opens, Carrying the Freight of a Changing Neighborhood," WHYY (WHYY, June 6, 2018), https://whyy.org/articles/rail-park-opens-carrying-the-freight-of-a-changing-neighborhood/) and Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, "Chinatown Neighborhood Plan Including Callowhill, Chinatown and Chinatown North" (city planning document, Philadelphia, 2017).
[101] Bryan Hanes. (Principal, Studio Bryan Hanes), in discussion with author. July 16, 2019.
[102] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.

Line accelerated development in New York.[103] Additionally, CCD has a poor track record in

engaging the community in their projects—Levy has "little patience for the public at large," and

sees himself as someone who "gets things done" over focusing on community input.[104] Levy's

inclination toward "action" conflicted with desires of Friends of the Rail Park and for a diverse

pool of input from the Callowhill community. Hanes explains that in conversations with CCD

there was an expectation that these meetings were gratuitous, but Hanes insisted: "we said

absolutely not, no, you need to get buy-in from all these neighborhoods. You have to get people

involved or this is going to blow up in your face and it's going to make us look bad. So we

convinced them to have a public meeting. That first public meeting consisted of a relatively

small, select group of people that was kind of hand-picked. But it resulted in a lot of pats on the

back."[105] Public in this context, though, was not public at all—only including "important

stakeholders" in so-called community meetings demonstrated that the Rail Park was not

democratically designed at all.

Unilaterally, the voices of white, wealthy, and powerful stakeholders were elevated in the

planning of the Rail Park. CCD's prominence in shaping the park speaks to the privatization of

public space: recalling Soja's theory that invisible boundaries define urban space, scholar Tridib

Banerjee writes about the public sphere and observes that "the seemingly unbounded public

[103] "The Rail Park," Center City District, https://centercityphila.org/ccd-services/streetscape/rail-park and Hahn, "Rail Park Opens."

[104] Patrick Kerkstra, "How Paul Levy Created Center City," Philadelphia Magazine (Philadelphia Magazine, February 13, 2014), https://www.phillymag.com/news/2013/11/22/paul-levy-created-center-city/) and Inga Saffron, "Who Runs Dilworth Park Is More Important than Who Runs Its New Coffee Kiosk," The Philadelphia Inquirer (The Philadelphia Inquirer, March 14, 2019), https://www.inquirer.com/real-estate/inga-saffron/dilworth-park-center-city-district-privatization-paul-levy-starbucks-kiosk-20190314.html)

[105] Bryan Hanes. (Principal, Studio Bryan Hanes), in discussion with author. July 16, 2019.

space is not boundaryless after all."[106] Though the Rail Park was ostensibly intended to be a park

for Callowhill, decisionmaking was largely limited to CCD, Friends of the Rail Park, and other

major stakeholders. Yue Wu, PCDC's community outreach director, further corroborated the

inequity in decisionmaking when she expressed disappointment over accessibility measures for

the park that were not honored.[107] Though Hanes's architecture firm made concerted effort to

engage community members in the Rail Park's design, voices like CCD and individuals like

McEneaney were the ones heeded in the process.

Identifying with the Rail Park

As part of the Site/Sound festival, Kevin Dow led a group predominantly made up of

older white couples on a Rail Park walking tour the morning after the Moon Viewing Platform.

Reflecting the path of the Reading Railroad that previously cut through the Callowhill and

Fairmount neighborhoods, this tour was intended to "explore the park's past, present, and

future."[108] The tour group met at a small park near the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a wealthy

and residential neighborhood, with a Whole Foods in sight and Dow began the tour. Walking

through the neighborhoods that once housed a prosperous railroad industry, Dow wove together

the industrial history of Philadelphia with future plans for the Rail Park. Conflating this history

with the story of the Rail Park invokes a similar rhetoric as the one used by planners during the

revitalization of Society Hill during the 1960s—though these are not analogous projects, Friends

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[106] Tridib Banerjee, "The Future of Public Space: Beyond Invented Streets and Reinvented Places," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 67, no. 1 (March 31, 2001): 9–24, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360108976352.

[107] Yue Wu. (Community planner, Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation), in discussion with author. July 11, 2019.

[108] "Rail Park Walking Tour," Site/Sound Festival, accessed April 20, 2020 https://sitesoundphl.org/events/rail-park-walking-tour/

of the Rail Park's emphasis on history invites otherwise disconnected residents of Philadelphia to identify with and support the park. Demonstrated through the demographics of the event-goers and supporters of the park, but also the planning process and marketing materials, the Rail Park aims to forge a site of identification for outsiders to Callowhill.

Rittenhouse Square, from VisitPhilly.com

As the only park in the neighborhood, the aesthetic design elements of the Rail Park have the ability to represent the character of Callowhill as well as provide a site of identification for residents. Philadelphia has frequently been identified as the "city of neighborhoods" due to the varied characters and landscapes represented across the city, as well as "the intense pride Philadelphians hold regarding the distinct residential communities comprising this city."[109] Hanes observes that neighborhoods create an identity in relation to the local parks; he says,

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[109] Lynn Washington Jr. "City of Neighborhoods," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, n.d. https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/city-of-neighborhoods/

"most neighborhoods identif[y] with their park, right? You could be from Spruce Hill, Squirrel Hill, whatever, but where are you from? You live near Clark Park, right? 'I live near Rittenhouse Square', 'I live near Fitler Square.'"[110]

Green space, and parks in particular, hold symbolic value in cities in that they allow residents to congregate and socialize, but also to imagine themselves collectively.[111] Parks reflect certain characteristics of neighborhoods, like Rittenhouse Square—a park located in an affluent neighborhood in Center City—one of the five squares designated in William Penn's original plan for Philadelphia.[112] Rittenhouse has consistently housed some of the wealthiest residents of Philadelphia, a fact which is represented by the well-maintained shrubbery, ornate fountains, and orderly paths that cut through the park.[113] With this cohesive identity, Rittenhouse Square has become a point of identification across the city—a place that conjures clear recognition of what the neighborhood is like and who lives there. As the Rail Park is the lone park in proximity to both Chinatown and Callowhill, it assumes the nearly insurmountable challenge of representing the identity of both neighborhoods.

For McEneaney, Friends of the Rail Park, and other Callowhill residents, the past industrial purpose of the railroad tracks was at the forefront of their vision for the park. Hanes explains that much of the feedback he received from the meetings underscored the importance of maintaining the "industrial heritage" of Callowhill. With this the design of the park required Hanes to interrogate, "How do we do something that respects the industrial character of the

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[110] Bryan Hanes. (Principal, Studio Bryan Hanes), in discussion with author. July 16, 2019.
[111] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 295
[112] Anastasia Day and Emily T. Cooperman, "Public Gardens," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, 2015 https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/gardens-public/
[113] Jim Saska, "On Rittenhouse Square: Perfect from then on," *WHYY,* May 4, 2016 https://whyy.org/articles/on-rittenhouse-square-perfect-from-then-on/

place?...that's why these people are here. They moved to this neighborhood because they want to live in a loft in an old factory."[114] Maintaining and augmenting the industrial heritage of the neighborhood through the Rail Park's design satisfied a predominantly white contingent of Callowhill residents, represented by Friends of the Rail Park, but PCDC opposed this direction, expressing objections to the High Line-esque upscaling that could raise property values.
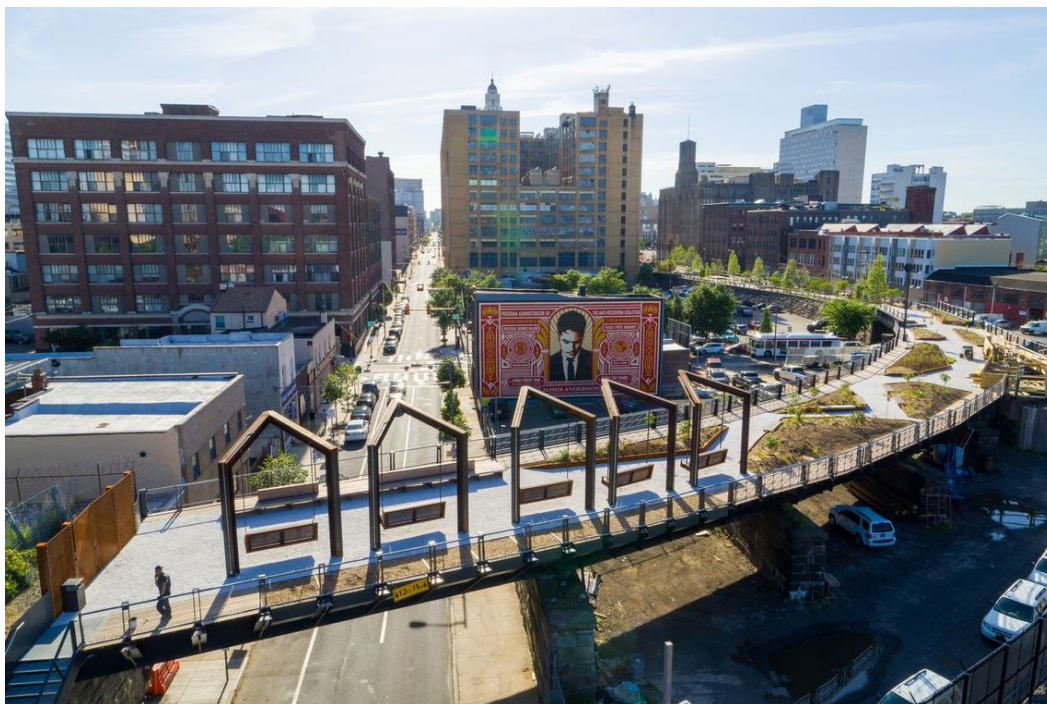
Aerial view of the Rail Park. Photo via Center City District

Ultimately, the Rail Park was built to express Callowhill's industrial heritage, quelling PCDC's desire for affordable housing in its place, but Friends of the Rail Park has made extensive steps to forge a sense of belonging for Chinatown residents. The summer of 2019 was the first summer of programming for the park, marking an important opportunity to establish outreach between Chinatown and the Rail Park. Shawn Sheu, the community engagement and

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[114] Bryan Hanes. (Principal, Studio Bryan Hanes), in discussion with author. July 16, 2019.

programs manager for Friends of the Rail Park, recognizes and acknowledges the tension with

PCDC, explaining that "there are a lot of people who feel as if they were not seen or heard

during the development of the Rail Park project," and, moving forward, Friends of the Rail Park

will be "really, really intentional about rebuilding those relationships."[115] These efforts have

taken the form of events at the Rail Park planned in collaboration with PCDC, bilingual signage,

and increased efforts to make the park more accessible to the older residents of Chinatown.

