



CHESTNUT STREET:

a living record

Fall 2005 Studio
Graduate Program in Historic Preservation
University of Pennsylvania
School of Design



Chestnut Street, West of 11th Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

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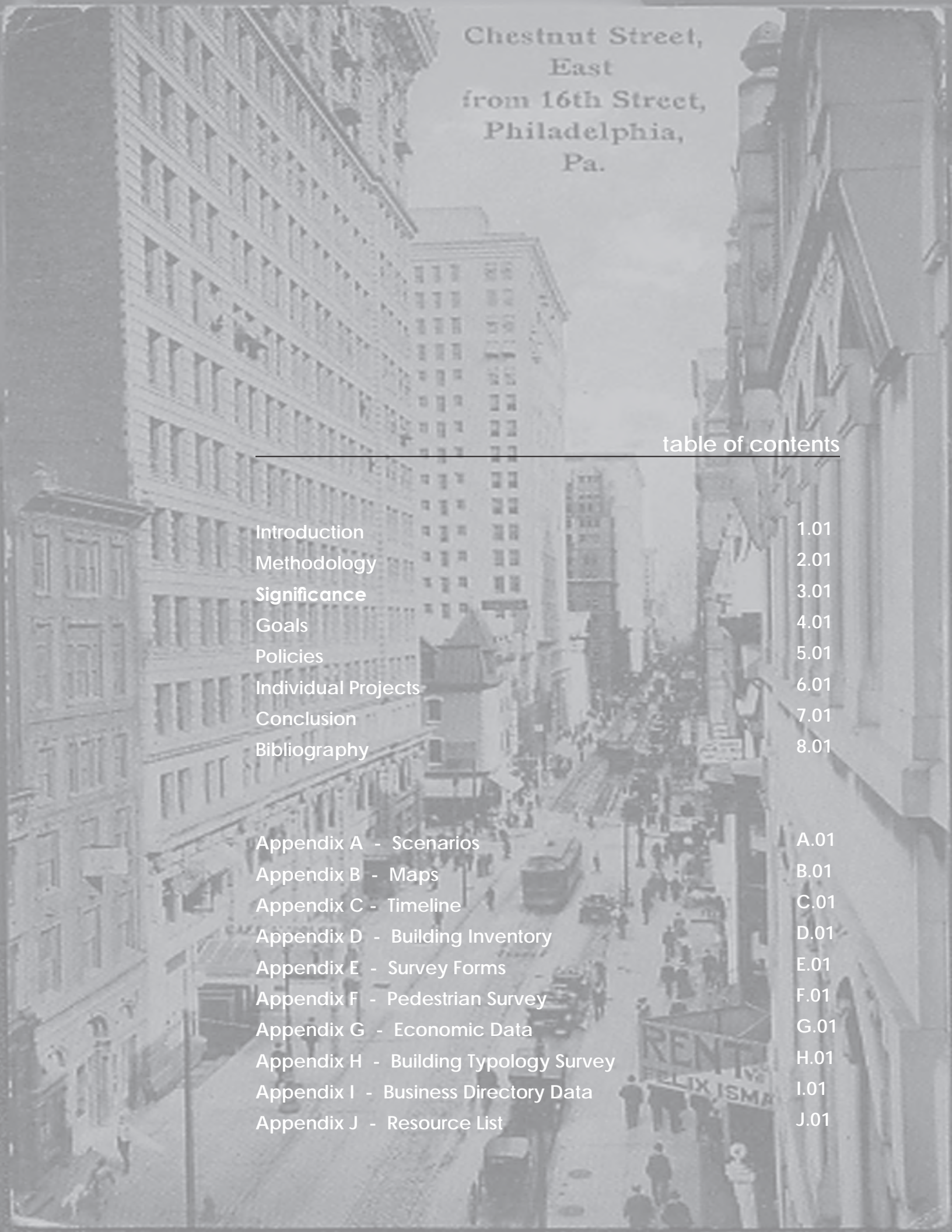
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Chestnut Street,
East
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1. INTRODUCTION

When asked to describe Chestnut Street, a random sampling of pedestrians gave responses that included: “unique,” “dirty,” “elegant,” “typical,” “expensive,” “inexpensive,” “seedy,” and “magical.” The diversity of these remarks illustrates Chestnut Street as it truly is – a place of contradictions and surprises. Wig stores, medical research laboratories, trendy restaurants, high-end retail and army-navy surplus stores happily coexist, and are housed in buildings that range from twentieth-century high-rises to nineteenth-century rowhouses with 1950s facades to art deco parking lots to monumental Beaux-Arts banks.

In contrast to the more manicured areas of Independence Mall or Rittenhouse Square, the commercial core of Chestnut Street reveals the gritty, organic, refreshing dissonance that seems more characteristic of the city as a whole. While some buildings still display faded store emblems that serve as reminders of past grandeur, others bear the battle scars of unsympathetic façade alterations inflicted during the upheaval of urban renewal, and still others retain intact nineteenth-century interiors due to economic downturn and subsequent abandonment during the 1980s and 1990s. This creates a dynamic atmosphere, which serves as an on-going record of the past and an environment of possibility for the future.



Our approach to understanding Chestnut Street was to research its history, its place within the city as a whole, its perception and use by Philadelphians, its physical fabric, and the political, social, and economic forces that have shaped and continue to shape the street. From this comprehensive background, we identified and distilled the different values of Chestnut Street in order to articulate what we believe to be its significance and to develop a corresponding vision of its ideal future. Finally, we have proposed policies and recommendations that seek to achieve this vision, providing for the future management of the street in a way that is preservation-oriented while allowing for on-going development.

Our vision for Chestnut Street is a continuation of its existing legacy. Due to its central location in the city, we expect that the street will remain a bustling mixed-use thoroughfare, reacting and adapting to the latest tastes, fashions, and technologies. We must strike a delicate balance between supporting the growth and change that is an important part of any commercial corridor and retaining the historic architectural fabric that makes the street a unique record of life in Philadelphia.

It is our hope that representations of diverse time periods, trends, and styles – both past and future – remain and will be a part of the streetscape. Focused preservation efforts will ensure the continuity of this record, while leaving further areas open to evolution. In the future, we expect that preservation efforts will be expanded in response to developing notions of significance and architectural appreciation. Perhaps one day, late-twentieth-century buildings such as Liberty Place may be held in the same esteem as the city’s colonial heritage. Fostered by this recognition of Chestnut Street’s historic character, residents, property owners, and other stakeholders will develop a strengthened sense of community and civic pride. This renewed awareness will in itself contribute to the protection of the street and its productive use by generations to come.

Our work on this project has made us keenly aware of the many forces that continually threaten the fulfillment of our vision for Chestnut Street. Encroaching new development, increasing real estate values, lenient zoning laws, insensitive façade alterations, public indifference, and the possible future insertion of slot machines, indicate that large-scale change might be on the immediate horizon, making our task all the more relevant and pressing. This is a critical moment for Chestnut Street, and acting now to understand and identify strategic areas for preservation and for development will enable Chestnut Street's living legacy to continue.



2. METHODOLOGY

Physical Boundaries

The study area for our project spans from 6th to 20th Streets on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia. The boundary of 6th Street on the east was chosen because it lies directly west of Independence National Historical Park, Independence Mall, and Old City, all areas which have previously been acknowledged for their historic significance. The west boundary at 20th Street represents the end of Chestnut Street's consistent historic fabric, as well as the transition of the commercial corridor to a more residential environment.



Figure 2-1: The study area, in context

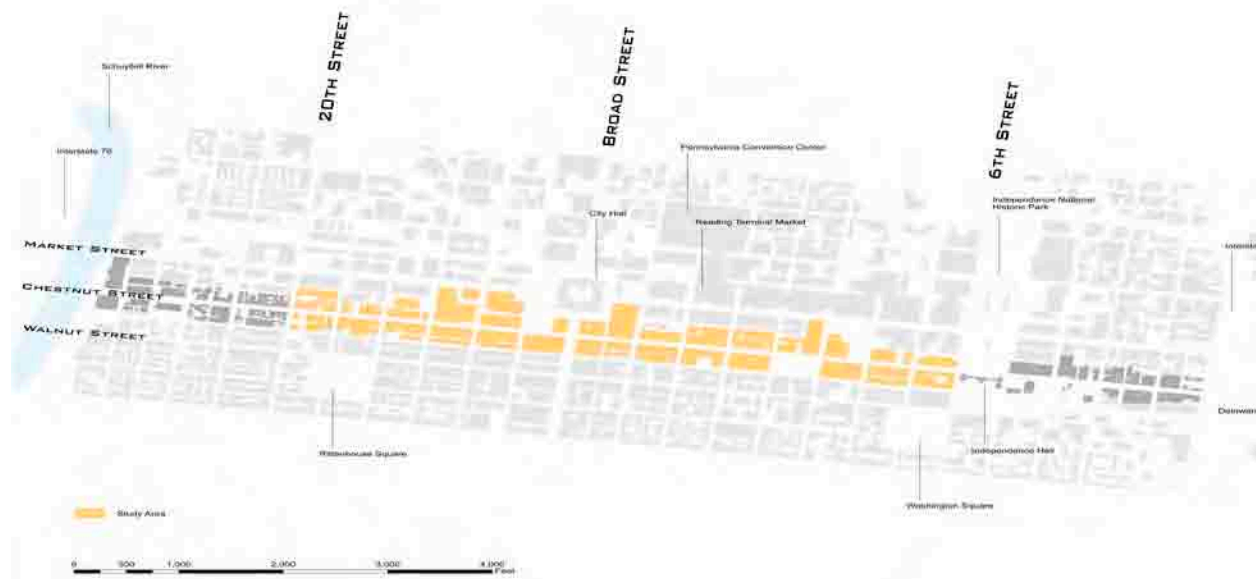


Figure 2-2: The study area



Figure 2-3: Discussing the study area

Planning Process

Our approach to the studio followed many of the recommendations of the 1981 Burra Charter: our research, analysis, and proposals all reflect the importance of the cultural significance of the study area, and acknowledge that there are many values, in addition to the historic

fabric, that must be taken into consideration. Using a values-based process, we focused intensely on the significance of the study area – the initial portion of our project resulted in the development of a statement of significance, while the final portion involved creating policies that have a strong relationship to the various types of significance identified through our research, hoping to ensure that this significance remains a part of the site despite future development or changing public attitudes.

Our methodology was generally guided by the values-based planning process described by Martha Demas in her article “Planning for Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites: A Values-Based Approach.”¹ Our project was organized and executed in three stages: “1. Identification and Description: collecting information; 2. Assessment and Analysis: taking stock; and 3. Response: making decisions.”¹



Figure 2-4: Exploring the study area

Stage One: Documentation and Description

Our initial goal was to uncover and analyze as much information as possible about Chestnut Street. In order to do this, we immediately divided into four research groups based on the four main values that we ascribed to the street: Architectural, Cultural/Historical, Economic and Regulatory. We later conflated Economic and Regulatory into one Economic/Regulatory value and research group, and added the new Contemporary Social value and research group. Through archival research, meetings with municipal and community leaders, pedestrian surveys, business interviews, mapmaking, background readings on major trends affecting Chestnut Street, and other data collection methods, we gathered and synthesized information in order to develop a collective understanding of the current and historical context of the street.



Figure 2-5: Stakeholders in action

Another important early task was the identification of the street's key stakeholders in order to determine who should be involved in our eventual decisions and whose interests we should keep in

mind throughout the process. While we did not carry out this study of Chestnut Street for a specific client, throughout the project, we were guided by the general concept of "the city" as the audience for our work. In the context of our studio project, "the city" comprises all of the different agencies that currently manage Chestnut Street, including the Planning Commission, the Historical Commission, the City Council, and the Center City District.

In addition to these administrative “clients,” we identified key groups of stakeholders from the general public. Not only were we interested in developing a plan for our study area that addresses the needs of those groups and individuals with a specific, identified interest in the street, but we were also aware of the role of our clients (as government bodies) as advocates for the public interest. We identified the following groups as public stakeholders and considered their interests throughout our study of the street: those employed on or near Chestnut Street; owners of businesses and property on Chestnut Street; residents of Chestnut Street; those who come to Chestnut Street to shop (whether from the suburbs or from other parts of the city); preservationists; developers; real estate brokers; tourist agencies; cultural institutions; and educational institutions.

Stage Two: Assessment and Analysis

There were two main components to this stage: the development of a statement of significance, and an assessment of the physical fabric of the street through a building survey. The Statement of Significance was the result of the first half-semester of research and documentation, and is discussed in more detail in the following section. The building survey, which documented and categorized each building according to type, recorded conditions, and made note of façade alterations, allowed us to connect the context and significance of the site to the street’s physical fabric. The building survey also allowed us to identify certain parts of the street that were the most reflective of the significance of the street and to better understand and articulate the potential impact of the threats to and weaknesses of the study area. This information was integral to the formulation of our policies and recommendations for the site’s future.

Stage Three: Response

The final stage in our process was the recommendation of policies for our study area. Given the vagueness of our client and the variety of the stakeholder groups,

the development of goals and strategies that might speak to the interests of those whom we had identified as stakeholders was challenging. We first identified a few key goals that then guided the formulation of our specific policies. Our four key goals were: (1) to encourage strategic growth; (2) to protect historic fabric and character; (3) to share information; and (4) to streamline administrative procedures. To achieve these goals, we recommend a number of broad policies that will be supported by several, smaller individual projects. All of these goals, policies, and projects, and their implications, are discussed in further detail later in this report.

As part of our effort to create an overall vision for the street, we participated in a scenario-building exercise. We identified two variables that we believe to be crucial to the future of Chestnut Street: the municipal government's attitude toward preservation, and the state of the real estate market. These variables were then placed on axes, creating a four-part matrix that included all possible combinations of the two variables. Four scenarios based on the interplay of the variables were created, and developed into narratives by small groups. These detailed predictions for the future helped us understand the interconnectedness of the many variables affecting the state of Chestnut Street, and how preservation goals and principles fit into this complex context.

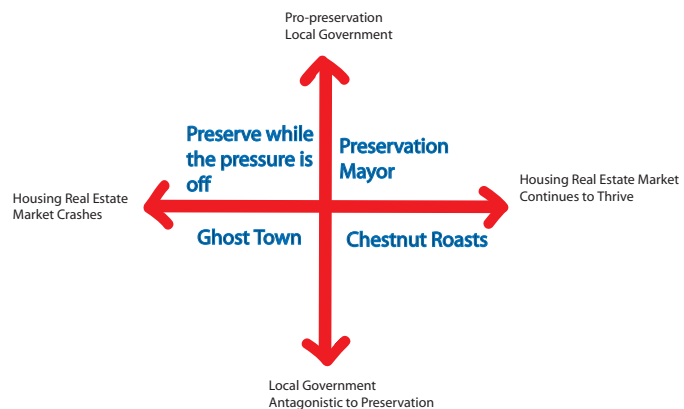


Figure 2-6: Our scenario-building matrix represents two extremes for each of our two variables, placed at the end of each axis. Within the axes, in blue, are the titles for the four scenarios developed.

Notes

¹Demas, Martha. "Planning for Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites: A Values-Based Approach." *Management Planning for Archaeological Sites: Proceedings*. Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2002. P. 3.

3. SIGNIFICANCE

Values Reports

Architectural Value

“So truly is architecture a reflection and monument of a people, that never yet a work worthy the name of noble art was produced by a man not fulfilled with the spirit of his age, and for learning the character of our own day, where shall we find a better school than the streets and shops?”

– James Knowles, Jr., 1855¹

Chestnut Street holds more than three hundred years of history in its length and has been traversed over those centuries by personalities both big and small – from founding father Benjamin Franklin to today’s Liberty Place lawyer running lunchtime errands. It is a veritable timeline set as the backdrop to our everyday lives – a remarkable portfolio of surviving historic architecture set in the commercial heart of one of America’s most populous cities.

Unlike other major thoroughfares in the city, such as Market or Walnut Street with their modern high-rises and the latest retail renovations, Chestnut Street continues to express certain core traditions of the Philadelphia experience and these are evident in its architecture and streetscape. Philadelphia has always been known as a “walking city” and this alone sets it apart from many other major urban centers in America. Like other cities, its demographics have shifted over time, yet in the twenty-first century perhaps no other street in any other city shares the complex characteristics that define Chestnut today: its continuing walkability; the predominance of the small building footprint; the diversity of scale, type and use; and the pacing of public-to-private, vernacular-to-landmark buildings as one walks along the street.² Despite its central location, a remarkable assemblage of architectural fabric has prevailed through time, aided, in no small part, by the failure of the city’s 1970s-era pedestrian transitway project, which, rather than



Figure 3-1, 3-2, and 3-3: Showing the evolution of Chestnut Street -- from a primarily residential street, to the hub of financial institutions (US Mint), to the present mix of retail with many altered historical facades.

spurring an economic boom, essentially mothballed Chestnut Street for decades by depriving the street of the traffic necessary to its economic survival.