Sheu's counterpart at PCDC, Yue Wu, commends these efforts, but still sees many deficiencies

in the park and its future. Despite the outreach efforts to Chinatown by Friends of the Rail Park,

the increased interest in Callowhill by developers, partially due to the amenities that the park is

able to offer, threatens to sever any attempts to welcome Chinatown residents to use the park.

Even with outreach measures, the Rail Park's aesthetic proclivities signaled to potential

and current Callowhill residents that the neighborhood could satisfy a desire for "authenticity."

Hanes cites the overwhelming input that he received about centering the industrial character of

Callowhill in the design of the Rail Park; with this feedback, the point of identification for

residents becomes their subversion of the norm and embrace of a neighborhood that was largely

cast aside. Wu pushed against the reverence toward apparent history and comments, "They see

the industrial history, but they didn't see after the industrial history who has been using this

neighborhood or this space."[116] Wu protested the contradiction of praising industrial history

while ignoring those people who had been inhabiting Callowhill in the interim between disuse

and revival.

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[115] Shawn Sheu. (Director of community engagement, Friends of the Rail Park), in discussion with author. July 9, 2019.
[116] Yue Wu. (Community planner, Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation), in discussion with author. July 11, 2019.

Conclusion

The Rail Park project acted as a microcosm that demonstrated tensions between actors in Callowhill. For Friends of the Rail Park and those who align themselves with their mission, the Rail Park is a testament to the industrial character of Callowhill and a space that satisfies the need for communal gathering places the neighborhood lacked. For PCDC, the Rail Park is an unfortunate example of whose opinions and desires are observed in planning endeavors.

Following in the lineage of the High Line, the Rail Park continues the trend of elevated parks as a method to reuse deteriorating industrial structures, but Philadelphia's iteration emphasizes the grittiness and *authenticity* of Callowhill. Hanes describes the design process: "Whatever we did on the Rail Park wasn't intended to be too sleek, too flashy, too High Line-ish."[117] Where the High Line failed in acting as a relic of the railroad tracks that it was created from, the Rail Park and Callowhill more largely centered history, rawness, and imperfection in revitalizing the neighborhood.

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[117] Bryan Hanes. (Principal, Studio Bryan Hanes), in discussion with author. July 16, 2019.

CHAPTER THREE: TRESTLE INN

Introduction

From the outside, the bar looks rundown: the siding is covered in chipping red paint and the sign that advertises J+J's Trestle Inn is worn. There is a strong sense of the potential past life that the Trestle Inn had in the 1970s while trains were still running on the eponymous trestle adjacent to the bar or as a popular locale for factory workers after their shifts. This exterior betrays a well maintained interior that now includes a stately dark-wood bar and tasteful decor that is well suited for professionals going out for a post-work happy hour drink. This dissonance is not an accident: Ian Cross and Josette Bonafino, the current owners of the Trestle Inn, are well


Exterior of the Trestle Inn.
Photo via OCF Realty

researched on the history of Callowhill and their bar.

The inside of the Trestle Inn is a welcomed respite from the heavy summer heat, dark and cool it is easy to spend hours there without feeling like time has passed. Interviewing Ian and

Josette provided a snapshot of what is required to run a business in Callowhill—a neighborhood where development is intertwined with historic preservation. As the Rail Park acts as a point of identification for outsiders to Callowhill through commemoration of past industrial prosperity and an indicator of Callowhill's burgeoning success, the Trestle Inn serves a similar purpose in quenching the desire for authenticity that has pervaded cities for the past couple decades.

Development projects across Philadelphia have aimed to cultivate a sense of authenticity that attracts residents and visitors. The 2035 Plan begins by citing the city's authenticity as
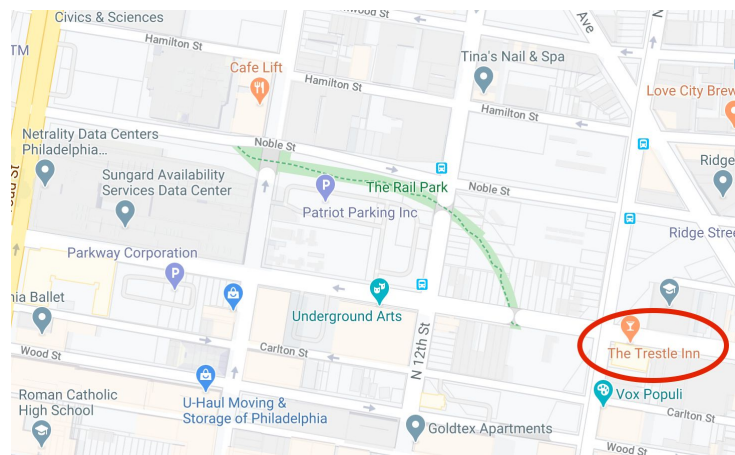
central to its attractiveness: "Philadelphia today is a desirable, vibrant place with an authentic urban form."[118] This is a frequently deployed characteristic to describe urban space, but there is no static understanding of what the "authentic" neighborhood

looks like—it is always shifting and changing depending on *who* is deploying the term. The City of Philadelphia names authenticity as a quality that is intrinsic to Philadelphia and Callowhill also receives this label from myriad sources: newspapers, business owners, and developers.[119] Arts + Crafts Holdings anchors their development projects on Callowhill's authenticity—with this, though, there is an undeniable power dynamic in labeling a neighborhood or locale as

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[118] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "2035 Citywide Vision," (city planning document, 2011), 3
[119] Melissa Romero, "Why Callowhill Is Philly's next Fast-Emerging Neighborhood" (Curbed Philly, June 22, 2017), https://philly.curbed.com/2017/6/22/15846412/callowhill-neighborhood-to-watch-philadelphia) and Sarah Mosley, "Why Callowhill Is Philadelphia's Best Neighborhood," PhillyVoice, February 27, 2015, https://www.phillyvoice.com/why-callowhill-philadelphias-best-neighborhood/)

authentic: what makes it so? And more importantly, who is excluded from inhabiting this authentic city space?

"Authenticity" in Callowhill has gone through multiple iterations: from loft conversions to the current use by Arts + Crafts. The shifting definitions and ideals attached to this label can be traced through the Trestle Inn and its long history as a Callowhill institution. In the exploration of authenticity in Callowhill, there is an unavoidable conversation about gentrification and its impact on the neighborhood. Gentrification has assumed many forms in cities and has subsequently been the subject of much scholarship—in this project that centers around contested negotiations of Callowhill and who has agency in these negotiations, gentrification and the label of authenticity are inseparably intertwined. A search for authenticity that real estate developers, business owners, and prospective homeowners embark on directly impacts the property values, racial demographics, and economic makeup of these areas.

The relationship between gentrification and authenticity serves a joint social and economic purpose. What began as individual residents endeavoring to cultivate an urban environment separate from the expensive and uniform city center has become an appendage that real estate developers and city governments harness to generate capital through marketing campaigns and development projects. Additionally, the process of change in Callowhill reflects that gentrification, against popular portrayal, is not a singular event but an ongoing process of changes to urban space that upset daily ways of life for current residents. Using the Trestle Inn, this chapter explores how Callowhill's authenticity has been utilized by various parties over the years and how it has become a term that is tightly linked to the neighborhood's status as an up-and-coming area.

Marketing and Gentrification

The mid-century renewal of Society Hill sets a precedent for gentrification in Callowhill.

During development of Philadelphia in the urban renewal period, planners of the Society Hill

project used selective historic preservation: rehabilitating the Colonial row houses, but erasing

histories of the working-class and non-white people who had lived there. Francesca Ammon and

other scholars studying Society Hill have identified this as an early example of gentrification.[120]

While the approach to Society Hill was considered an innovation in the urban renewal period,

preserving and elevating Philadelphia history has become a priority for development—evidenced

in the 2035 Plan.[121] In Callowhill, the relationship between authenticity, history, and

gentrification are inseparably linked—the simultaneous preservation of history and erasure of

former residents allows Arts + Crafts to map their own vision of Callowhill onto the landscape.

[122]

Arts + Crafts are not the ones creating the authentic neighborhood—they are not forging

the reputation—instead, they have employed the image created by early gentrifiers and are

appropriating it for economic gain. People like Seth Soffer, a white Drexel University student,

who converted a floor of a multi-use industrial building in Callowhill into an

apartment/showspace in the early 1990s; or Sarah McEneaney, an artist, who has lived in the

neighborhood since 1979 and has spent the following forty years renovating her home into an art

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[120] Francesca Russello Ammon, "Resisting Gentrification Amid Historic Preservation: Society Hill, Philadelphia, and the Fight for Low-Income Housing," *Change Over Time* 8, no. 1 (2018): 8–31, https://doi.org/10.1353/cot.2018.0001 and Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[121] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "2035 Citywide Vision," (city planning document, 2011).

[122] Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

studio/home. Though Arts + Crafts owns more real estate than any other entity in Callowhill, the city government and other local business owners are similarly benefiting from the previously formed authenticity. The Trestle Inn's journey from a working-class bar, to a Black strip-club, to a hip and "authentic" bar that "evokes these bygone days," is indicative of the years of layered history that contribute to creating a neighborhood that can be marketed as "authentic."[123]

Before delving into the connections between authenticity, historic preservation, and gentrification in Callowhill today, I want to establish how I employ "gentrification" in relation to Arts + Crafts presence. Neil Smith differentiates between the "producers" and "consumers" of gentrification by explaining, "it appears that the needs of production—in particular the need to earn profit—are a more decisive initiative behind gentrification than consumer preference."[124] The understanding that it is individual gentrifiers who perpetrate gentrification obscures a larger process—one that facilitates a market wherein producers *produce* the experience that *consumers* buy into. The individuals who rent property from Arts + Crafts are essentially arbitrary consumers of the product that Arts + Crafts is offering them; if that individual did not rent, another inevitably would. In acknowledging that this system is directly linked to gaining profit, it is imperative to draw a connection between gentrification and the neoliberal city. While the urban renewal projects of the midcentury, like Society Hill, were undertaken by the city government with some private assistance, the gentrification seen today is almost entirely executed by private money; looking back to the Society Hill project and other postwar revitalization projects in Philadelphia, the "city remaking on a grand scale"[125] has fallen away as

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[123] "History," The Trestle Inn, http://www.thetrestleinn.com/#history

[124] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996), 57

[125] Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

the city government received less federal aid in the 1980s.[126] In the place of city-driven

development initiatives, these projects have fallen into the hands of private developers, like Arts

+ Crafts.

With the understanding that the current form of urban development is anchored in a

transactional system between producers and consumers, projects are inseparable from their

marketing potential. Callowhill being labeled as an "authentic" neighborhood on the edge of

widespread popularity is solidified and perpetuated by Arts + Crafts—though they are not the

originators of the products they are marketing, Arts + Crafts are directly benefiting. Urban

scholar Timothy Weaver establishes that neoliberal development is a "boon" to real estate

developers and corporations, explaining that "property-led development becomes one of the few

tools available for enhancing revenues."[127] This chapter will delve deeper into the minutiae of

private development in Callowhill later on—I want to establish gentrification not as a

phenomenon solely driven by individual gentrifiers, but as a process symptomatic of larger

neoliberal economic shifts that prioritizes privatization and deregulation.

Creative Class and Authenticity

In Callowhill, the authenticity of the neighborhood is harnessed as a marketing tactic, but

what and who drive the push to discover these areas? One of the most complex discussions

around gentrification is centered around *who* occupies the consumer position—while there is a

fair amount of scholarship that defines gentrification as a process where people of a higher

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[126] William J. Mallett, "Managing the Post-Industrial City: Business Improvement Districts in the United States," *Area* 26, no. 3 (1994): 276–87.

[127] Timothy P. R. Weaver, *Blazing the Neoliberal Trail: Urban Political Development in the United States and the United Kingdom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 17

socioeconomic position reclaim urban space from the current users, this project will consider

consumers of gentrification as a "creative class."[128] Neil Smith explains that the "new middle

class," those who are the primary drivers of rehabilitation, are not defined by socioeconomic

status, but instead by their professions—for example: artists, graphic designers, musicians,

architects.[129] These people are trendsetters, they dictated what was "cool" and the producers

followed suit. Emergence of a creative class additionally remade who the city was for—whatever

shoddy development projects that private or city forces had focused on for non-white, low

income communities were abandoned for the marketing potential that private interests saw in this

emerging class.[130]

Looking to another project in Philadelphia, the battle over Love Park exemplifies some of

the complexities inherent in the creative class—contestation over this park shows the

ever-shifting identity of consumers as well as shifting consumer base simultaneously elides and

erases undesirable consumers. Ocean Howell writes about the contestation of Love Park in

Philadelphia in the 1990s and 2000s which was once a prominent skateboarding locale as well as

homeless encampment, before the city and private interests set their sights on "uplifting" the

square. Howell describes a process of displacement where homeless people were pushed out by

the skaters before skaters were pushed out by the development and privatization of the square.[131]

Even though the skaters were thought of as public nuisances at the start of the uplift project, they

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[128] Ocean Howell, "The 'Creative Class' and the Gentrifying City: Skateboarding in Philadelphia's Love Park," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 2 (2005): 32–42.
[129] Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996).
[130] Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2004) and Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[131] Ocean Howell, "The 'Creative Class' and the Gentrifying City"

eventually reached a point where they had acquired a certain social capital that awarded them the "creative class" label. The skating industry had assumed a prominent position in American pop culture, and subsequently skaters were "beginning to be represented as the new model citizens and new model workers" and drew interest to the park through skate videos and widely disseminated media.[132] Ultimately, though, the skaters that brought "a small capital flow into a distressed area" fell victim to the "same process they precipitate[d]" with the homeless population.[133] The ever-consuming process of gentrification is inescapable: the skaters who dislocated the homeless people from Love Park and later brought attention and popularity to the park, were eventually subsumed themselves from a space they helped cultivate. Translating this example to the early "gentrifiers" of Callowhill—the art students, architects, musicians, etc. who moved to the neighborhood in the 1980s and 1990s—represent a point in the development of Callowhill before the producer and consumer dynamic emerged. This cadre of residents were a step on the ladder between the industrial and immediately postindustrial population and the current scramble to sell authenticity.

The demographics of Callowhill, which has a very small residential population, raise questions about who is displaced as the result of gentrification. In the 2000 Census, Callowhill (comprising tracts 126 and 127) had a total population of 1,562 and 708 housing units.[134] Compare this to the adjacent neighborhood to the west of Broad Street which had more than double the population and housing units. Sarah McEneaney, a resident of Callowhill since 1979, explains that she was the only person living on her block during her early days in the

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[132] Ocean Howell, "The 'Creative Class' and the Gentrifying City: Skateboarding in Philadelphia's Love Park," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 2 (2005): 32–42.

[133] Ibid.

[134] https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF

neighborhood; similarly, Josette and Ian of the Trestle Inn recounted that the block housing the bar was "destroyed" and the neighborhood "derelict" when they first experienced it. Though there was a low residential population, there were remnants of manufacturers that remained scattered throughout the neighborhood—many wholesale businesses that were run by Chinese immigrants and a few small factories remained. Due to this demographic configuration, early gentrification to Callowhill did not result in the physical displacement of a preexisting population, like in Society Hill, but even so there are more symbolic methods of displacement that arise. Filip Stabrowski, writing about a Polish immigrant enclave in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, introduces the theory of everyday displacement. He argues that reducing displacement by gentrification to a singular event that is both "temporally and spatially circumscribed" obscures the more "abstract" impacts of the process.[135] Stabrowski defines everyday displacement as the "lived experience of ongoing loss," when a neighborhood's development "fundamentally alters the lived experience of place."[136] Applying everyday displacement to Callowhill, the presence of early gentrifiers in a neighborhood with a small residential population may not have resulted in physical displacement of those people or businesses, but it *did* change their experience of everyday life.[137]

For Sarah McEneaney and Seth Soffer, who came to Callowhill in the middle period between the postindustrial era and the current development boom, they were drawn to the neighborhood for its affordability and industrial architecture. Suleiman Osman's exploration of Brooklyn Brownstoners provides a useful framework through which to understand the early

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[135] Filip Stabrowski, "New-Build Gentrification and the Everyday Displacement of Polish Immigrant Tenants in Greenpoint, Brooklyn: New-Build Gentrification and Everyday Displacement," *Antipode* 46, no. 3 (June 2014): 794–815, https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12074.
[136] Ibid
[137] Find source for this

Callowhill gentrifiers; he asserts that "brownstoners sought to purchase, restore, and preserve the 'historic' architecture of the urban core."[138] McEneaney, an artist, echoes this rhetoric in explaining the forty-year renovation process of her home that has made it into the "perfect setup" for her.[139] McEneaney was an art student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and moved to Callowhill because of the affordable property values and proximity to Center City—her identification as an artist aligns with the "creative class" label, but the Callowhill of the early 1980s did not have the same buzz that it does today. McEneaney was not consuming a product sold to her by a real estate developer or city marketing campaign, but was moving to a neighborhood that was affordable while also providing the "diversity" of older architecture.[140] Seth Soffer followed a similar trajectory in 1996, when he moved from Drexel University in West Philadelphia to Callowhill to have enough space to run a concert venue. He explains that he and his friends "decided we want to live in a warehouse space after graduating. And so we looked at different places."[141]
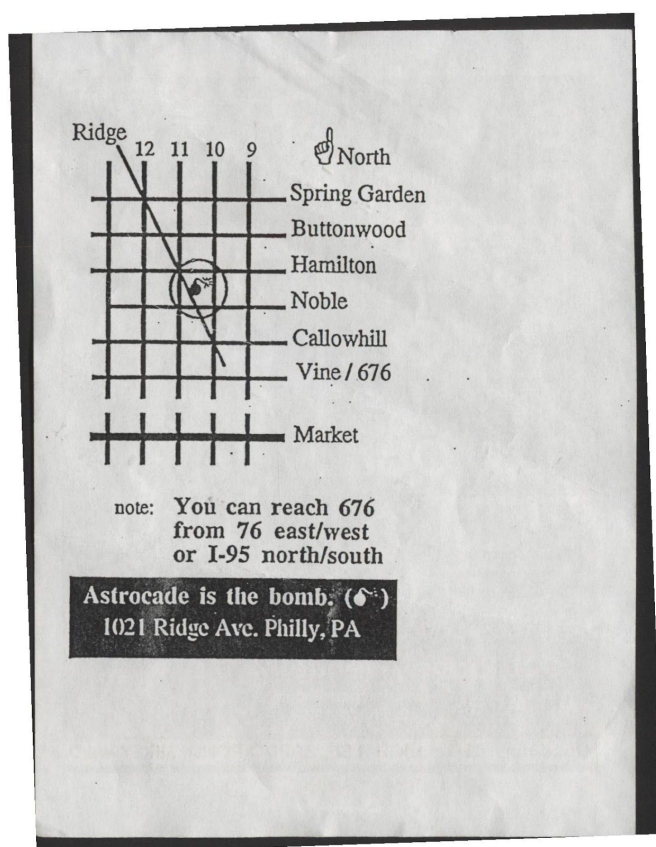
After deciding on Callowhill because of the cheap cost of living, Soffer describes the

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[138] Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10

[139] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.

[140] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.

[141] Seth Soffer. In discussion with the author. August 29, 2019.

neighborhood: "Oh, it was pretty industrial. Yeah, it was industrial."[142] Opening a showspace

called the Astrocade in his loft space, Soffer and his housemates put on underground shows for

the entirety of their time living there. In choosing to live in a warehouse space, Soffer

participated in the early loft conversion movement in Callowhill—which eventually acquired the

Loft District label due to these projects.[143] Like many with the Rail Park, McEneaney and Soffer

found charm and potential in the industrial and historical memory of Callowhill while also

anchoring their respective artistic and professional endeavors within this authentic space.

The Trestle Inn and Authenticity

McEneaney and Soffer came to Callowhill while its landscape held the remnants of

industrialism, albeit rapidly fading, but in building up the neighborhood and in becoming more

removed from Callowhill's industry, the claims of authenticity became unrooted from history.