What we see in today's streetscape from 6th Street to 20th Street is an eclectic array of building types and styles. The street is not frozen in a single historical period, but reflects the dynamics of change over time. We see the influence of shifting residential trends, changing retail fashions, and expanding institutional needs – important social dynamics that are inevitably reflected in the built environment and will be discussed more fully in the cultural and historical value section of this report. Chestnut Street affects the pedestrian in ways both conscious and unconscious, or, as Kevin Lynch might say, in ways “legible” (like reading text) and “imageable” (like seeing a picture.)³

There are the big-impression landmarks, significant structures that represent a specific event or period of time, as well as the subtle impressions of the overall streetscape. This creates a sense of a living history through layers of use, whether that

is the juxtaposition of a federal-era rowhouse next to a twentieth-century bank, or the layers of adaptation on the façade of a single commercial building.

Among the streets of Center City Philadelphia, only Chestnut Street offers the duration of historical importance, the perseverance of diversity, and the layers upon layers of evidence to be able to convey the complex historical interweaving of themes (social, economic, residential, commercial, entertainment, and institutional, to name just a few) that has taken place not only in Philadelphia but in major cities throughout the country.

Multi-Tiered Research of Past and Present

Our methods of research were as varied as the architectural examples on the street. We compiled current data for each building in the study area, including address, height, occupancy, use, age, and architect. We developed GIS maps to reveal the visual clues or themes that a spread sheet would never reveal, and to better understand the nature of the street as it currently exists. We walked the street again and again and noted the changing rhythm of the blocks, the gentle, nearly undetectable rise and fall of its topography. In libraries and archives, we researched the recorded history of the street, the buildings, their uses, their ages, and typography. We studied images and photographs from various periods in the street's history to get a visual sense of streetscape, storefront styles, signage, street accessories, and pedestrian use. We merged this historical data with our contemporary perceptions of the street to appreciate the changes wrought by time and evolving social needs: the shifts of balance between residential and commercial, the loss of notable old structures and what took their place, the efforts of retailing enterprises to keep up with changing fashions by adding on new facades, covering varying percentages of original fabric and with varying degrees of sensitivity to the original structure – or even to the previous renovation. We surveyed each building on each block according to typology, condition, the

presence of façade alterations, and their contribution to the overall character of the street.

It is our conclusion that no other commercial thoroughfare in Philadelphia offers the same variety and depth of architectural heritage over such a central, pedestrian-oriented expanse.

The Collection

While buildings are of a scale that prevents their being amassed and collected as works of art, the architectural portfolio that exists on Chestnut Street could nevertheless be considered museum quality. Chestnut Street is the home of one National Historic Landmark building: the former John Wanamaker store which covers the block between Market and Chestnut Streets and 13th to Juniper Streets. Built in 1902-1911 by Daniel Burnham with John T. Windrim, this building is recognized as, in the words of the federal government, “an exceptional place that forms a common bond between all Americans.”⁴ It serves as both a tourist



Figure 3-4: Locations of buildings by distinguished architects (Appendix B)



Willis Hale's Quaker City Bank, 700 block Chestnut Street.



Victory Building, 10th and Chestnut



Eclectic facades on 700 block

Beneficial Savings Fund Society building at 12th and Chestnut



DeLong Building, corner of 13th and Chestnut.



McKim, Meade and White's Girard Bank on Broad and Chestnut

Figure 3-5: Styles

Chestnut Street is a veritable portfolio of architectural styles that reflect changing tastes and building purposes over the last several hundred years. Within a fourteen block stretch one will examples ranging from a sampling of neo-classical temples of banking and Philadelphia's first commercial use of the Second Empire mansard roof to outstanding examples of eclectic Victorian commercial facades and exuberant Art Deco geometry. Time will tell whether the more recent facades evident will be judged to capture the essence of the late 20th century the way these earlier examples represent their periods.



Paul Cret Building, 700 block



Harry Sternfeld's 1100 block commerical building



1622 Chestnut Street.



1200 block Chestnut Street.

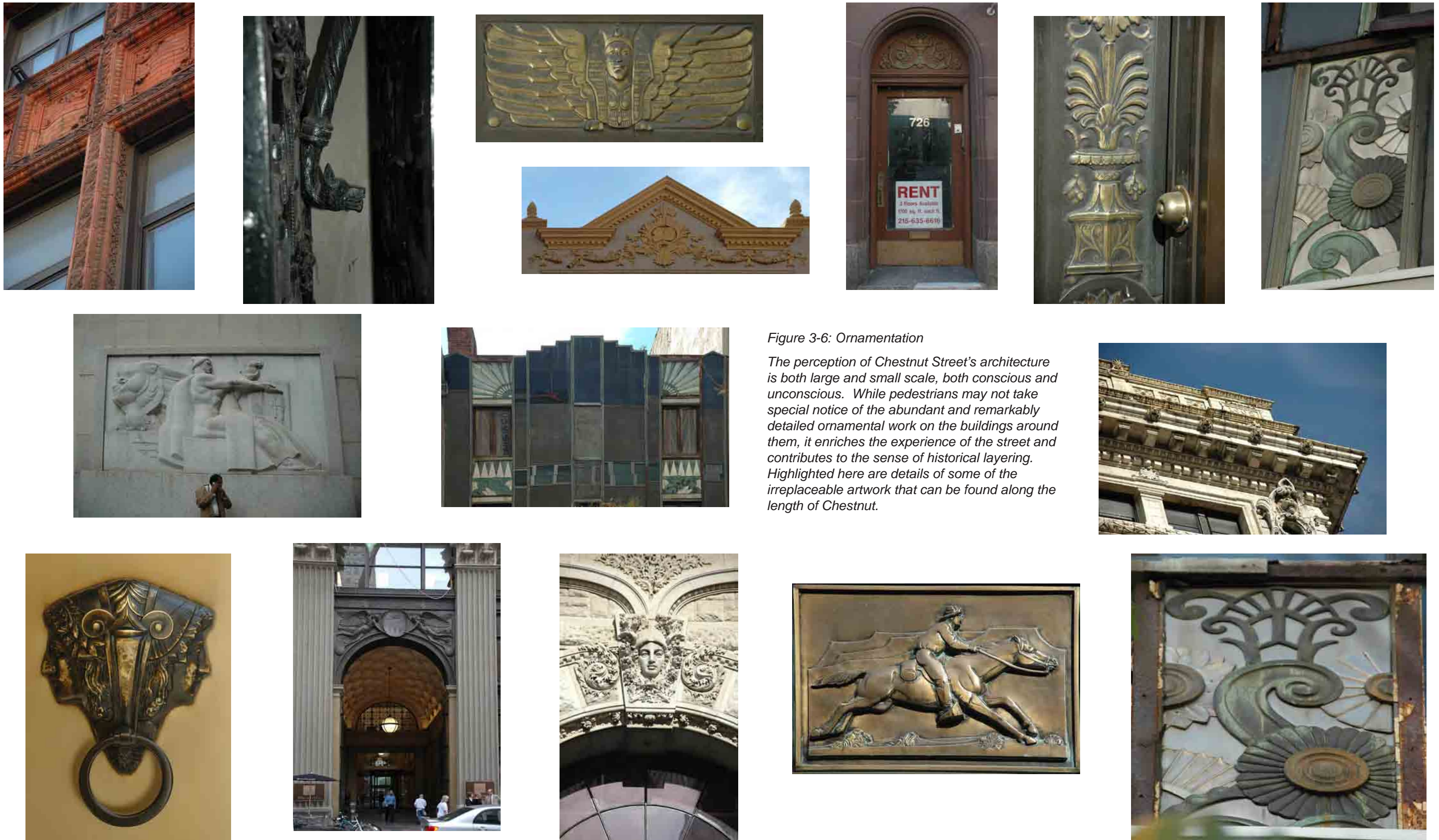


Figure 3-6: Ornamentation

The perception of Chestnut Street's architecture is both large and small scale, both conscious and unconscious. While pedestrians may not take special notice of the abundant and remarkably detailed ornamental work on the buildings around them, it enriches the experience of the street and contributes to the sense of historical layering. Highlighted here are details of some of the irreplaceable artwork that can be found along the length of Chestnut.

attraction and a major anchor for pedestrians and is centrally located within our study area.

Chestnut Street boasts outstanding examples of the work of numerous noted architects from various periods in the city's history, including: Daniel Burnham; Paul Cret; Willis Hale; McKim, Mead and White; Samuel Sloan; Horace Trumbauer; John T. Windrim; and Zantzinger, Borie and Medary. Not only representative of the values, technology, and architectural fashion of their day, many of these buildings now serve as key placemakers along the street, making important contributions to the pedestrian's aesthetic experience.

Of equal merit to the large-scale architecture, but given little or no formal recognition, is the vast quantity of superb ornamental work by some of the leading practitioners of the day, including ironwork by Samuel Yellin at both the Federal Reserve (900 block) and the Packard Building (1428-32), Mercer tile on the façade of Jacob Reed's Sons Store at 1424-26, and bas relief sculpture on the 900 block's former federal courthouse and post office by Donald De Lue and Edward Amateus. Credit must also be given to those whose names have been lost to the passage of time but whose work lives on in our everyday aesthetic experience of the street. Examples of such contributions to the beauty of Chestnut Street include the leaded glass windows at 1804, the bronze sphinx presiding over the door at Daffy's in the 1700 block, and the stunning art deco spandrels at 1106.

Horizontal Layers of Time

Our study area functions like a catalogue of architectural styles and trends over the last several hundred years. It is truly remarkable to find such a diversity of style, type and time period on a major thoroughfare in one of the most populated cities in the country. In many other metropolitan areas, a comparable avenue would be expected to have lost a much greater percentage of its historic fabric to development pressure.

One may still find several examples of the unassuming, Federal-style, brick rowhouse which was the archetypal housing of early Philadelphia. The Victory Building at the northwestern corner of 10th Street was the first use of the mansard Second Empire style in a commercial building in Philadelphia. The exuberant eclecticism of the late Victorian period is evidenced by many of the ornate facades on the 700 block, the Byzantine-influenced Reed's Store on the 1400 block dating from 1903-4, and the riot of detail and dimensionality found on the Hale Building at Juniper Street. Neo-classical temples of banking are scattered throughout the street, including Trumbauer's Beneficial Savings Bank at the corner of 12th and Paul Cret's flattened templefront in the 700 block. The art deco style of the 1920s and 1930s is amply represented with examples on a variety of scales, from the black glass and floral-themed metal murals at 1106 or the geometrically playful tower of the former WCAU building in the 1600 block, to the massive 1939 Girard Block (the north side of the 1100 block) with its candybox assortment of differing retail façade treatments. More recent trends are evident in the polka-dot façade of the Philadelphia Federal Credit Union in the 1200 block or the 1990s mega-block that is Liberty Place – a structure that redefined the city's skyline by ignoring the long-standing "gentlemen's agreement" not to build higher than the statue of William Penn atop City Hall.

Vertical Layers of Time

While many of the original structures evidence layered additions and alterations, such as new facades, security grates, signage, lighting, and fenestration alterations, these accretions attest to the dynamism of the street and the city, and make an important contribution to the character of the streetscape and the pedestrian experience of the block. One may find a nineteenth-century building with the vestiges of an early-twentieth-century storefront on the second floor and a 1970s renovation on the ground floor level. Façade alterations tell a story of trends and leave ghosts of what was. The luxury department store Bonwit Teller expanded

Bonwit Teller Building - 1700 block Chestnut St.



1604 Chestnut St. Payless



Figure 3-7: Accretion of Layers

Chestnut Street's centuries-long role as one of Philadelphia's most important commercial thoroughfares has imposed a necessity for alterations at the ground floor level to keep pace with changing retail trends. Occasionally sympathetic to the overall character of the building, more often the first floor alterations are jarringly dissimilar to what remains in evidence above. At ground level, the pedestrian experience is one of vibrant discordance. Taking in the entire block view, one is struck by the diachronic facade layering. This record of change is one of the more distinctive characteristics of Chestnut Street.



1500 block Chestnut St.



1200 block Chestnut St.



Chestnut and Juniper St.

beyond their corner location, remodeling Willis Hale's Greble Estate buildings in the 1700 block, resulting in the matching limestone façade that now stretches across three adjacent lots, but only covers the first few stories of the buildings. A pedestrian looking above this lower flat façade can still see the detailed masonry work at the roofline and the outline of long-removed lettering that spelled out "GREBLE." These accretions act as a vertical timeline and often indicate how use and occupancy have changed over time.

The average pedestrian of 2005 might not easily recognize the architectural significance of Chestnut Street. Much of the impression that Chestnut Street makes is subtle, a series of glimpses or pictures as one travels the length of the street. The pedestrian experience is primarily at street level, where, on many blocks, a variety of facades and jumbled signage vie to gain their attention and draw them inside. Much of the architectural differentiation and evidence of past design is now found only on the upper floors, where pedestrians rarely look. The scale varies from block to block, in both height and footprint. Part of preserving the character of Chestnut Street for future generations lies in making the street's importance more "legible" – interpreting the layers and making more apparent the story the buildings themselves tell.

Chestnut Street has a special place in the hearts and memories of generations of Philadelphians, who tell fond tales of shopping excursions, a trip to the Gimbel's Christmas parade, a special event at one of the theatres, or one of any number of other moments from the street's illustrious past. Many of the buildings that served as the setting or backdrop for these personal memories and historical moments still survive today. This was a key commercial district at one time, the heart and soul of a thriving downtown, and while time and circumstances have changed, the buildings remain as a testament to Chestnut Street's important, colorful, and layered past.

Cultural And Historical Value

As one of the city's most central and busiest thoroughfares, Chestnut Street has long played an important role in Philadelphia society. Like the street's architecture, the social dynamic of Chestnut Street has changed, and changed often, since the days of Philadelphia's founding. Nevertheless, certain major themes and activities – among which are residential, commercial, institutional, shopping, transportation, and entertainment – were identified as having had important effects on and having been important parts of Chestnut Street throughout its history. Tracing the evolution of these consistent themes, and linking them to the resultant changes in the street's architecture, is a means of connecting the people of Chestnut Street to the street's built environment and offers an approach to understanding the less tangible development of Chestnut Street.

Members of this research group studied historical texts and photographs as well as contemporary sources and collections, focusing on four areas of social activity that have been prevalent along the length of Chestnut Street since its inception.

These four subtopics are:

- (1) Chestnut Street as a place of residence
- (2) the role of Chestnut Street as a shopping corridor within Philadelphia
- (3) how the institutional presence of banks and schools affected the development of Chestnut Street
- (4) the study of theater culture to illustrate the leisure tendencies of Philadelphia inhabitants through time

While much was revealed about Chestnut Street through independent research in these four areas, even more was learned from looking at the interaction of these activities. Although the location and specific nature of these activities has changed over the centuries, our study area continues to be used in very similar ways by the contemporary Philadelphia public. Because of the rather fluid nature of human settlement and social trends, however, it was particularly necessary for

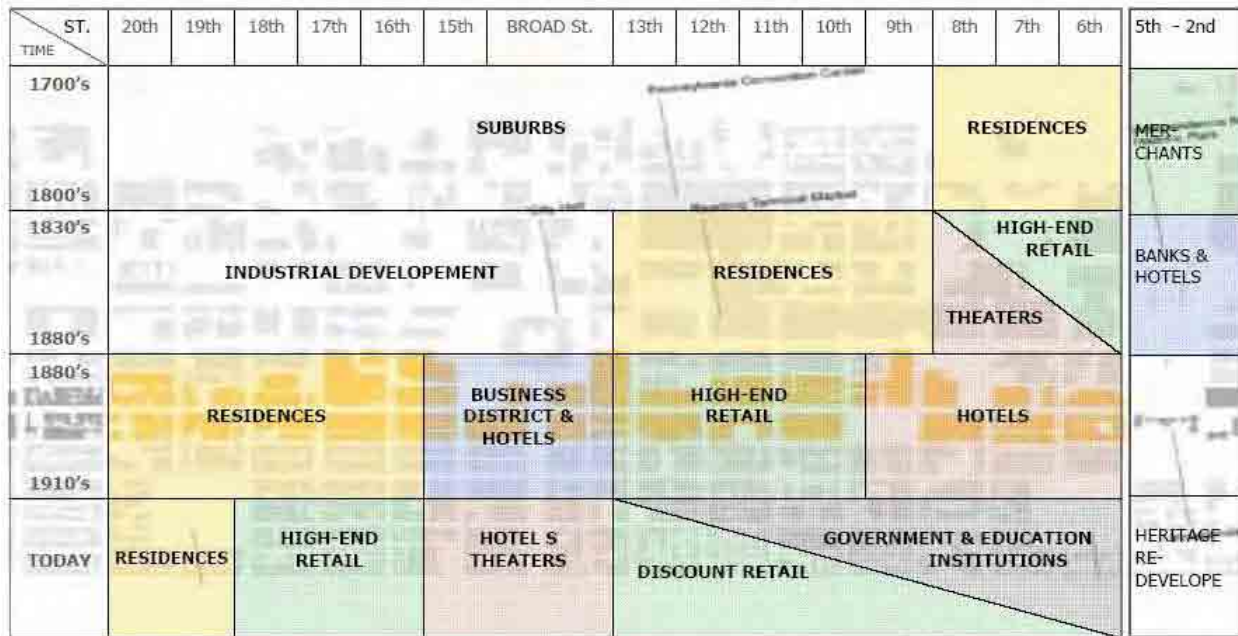


Figure 3-8: This diagram charts the patterns of development along Chestnut Street through time and space. Notice how the residential character of Chestnut Street was always in the forefront of any new pattern of development, causing the other services of shopping, banking, education, and entertainment to follow in their path. It shows how cities develop around the people who live in them.

this research group to look beyond the specified boundaries of our study area in order to understand the true context and history of the street.