Sitting in the back of the Trestle Inn as the interview was winding down, Ian Cross, an owner,

reflected on what attracts people to the bar, citing the homage to 70s soul and disco music: "I

think that's kind of like part of what makes this place interesting to people as well: there's some

authenticity even though this is all completely fabricated."[144] In identifying that the Trestle Inn in

its current form, though established in Callowhill since at least the 70s, fashions an artificial

sense of authenticity from a false history, it is clear that an *aura* of historical memory is more

valuable than an actual one to many. The dissonance between real and imagined authenticity

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[142] Seth Soffer. In discussion with the author. August 29, 2019.

[143] Anna Orso, "Eraserhood? Callowhill? How the neighborhood David Lynch made famous is changing, and showing its roots," *Billy Penn,* August 4, 2015 https://billypenn.com/2015/08/04/eraserhood-callowhill-how-the-neighborhood-david-lynch-made-famous-is-changing-and-showing-its-roots/

[144] Josette Bonafino and Ian Cross, (owners of the Trestle Inn), in discussion with author. August 21, 2019.

points to a proclivity that many gentrifiers, or prospective consumers, hold for history represented in urban space regardless of its veracity. Authenticity, then, is a paradox: though the term connotes adherence to the preceding urban form, truthfulness in elevating tradition, authenticity has much more to do with sustaining a consumable atmosphere.

Although this history is not necessarily accurate, authenticity is closely linked with history—why are neighborhoods that suggest the past so attractive to many? In the previous section Soffer, McEneaney, and the Trestle Inn owners expressed that the pull to Callowhill was in part motivated by the industrial architecture. Sharon Zukin uses the Greek word "kairos," which describes a "sense of the past that intrudes into and challenges the present," to explain the "alternative" sense of past and present that complicates the linearity of time.[145] For Zukin, the temporal entwining of past and present manifest in the East Village's urban landscape, allowing residents and visitors to "feel [they are] recreating a unique story of origin."[146] Cross explains that "the old Trestle was this black strip club where the guys who work in the fabric factories, tenderloins...get out of work [at] 6:00 in the morning [and] come down and you open at 7:00 and have that post shift drink at 7:00 in the morning."[147] This snapshot of the bar in the 1960s and 70s portrays a distinctly *working class* environment, evoking the long hours associated with workers who were employed in the declining industry of Callowhill. Despite this, the Trestle's website describes the "wink to the free spirit of the 60s and 70s" that the bar gives in its current form.[148]The Trestle Inn creates its own story of origin: a working-man's bar during the industrial

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[145] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 101
[146] Ibid
[147] Josette Bonafino and Ian Cross, (owners of the Trestle Inn), in discussion with author. August 21, 2019.
[148] "The Trestle Inn," Trestle Inn website, accessed April 27, 2020 http://www.thetrestleinn.com/

period, through constructing an atmosphere that places the genesis of the bar to a different cultural period, Cross and Bonafino successfully cultivate a sense of *kairos*.

Wrapped in Soffer and McEneaney's move to Callowhill is a sense of settling in a neighborhood rife with untapped potential and an appealing risk of danger, a kind of frontier that welcomes settlement. Callowhill's former life as a Skid Row that was one of the main enclaves for homeless men in Philadelphia provided a sense of "exoticism" even during the mid-20th century; many found a direct correlation drawn between the physical deterioration of the neighborhood and the social breakdown among the men of Skid Row which sparked interest from both tourists and sociologists.[149] Stephen Metraux argues that, "It was the Skid Row man, as well as the Skid Row area, that was perceived as the purveyor of blight."[150] But, as Philadelphia became more developed in the later 20th century, the desire for urban space by creative class gentrifiers that defied the norms represented in Center City through regimented high rises and business centers was found in outlying neighborhoods that maintained an unshakeable grit from the past. While there was a growing interest in these outer areas, there was tension between what was considered *too* dangerous and what would quench the search for appealing risk. McEneaney describes driving back to her house in Callowhill shortly after moving there in 1979:*"Sometimes I'd come back and there was someone walking on my street. I'd circle around till they weren't there, till I got out and had the garage operational and stuff like that. It was not as safe [a] place [as] right now."*[151] She names a sense of looming danger that she felt in the early days of living in the neighborhood, more than that she expresses feeling *unsafe*.

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[149] Stephen Metraux, "Waiting for the Wrecking Ball: Skid Row in Postindustrial Philadelphia," *Journal of Urban History* 25, no. 5 (July 1999): 690–715, https://doi.org/10.1177/009614429902500503.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Sarah McEneaney, in discussion with author. August 16, 2019.

Perhaps the defining differentiation between a neighborhood that is too risky and one that is just risky enough is that that latter requires an intrinsic sense of safety while maintaining the suggestion of danger.

The calculated risk of living in a "gritty" and "authentic" neighborhood falls away as newcomers move and interest by creative class consumers is demonstrated more broadly. Soffer explains the encampment of homeless men under the trestle adjacent to his home: "That's what we called Bumtown. There's a whole stretch of dudes like sleeping on the side of our building." [152] He also mentioned the frequent break-ins to his friend's car that required careful attention to where it was parked, calling the neighborhood "sketchy." While interviewing Soffer about Callowhill when he lived there in the 1990s, he commented on how it had changed since; observing that there has been a significant shift in expectations for living in Callowhill, he remarked: "You know, people are real uptight... people expect a certain level of comfort when they live in the city and...I don't blame them necessarily."[153] Cities caught in the aftershocks of deindustrialization have largely dissipated and become replaced by development as urban real estate has become a central source of capital that accounts for 60 percent of the world's assets.[154] The authenticity that Soffer feels he discovered and the neighborhood that he established for himself has been coopted—it has lost its authenticity in exchange for comfort.
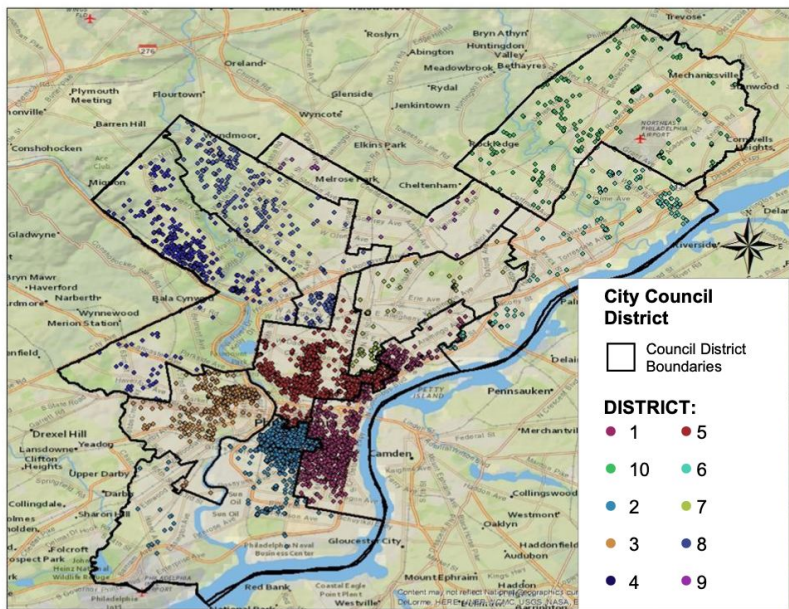
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[152] Seth Soffer. In discussion with the author. August 29, 2019.
[153] Seth Soffer. In discussion with the author. August 29, 2019.
[154] Samuel Stein, *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*, Jacobin Series (London ; Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2019).

Incentivizing Gentrification

The gentrification seen unfolding in Callowhill today is an upscaling of the historical

charm that McEneaney and Soffer found in the 1980s and 1990s. The 2035 Citywide Plan

proposes steps toward increasing preservation in development moving forward, enumerating

both economic and social benefits to it. It reads: "As neighborhoods recognize their historic

assets, they attract more residents and experience better overall maintenance. Historic

preservation also allows the City to guide new development, ensuring that it respects and enhances the existing urban fabric."[155] The plan asserts that investing in preservation will both increase population and bring flows of capital into the neighborhood—it is especially telling that these developments will improve the maintenance of neighborhoods, which speaks to government

Council District	Number of Abated Properties
1	3,549
2	4,028
3	615
4	973
5	4,686
6	357
7	269
8	403
9	43
10	682
	15,607

Note: the numbers in the table total to 15,605 abated properties, not 15,607, because two properties were unable to be geo-coded.

outsourcing of neighborhood upkeep. Additionally, there are multiple incentives encouraging

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[155] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "2035 Citywide Vision," (city planning document, 2011), 154

historic preservation and development more generally in Philadelphia; gaining certification on

the city's Register of Historic Places provides a 20 percent tax credit for rehabilitation projects,

while there is a ten year tax abatement that eliminates property tax for both new construction and

improvements. The latter initiative began in the 1970s and reached its current form in 2000,

increasing "homebuilding activity" in Philadelphia by 376%; Callowhill's district and the two

abutting districts are the three districts that account for the majority of abatements in the city.[156]

With these valuable incentives put in place by the city, Philadelphia emphatically encourages

development and Callowhill is in a position to benefit greatly.

With the financial motivation of tax breaks, the authenticity that entices consumers to

Callowhill converges with institutional interests and becomes a feedback loop of authenticity

produced and consumed. Callowhill was designated a historic district in 2010, significant

because the neighborhood "contains an intact group of industrial buildings which show the

aesthetic variety and technological progression and the merits...of Philadelphia's industrial

architecture during the period of significance."[157] Arts + Crafts Holdings has jumped on this

opportunity with vigor, beginning their development of Callowhill in 2016 and buying up as

many as twenty buildings in the neighborhood—entirely consisting of former factories and

warehouses.[158] Kelly Edwards, the community relations director for Arts + Crafts, describes their

mission: "This is just a slice of a bigger swath of land that has been vacant or underutilized for

50 years...So we're coming in and reinvigorating these historic buildings with the opportunity to

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[156] BIA report, 18

[157] Register of hist places

[158] Ryan Briggs, "'Spring Arts' remake dogged by tenant complaints, code violations," *WHYY,* December 27, 2018,
https://whyy.org/articles/leaks-faulty-heating-and-shoddy-repairs-haunt-developers-dreamy-spring-arts-remake/

develop parking lots already and create a denser, more urban community."[159] In explaining the

approach Arts + Crafts takes to development, Edwards underscores that the neighborhood was

largely *vacant,* hinting that there was not a residential population to displace, as well as tying the

aesthetic sensibility to the historic buildings. Adhering to Sharon Zukin's observation about

selling authenticity, which says "Filtered through the actions of developers and city officials, our

rhetoric of authenticity became their rhetoric of growth,"[160] Arts + Crafts serves as a prime

example of how historic memory and authenticity are popularized by members of the creative

class and then appropriated to generate profit.

Introducing financial incentives for private development that includes tax breaks for both

renovating historic structures and new building changes how "authenticity" is deployed and who

dictates it. As Arts + Crafts establishes a hold over Callowhill in terms of real estate ownership,

they also create visual markers, like murals, and an architectural vernacular that signifies their

presence in the neighborhood.

Marketing Authenticity

While Sarah McEneaney, Seth Soffer, and the owners of the Trestle Inn each took a role

in shaping their individual spaces in Callowhill, Arts + Crafts is a major force in consolidating

and marketing both the physical and symbolic attributes of Callowhill today. Boosterism is not

unique to 21st century gentrification, it has been an important factor of city growth since the

urban renewal period, but the packaging and selling of neighborhoods has become a vital part of

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[159] Kelly Edwards, (director of community relations, Arts + Crafts Holdings), in discussion with author. August 6, 2019.
[160] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 27.

urban development. In addition, the city instituting generous incentives for development speaks

to a larger pattern of the deregulation of urban space: without the resources to maintain the

upkeep of struggling neighborhoods, Philadelphia views private development as a solution to

revitalization. In Callowhill, Arts + Crafts takes the rhetoric and image of authenticity and

manipulates it as a vehicle of power that awards them control both aesthetically and politically.

Marketing in Callowhill has centered around the neighborhood's industrial history and its

potential life as a "dynamic" mixed use area. Writing about branding and marketing in

Pittsburgh, Tracy Neumann differentiates between the more diversified sources of boosterism

that once prevailed and the emergent elite-controlled marketing, explaining that, "The eclectic

and often uncoordinated images and symbols that characterized traditional boosterism gave way

to urban branding, a well-coordinated, capital-intensive marketing model for place promotion

adapted from corporate strategies."[161] Identifying that the shifting sources of financing for city

redevelopment have moved from a heterogeneous collection of funders to a targeted and highly

efficient effort to market cities. Kelly Edwards invokes a familiar rhetoric of Callowhill as a

neighborhood filled with hidden gems, but also uses terminology that elicits the

producer-consumer relationship; she explains that Arts + Crafts approaches rehabilitation by

"polishing concrete, stripping the columns, adding great art, leaving everything exposed—people

love that. People want to be in cool, interesting, differentiated space."[162] Clearly, the memory of

industry is a central selling point to Arts + Crafts, in addition to the "authentic" atmosphere that

many potential clients are searching for. Edwards's acknowledgement that "people love that"

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[161] Tracy Neumann, "Reforging the Steel City: Symbolism and Space in Postindustrial Pittsburgh," *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 4 (July 2018): 582–602, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144218759026.
[162] Kelly Edwards, (director of community relations, Arts + Crafts Holdings), in discussion with author. August 6, 2019.

indicates that these renovations are intended to increase the consumability of the neighborhood. The architectural vernacular that Arts + Crafts employs in their renovations also manifest in the murals that adorn all of their properties in Callowhill which culminates in a cohesive visual branding that makes their presence in the neighborhood immediately recognizable.

Murals play a large role in Arts + Crafts attempts to elevate Callowhill into a consumable and trendy neighborhood. Mural Arts, an organization nearly ubiquitous in Philadelphia, has painted nearly 4,000 murals since its founding in 1984, informally making Philadelphia the "Mural Capital of the World."[163] Arts + Crafts has forged a mutually beneficial partnership with Mural Arts that Edwards explains: "For us, it's a way to show change on the street in the same way that we add bike racks and planters and retail, but it's also a really interesting trend we're seeing that we're seeing across all cities where people are traveling for Instagram and want to take photos."[164] Public art in Callowhill serves a dual benefit by both creating visually dynamic and recognizable buildings while also attracting *new* people to the neighborhood to post the murals on social media. Bryan Hanes, architect of the Rail Park, comments on the impact of murals in Callowhill, explaining that "You pick them out by a relatively minimal kind of interventions," referring to Arts + Crafts properties.[165] Arts + Crafts utilizes murals in their branding of Callowhill with low-risk, high-reward: there is no construction needed, they are clearly recognizable in the landscape, they have the potential to attract visitors, and they differentiate Arts + Crafts properties from the rest of the neighborhood.

[163] https://www.muralarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/MA_Press-Kit_FINAL_April2017-1.pdf

[164] Kelly Edwards, (director of community relations, Arts + Crafts Holdings), in discussion with author. August 6, 2019.

[165] Bryan Hanes. (Principal, Studio Bryan Hanes), in discussion with author. July 16, 2019.

Conclusion

Inseparable from Arts + Crafts' interventions in Callowhill are the everyday impacts that have impacted non-white and immigrant communities who live in and around the neighborhood. Authenticity, though glorified as an indication that a neighborhood is "real," is a fabricated reality that is distorted and then packaged by private interests. The privatized city emphasizes the consumability of urban space, which in turn deepens spatial inequality.

As marketing has become inseparable from identity, neoliberal spatial management techniques are co-opted by private interests to sell identity and culture. In this case study, many of the same marketing tactics employed by Arts + Crafts have also been used by PCDC. Ironically, the latter organization has vocally criticized Arts + Crafts for the impact they have made on Callowhill, but PCDC's own bid for Callowhill utilize analogous tactics.

CHAPTER FOUR: EASTERN TOWER

Introduction

The Eastern Tower stands as a sentinel overlooking Vine Street. It dwarfs nearly all of the surrounding buildings, which are low-standing, and is strikingly out of place in its contemporary style among Callowhill's aging housing stock. In the last months of Summer 2019, the massive project was receiving its finishing touches before opening as the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation's long-awaited community center. Though it still smelled like paint and was awaiting some final additions before its grand opening, the building boasts

View of the Eastern Tower looking north. Via
Philadelphia Inquirer

impressive facilities: a gym, basketball court, banquet hall—all amenities that PCDC has been

striving to provide for its constituents for many years. In addition to the lack of green space in

the proximity of Chinatown, the 2017 Chinatown Neighborhood Plan explains that the Eastern

Tower satisfies a "much needed indoor community space for recreation, community gathering

and programs."[166] The Eastern Tower project has been in process since 2001, encountering many

roadblocks and barriers before construction finally began in August 2017.[167]

  For PCDC and Chinatown more broadly, reaching over Vine Street is both an economic

maneuver with the intention of improving business opportunities, as well as a demonstration of

ownership over Callowhill. Eastern Tower is representative of multiple struggles for Chinatown

surrounding land ownership, the vision for the neighborhood north of Vine Street, and urban

renewal endeavors that continue to impact Chinatown in its development. The tower's location

on the northern side of Vine Street emphatically asserts PCDC's presence in Callowhill,

establishing a community space with the intention of attracting foot-traffic over the Expressway

considered a significant barrier for many Chinatown residents. PCDC also sees the Eastern

Tower as an incentive for businesses to move from Chinatown to Callowhill; Yue Wu describes

a vision of a business corridor along Ridge Avenue with a "diverse" collection of businesses.[168]

Beyond the material benefits that come along with expansion, PCDC's ability to dictate

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[166] Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, "Chinatown Neighborhood Plan Including Callowhill, Chinatown and Chinatown North" (city planning document, Philadelphia, 2017), 76

[167] Melissa Romero, "Chinatown's Eastern Tower Community Center Finally Breaks Ground" (Curbed Philly, October 6, 2017), https://philly.curbed.com/2017/10/6/16438060/chinatown-eastern-tower-groundbreaking-philadelphia)

[168] Yue Wu. (Community planner, Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation), in discussion with author. July 11, 2019 and Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, "Chinatown Neighborhood Plan Including Callowhill, Chinatown and Chinatown North" (city planning document, Philadelphia, 2017).

Callowhill's future demonstrates agency over space that has historically been stripped away from Chinatown residents.

From the urban renewal period until today, development projects in and around Chinatown have been massive losses in PCDC's visions of the future neighborhood: though some of the harm was mitigated through protest and negotiation, the realized projects have had both a physical and symbolic impact on Chinatown. Development in Philadelphia has consistently stunted the neighborhood's growth, some of which was discussed in chapter one: the Vine Street Expressway to the north resulted in a swath of the neighborhood being cleared; the Pennsylvania Convention Center to the south severed easy access to Center City; and there have been bids to erect both a casino and sports complex either adjacent to Chinatown or in media res. For PCDC, an organization that began in response to the construction of the Expressway, continued infringement has motivated steps—in the form of land development as well as other measures—to definitively establish the permanence of Chinatown.

Philadelphia is fragmented into discrete neighborhoods controlled by non-governmental leadership: in Chinatown, PCDC acts as a governing body that dictates neighborhood change. Though PCDC may be the de facto leadership for Chinatown, through negotiating the ownership of Callowhill there are clear differentiations in power between PCDC, Arts + Crafts and other predominantly white urban leaderships. In the larger scheme of the future Philadelphia proposed in the 2035 Plan, PCDC ostensibly wields power in its stewardship of the "cultural" contribution that Chinatown makes to the rest of the city. The Plan asserts: "Cultural and ethnic traditions contribute greatly to Philadelphia's sense of history and identity...Investing in them will help

ensure their continued existence by encouraging participation and private investment."[169] Jan Lin

identifies this sentiment as a component of the "revalorization of ethnic places," to describe the

renewed interest in ethnic enclaves that were previously labeled nuisances during urban renewal.
[170] Applying this dynamic to Callowhill, though, displays that when negotiating with other

leaderships, PCDC is subject to a complicated access to agency. Looking towards Claire Jean

Kim's theory of racial triangulation, "civic ostracism and relative valorization functioned

together" to racialize Asian Americans in relationship to Black and white people.[171] Applying the

framework of racial triangulation to spatial contestations between PCDC and Arts + Crafts in

Callowhill elucidates how space, race, and power are all inextricably linked.