Settlement

Chestnut Street has been a part of Philadelphia since its founding by William Penn, and has played a significant role in the establishment of the city. Throughout the eighteenth century, Philadelphia grew as settlers arrived, and Chestnut Street grew along with it. In these earlier years, landowners had not moved very far westwards along Philadelphia’s east-west streets, despite the fact that the land had been mapped all the way to the Schuylkill River. Most of the activity in the city occurred along the navigable banks of the Delaware River. From there, city merchants, who quickly took their place among Philadelphia’s elite, began building on lots along Chestnut Street. They chose this area in order to stay in close proximity to the city’s other members of high rank: the government officials who thronged the State House on 5th and Chestnut. They also wanted to remain near the national

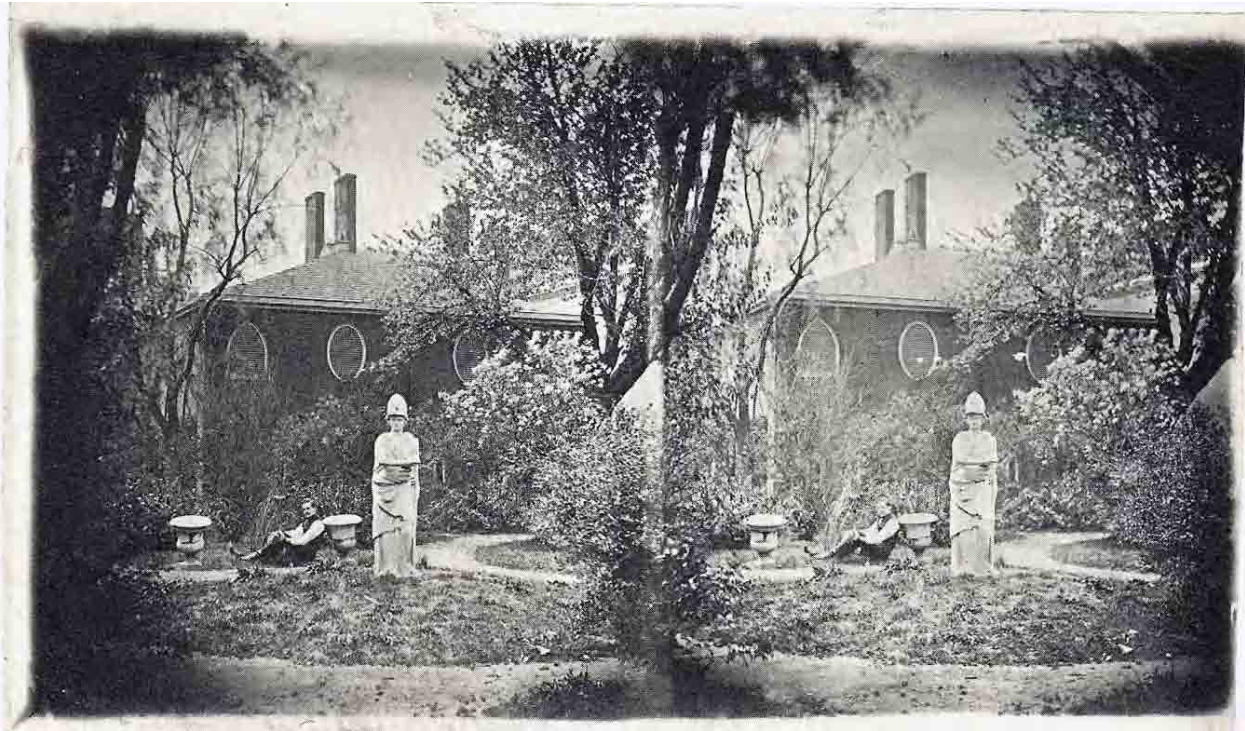


Figure 3-9: Stereoptic images in the garden of the Burd Mansion located at 9th and Chestnut Street. The photo was taken in 1860, two years before demolition.

Source: Finkel, Kenneth. Nineteenth Century Photography in Philadelphia. 1980.

banks located further east at 3rd Street. By 1800, the merchants, physicians, and politicians of Philadelphia were firmly established between the 600 and 800 blocks of Chestnut Street, establishing it as of the most desirable areas of Philadelphia.

While Market Street initially garnered the reputation as the city's main commercial street in the early eighteenth century, Chestnut Street gained prominence as the



Figure 3-10: David Jayne residence on corner of 19th and Chestnut, c. 1860

Source: www.philadelphiabuildings.org

main residential thoroughfare with some of the most notable mansions and even country seats of the Philadelphia elite, including the Robert Morris mansion (ca. 1794), the Matthias Baldwin mansion (ca. 1860), the Jayne mansion (ca. 1866), and the Rush mansion (ca. 1869).⁵ These

residences created landmarks in the cityscape, often located on corners of blocks or occupying whole blocks.

Such upper-class residents demanded services of high quality. As a result, Chestnut Street hosted the tradespeople and workmen that provided these services for their elite patrons. Virtually every social class and occupation found representation on Chestnut Street.⁶ The presence of merchants and small businesses laid the foundation for the street's future as the city's primary commercial corridor. Also during the eighteenth century, Philadelphia theaters were



Figure 3-11: Rickett's Circus, one of the earliest theaters to be built on Chestnut Street, was located just across the street from Congress Hall. The wooden hall burned down in 1799.

Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Irvin R. Glazer Collection

finding their place along Chestnut Street. Unlike the relatively quick increase in residences, shops, and banks, theaters had a slower start in Philadelphia due to prevailing Quaker attitudes regarding their immoral character. It was not until an Episcopalian mayor was elected in 1750 that the city's government supported the establishment of new theaters, and society at large subsequently accepted them. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, two theaters stood on opposite corners of 6th and Chestnut Streets, in full view of Congress Hall and the State House. Throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, Chestnut Street was home to many, a place of business for many more, and an entertainment destination for still others. From the initial years of the city's existence, Chestnut Street was firmly established in the public consciousness.

Rising Prominence

Like the city around it, Chestnut Street grew substantially during the nineteenth century. By this time it had become a more distinctly commercial area, one of several in Philadelphia. While South Street was popular for second-hand clothing and pawnshops, and Market Street earned

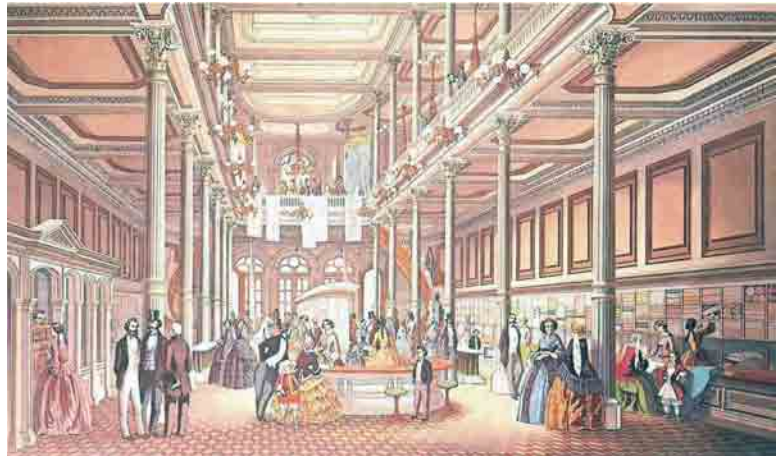


Figure 3-12: Image of the interior of L.J. Levy's Dry Goods Store on Chestnut Street taken in 1857. Notice the high decorative elements in the space and the well dressed patrons in the store.

Source: Edwin Wolf Philadelphia: Portrait of an American City. 1990.



Figure 3-13: Image of a young lady fashionably dressed in bloomers taken from the cover of sheet music published in 1851. Notice the piano stores and the Chestnut Street addresses located on the shops behind her.

Source: Edwin Wolf Philadelphia: Portrait of an American City. 1990.

its reputation for the open air stalls lining its wide avenue, Chestnut Street had become the city's premiere shopping district, supplying its august patrons with luxuries such as silks, jewelry, and pianos (Figure 3.06). Such high end shops were the legacy of the elite residents who had lived there. These people, who stood at the vanguard of society, had already begun moving westward by the nineteenth century, seeking a quieter, less commercial area. In 1820, the elite core of Chestnut Street was centered around the 1200 block. In 1831, the introduction of an omnibus on Chestnut Street between 2nd and 16th Streets, the city's first form

of public transportation, facilitated travel and promoted westward movement.⁷ This new transportation system meant that investors living in the west could easily reach the banks in the east; merchants living to the west could arrive at their warehouses on the Delaware; ladies living at the edge of the omnibus route could easily go shopping between 6th and 8th streets; and, at night, patrons had a quick method of arriving at the theater. The theaters meanwhile, enjoyed their highest patronage ever during the mid-nineteenth century, with the Chestnut Street Theater being one of the nation's finest venues. This building hosted some of America's and the world's most renowned figures, a tradition continued throughout this period by other theater buildings built later and to the west.

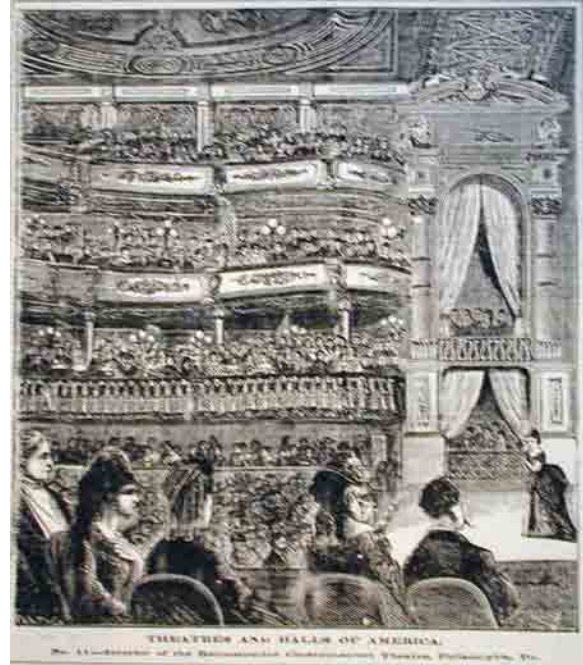


Figure 3-14: Performance inside the Chestnut Street Theater.

Source: *Athenaeum of Philadelphia*, Irvin R. Glazer Collection.

The creation of the omnibus system also introduces the notions of technology, transportation, and adaptation, which have been important to the history and development of Chestnut Street. Chestnut Street, and its inhabitants, have a long tradition of embracing innovation, particularly during the nineteenth century. Chestnut Street pedestrians quickly made use of the new omnibus to support their existing uses of the street, thereby creating a new social dynamic along the thoroughfare and extending development along the street. After the invention of photography, Chestnut Street quickly became host to most of Philadelphia's most notable photographers. A theater on Chestnut Street, the Temple, was the first in Philadelphia to be outfitted with gas lighting technology, and the entire



Figures 3-15: The General Telegraph and Ticket Office on the northeast corner of Chestnut and Broad Streets, marking the presence of technology along the street. Image made in 1879.

Source: Edwin Wolf *Philadelphia: Portrait of an American City*. 1990.



Figures 3-16: The northeast corner of Chestnut and Broad Streets in 1894 with a tall office building going up at the site of the telegraph office, showing the huge change in the landscape resulting from the mass migration of the banks into this area of Philadelphia.

Source: Kenneth Finkel *Nineteenth Century Photography in Philadelphia*. 1980.

street from river to river was the first in the city to be electrically illuminated. The fact that these innovations found their way to Chestnut Street before any other place in Philadelphia reinforces the street's prominence within the nineteenth-century city – the people who had the means, the knowledge, and the interest to make use of the latest technologies were those who lived and worked on Chestnut Street.

The street's grandeur persisted into the twentieth century. It was perhaps Chestnut Street's indomitable reputation that prompted reputable department stores such as Reed's and Bonwit Teller to open new stores on Chestnut Street west of Broad Street, rather than joining the city's other department stores along Market Street, which had the attraction of being a wider road with larger lots. Banks, theaters, and stores continued to open along Chestnut Street's length during this period of prosperity, attracting the finest in patronage, clientele, and performance because Chestnut Street was perceived among the public as the place to be.

Twentieth-Century Decline

The prosperity of Chestnut Street succumbed to a number of social factors that were affecting cities across the country during the mid-twentieth century. Chestnut Street's entertainment industry continued to fare well during the 1930s as many of

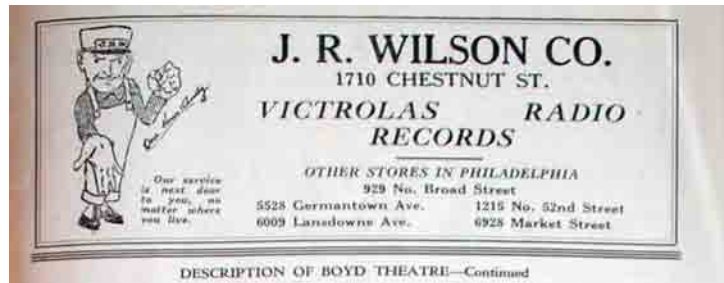


Figure 3-17: An advertisement for a radio and victrola distributor located in the opening night playbill at the Boyd Theater in 1928. The main store was on Chestnut Street but also had five regional branches.

Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Irvin R. Glazer Collection.

the city's residents sought the comforts of theaters as an escape from the rigors of the Great Depression, but other components of the street's identity suffered because of the bad economy and the growing lure of the suburbs. As early as 1922 the street's last residential center, the Colonnade Hotel, came down.⁸ By the 1920s, theater playbills featured advertisements for city area stores with branches out in the suburbs.⁹ Following World War II, suburbanization swept the United States to an even greater degree, and had an increasingly debilitating effect on many of America's urban centers.¹⁰ The dramatic residential shift in the twentieth century from cities to new suburban developments drained Chestnut Street of many residents and a great deal of commercial activity. Seeking to retain their customer base, businesses and institutions followed the people into the suburbs, and new suburban malls replaced the old, urban commercial strips. Meanwhile theater attendance experienced a dramatic downturn during the 1950s and 1960s. Just as people abandoned the cities for the suburbs, so did they also vacate the theaters for the comforts of television in their own homes. Although Chestnut Street remained the premiere shopping venue within the city during these turbulent decades, it experienced a significant decline in patronage that sadly heralded what was to come.

Cities across the country turned to large-scale revitalization efforts as an attempt to bring life back to urban areas. Unfortunately, many of these revitalization plans were, in retrospect, misguided and resulted in effects quite different from their original intentions. The year 1976 was the America's Bicentennial, and Philadelphia prepared itself for celebrations on the scale of those carried out so successfully at the Centennial a century earlier. One of the Bicentennial initiatives was a plan to convert Chestnut Street into an outdoor transit mall open only to buses and pedestrians, something that had already been implemented in several other American cities. To this end, Chestnut Street was narrowed and closed off to automobiles. Unfortunately, for a number of political and social reasons, the Bicentennial celebrations did not meet expectations and little interest was found for the large-scale events on which the city of Philadelphia had expended so much time and money. The Chestnut Street pedestrian mall, in particular, was a failure, depriving the street of the automobile traffic that brought customers, use, and vitality. This decrease in business, paired with a national economic downturn, forced many stores and businesses to close down or move to other parts of the city, such as Walnut Street.

Chestnut Street was reopened to vehicular traffic in 1999, but by then Walnut Street had already supplanted its northern neighbor as the preeminent shopping district of Philadelphia. Chestnut Street had grown increasingly seedy in the previous decades, as the banks departed and the former boutiques were replaced by dollar stores and adult bookstores. It gained a reputation for street crime and drug use as the street was often unpopulated and many of the buildings lining it were abandoned. Maintenance suffered as appreciation for the street waned. As has been mentioned, this lack of economic activity may be partly responsible for the preservation of much of the street's architectural fabric, but it has also largely erased the public's perception of the street's former glory and history.



Figure 3-18: Image of the Arcade Hotel located west of 6th Street taken in 1858. Places such as these served as long-term boarding for the elite, similar in manner to the upscale condominiums becoming a presence on Chestnut Street today.