This chapter will explore the complexities of Chinatown's claim to Callowhill. By first

establishing the historical basis of Philadelphia's encroachments on Chinatown, Callowhill's

value as a symbol of PCDC's power becomes clear. Additionally, the conflict between Arts +

Crafts and PCDC over their opposing vision for the neighborhood is an entry point to discussing

the contradictions and inconsistencies that come with negotiating space in the neoliberal city.

Chinatown History

Beginning with the Vine Street Expressway project proposed in 1957, Chinatown fought

against projects that threatened their neighborhood, going against the stigma that framed

Chinatown as a neighborhood unable to make its own decisions.[172] This activism also challenged

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[169] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "2035 Citywide Vision," (city planning document, 2011), 160
[170] Jan Lin, "Globalization and the Revalorizing of Ethnic Places in Immigration Gateway Cities," *Urban Affairs Review* 34, no. 2 (November 1998): 313–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/107808749803400206.
[171] Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 107, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005.
[172] Mary Yee, "Vine Street Expressway," Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia, https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/vine-street-expressway/

many commonly held assumptions about Chinatown's agency in Philadelphia's development.

PCDC formed in response to the Expressway—stating their mission to be to, "preserve, protect,

and promote Chinatown as a viable ethnic, residential, and business community."[173] The activism

that surrounded fighting the Vine Street Expressway forged a new political involvement for

Chinatown residents, creating connections between the neighborhood and the Philadelphia city

government that continue to influence PCDC's work today. Chinatowns have been portrayed as

exotic enclaves characterized by their dirt, danger, and foreignness.[174] Though this stigma has

faded from popular view, it has continued to impact Chinatown residents' access to political

agency.[175] Agency, in this context, can be understood as the "right to the city"; David Harvey

posits that, "The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources:

it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city."[176] Chinatown's protests of the Vine Street

Expressway and the subsequent formation of PCDC were attempts to claim the right to change

the city. Beyond Vine Street, the construction of the Pennsylvania Convention Center and

proposed baseball stadium, casino, and detention center have also challenged PCDC's claims to

the neighborhood.

Chapter one briefly discussed the history of the stigmatization of Chinatown and, though

explicitly racist rhetoric has diminished, framing Chinatown residents as incapable neighborhood

custodians has continued. Nayan Shah explains the construction of the imaginary of American

Chinatowns; he writes: "By visiting and surveying Chinatown, individual doctors, journalists,

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[173] Philadelphia Development Corporation, https://chinatown-pcdc.org/
[174] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, American Crossroads (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001),
[175] Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 105–38, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005.
[176] Harvey, David. "The Right to the City." *New Left Review* 53 (October 2008): 23–40.

and middle-class tourists delineated the utter foreignness, exoticism, and evil of the place."[177]

Through newspaper articles and other widely circulated mediums, Chinatown came to be known

as a perpetually foreign neighborhood that served as a foil to the rest of the city. Philadelphia's

Chinatown is no exception—combing through issues of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* from the late

19th and early 20th centuries, Chinatown was mentioned almost exclusively in the context of its

otherness. An article from 1888 titled "Flames in Chinatown," reports a blaze started by "opium

smoker" that awakened Chinatown's "jabbering inhabitants" and drew them from their houses

"in droves, talking and gesticulating the while until it sounded like an impromptu matinee in the

monkey house at the Zoo."[178] Not only does this article compare Chinatown's residents to

animals, it frames them as unable to care for their neighborhood—a careless and unaware opium

addict who starts a fire and his confused and incapable neighbors are helped by Philadelphia

officials.

During mid-century urban renewal, white powerbrokers continued to view Chinatown as

a neighborhood unable to match the modernization projects in the rest of Philadelphia. The

Expressway was considered a step toward modernization for Philadelphia and Chinatown, in its

backwardness, stood as a barrier.[179] In a display of strong and coordinated action, PCDC gained

attention for protesting the Vine Street Expressway and advocating for the preservation of the

Holy Redeemer Church. A *Philadelphia Inquirer* article from 1973 reports that PCDC "argues

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[177] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides,* 29.

[178] "July 26, 1888 (Page 8 of 8)." 1888.*Philadelphia Inquirer (1860-1934)*, Jul 26, 8. https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/1826032823?accountid=14707.

[179] John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987) and Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, American Crossroads 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
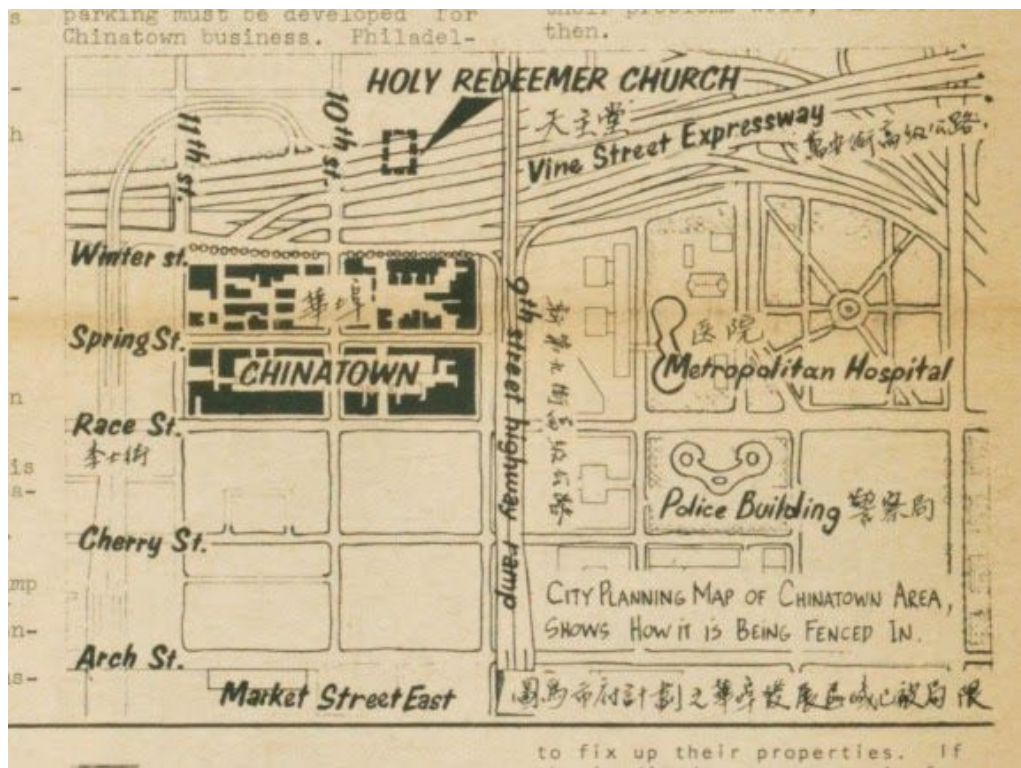
Map circulated by Save Chinatown Movement detailing Vine Street Expressway's damage to the neighborhood

that the plans will choke Chinatown residentially and commercially by geographically defining the limits of growth."[180] With the Expressway to the north, Chinatown was left with no space to expand its boundaries. Beyond the adverse residential and commercial impacts of the Expressway, losing the Holy Redeemer Church meant losing one of the very few community spaces in Chinatown. A letter to the editor also published in 1973 was an emotional call to save the Church: "Without Holy Redeemer Chinese Catholic Church and School, our children will be scattered like bugs to survive on their own...Please, we are a very little community, we do not need ramps and highways to kill Chinatown."[181] In this appeal, the Chinatown resident expressed

[180] "February 10, 1973 (Page 11 of 42)." *Philadelphia Inquirer (1969-2001),* Feb 10, 1973. https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/1842065276?accountid=14707.

[181] "May 10, 1973 (Page 10 of 60)." *Philadelphia Inquirer (1969-2001),* May 10, 1973. https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/1842135779?accountid=14707.

that the Church was more than a religious gathering space—it was a public space that served a small, underserved neighborhood.

The subsequent protests by residents of Chinatown in response to the Vine Street Expressway were acts of defiance against the city's disregard of Chinatown and efforts to assert control over neighborhood change. In a 1973 newspaper clipping, *The New York Times* describes "youths of Chinese ancestry" protesting the Expressway: "In a drenching rain, the youths unfurled banners reading: 'Save Chinatown—homes not highways,' and 'Chinatown for people, not cars'...The demonstrators told the department's deputy district engineer, Harold Humbert Jr., that they would not permit further demolition until their protests were heard…"[182] Such visible protests upset the image of Chinese residents of Chinatown as passive and was an assertive display of their desire for self-determination. Yee elaborates on the monumentality of this action, saying that it represented the "time that we broke the mold," and challenged "not only our own personal dispositions influenced by Asian culture but the bureaucratic and irrational decision making of government officials."[183] While Yee lauds how Chinatown residents eschewed the bureaucracy of the Philadelphia government, PCDC has come to depend on city resources to facilitate their development of the neighborhood. Ultimately, Holy Redeemer Church was saved,

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[182] Special to The New York Times. "WRECKING HALTED IN PHILADELPHIA: CHINATOWN FAMILIES PROTEST DEMOLITION FOR EXPRESSWAY." *New York Times (1923-Current File),* Aug 05, 1973. http://ezproxy.oberlin.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/119833816?accountid=12933.
[183] Mary Yee, "The Save Chinatown Movement: Surviving against All Odds," *Pennsylvania Legacies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 24–31, https://doi.org/10.5215/pennlega.12.1.0024.

but the Expressway was built and the Church now sits on the northern side of Vine Street,

nestled between on-ramps to the highway.