Source: Finkel, Kenneth. Nineteenth Century Photography in Philadelphia. 1980.

of buildings like the Victory Building located at 10th and Chestnut Streets is re-emphasizing the residential component of the street, and starting anew the pattern of development that began hundreds of years ago. New stores and entertainment venues are already following this influx of new residents. A growing public awareness of the value of historic preservation has ensured that much historic fabric is retained as the street's popularity has been rekindled, such as the recent efforts to restore the Boyd Theater. At the same time, however, the street's redevelopment has also

Chestnut Street Today

Contemporary social trends, however, may perhaps revive some of Chestnut Street's historic character. A general renewed interest in urban life has brought many residents and businesses back to Philadelphia and the country's other urban centers. Many of the street's historic buildings are now being reused, to house both expanding institutions like Thomas Jefferson University and the Art Institute of Philadelphia and growing populations of urban professionals and retired individuals looking to return to dense urban areas and the services they offer. The conversion to condominiums



Figure 3-19: Jones, located at 7th and Chestnut Streets, is an example of the type of high-end establishments starting to move in to the eastern end of Chestnut Street today.

led to some façadeism, an activity with debatable preservation value, and it must be wondered how ever more development pressure in the future might affect the survival of both the street's historic fabric and character.

There are many future layers to consider when discussing the social context of Chestnut Street. A new residential population and the revitalization of the street's former commercial activity may seem to paint a rosy picture, but at the same time may displace those residents and businesses that were parts of the Chestnut Street community during the more economically depressed but still equally valid decades of its history. In addition, the likelihood that a casino will be built along the eastern half of Chestnut Street has important implications for the street's social fabric. Although the casino may bring a great deal of visitors and money into the city, it could also be an alienating force for the people already there and create a wider disparity in the economic demographics of the east and west sections of Chestnut Street.

The social character of Chestnut Street as embodied by the residents, shoppers, bankers, educators, students, theater-goers, developers, and preservationists, among others, is a rich and vibrant element of the streetscape, in addition to the streetscape's physical character. The buildings that stand as a physical record of the street's evolution also speak of the people who made those changes – the people who have created the buildings, and, in turn, been affected by them. Chestnut Street has been a lively, lived-in place since its creation as part of William Penn's original plan for the city. It maintained its preeminence in the eyes of Philadelphians for several centuries, until a confluence of local and national circumstances contributed to its decline in the latter half of the twentieth century. Recent redevelopment and renewed popularity, however, hold much promise, and some threats, for the continued use of Chestnut Street as a home, a workplace, a retail corridor, and an entertainment destination for the city of Philadelphia.

Economic And Regulatory Value

As Chestnut Street is a primarily commercial corridor, understanding the economic and regulatory context of the area is especially important. In large part, the current character and fabric of the street exists as a result of the effects of long-term economic and regulatory forces. Similarly, the forthcoming trajectory of the street will reflect the current and future economic and regulatory atmosphere.



Figure 3-20: The new Di Bruno Brothers store and cafe illustrates the recent upturn in the real estate market on west Chestnut Street

Our research began broadly: a foot survey of the study area, noting ground floor uses and vacancies, and general observations about the context of the area. Further research involved background readings on commercial corridors, the Philadelphia economy and real estate market, retail trends, and the effect of certain regulations. In order to gauge the economic state and real estate market specific to Chestnut Street, we gathered information from the Board of Revision of Taxes on each property, and approximated vacancy rates. We studied existing financial incentives offered locally and nationally, specifically Tax Increment Financing districts and tax abatements, while familiarizing ourselves with the regulations, policies, regulatory bodies, and zoning codes of the city.

We also investigated how the street is regulated from a preservation perspective. This involved compiling lists of locally- and nationally-designated buildings and of

buildings with façade easements, and researching possible regulation mechanisms like designation, Main Street programs, and conservation districts. Speaking with local groups, such as the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, the Arts Commission, the Philadelphia Historical Commission, the City Planning Commission, and the Center City District provided further insight into the effects of the regulation currently and historically acting on Chestnut Street.

Sale Prices and Rent Levels

Between 2000 and 2005, the average sale price for properties on Chestnut Street and 6th and 14th Streets was approximately \$78.50 per square foot of improvements.¹¹ In general, rent levels are slightly lower in the Chestnut Street study area than in the rest of Center City, Philadelphia. In Center City, the average retail rent level is approximately \$24 per square foot and the average office rent level is \$25 per square foot.¹² The average rent level for Chestnut Street in 2004 for retail space was approximately \$21 per square foot and was \$24 per square foot for office space. Surprisingly, the suburban market offers average retail space and office space from approximately \$16 per square foot to \$22 per square foot, making Chestnut Street fairly competitive on the larger regional scale.¹³

Vacancies

The estimated vacancy rate for ground floor retail in our study area of Chestnut Street is approximately 6.3%. The estimated vacancy rate for upper story space is approximately 11%. These numbers are based on observed rates from street surveys conducted in September 2005. Statistically, the vacancy rate for office space in Center City is 15.5%. The vacancy rate for industrial space in Center City is 10.2%.¹⁴ The overall vacancy rate for properties in Center City is 21%.¹⁵ Thus,

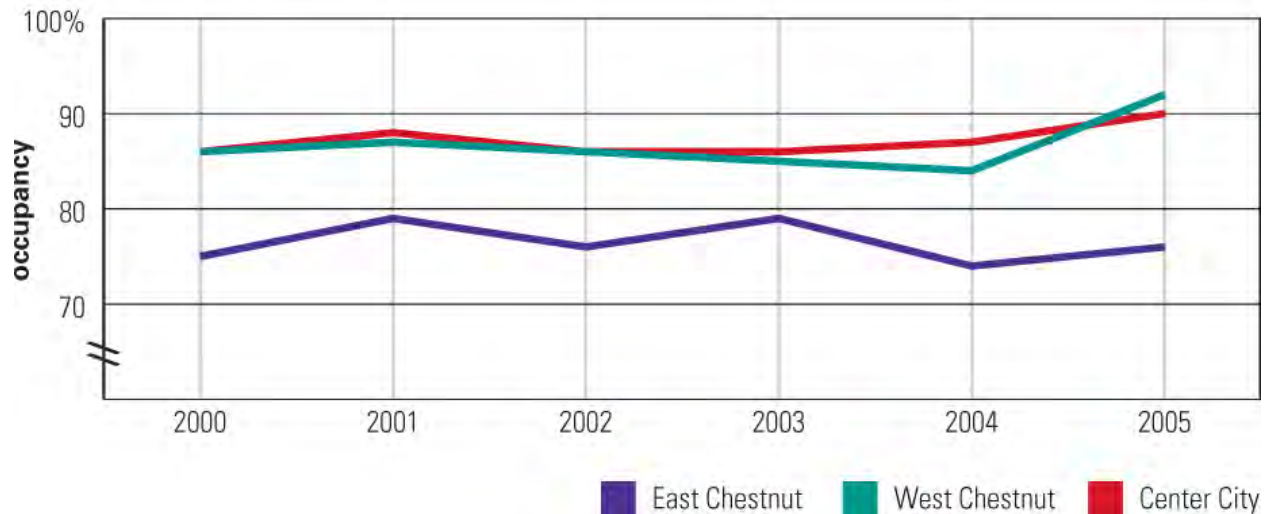
RETAIL OCCUPANCY RATES

Figure 3-21: The above graph shows retail occupancy rates rising in Center City, on East Chestnut Street, and on West Chestnut Street since 2004, with West Chestnut Street showing the steepest occupancy rate increase.

Source: Center City Retail: Steady Improvement with Potential for Growth

based on our study, Chestnut Street shows a rate of vacancy lower than that of the rest of Center City. The fact that buildings currently undergoing renovation or rehabilitation were not listed as “vacant” could have impacted the study, as Chestnut Street is the site of many rehabilitation projects.

The portion of the study area undergoing the most drastic changes is the area west of Broad Street. Just one year ago, the vacancy rate for ground floor retail on Chestnut Street between Broad and the Schuylkill River was 15.6%.¹⁶ By mid-2005, the vacancy rate was a drastically improved 8%.¹⁷ On Chestnut Street east of Broad, the retail market is still slower than in the rest of Center City, but is enlivening as well. Investment in the areas immediately east of Broad, particularly on the 1300 block, are competing with West Chestnut and Walnut Street for the predominant retail share of Center City.¹⁸

Ownership

There are a few parties that own more than one property in the study area; however, of those multi-property owners, the buildings are dispersed throughout the study area, leaving no block in the hands of a single property owner. About one third of the properties are owned by limited liability companies (LLCs), one third by unincorporated small groups, such as families, and one third by large-scale local real estate investors, such as the estate of Sam Rappaport.¹⁹

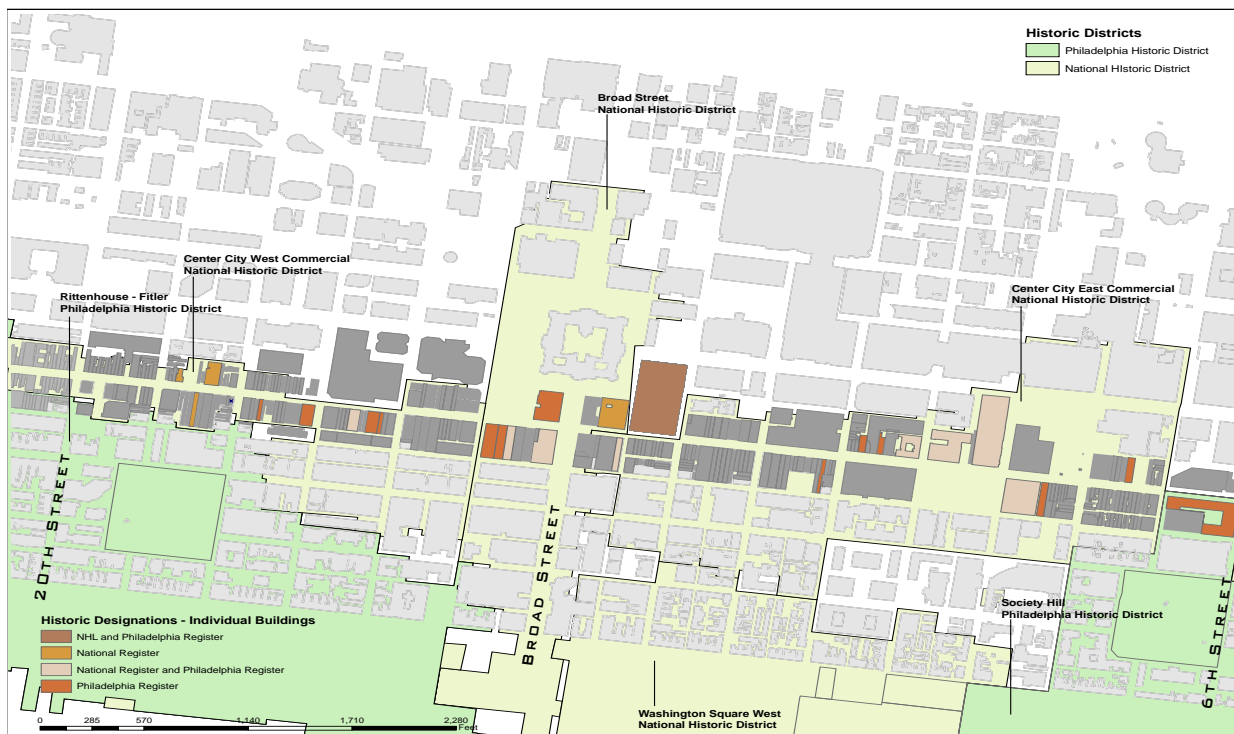


Figure 3-22: National and local historic designations (Appendix B)

National Historic Designations

The Chestnut Street study area runs through three National Historic Districts: the Center City West Historic District, the Broad Street Historic District, and the East Center City Commercial Historic District. Twelve buildings in the study area are

listed on the National Register of Historic Places, one of which, the Wanamaker Building at 13th Street, is a National Historic Landmark.

National-level designation, while a federal recognition of a building's or area's historical importance, does not add any regulatory protection against demolition or insensitive alterations. A building on the National Register or a building deemed to be "contributing" in a National Historic district does have the possibility of applying for a 20% Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit for any major rehabilitation activities undertaken on the building.²⁰

Local Historic Designation

There are thirty-four buildings in the study area that are locally designated. The Philadelphia Historical Commission is the administrative body that oversees local designation, and all alterations on these locally-designated properties must go through their approval process. In Philadelphia, as elsewhere, local designation carries with it more weight than national designation, due to the regulation and restrictions it imposes. The Chestnut Street study area does not run through any local historic districts.



Figure 3-23: The Horn and Hardart building at 818 Chestnut Street is an example of a locally-designated landmark

Zoning

The zoning code, a method for the identification and regulation of land use by the local government, is a powerful tool that has affected and continues to affect the

development of Chestnut Street. The zoning classification for nearly all of the study area is C-5, except for the 1900 block, which is C-4. These are both classifications that allow for predominantly commercial and mixed use. Significant to our study is the fact that while on the south side of Chestnut Street the height restriction is fifty feet above average sidewalk level, with one additional foot allowed for each foot of setback on the building, there is no height restriction on the north side of the



Figure 3-24: Jefferson Hospital's Parking lot will be on the south side of the 900 block of Chestnut Street, at an intersection populated with historic buildings such as Paul Cret's Federal Reserve Building.

street.²¹ Therefore, we can identify the whole north side of Chestnut Street as a "soft spot" in terms of regulatory protection – if a building is not locally designated, for example, there is an incentive to tear down an older two-story building in order to build a taller, more lucrative building, such as a building like Liberty Place. As few contiguous properties are currently owned by the same

party, however, this is not a threat that we deem imminent.

While the zoning code sets out a general framework for the city's property use policies, property owners can, and often do, petition for a zoning variance. For example, in the 900 block of Chestnut Street, Jefferson Hospital is currently building a parking lot, which required seven different zoning variances to enable the project to go forward.

The City Planning Commission also encourages sensitive façade alterations through the publication of recommended design guidelines for commercial façade improvements. Property owners are not required to follow these, rather they are intended to “provide ideas, stimulate thinking, and promote good design.”²²

Philadelphia Art Commission

The Philadelphia Art Commission is established by the Philadelphia City Charter, and comprises members, such as art and design professionals and the Commissioner of Public Property, who are appointed by the mayor. The jurisdiction of the Arts Commission extends to public art, city-owned properties, anything located on public land, and any part of a building (including signs and bay windows) that extends over the public right of way, and, relevant to our study area, any property that is adjacent to Independence National Historical Park. Alterations to any property or part of a property under the Art Commission’s jurisdiction must receive approval from the Art Commission.

Local Economic Incentives

The City of Philadelphia offers several incentives to attain a desirable mix of businesses in Philadelphia, such as a ten-year tax abatement and a job creation tax credit. The ten-year tax abatement is an incentive that has really had a significant impact, both on Chestnut Street and throughout Center City, since its inception in 1997. It is a ten-year abatement on the value added to a property due to improvements. The tax abatement has contributed to a dramatic increase in residential units over the past few years in Philadelphia and on Chestnut Street, and has spurred the rehabilitation of buildings for residential space. While the abatement has contributed to the rising real estate market in the city, it is uncertain how this will effect continued investment in and ownership of properties as the ten-year period expires.

As a result of the ten-year tax abatement and nationwide reinvestment in urban areas, Philadelphia has undergone a significant residential boom, particularly in the conversion of class B and C office space into residential condominiums. Another manifestation of this adaptive reuse trend is the conversion of buildings for uses other than residential such as Broad Street's Girard Trust building's conversion to a hotel, and the second floor of the Woolworth building, between 13th and Juniper, into a bowling alley (currently in progress.)

The Commerce Department oversees all economic development activity in the City of Philadelphia, and works with other agencies such as the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) and the Philadelphia Commercial Development Corporation (PCDC) to facilitate loans to small businesses. It also offers grants to small businesses for façade improvements and enhanced security and helps with the creation of TIF districts.²³

Façade easements

A property owner who wishes to ensure that the façade of his or her property remains unchanged in perpetuity may donate a façade easement. In Philadelphia, most façade easements are donated to and held by the Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, a non-profit organization that, in addition to holding easements, serves as a lobbying and advocacy organization for historic preservation. In our study area, the Preservation Alliance holds façade easement donations on eight buildings.

Property owners may receive a charitable donation tax deduction for donating a façade easement to a non-profit organization. The 1980 extension of the 1976 Tax Reform Act restricts charitable deduction for easement contributions to properties individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or certified as contributing to a National Register Historic District.

Center City District

The Center City District is a Business Improvement District (BID) located in the heart of Center City. Our entire study area is included in the BID. As a BID, the revenues of the CCD come from property owners, in the form of assessments on real property (and volunteer contributions from tax-exempt properties that benefit from CCD's services.) The BID was founded in 1990 and was recently reauthorized to act until 2025. Its initial mission was to keep Center City "clean, safe, and attractive" and its board is made up of private sector representatives. Since 1990, CCD has been involved in programs such as façade improvement grants, streetscape improvements, and marketing.²⁴ As a market-driven entity, historic preservation is incidental to its goals of expanding the economic base of Center City. While the goals of a healthy downtown economy and a Chestnut street with historical integrity sometimes coincide, the former is CCD's main objective.