Beyond the Expressway, there have been multiple other proposed projects in subsequent

years that have required Chinatown and its residents to defend their neighborhood from

infringement. Represented in the figure, there have been several developments proposed for

construction in or around Chinatown, though many of them did not reach fruition. The

Pennsylvania Convention Center occupies what was once a large swath of Chinatown and cuts

off any hopes of expansion west. The original Convention Center (dark blue) opened in 1993 and
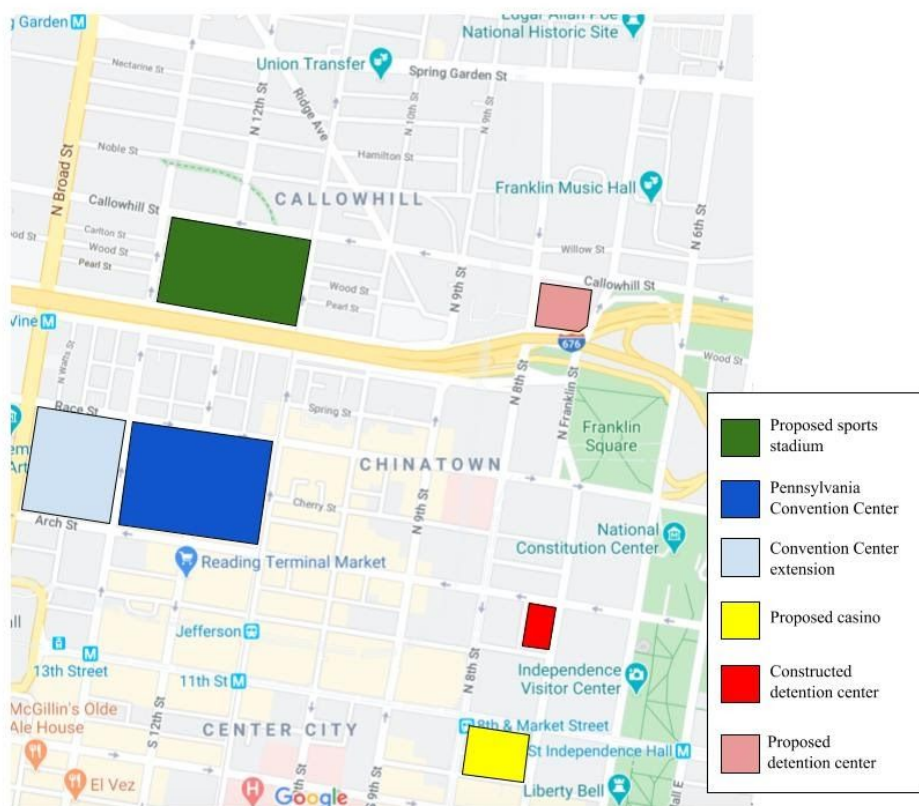
underwent a $471 million expansion that was completed in 2011, ultimately spanning four city blocks.[184]

Many of the other proposed projects were halted with protests spearheaded by PCDC: in 2008, the Foxwoods Casino provoked a strong response from Chinatown, with many residents expressing fears that the casino would stoke gambling addictions in the neighborhood. Not only did it have the potential to prevent Chinatown's expansion, but it could also "change the character of their community, hurt business and, even worse, feed an already serious problem with compulsive gambling."[185] Earlier, in 2000, a baseball stadium at 12th and Vine St. was proposed as a measure to encourage economic development in Center City and met objections from PCDC who saw the project as targeting Chinatown directly. The project was ultimately struck down, according to a *Philadelphia Magazine* writer, "by some combination of community or political NIMBYism and logistical or infrastructural clusterfuckery."[186] There were also two satellite detention centers proposed in 1992, one north of Vine Street and the other at 7th and Arch St. While the Vine Street location was staved off, the latter location was completed and opened in 2000.[187] Evidenced by these many projects, Chinatown has received an inordinate amount of attention as a location for new construction.

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[184] "About the Facility," The Pennsylvania Convention Center. https://www.paconvention.com/about/facility and https://djkeating.com/portfolio/pennsylvania-convention-center-expansion/

[185] "Philly's Chinatown Seeks to Keep out Casinos" (NBCUniversal News Group, November 13, 2008), http://www.nbcnews.com/id/27704204/ns/us_news-life/t/phillys-chinatown-seeks-keep-out-casinos/#.Xnfc G9NKg_X)

[186] Brian G Howard, "Citizens Bank Park: A Decade in the Stadium We Didn't Want" (Philadelphia Magazine, April 8, 2014), https://www.phillymag.com/news/2014/04/08/10-years-phillies-citizens-bank-park-stadium-we-did-not-wan t/) and Kathryn E. Wilson, *Ethnic Renewal in Philadelphia's Chinatown: Space, Place, and Struggle*, Urban Life, Landscape, and Policy (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2015), 128

[187] "March 23, 2000 (Page 33 of 108)." *Philadelphia Inquirer (1969-2001),* Mar 23, 2000. https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docvi ew/1855777413?accountid=14707 and https://www.bop.gov/locations/institutions/phl/

As a result of this long history, PCDC sees itself as an organization that is responsible for defending, preserving, and expanding Chinatown. Key in their identity, though, is *growth*: expanding the neighborhood, developing profit-generating properties, asserting Chinatown as a tourist locale. There is tension between the outward-looking aims of development and construction and the more insular social services that PCDC offers to Chinatown. PCDC has been fastidious about building affordable housing for their constituents, calling for demolition of the Reading Viaduct to make room for them in discussions leading up to the construction of the Rail Park. They also offer a wide array of services that aid the Chinatown community: youth service programs, family support services, and assistance navigating the homeownership process with Chinese-speaking immigrants.[188] Sarah Yeung, former project manager at PCDC, offered some clarity in understanding the tension and inconsistencies within PCDC in an opinion piece, saying that, regardless of judgement, "the business of community development—our business—goes on."[189] Identifying that PCDC is in the *business* of community development sheds light on their methods of development, complicating the radical history of protest that they were born from.

Revalorization and Chinatown

Simultaneous to the privatization and deregulation of city government that occurred in the 1980s with the rise of neoliberalism, urban space became a commodity to package, market, and sell. In the previous chapter there was an extensive discussion about how "authenticity" is

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[188] "Programs and Services," Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation https://chinatown-pcdc.org/programs-services/
[189] Sarah Yeung, "Addressing Displacement: The Business of Community Development" (WHYY, March 26, 2015), https://whyy.org/articles/addressing-displacement-the-business-of-community-development/)

utilized to attract people to Callowhill; in a similar move, PCDC, along with the city

government, sees the cultural heritage of Chinatown as an invaluable asset for generating capital

from the neighborhood. Arlene Davila introduces the idea of "marketable ethnicity" to argue that

"culture" is an "instrument of entrepreneurship utilized by government and businesses" in the

neoliberal city in order to "sell, frame, structure, claim, and reclaim space."[190] With the

consideration that Chinatown was consistently regarded as an obstacle for Center City's

development, the neighborhood's apparent value as an asset to Philadelphia seems

counterintuitive. "Marketable ethnicity" speaks to Lin's writings about revalorization; as "ethnic

actors," such as PCDC, become involved in the "economic and cultural revalorization of

everyday life," they also become implicated in "gentrification and transnational capital

accumulation, which ultimately may displace local ethnic residents and commercial merchants."
[191] PCDC is first and foremost a business and therefore complicit in facilitating the packaging

and marketing of Chinatown.

The 2035 Plan presents a number of references to how culture and diversity benefit

Philadelphia—using Chinatown and other enclaves as selling points for the city—but there is a

fundamental dissonance between the material realities of Chinatown and the way it is utilized as

a marketing tool. Sharon Zukin explains that, by emphasizing cultural assets, cities' "encourage

entrepreneurial innovation and creativity, cleanse public spaces of visible signs of moral decay,

and compete with other capitals of the symbolic economy of finance, media, and tourism."[192] For

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[190] Arlene M. Dávila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 6. As "authenticity" is deployed to draw residents to a neighborhood, the "culture" of a neighborhood—as a way to describe ethnic enclaves—is similarly attractive.
[191] Jan Lin, "Globalization and the Revalorizing of Ethnic Places in Immigration Gateway Cities," *Urban Affairs Review* 34, no. 2 (November 1998): 313–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/107808749803400206, 335
[192] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 234.

Philadelphia, as with other cities, "success" in tourism requires sanitizing urban space in order to make it consumable. The 2035 Plan centers ethnic enclaves primarily as a tool for tourism, stating that one of their objectives is to "create new and enhance existing tourism programs based on various cultural experiences unique to Philadelphia."[193] The Plan continues, saying that the typical tourism experience focuses on the city's Colonial history, but the city strives to "give tourists a more complete picture of Philadelphia life" by providing "new tours and programs that highlight unusual or non-traditional aspects of Philadelphia's culture."[194] The city presented to tourists is the best example of the sanitized, idealized, commodified urban space; in the neoliberal city, where the government's role in development is minimal, it is the responsibility of the private, "de facto" leadership of the city to execute this vision.

Beyond Chinatown's value to Philadelphia as a tourist attraction, the neighborhood also elevates Philadelphia's status as a competitive city that is able to offer businesses and potential residents amenities comparable to New York and other major cities. Typical of cities during postwar deindustrialization, Philadelphia's population dropped 500,000 between 1950 and 2000; but unlike other cities, Philadelphia has only very slowly regained the lost population.[195] For comparison, New York City's population declined between 1950 and 1980 before consistently increasing every successive decade.[196] Philadelphia is only now approaching the same population that it had in 1910.[197] Among other growth-oriented measures, cultivating ethnic enclaves that

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[193] Philadelphia City Planning Commission, "2035 Citywide Vision," (city planning document, 2011), 162.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Carl Bialik, "Philadelphia Is Bouncing Back From Problems Still Plaguing Cleveland," FiveThirtyEight (FiveThirtyEight, July 26, 2016), https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/philadelphia-is-bouncing-back-from-problems-still-plaguing-cleveland/) and https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html
[196] https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html
[197] Ibid

draw capital—whether through tourism or through other forms of investment—is a priority for

Philadelphia governance. Between Philadelphia government and PCDC there is an effort to

invest in and highlight the difference of Chinatown, but these must be a *marketable* difference.