General Trends and Conclusions

The retail market on Chestnut Street has seen a recent upturn, especially on the western portion of our study area near 17th and 18th Streets. The construction of Liberty Place in 1987 created a change in the retail atmosphere, but this general upscale trend has been more recent and has not progressed much farther east than Broad Street (with the possible exception of the eastern blocks closest to Broad, which feature two contemporary home furnishings stores, Mitchell Gold/Bob Williams and West



Figure 3-25: The narrow footprint of the Cunningham Building on the 1300 block shows the real estate value of the street in the early twentieth century: each square foot of land was put to maximum use.



*Figures 3-26 and 3-27:
Two of the new additions
creating a new character
for the 1300 block of
Chestnut Street*



Elm, as well as the Lucky Strike Bowling Alley in the old Woolworth's building.) One of the most interesting aspects about this street is the spectrum of goods offered to a broad demographic – from wig stores to Boyd's department store. It is consequently an environment that offers almost everything to almost everyone, reinforcing its pivotal role in both the surrounding community and the city in general.

The many conversions and rehabilitations of residential space on Chestnut Street is both a product of the real estate boom in the United

States over the past four years, and a product of the Philadelphia Tax Abatement program started in 1997. Despite many recent and ongoing conversions of previously vacant properties into rental and condominium spaces, there are still many smaller buildings that remain vacant. Although these vacancies are generally perceived as negative market drivers, they have fortunately resulted in the retention of the original nineteenth-century interiors in several second-story apartments.

Although this recent influx of investment, the primary objective of the CCD, is a goal desired by many in the study area, the street's reversion to its historical use as an upscale shopping district and the likely subsequent alterations of storefronts and interior spaces, may, rather ironically, act as an active threat to the historic fabric. For this reason, strong regulations and incentives are especially important as they provide a preservation-oriented framework within which economic revitalization can take place.

Contemporary Social Value*Pedestrian Interviews*

As has been discussed, because the study area of Chestnut Street is in the center of downtown Philadelphia, there is a multitude of stakeholders, all with varied interests. One crucial group of stakeholders are those people who use the street – either on a regular basis or only sparingly. Because of the many types of buildings and businesses on the street, these people can be shoppers, workers, tourists, residents, or those just passing through. Also, as the diversity of businesses on Chestnut Street caters to a wide range demographic range, from the highest end retail at Boyd’s department store to dollar stores and convenience stores like Wawa or Seven Eleven.

In order to make an appropriate plan to preserve the architectural record and the character of Chestnut Street, the opinions, desires, and hopes of the various users of Chestnut Street had to be captured. The studio group devised a pedestrian survey as the means of collecting and distilling this information.

The survey was designed by a small group of studio members, each representing one of the three other values groups: architectural, cultural/historical, and economic/regulatory. Once the survey form was created, several Chestnut Street intersections were designated as collection points and the rest of the members of the studio were assigned specific times of the day to collect information, so as to capture the various populations of the street. These times were 1:00-3:00 pm and 5:00-7:00 pm on weekdays, and 3:00-5:00 pm on Saturdays. The hypothesis was that this would capture the widest range of users, from workers to the “after-work crowd” to those coming to the street for leisure on the weekends.

The survey could be completed in as little as five minutes, but also allowed for flexible questioning if the respondent was particularly eager or effusive. The

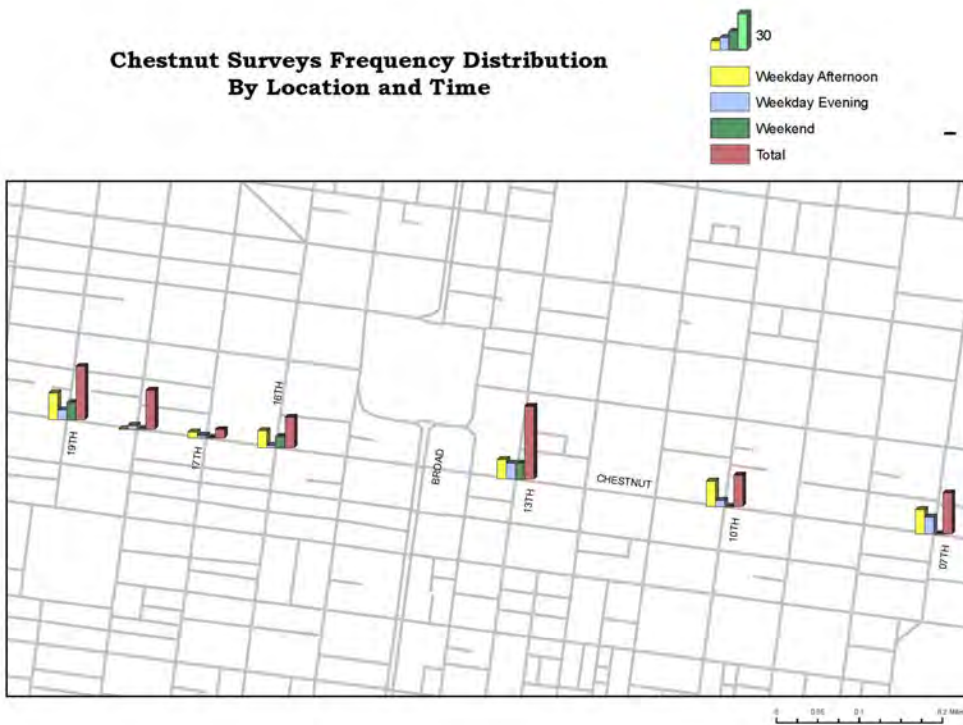


Figure 3-28

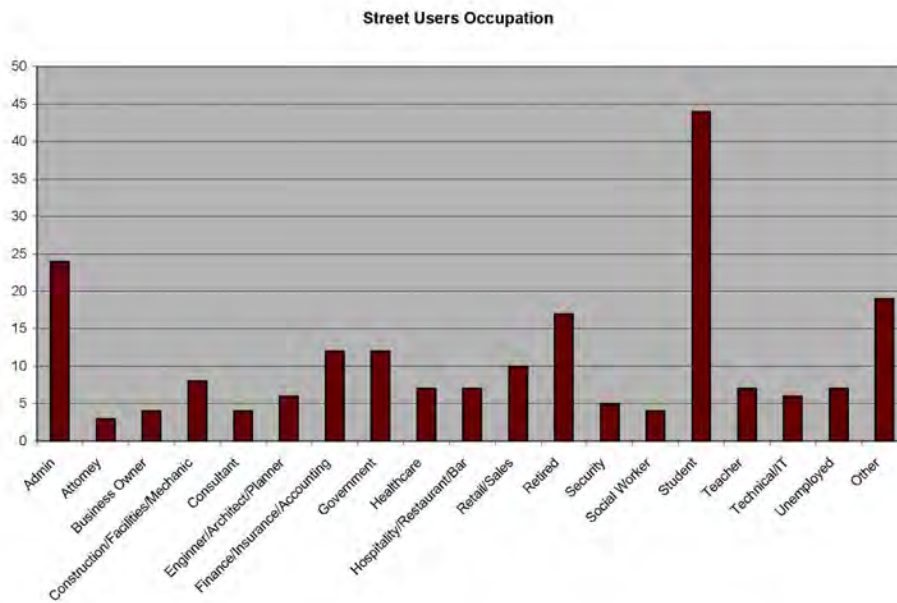


Figure 3-29

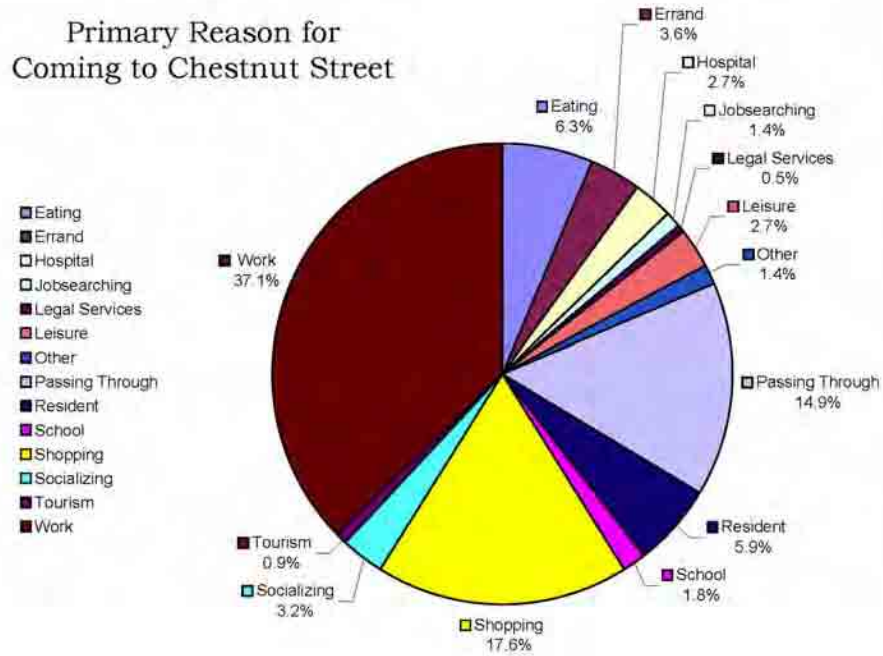


Figure 3-30

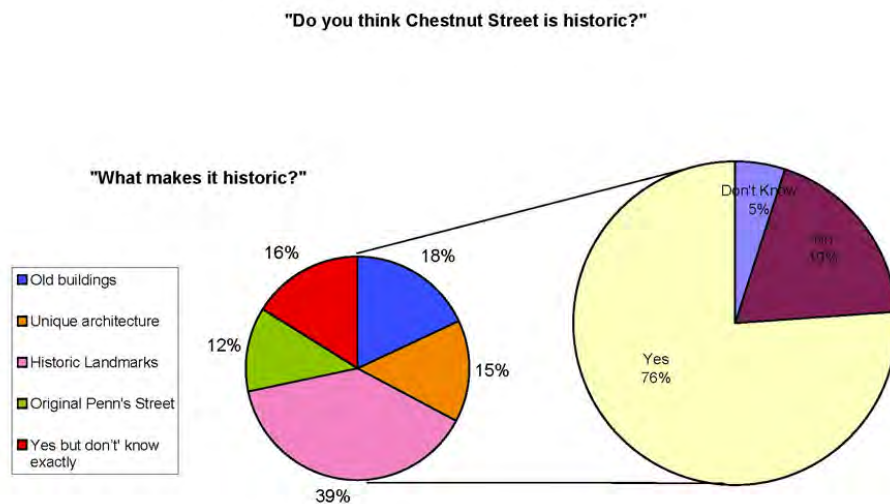


Figure 3-31

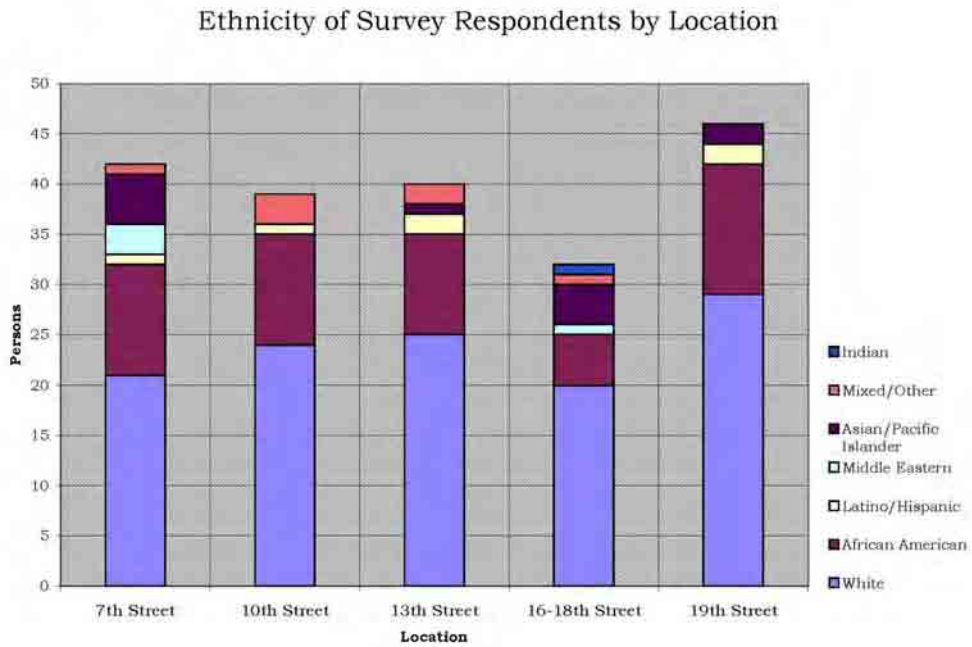


Figure 3-32

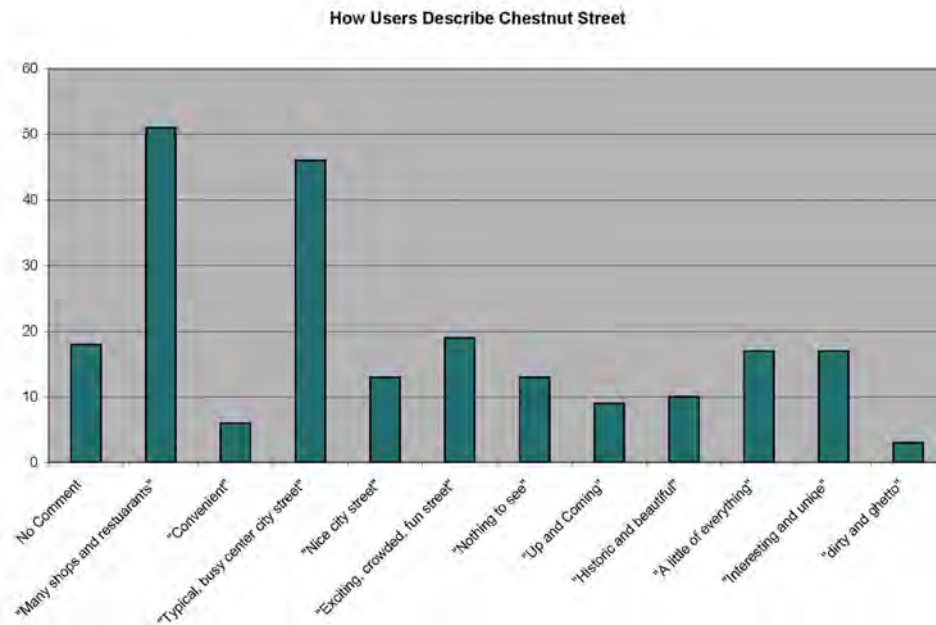


Figure 3-33

majority of the questions focused on the respondent's perceptions of Chestnut Street, why and how often they used the street, and their feelings about its history and architecture. The survey asked people to describe the street in their own terms and to consider any aspects of the street they would like to see improved or changed. The survey also included basic demographic information, such as age, gender, and ethnicity.

While the users of Chestnut Street vary throughout the day, they are also quite different from one end of the street to the other. As the study area extends for fourteen blocks, it was necessary to position surveyors at planned intersections to intercept the many nodes of the street. Five locations were chosen at equal intervals of three blocks apart:

- 1) 7th Street – a likelihood of a large number of tourists because of the proximity to Independence Hall and Jeweler's Row
- 2) 10th Street – at the backdoor of Jefferson Hospital, also a sparsely populated portion of the street
- 3) 13th Street – an up-and-coming neighborhood directly east of Broad Street, exhibiting a mix of new, upscale retail and housing, with lasting representatives of its past like lower-end stores and vacancies
- 4) 16th Street – the beginning of the shopping district around Liberty Place, yet still bordered to the east by less "desirable" shopping, also proximity to business district of Market Street and Walnut Street shopping
- 5) 19th Street – on the western edge of the "West Chestnut" renaissance area, and the northern border of the Rittenhouse upscale residential area.

The intention of the survey was to gather data from an equal number of pedestrians of varied ethnicities and ages at each of these locations. As is the nature of survey gathering, however, it was impossible ensure an equal distribution. In the end, 210 surveys were collected. Although this is not a large enough sample to be statistically significant, nevertheless, the survey provided the studio group with invaluable data and anecdotes about the opinions and feelings of the ordinary

users of Chestnut Street, people who will be largely affected by any plans for the area.

Historically, Chestnut Street has been a major thoroughfare that reflects national, regional and local trends. As evidenced by the survey results, the variety of activities in which people currently participate proves that Chestnut Street continues to be a major and mixed-use thoroughfare in Center City today (Figure 3-30).

As shown on the preceding chart, 76% of the pedestrians believe that Chestnut Street is historic. Many pedestrians referred to buildings as the key element that gives Chestnut Street its historic character. 72% of those who think Chestnut Street is historic chose architecture, in some form, as one of the street's main attributes.

Chestnut Street is significant largely because the accretion of time and history is still evident today. There has always been a mix of architectural styles, land-use, and of people, and this amalgamation gives energy and vitality to the street. The array of the people found on Chestnut Street mirrors the array of buildings located on and activities occurring on the street: of a group of survey respondents diverse in race, age, and social class, many referred to the street as being "a little of everything" or "many different shops and restaurants." Preserving this diverse nature of Chestnut Street is essential.

General improvements to the atmosphere and streetscape were found to be an important aspect that would increase the value and appreciation for the street. "Cleaner street," "fix vacant building," "more trees and benches," and "more safety" were some of the main improvements that users would like to see. These statements guided us in recommending new policies and interpretive programs that will protect historic fabric, beautify the street, and increase public awareness.

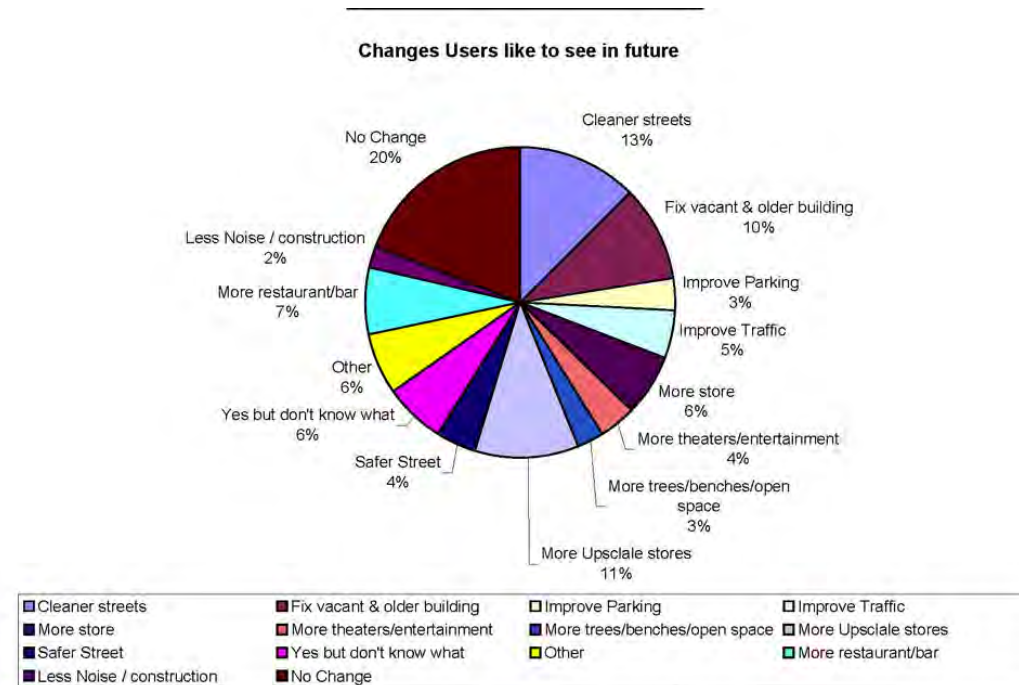


Figure 3-34

Chestnut Street is for everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, or any other social categorization. It is truly a public place. In *Power of Place*, Delores Hayden discusses the power of “urban landscapes to nurture citizens’ public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory.”²⁵ Speaking to the ordinary users of Chestnut Street and hearing firsthand their ideas about the street and their memories of its past made it clear that Chestnut Street is very much, and must remain, one of these “shared territories.”

Business Interviews

The purpose of the business interviews was to understand the perspective of business establishments on Chestnut Street, an important consideration for a major commercial corridor. To this end, the group devised a questionnaire that was used in twelve structured interviews with six business owners, one director of public relations, three business managers, and two clerks. These establishments ranged from restaurants and retail stores to a large institution, and encompassed eight different blocks of Chestnut Street. The interviews focused on the characteristics

of the clientele, the location, and the types of changes those interviewed would like to see. Below are some of the key points discussed during the interviews, and the most frequent responses received.

They gave the following reasons for the store's location:

- a. access to clientele
- b. desirable space
- c. desirable rent

They voiced a range of views on the historic nature of the buildings and the area:

- a. The owners we talked to knew the age and history of their buildings, while the managers and clerks generally did not.
- b. The architectural quality of the street mattered to three of the owners.
- c. Locating in an historic area was not necessarily beneficial to their businesses.

They described their clientele.

- a. Most were workers from the surrounding blocks and center city.
- b. Many were tourists.
- c. They represented all income ranges.

They shared their vision for Chestnut Street.

- a. Continued growth and improvement.
- b. More high end establishments.
- c. Elimination of the tawdriness.

They suggested specific actions that should be pursued.

- a. More parking.
- b. Better signage.
- c. Added police presence.

Statement Of Significance

Since its creation as a part of William Penn's 1682 plan for Philadelphia, Chestnut Street has been one of the city's most important thoroughfares. It was the site of many firsts – such as the city's first public transportation system of omnibuses in 1831 and the location of the first electric streetlights in 1881 – that reflect the street's importance within the city. More than these individual events, however, the street's overall history and surviving architectural fabric make Chestnut Street a unique contributor to the identity of the city.

Chestnut is the only street in the city that provides a physical record of every important period in the development of the Philadelphia and offers clues to the social, cultural, and economic changes that have occurred there. While there are some modern intrusions and many street level facades that have been altered over time, the fourteen-block study area offers a remarkable assemblage of major architectural styles and building types, including important representative samples of some of the country's most renowned practitioners – among which are Daniel Burnham, Willis Hale, McKim Mead and White, William Strickland, and Horace Trumbauer. Because thirty-four buildings on Chestnut Street are locally designated landmarks, twelve buildings are nationally designated, and one building, Wanamaker's, is a National Historic Landmark, it has an exceptionally high concentration of recognized architectural heritage. The historic fabric makes Chestnut Street a place where one can literally see the changes that have swept over the urban landscapes of the United States from the eighteenth century to the present day. It is this comprehensive preservation of change over time that creates the truly singular character of the street.

Initially a largely residential street in the eighteenth century, Chestnut Street was at first home to the city's most prominent residents. Over time, the residential character of Chestnut Street has been succeeded by the bustle of commerce. From the eighteenth century, businesses, banks, and theaters have steadily pushed the residences of the

street westward throughout the city's history and secured the street's reputation as a primary retail, financial, and entertainment corridor. Despite a change in the nature of the stores over time, Chestnut Street remains a dense retail environment, dominated by independent, small-scale businesses serving a broad demographic. While housing has always remained at least a part of Chestnut Street's make-up, a wave of recent condominium conversions is reviving the important residential component of the street's character.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, due to a number of national and local circumstances, such as a declining economy, changing public attitudes toward cities, and the failed conversion of the street to a pedestrian mall, Chestnut Street began to lose the prominence that it had achieved over the previous centuries. Although the ensuing economic depression is generally viewed as negative, the decreased activity aided in the preservation of the street's historic fabric and character.

Chestnut Street is a living, evolving, emerging representation of this city's history and the history of cities in America. It is emblematic of the urban dynamics and tensions that have existed in Philadelphia, and the United States overall, since the settlement of the country and that continue to the present day. The transition from residential to business, the increased commercialization of the late nineteenth century, the debilitating effects of suburbanization, and the attempts at revitalization through large-scale urban planning in the mid-twentieth century are all trends that link the history of Chestnut Street to the history of American cities.

The street once had status, glamour, allure: it was a desired residential area, a shopping mecca, an entertainment destination. Today it is hard to find anyone who will describe Chestnut Street in those same terms. Yet the street remains a major circulation route and central to the culture of the city as an important place for living, working, and shopping.

Notes

- ¹ Olsen, Donald J. *The City as a Work of Art*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986. p. 300.
- ² Stevick, Philip. *Imagining Philadelphia: Travelers' Views of the City from 1800 to the Present*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996. p. 33.
- ³ *Ibid*, 31.
- ⁴ National Park Service, *National Historic Landmarks*. <www.cr.nps.gov/nhl/>.
- ⁵ Watson, John F. *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time; Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of the City and Its Inhabitants And of the Earliest Settlements of the Inland Part of Pennsylvania. etc.*, enlarged, with many revisions and additions by Willis P. Hazard, Volume II, Philadelphia: Leary, Stuart & Co., 9 South Ninth Street, 1909.
- ⁶ *Business Directory of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: Boyd's, 1859, 1874, 1900, 1925.
- ⁷ Miller, Harry. *History of the Transit System in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Ph.D. dissertation, 1951.
- ⁸ "Old Chestnut Street," 16 March 1922. Campbell Collection of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, v.14. p. 206.
- ⁹ "Opening Night Program of the Boyd Theater," 25 December 1928. Irvin R. Glazer Collection of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
- ¹⁰ Jackson, Kenneth T. *Crabgrass Frontier: the Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- ¹¹ This number was calculated excluding those properties that were sold for a nominal price of one or ten dollars.
- ¹² *Center City District of Philadelphia*, Center City District / Central Philadelphia Development Corporation. 17 December 2005. <www.centercityphila.org>.
- ¹³ Riell, Howard. "The Philadelphia Story." *Retail Traffic*. 1 September 2003. 17 December 2005. <http://retailtrafficmag.com/markets/retail_philadelphia_story/>
- ¹⁴ *Market Pulse*. Cushman and Wakefield. 17 December 2005. <www.cushwake.com/cwglobal/jsp/marketPulse.jsp?_requestid=384344>.
- ¹⁵ *State of Center City 2005*. Philadelphia: Center City District, 2005. p. 10.
- ¹⁶ "Steady Improvement with Potential for Growth." *Fall Digest*. Philadelphia: Center City District, 2005. p. 5.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*.
- ¹⁹ Board of Revision of Taxes of Philadelphia. 17 December 2005. <<http://brtweb.phila.gov/>>.
- ²⁰ The 20% federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit for buildings that are individually listed or listed as contributing to an historic district allows property owners to receive a credit of 20% of qualified rehabilitation expenditures on their federal income tax. The rehabilitation must be "certified," which means that it must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The building must be depreciable (used for income-producing purposes), the rehabilitation must be substantial, and at risk rules and passive activity limitations apply. There is also a 10% Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit, which applies to any non-historic, non-residential buildings built before 1936.
- ²¹ Philadelphia Zoning Code
- ²² *Design Guidelines for Commercial Facade Improvements*. Philadelphia: The City of Philadelphia, 2003.
- ²³ Philadelphia Department of Commerce. 17 December 2005. <www.phila.gov/commerce/comm/>.
- ²⁴ *Center City District of Philadelphia*, Center City District / Central Philadelphia Development Corporation. 17 December 2005. <www.centercityphila.org>.
- ²⁵ Hayden, Dolores. *Power of Place*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995.

4. GOALS

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

The statement of significance represents a distillation of our research into the history and importance of Chestnut Street. Our primary goal resulting from this understanding of the street is to ensure that its significance endures, despite changing circumstances and contexts. In order to do this, and to lay the foundation for the more specific goals and policies, it is helpful to identify Chestnut Street's major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Any discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Chestnut Street, and the opportunities and threats it currently faces, must first be qualified, however, by an understanding that such characteristics are often relative and almost always somewhat subjective. This report, written by preservationists, will necessarily have a different viewpoint from, for example, a purely economic assessment of Chestnut Street and its future. Throughout the project, however, we have consciously attempted to refrain from approaching the street with a single-minded perspective. Although we are preservationists, and preservation remains our priority, the street is used by and must serve many populations. Our vision for the street has always attempted to assert preservation principles as a key component in planning for the future of Chestnut Street, while at the same time remembering that it is only one, and not the one and only, component of that future.

As discussed above, in our ideal vision, Chestnut Street would serve the functional needs of the people who live, work, and shop there, while preserving its historic fabric and aesthetics. Achieving this vision requires a delicate balancing act between preservation and growth. In addition, the population served by Chestnut Street varies in wealth and ethnicity, and has differing needs that

must be balanced. With this vision in mind, we can now consider the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Chestnut Street.

Strengths

The location of Chestnut Street in the heart of the city and convenient to prime living and working areas constitutes one of its significant strengths. In addition, its ready accessibility to all major transit lines makes for easy travel to and from Chestnut Street.

Another major strength of Chestnut Street derives from its rich and varied architectural fabric that encompasses a variety of periods, types, and styles. Not only does this architectural fabric convey historical and cultural values, but bears the potential for conferring economic benefit as well.

Increased investment in the street indicates recognition by capital markets of the economic value that can be gained from these strengths. Even the international capital markets have staked their claim with substantial investment in Liberty Place. The resulting combination of national chains and locally-owned retail establishments contributes to a wide-ranging mix of stores for shoppers.

Weaknesses

The bureaucratic confusion caused by the regulation of Chestnut Street by multiple city agencies has been a stumbling block in maintaining the character of the street. City preservation ordinances have protected individual buildings as historic resources but have not devised a means to protect a whole district in a commercial corridor. Likewise, the lack of adequate and enforceable design guidelines is also seen by many as a weakness facing Chestnut Street.

Opportunities

The changing demographics of all of Center City, with more empty-nesters and young professionals moving downtown, coupled with a favorable economic climate and incentives, have led to a large amount of condominium conversions. The needs of this increasing residential population present many opportunities for the retail, restaurant, and entertainment sectors on Chestnut Street. A majority of the business owners that were interviewed revealed their interest in having more high-end retail stores to help revitalize the street. The success of Di Bruno Brothers, a gourmet food emporium, on the 1700 block and Boyd's, a designer retailer, shows the growth potential for the specialty market.



Figure 4-1: Boyd's Department Store was an early pioneer of the redevelopment of West Chestnut street with high end retail establishments

Threats

The current positive environment on Chestnut Street for economic investment can also be seen as a threat. While in the past the architectural fabric has been

preserved by economic stagnation, new interest in investment today often means demolition, new construction, and alterations. While the interest of national chains in locating on Chestnut is viewed as a sign of economic strength, historic buildings often do not have sufficient floor space to accommodate current retail practices, threatening the architectural fabric that gives Chestnut Street its unique qualities.

Even though we acknowledge that changes over time have made Chestnut Street what it is today, many areas have been adversely affected by insensitive changes and alterations. As the western portion of our study area rises in value and status with its proximity to Rittenhouse Square and white collar offices, the east threatens to further dwindle in vitality.

The added population that new condominiums bring, the additional customer traffic that new retail space brings, and the needs of the area's growing institutions are driving a perceived need for more parking garages. Large parking facilities occupying prime street level space reduce the opportunity for pedestrian activity, a critical



Figure 4-2: The Continental Midtown on 18th and Chestnut is a symbol of both the economic boom of this area, and the potential for outlandish architectural designs that can result from this state.

component of a vital street. The debate over how much and what type of parking is needed must be resolved in a way that provides adequate parking for Chestnut Street's growing population, but in a way that does not destroy the aesthetics that attracted the population to Chestnut Street in the first place.



Figure 4-3: Jefferson Hospital's new parking garage on the 900 block of Chestnut is an example of a threat to historic integrity.

As home to some of the city's wealthiest institutions, historic areas of Chestnut Street risk being taken over by organizations for whom newer, more up-to-date buildings, that are close to their existing facilities are preferable to rehabilitating older structures. While some institutions, like the Art Institute, seem to satisfy their need for additional space within existing buildings, others,

like Thomas Jefferson University, may become an increasing threat to the historic fabric as they grow in size and influence in the city. The monolithic presence of a building that consumes one entire block and whose façade contributes nothing to street life presents the same problem as that of large parking facilities.

Market forces alone could continue to result in aggressive and unfavorable changes for the long term success of Chestnut Street. It is our hope that proper management and regulations could channel such change to preserve the character of the street.

The results of our pedestrian surveys and business owner interviews indicate an ambivalent public perception towards historic values. Many people that use

Chestnut Street identify only Independence Park as historic and not the street itself. Even though many pedestrians did consider the street historic, it was clear that many did not necessarily know why. Although most business owners knew whether or not their building was historic, they did not perceive a benefit to their business in locating in an historic area.

While this is not a threat to the fabric of the street per se, lack of knowledge and appreciation about the entire street's history and architecture lessens the chance for the public support or outcry needed to counteract political or market forces that threaten Chestnut Street's character. Without an increased collective appreciation of the street as historic, its legacy is in jeopardy.

General Goals

Guided by our understanding of Chestnut Street's significance and an overview of the current state of the street, including the threats to its architectural and social fabric, we devised four broad goals for Chestnut Street's future.

Encourage Strategic Growth

Current preservation practice has moved away from old-fashioned attempts to freeze locations or buildings in time and treat them as sites located outside of the modern world. Instead, it is now widely acknowledged that preservation is about managing change rather than preventing it.



Figure 4-4: Stephen Starr's Jones Restaurant at 700 Chestnut

Change is particularly important for a site like Chestnut Street, a central commercial corridor in a major city and one whose significance is largely based on its status as a record of change throughout time. Chestnut Street is too important to the city of Philadelphia and its economy not to adapt to future needs and trends. Therefore, the goal of all of the work of this studio, even having the studio itself, can be seen as encouraging the strategic growth of the street. For a site like this, growth is not only inevitable but positive. The important part is making sure that this growth is strategic – that it is aware of the defining characteristics of the street and that future plans respect them.