Racial Triangulation and Chinatown

PCDC utilizes the culture of Chinatown to advance the "business of community

development." Though PCDC criticizes Arts + Crafts for gentrifying Callowhill through

marketing the neighborhood to white professionals with "authenticity" rhetoric, they have drawn

Proposed business improvement districts

Chinatown   Callowhill   Within both districts
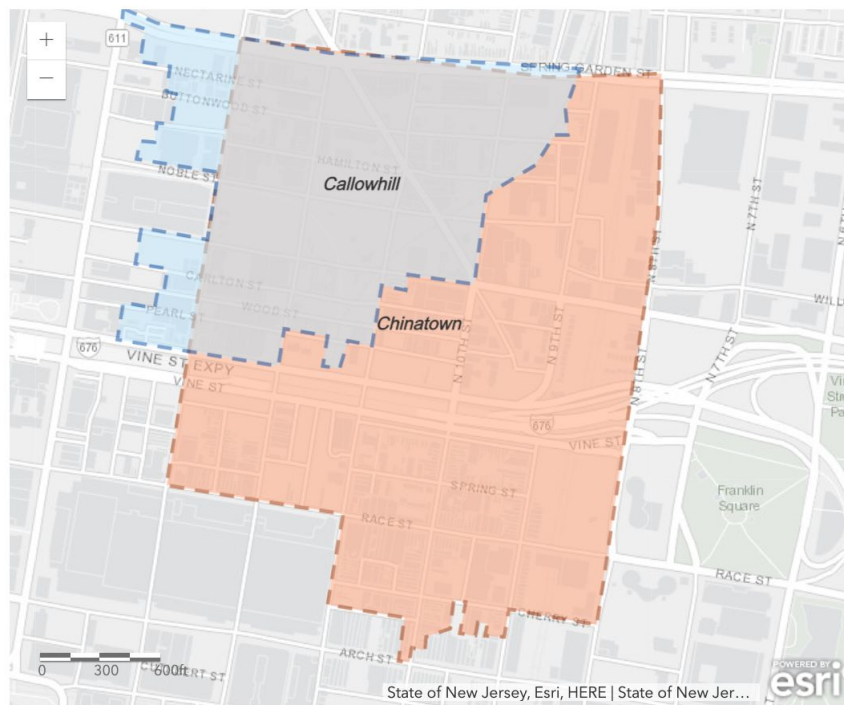
an analogous population with the market-rate apartments in the Eastern Tower. Additionally, Arts + Crafts' business improvement district (BID) proposal was met with vehement opposition from PCDC, but PCDC proposed a BID encompassing both Chinatown and Callowhill. Returning to Lin who posits that, "Community contenders

are drawn into negotiation with state agencies, possibly becoming incorporated into the state

apparatus itself."[198]

The PCDC BID approaches a murky territory between reproducing the same spatial

injustices that the organization fought against during urban renewal and taking necessary steps to

serve the Chinatown constituency through compliance with dominant methods of spatial

management. In order to more effectively examine PCDC's inconsistencies, Claire Jean Kim's

theory of racial triangulation provides a framework to understand how Asian agents negotiate

power within the schema of urban governance.

Before continuing to dissect the complexities within PCDC's claims of Callowhill, it is

necessary to establish the significance of BIDs in allocating power within the neoliberal city.

Simply defined, BIDs are an allotted area where businesses and residents pay a tax based off of

the assessed value of their property; an executive board elected by property owners allocates

these collected funds to services such as street cleaning, security, lighting, and other maintenance

measures.[199] While there has always been informal ownership and control over neighborhoods,

decided by various criteria, BIDs not only formalize ownership but also limit decision-making

positions to property owners. BIDs, as is quintessential in the neoliberal city, privatize urban

space and take the place of the government in maintaining public space; Sharon Zukin explains

that BIDs "remain attractive to political officials because they are mechanisms for not only

privatizing responsibility for public space but also upscaling a neighborhood."[200] In this way,

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[198] Jan Lin, "Globalization and the Revalorizing of Ethnic Places in Immigration Gateway Cities," *Urban Affairs Review* 34, no. 2 (November 1998): 313–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/107808749803400206.
[199] Susanna Schaller and Gabriella Modan, "Contesting Public Space and Citizenship: Implications for Neighborhood Business Improvement Districts," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24, no. 4 (June 2005): 394–407, https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X04270124.
[200] Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 147

BIDs are another method of packaging and marketing the city: under the tutelage of an executive board, a neighborhood or district that makes up the BID can be reconfigured "into specialized, mass-marketable, consumer-friendly environments."[201] PCDC's proposal for a BID aligns the group closely with the mechanisms of neoliberal city government.

Just as the 2035 Plan sees value in elevating the "unusual" and "non-traditional" aspects of Philadelphia, PCDC's Chinatown Plan underscores the neighborhood's "unique economic and cultural hub," a maneuver that aligns PCDC with Philadelphia city government.[202] Kim explains that the model minority myth attributes Asian American success to "ongoing cultural distinctiveness" which subsequently grants them "provisional acceptance" as Americans.[203] In applying Kim's theory to PCDC and its claims to Callowhill, the organization's preservation and promotion of Chinatown's marketable difference grants that provisional acceptance into receiving funding and other access to resources. But, considering Arts + Crafts' BID proposal, PCDC's conditional acceptance is revoked when held in comparison to the white organization. Kim elaborates on the limits of acceptance: white decisionmakers do not "overtly deny civic membership to Asian Americans" but "skepticism about the legitimacy of Asian American participation in public life and their readiness to see Asian American public figures as agents of a foreign power powerfully constrain what civic privileges Asian Americans do enjoy."[204] Much of the rhetoric around the conflicting claims to Callowhill and a BID center around deservingness.

[201] Susanna Schaller and Gabriella Modan, "Contesting Public Space and Citizenship: Implications for Neighborhood Business Improvement Districts," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24, no. 4 (June 2005): 394–407, https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X04270124.
[202] Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, "Chinatown Neighborhood Plan Including Callowhill, Chinatown and Chinatown North" (city planning document, Philadelphia, 2017).
[203] Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 129, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005.
[204] Ibid, 126

In her interview, Kelly Edwards of Arts + Crafts put forward a dichotomy of investment versus speculation as an indicator of who is the more worthy recipient of Callowhill.

While discussing the competing BIDs, Edwards demonstrates skepticism toward PCDC's involvement in developing Callowhill. Referring to John Chin, the executive director of PCDC, Edwards views the vision put forward by PCDC as not just incompatible with Arts + Crafts' but actively duplicitous. She delineates the potential harm that PCDC enacts on Callowhill: "John is turning a blind eye to illegal structures for his own constituency, but then villainizing people who are following code and putting in fire sprinklers and windows and basic life-safety things….he just partnered with a developer and built an apartment tower with 150 units—three are affordable—and now they're selling it for $67 million. That's going to fuck up this neighborhood, so that's on him."[205] Referring to the Eastern Tower, Edwards identified the contradiction between PCDC's stated endeavors for affordable housing and the multi-million dollar tower that has a rental rate that reaches nearly double the median rent in Chinatown.[206] For Arts + Crafts, the repurposing of industrial warehouses is an *investment* in Callowhill, while PCDC's apparent speculation will dismantle the marketable character of the neighborhood.

The contested Callowhill does not have the "marketable ethnicity" that Chinatown south of Vine Street does, and so PCDC's attempts to cohere the two neighborhoods violates the conditional acceptance that the organization received for packaging Chinatown as a cultural commodity. Success in the neoliberal city is predicated upon who can package and sell urban

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[205] Kelly Edwards, (community relations director, Arts + Crafts Holdings), in discussion with author, August 6, 2019

[206] Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation, "Chinatown Neighborhood Plan Including Callowhill, Chinatown and Chinatown North" (city planning document, Philadelphia, 2017) and Ryan Briggs, "Chinatown CDC Is Marketing the 'Hood's Tallest Tower as a $67 Million Lux Address," WHYY (WHYY, August 12, 2019), https://whyy.org/articles/chinatown-cdc-is-marketing-the-hoods-tallest-tower-as-a-67-million-lux-address/)

space most effectively; ethnic actors are placed in limited positions of power that require

adherence to dominant conceptions of race—in the case of ethnic enclaves, conditional access to

power relies upon utilizing the marketable aspects of culture.[207] It is PCDC's conformity to the

status quo that affords the organization legitimacy in spatial negotiations; when development

strays from maintaining and marketing Chinatown toward expanding into Callowhill, PCDC

loses the legitimacy gained from executing the "instrument of culture."[208]

Conclusion

At the beginning of September 2019, the Callowhill BID was defeated when one-third of

the property owners submitted their opposition to Philadelphia City Council.[209] PCDC, evidently,

views this as a major victory that marks one fewer obstacle in the way of claiming Callowhill

and expanding Chinatown north over Vine Street. Regardless of the status of the BID, Callowhill

remains contested, incohesive, and constantly fluctuating—locked in a spatial negotiation that

demonstrates and reinforces the harmful impacts of neoliberal urban development.

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[207] Arlene M. Dávila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) and Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (March 1999): 105–38, https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329299027001005.
[208] Dávila, *Barrio Dreams.*
[209] Valerie Russ, "Opponents of Callowhill BID Have Claimed Victory. Advocates Say Not so Fast.," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 30, 2019), https://www.inquirer.com/news/callowhill-bid-squilla-victory-win-arts-crafts-holdings-20190830.html) and Valerie Russ, "Callowhill Neighbors Group Concedes Defeat in the Creation of a Business Improvement District" (The Philadelphia Inquirer, September 6, 2019), https://www.inquirer.com/news/callowhill-bid-defeat-official-philadelphia-squilla-20190905.html)

CONCLUSION

Through this project I have continued returning to David Harvey's articulation of "the right to the city." His understanding that it is a fundamental human right to "change ourselves through changing the city" vocalizes the ideal collectivity that cities afford us: urban space should be something we build together that changes, grows, and evolves as we do. Despite the barriers that preclude a universal right to the city today, Philadelphians continue to strive for a city that reflects the best qualities of its collective citizenship.

Asian Arts Initiative sits on Vine Street between Callowhill and Chinatown, spanning the two neighborhoods. At an event in October, a group of residents from both neighborhoods came together to discuss their shared space —participants wrote answers to questions such as "what is key to a better neighborhood?" and "what do you like most about our neighborhood?" on sheets of paper taped to the walls. The responses included: "connection," "communication," "humanity," and "helping hand."[210] None of these answers are carefully packaged slogans to market a neighborhood to white, wealthy, or powerful people, nor do these answers restrict the neighborhood to a formalized ownership—though we are a long ways away from dismantling and undoing the systems that have so deeply ingrained inequality into our cities, individuals and

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[210] Asian Arts Initiative, (asianartsphilly), Instagram story. October 17, 2019.

communities still share a common and collective ideal that revolves around humanity and

connection.

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