Protect Historic Fabric and Character

From a preservation perspective, of course, one of the most important features of the street is its architectural fabric. This fabric has not only historical and cultural value, but people are now beginning to realize that it can have economic value, as well. As has been shown, much of the street's significance stems from the survival of buildings and facades that represent a number of periods, types, and styles from the city's history. Allowing these vestiges to be destroyed is an irreversible action that will necessarily result in a less complete record, and a less interesting Chestnut Street.



Share Information

One of the underpinnings of the preservation field is that the work we do is for the public good. Protecting the street's historic fabric is undoubtedly important, but it is only part of the challenge. We may be successful at saving the buildings, but it is by teaching people about them, and why we should care about them, that we will really complete our job and make our work sustainable.



Figure 4-5: New policies should emphasize the preservation of existing historic fabric in any new changes acting upon the street.

People come to appreciate what they learn about. This is something we have found out ourselves as we have studied Chestnut Street,

and come to appreciate its idiosyncrasies more every passing week. Too often on busy commercial corridors like Chestnut, the buildings blend into a gritty backdrop for the activities of everyday life. As we have meticulously studied and scrutinized the physical details and histories of the buildings that compose Chestnut Street, we have found many unexpected gems – great buildings, large or small, that



Figure 4-6: Providing information about Chesnut Street's history to those on the street should be a priority.

we not only want to save, but that we also simply want to tell people about. Sharing this information and interpreting the history of Chestnut Street actually on Chestnut Street will help raise awareness about the memorable past, both celebratory and unsavory, of this now somewhat overlooked street.

To this end, our goal of sharing information entails far more than carrying out a duty to inform the public. Providing a basis upon which to understand Chestnut Street's histories hopes to give additional meaning to everyday life on Chestnut.

Streamline Administrative Procedures

When researching the current regulations that apply to Chestnut Street and any alterations to be made to facades there, it was extremely difficult to get straightforward, consistent information from different municipal agencies; this included the Arts Commission, the Center City District and the City Planning Commission. If we had such difficulty, already having done a good deal of research and knowing precisely what questions we wanted to ask, we can only imagine the frustration that a property owner would feel, someone without our specific preservation background and with a construction project potentially

on the line. Frustration at this bureaucratic confusion, and the potential effects that it may have on people's perceptions of preservation, however undeserved, should not be ignored. While we recognize that this situation may be difficult if not impossible to alter, helping to streamline the process by making easily available not only the information about what approvals are necessary but also the reasons behind these requirements, could help alleviate some of these frustrations faced by property and business owners as well as combat a significant public relations issue that preservation often faces.



Figure 4-7: Breaking down administrative barriers would facilitate growth and lessen resentment toward preservation.

5. POLICIES

To achieve these goals, we recommend a number of broad policies that will be supported by several, smaller individual projects.

Historic Designation

Based on the key goals identified in the previous section, our studio struggled with determining the level of regulation appropriate for a commercial corridor such as Chestnut Street and explored several distinct historic designation options. Our study area is included in a number of existing National Register historic districts: the Center City West Commercial Historic District, the Center City East Commercial Historic District, and the Broad Street Historic District. By nature, these districts provide no regulatory control, although they do fortunately offer some preservation incentives. The Philadelphia Planning Commission promotes a set of design guidelines for the alteration of commercial facades in central Philadelphia, however these guidelines are only recommended. While we want Chestnut Street to continue to grow and change, it is clear that completely unfettered growth could easily result in the loss of important features and significant buildings. As preservationists, we feel strongly that additional designation is necessary to ensure Chestnut Street remains as thorough a record of life and architecture in Philadelphia as it is today.

Options Considered

Our studio identified the various designation tools available and explored the benefits and drawbacks associated with each type of designation. The following options were considered:

Individual Listings

Individual buildings on Chestnut Street could be designated as local landmarks, adding to the list of structures like Wanamaker's and the Horn and Hardart building that deserve distinction. This would ensure the strict regulation of only those buildings that significantly contribute to the street's history and character. The difficulty, however, is that the character of the street is created by more than just a handful of buildings. Instead, entire blocks along Chestnut Street have distinct character, created not just by the presence of singular, interesting buildings, but by the interactions between buildings of different types and from different times. Seeing a tall sliver of a commercial building next door to a group of nineteenth-century rowhouses can tell a story about past land values, and someone's hopes, perhaps disappointed, for the neighborhood's future. Without this context and juxtaposition, these stories, this character would be forever lost. Therefore, it is clear that selecting a few individual buildings is not enough.



Figure 5-1: The Belgravia Building at 1811 Chestnut, is an example of a locally designated historic building.

Local Historic District

Yet we believe that selecting all of the buildings, and making the entirety of Chestnut Street a single local historic district, would be too much. Local districts have been successfully implemented in Philadelphia for areas like Rittenhouse-Fitler Square, which are distinct areas densely packed with historic buildings.

While it is important to recognize that local districts can be used to protect more than just well-maintained, traditionally beautiful residential neighborhoods, the use of the appropriate preservation tool must be guided by the individual site's significance.

The use of a single historic district to encompass all of Chestnut Street seems ideologically inappropriate. Although it is nominally a single unit, we have discovered during our project that Chestnut Street is a diverse, varying, segmented place. A more organic view of the street recognizes that cities and communities rarely develop in straight lines, and certain blocks of Chestnut Street may have more in common with their neighboring areas to the north or south than to the other parts of Chestnut Street to the east and west. Recommending designation that is coterminous with our study area, in addition to being too convenient to be plausible, would also result in an artificially created place rather than recognizing the true character of the street.

Furthermore, unlike a street like Delancey Place, much of the current character of Chestnut Street that we appreciate today is the result of a blatant disregard for preservation or contextual sensitivity in the past. Creating a single, large historic district would impose a level of regulation on the entire street



Figure 5-2: Delancey Place, an example a street included in the Rittenhouse-Fitler Local Historic District.

that would present a serious obstacle to future development, even if it allowed for the existence of a “non-contributing” category of buildings within it. While a major goal of ours is to make sure that the street remains a record of the past, it is equally important that this record continues to develop in the future, incorporating new types of architecture and trends affecting the city. In order to do so, portions of the street must remain open to new development.

Conservation District

Greater flexibility towards change could be allowed by creating a conservation district covering the entire study area. The language of the recently passed ordinance enabling the creation of conservation districts in Philadelphia makes it clear that this ordinance is primarily intended for the protection of residential neighborhoods, such as Queen Village in South Philadelphia. While changes to the ordinance, or even a new ordinance altogether, could be proposed in order to better serve the needs of a commercial area like Chestnut Street, a review of conservation districts in general has led us to believe this is not the appropriate means by which to manage this particular site.

Our research has shown that the term conservation district does not have a single definition. In some cities, they require no additional regulation but serve to focus the attentions of the city



Figure 5-3: Queen's Village, in South Philadelphia, is an area currently being considered for designation as a conservation district.

government on a particular neighborhood. In other cities, they are regulated as stringently as historic districts.¹ A few characteristics, however, stand out as being commonly-held among most conservation districts:

- They are often for people wanting to protect the “livability” of their neighborhoods.
- They are for areas that have a cohesive and identifiable physical character, often the result of a single or closely related building campaigns.
- They are for areas that do not meet, or do not yet meet, the criteria for historic significance.

None of these characteristics, however, describes Chestnut Street. Chestnut Street has a residential component, but it is not its own neighborhood. Its physical fabric is the result of countless separate, unrelated building projects. These have resulted in a street with a definite character, but not necessarily a cohesive one. Most importantly, as we have shown, Chestnut Street does have historic significance, and it is important to make a decisive statement about this fact. At least in some way, it deserves the full protection that designation can provide.

Proposed Designation Tool: Discontiguous Local Historic District

After much deliberation over the benefits and liabilities of the options discussed above, the group agreed on the concept of a discontiguous local historic district, a form of designation that, although rare, is endorsed by the National Park Service.² Implementing this type of designation along Chestnut Street would allow one to focus on the areas in greatest need of preservation, while allowing the remaining sections to develop as they will, within the established parameters of the city's zoning and building regulations. The use of a district rather than individual designations also helps to shift some of the emphasis away from the integrity of single structures and toward the importance of context and the effects of the assemblage as a whole – a key consideration for a street like Chestnut that, with

its inconsistent maintenance and altered facades, has clearly experienced some of the less positive repercussions of age.

The discrete sections are united by the general theme of the development of Chestnut Street, and the meaning of this development as outlined in our statement of significance. Sections were chosen to ensure that all of the street's different and important aspects will remain a part of the street for the education and enjoyment of future Philadelphians.

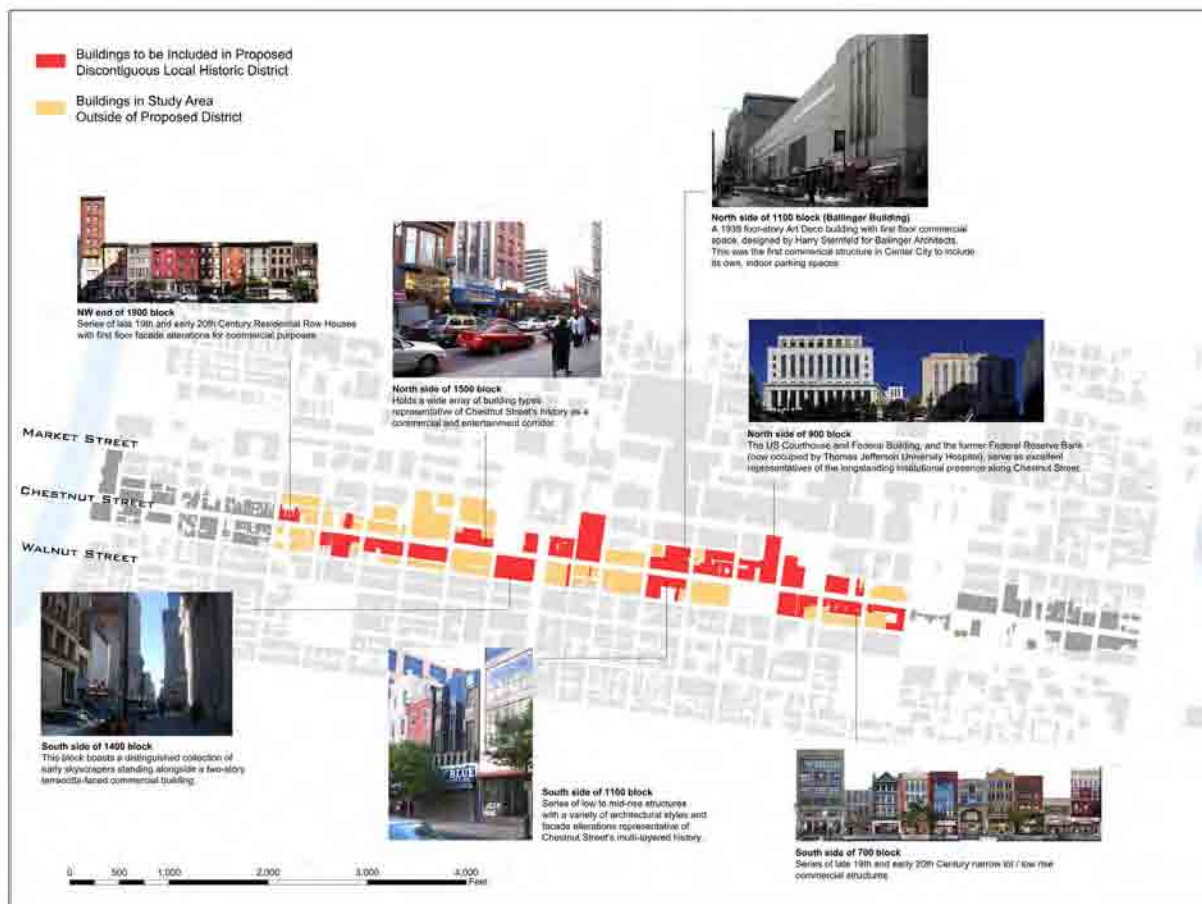


Figure 5-4: The discontiguous district (Appendix B)

While it may seem unusual for a group of preservationists to be willing not to seek control over large areas of old buildings, close to landmarks and historic districts, we believe that having unregulated sections of Chestnut Street – subject only to the general limitations imposed by the city – is both appropriate to the character and significance of the street, and preservation-minded in a long-term sense. Strict regulation encompassing all of Chestnut Street may prevent insensitive or “bad” architecture, yet at the same time it can prevent great architecture. In fifty years, it is hoped that Chestnut Street will not only be home to undistinguished, contextual buildings, but be the location of many new, daring architectural expressions – buildings that will themselves be worthy of preservation.

In deciding which portions of our study area would be included, we approached each street block as a sub-dividable entity. This means that anything from a full block to a third of a block, or even a single building, could form part of the district. By doing so, we ensure that only the significant portions of each block are



Figure 5-5: South side of the 700 block of Chestnut Street

designated. Adding this level of flexibility to the process ensures the long-term survival of the evolving and adaptable nature of the street, which undoubtedly stands at the core of its unique character. The selection process for the district also ensured that every building typology, style, and condition that contributes to



Figure 5-6: North side of the 900 block of Chestnut Street

the significance of the street is well represented; only in doing so, can the district do justice to the street's history.

That being said, we acknowledge that it is possible for different stakeholders to have varying opinions of what should and should not be included in the discontinuous historic district. Nevertheless, the attached map provides an educated draft of how this concept could be applied along Chestnut Street. The following discussion highlights some of the areas included within our proposal in order to further clarify the reasoning for their selection, and serve as evidence of the eclectic character of the district. As stated earlier, this is a quality that is not only desired, but in fact necessary in order to appropriately record the many layers of



Figure 5-7: North side of the 1100 block of Chestnut Street

history that have contributed to the street's significance.

South Side of 700 Block

This block consists of a series of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century narrow lot / lowrise commercial structures that are emblematic of Chestnut Street's traditional scale and purpose-built architecture.

North Side of 900 Block

Residing on this block are the United States Courthouse and Federal Building, and the former Federal Reserve Bank, which is now occupied by Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. Together they serve as excellent representatives of the longstanding institutional presence along the street.

North Side of 1100 Block

Superblocks have long been a part of Chestnut Street's history and character. On this block is a 1939 four-story Art Deco building with first floor commercial space, designed by Harry Sternfeld for Ballinger Architects. It



Figure 5-8: South side of the 1100 block of Chestnut Street



Figure 5-9: South side of the 1400 block of Chestnut Street

was the first commercial structure in Center City to include its own indoor parking spaces; and stands as evidence of changing preferences not only in architectural styles, but also in the way people interacted with cities as the car began to take center stage in the social fabric of the nation.

South Side of 1100 Block

This block contains a series of low- to mid-rise structures with a variety of architectural styles and facade alterations that are representative of Chestnut Street's multi-layered history.

South Side of 1400 Block

This block boasts a distinguished collection of early skyscrapers standing alongside a two-story terracotta-faced commercial building. Some of the impressive buildings on this block include the Land Title building, the Jacob Reed Son's Store, and the Packard building.

North Side of 1500 Block

This block holds a wide array of building types representative of Chestnut Street's history as a commercial and entertainment corridor. The Trans-Lux Theatre and the Pennsylvania Building on the east corner exemplify the diversity of this block.



Figure 5-10: North side of the 1500 block of Chestnut Street

Northwest End of 1900 Block

This series of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century residential rowhouses with first-floor facade alterations for commercial purposes serves as a distinctive end to Chestnut Street's remarkable collection of architectural styles and building types, and illustrates the transition of the street to a more residential character west of our study area.



Figure 5-11: North side of the 1900 block of Chestnut Street.

Chestnut Street Association

The character of Chestnut Street is created by its people as well as its buildings. In order to promote a stronger sense of community among these people, as well as support the independent, small-scale retail that has long been an important feature of Chestnut Street, we suggest the creation of a Chestnut Street Association.

The Chestnut Street Association would be comprised of both business and property owners on Chestnut Street. This relatively informal organization would

not impinge upon the responsibilities or authority of existing groups, such as the Center City District, but would instead serve primarily as a voice and a resource for the business and property owners of Chestnut Street. The primary purpose of the Chestnut Street Association would be to provide an environment in which business and property owners would be able to discuss important issues affecting their individual interests, as well as Chestnut Street as a whole.

There is an historical precedent for this organization, as a Chestnut Street Merchants'



Figure 5-12: This image shows some of the efforts of the Chestnut Street Merchants' Association, active in the early twentieth century.

Association existed throughout much of the twentieth century until it was disbanded in the mid 1980s. Reviving the spirit of this association, if not necessarily its specific details, would help promote self-management of the street rather than relying solely on imposed regulations.

Membership in the association would be voluntary, and would require paying minimal annual dues that would support the basic operations of the group. A volunteer board would help provide general organization as well as the coordination of major activities. Subcommittees could be created to address the different issues and needs facing various sections of

Chestnut Street, such as the noted divide between the areas east and west of Broad Street.

Regular meetings of the Chestnut Street Association would provide a forum for members to discuss issues affecting their business and properties, allowing members, with their own experience, to become sources of information and support for each other. Workshops and seminars would be held as a means of educating members about any number of topics, such as making façade alterations, helping to explain preservation goals and concerns while elucidating administrative approvals processes that are unlikely to change anytime soon.

By uniting a large number of the stakeholders of Chestnut Street, they could become a significant lobbying and advocacy force, helping to promote the specific interests of Chestnut Street to larger organizations, such as the municipal government or the CCD. By banding together, business owners may be able to ensure the continued presence of the small-scale independent retailers that have long characterized the street. Something as simple as window decals, such as the example in Figure 2, that announce a certain building's or business' membership in the association could bring the impact of the association down to the street itself, making visible a sense of community.



Figure 5-13: Proposed window decal for Association.

The Chestnut Street Association would not only unite important stakeholders along Chestnut Street, but would also provide a means for ideas to be spread and members to be educated. The Chestnut Street Association would create a larger sense of community along the street as a whole, and by promoting appreciation of the street, or even by such measures as requiring members to adhere to design guidelines, might also help to preserve the character of Chestnut Street.



Figure 5-14: Center City District office in the Public Ledger Building

Preservation Presence At Center City District

Although municipal agencies, such as the planning commission and the historical commission, retain their important roles throughout the city, it is clear that the Center City District (CCD) has become an organization with a tremendous influence on the future development of Center City and Chestnut Street in particular.

Because of their influence and the significance of the historic fabric and character of Chestnut Street, and much of Center City, we feel that it is important that preservation become a consideration in all future CCD development plans and decisions. This is not meant to supplant the role of the Historical Commission as the primary source of traditional preservation regulation and information. Instead, the preservation presence at the CCD would focus on preservation in a new way – a market-sensitive preservation that understands the needs of the business world and how preservation can further these



Figure 5-15: CCD street cleaner.

ends rather than hinder them. Therefore this presence, whether it be an entire preservation committee or department or just a single preservation officer, would not necessarily initiate new preservation activities in the city, but instead serve as an advocate for preservation issues and the importance of incorporating them in decisions affecting the future of the city and Chestnut Street.

Interpretation

Community and sense of place can also be created by bringing greater recognition to the street and acknowledging it as an important cultural resource of the city. Interviewing pedestrians on Chestnut Street taught us a great deal about how people today view the street. While many hesitantly believe that the street is historic, most are not sure why or are unable to express it. Several pointed to widely recognized sites such as Independence Hall or the plaques erected by the historical commission as being evidence of historic significance. While these plaques may be seen as extremely conventional, they are nonetheless effective at getting people's attention and alerting them to the history of the area.

A more elaborate interpretive scheme that is very visibly present on the street would help to increase people's knowledge of Chestnut Street, showing them that there is more to Philadelphia's history than the colonial era and pristine neighborhoods of rowhouses, and that this history might be more incorporated in their daily lives than they had previously thought. Moreover, interpretive schemes can be carried out in a variety of ways that extend beyond plaques. Significant social and cultural happenings that have swept the street, not able to be conveyed through existing fabric, can still be told through signage, publications, and banner programs. Alternative methods might be especially useful in telling the "invisible" stories of Chestnut Street, in the cases where the relevant historic fabric no longer

exists. More active ways to engage the public with Chestnut's history might entail walking tours and websites.

It must also be remembered that Philadelphia at large is a stakeholder of Chestnut Street. Part of any interpretive efforts should be an attempt to involve city-wide institutions and the public they serve. One particularly interesting idea is creating a regular column in a Philadelphia newspaper that could publish people's memories of Chestnut Street. This would not only be publicity for the street, but also a way of collecting individual oral histories, an important component in the documentation of any site. These oral histories would be a valuable source of information about the recent history of Chestnut Street, a period that, because of contemporary biases or lack of temporal distance, is underrepresented in the existing sources about the street. Models for this exist, most exemplary of this are websites for organizations such as the Friends of the Boyd (www.friendsoftheboyd.org) or Cinema Treasures (www.cinematreasures.com), which provide a forum for the public to post and exchange memories that range from information about particular buildings to personal experiences on a certain time and place. It was evident from our pedestrian surveys, particularly with the older respondents, that a wealth of personal stories do exist about Chestnut Street, they merely need a place to be collected.

The physical space of the street provides a range of possibilities for both active and passive interpretive options. Providing interpretive schemes that make use of the entire street as a seemingly cohesive unit does not attempt to imply that Chestnut's history is as such. As is evident through our research, the street is a collection of contradictions, surprises, and mysteries. The groundwork for these issues has been addressed in the interpretive schemes proposed in some of the following individual projects.

Notes

¹ "Conservation Districts." *Cultural Resources Partnership Notes*. Washington, DC: Heritage Preservation Services.

² Seifert, Donna J. "Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties." *National Register Bulletin*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1997.

6. INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

The following individual projects will provide further depth to the broad goals and policies previously discussed.

The Two-Story, Corner Commercial Typology

Sean Denniston

Although the majority of Chestnut Street is characterized by high density and taller buildings, there are still many lower buildings, including those with only two stories. These can even be found on corner lots. Despite the pressure that one would expect from the real estate market to re-develop these lots for taller buildings, this type is still pervasive. This reality makes it only more curious that the presence of this type is in frequent proximity to residential row houses that have a greater number of floors. The market forces that would push for greater density on these more valuable corner lots, with their higher visibility and greater access to daylight, seem to have not acted in these cases.

This individual project seeks to unravel the evolution and staying power of this building type. It looks into the history of these buildings, their construction dates and the construction dates of their neighbors discover what the forces were that led to the construction of this type. Were they all built around the same time? Was there a commercial trend that sparked their construction? Using a didactic poster as the medium, these are the questions that will be explored.



Mapping the two-story commercial buildings on Chestnut Street

Design Guidelines for Façade Improvements

Bhawna Dandona & Leigh Seyfert

This individual project created new design guidelines for façade improvements to buildings falling within the new Chestnut Street Discontiguous Historic District, but not individually listed. Designing and enforcing appropriate design guidelines on a commercial corridor such as Chestnut Street is a complicated task. This new set of guidelines is intended to preserve existing architectural integrity and the diverse stock of buildings while also preserving the ‘changing’ commercial nature of the street and the character of individual blocks. The guidelines emphasize goals such retaining historic fabric, reestablishing a visual connection between the first floor and the upper floors

and the upper floors, maintaining a respect for the scale and rhythm of overall façade proportions, and mandatory reversibility. Through a detailed examination of 10 case studies, the guidelines explicitly illustrate the identified goals and principals in a reader friendly format.

CASE STUDY: JONES RESTAURANT



1. Harmonious relationship with rhythm of existing streetscape



2. Preservation of existing fabric and design integrity

3. Reversible new construction

4. Vibrant signage and appropriate use of color preserves the existing commercial vitality of the street

5. Historic Fabric at eye level becomes visual connection to historic building



6. Visual connection between ground floor and upper floors

7. Façade proportions consistent

Jones Restaurant is an example of one of the successful case studies illustrated in the new guidelines.

A Historic Nomination for 722 Chestnut Street

Frances Ford

One of the most significant forms of protection in the city of Philadelphia may be the Philadelphia Historical Commissions individual designation for historic structures. If designated, the PHC must then review all work that may potentially alter that building including replacement of windows and doors to larger scaled remodeling or additions.

For my individual project I chose to write a nomination for 722 Chestnut Street, a building which dates from the late nineteenth century. Its significance lies in the architectural distinction of its Beaux Arts style. It is a compliment to its neighbors across the street, Quaker City National and the Integrity Trust Building; designed by well known architects Willis Hale and Paul Cret. 722 Chestnut was designed by the Philadelphia firm of Collins and Autenrieth, two German immigrants whose commissions in Philadelphia were primarily for the Lea family of Philadelphia. This building was constructed as offices for Henry Charles Lea, Esq. in 1897. The buildings significance lays also in this relationship with Henry Charles Lea. A historian, publisher and reformer, he was well known world wide for his knowledge of law and the church in medieval times.



The 700 block of Chestnut Street is one in which there is one individual nomination and one easement in place at the present time. The ensemble of intact buildings still extant offers the greatest effect, each building seemingly trying to out do its neighbor in architectural details, the protection of 722 Chestnut Street and all of its neighbors in the 700 block is crucial; through individual designation this may yet be accomplished.

Chestnut Street Story: A Research Prototype

Sabra Smith

“Chestnut Street Stories” is a prototype for a large scale research project of each building on Chestnut Street. The resulting “dossiers” would include images of the building and the block context (both historical and contemporary), historical information and narrative overview of both the building and the block, an architectural description and suggested recommendations/action steps for the property owner, images and narratives about material culture associated with the building (for example, a Civil War cap with a label showing it originated from “Wilson’s Military Furnishings, 1106 Chestnut Street”) as well as a narrative/interview with the business currently occupying the site to capture the “history” of Chestnut as it currently exists. Historic maps will provide a timeline of block

ownership and land use.

Chestnut Street Story

1100 block; south side

Street Address:
1106 Chestnut

Date of Construction

In 1831, three women with the last name McCall took out an insurance policy on a 3 story brick house on this site. The policy was renewed over subsequent years, up to 1881 for James M. Wilcox (by 1880, the first floor was retail space). It is likely that 1106 may still be this original building, with a commercial “face lift” that was added in the 1930s.

Date of Alterations
c. 1930s

Architect
unknown

Number of floors
3

Previous uses:

Paulme’s Bridal c. 1986
Dr. Scholl’s Foot Comfort Shoes, c. 1978
Geo. B. Evans Druggist, c. 1896-1919
Pianoware Room of Mr. C.J. Heppie c. 1882
Wilson’s Military Furnishings, c.1882
Singer Sewing Mfrg, c. 1880

2005 Current occupancy

Ground floor retail: City Blue, menswear, jeans, sneakers, jackets, etc. Additional branch across street in Girard Block. Other branches in the Philadelphia area.

2005 data

Owner: Joseph Nadau
Sale price on 4/21/1988: \$1,100,000

2005 data

Historic Designation
* Philadelphia Register of Historic Places (4/30/1986)
* National Register of Historic Places: Significant Building, East Center City Commercial District



Description:

Three story masonry structure with Art Deco facade of black glass and stainless steel. Important floral art deco spandrel panels (see detail photos on next page). First floor altered for retail. Metal detailing and window surrounds on upper floors in poor, deteriorating condition. Stepped roofline.

Recommendations for owner:

Important priority: Address deteriorated metal facade banding and window framing.
Consider enhancing your street presence by commissioning new signage more in keeping with the highly stylized building you occupy. (See art of Michael Roberts – stylized angles and geometry, use of natural motifs)

This would ultimately serve as a physical archive of information about the street as well as a searchable website (search art deco, or sheet music). What distinguishes it from something like the Athenaeum’s Philadelphia Architects and Buildings project is the integration of architecture and material culture, as well as the attempt to proactively capture current data as Chestnut transforms yet again -- from a 20th to a 21st century commercial corridor.

Street as Canvas: Concept Plan

Sergio De Orbeta, Julie Donofrio & Sunny Kim

The purpose of this project is to elevate Chestnut Street to a thought provoking experience through the use of three interpretive mediums that will take advantage of the extant urban fabric, and celebrate the history of the distinguished and the mundane along this unique commercial corridor. By incorporating these interventions into the everyday life of the urban landscape we can ensure that the information will be accessible to all; but also it will serve the purpose of beautifying and improving the streetscape, creating a positive impact on a somewhat forgotten cultural and economic resource of great importance to our city and the nation. In essence, these mediums will merge time and space by bringing memories and images of the past and present into forms that will both highlight and inform the physical and mental fabric of the street.

Street as Canvas: Signage

Julie Donofrio

The signage program was part of a larger interpretation strategy, aimed at highlighting the urban landscape in an accessible and understandable manner. The signage portion will particularly seek to educate the public about pieces of the urban landscape that are not largely extant

This will take a number of routes. The signs will display stories and images of buildings which were formerly on the street, and tell why they were or are of importance. Second, the signs will tell of social or cultural events or movements that took place on the street, and their role in history. Thirdly, the signs will pictorially tell the history of tenants who currently inhabit the street. Even if they may not have been on the site previously, they can still tell an important part of the history of the city or urban landscape. Finally, the signs will point out the architectural or social significance of buildings that may still be standing, but whose facades have been largely altered, or whose merit may not be readily appreciated. In this way, the

public can see what lies underneath the layers of time accretion.

The driving force behind the signage is a desire to give the public an accessible history of the vernacular built environment without charging admission. It will highlight pieces of history that are beyond the museum, and beyond the history that most people know to exist on Chestnut Street. People need to understand what made up downtown, and who shaped it. In turn, the street will gain a sense of place and cohesion that will be easily absorbed by those who traverse the street daily, monthly, or whenever they take a brief moment to read a sign, thus learning something new about the story of Chestnut Street. This will promote a self-sustained preservation of the corridor, driven by the desire to retain the historical record, which made it the remarkable place it is today.



Street as Canvas: Banners

Sunny Kim

As part of "Street as Canvas" I have developed and designed a banner program for Chestnut Street. The main purpose of the banners is to improve and beautify the streetscape, inform public and create cohesive atmosphere and identity for the street. Banners are an effective yet affordable means to achieve the objectives mentioned above. Studies show that banners in Center City during weekday afternoon, receives more than 17,000 viewing from pedestrians per hour. (CCD) This is a convincing number to support the effectiveness of this program.

The banners will contain images with minimum text, and will employ the specifications of CCD's current banner program. Utilizing the existing banner poles, installation and maintenance methods will keep the cost at a minimum.

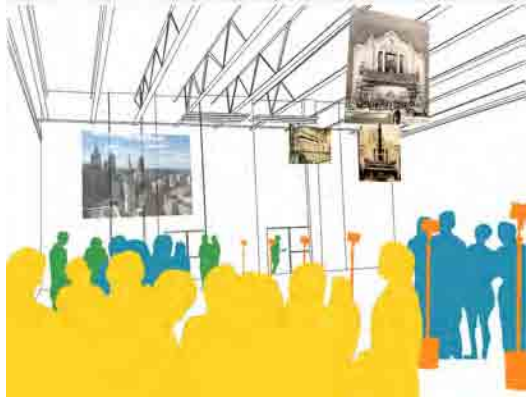
Chestnut Street Legacy will be the heading for all banners. There will be four themes reflecting the four historic settings of Chestnut Street: Residence, Banking, Retail, and Theater. An image of old photos, paintings, or lithographs will represent the four themes. Each theme will be installed in set of blocks that represents the theme in its architectural fabric. For example, the banking theme banners can be installed in and around Broad Street. Initially banners will be hung one month out of the year to commemorate and celebrate the rich diversity of public history of Chestnut Street. As more funding and interests arise, additional banners can be designed and installed.

Chestnut Street Banner Program Layout



Street as Canvas: Vacant Buildings as a Space for Art & Interpretation

Sergio De Orbeta

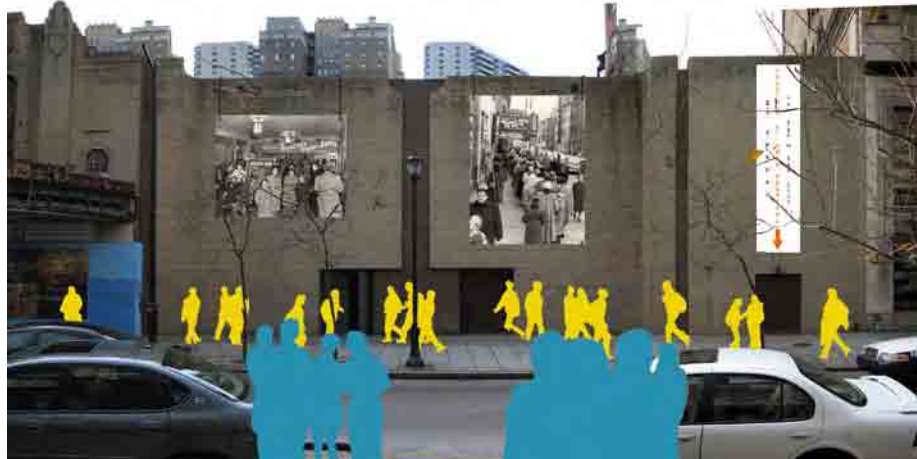


Taking into consideration the modest amount of vacant buildings along Chestnut Street, this project intends to challenge to common attitude towards these buildings among the general public and their owners. Vacant buildings offer a unique opportunity to celebrate and showcase the history and culture of an area. Rather than standing dormant as a detriment to the life of the street, they should contribute to the streetscape by using their storefronts, facades, exposed sides, window openings, and interior spaces to their fullest potential.

Among the many opportunities that these buildings offer are:

- Spaces for exhibitions, galleries, meetings, celebrations, workshops and presentations.
- Facades and exposed sides could be used to add interpretive elements to the street like images, banners, creative lighting, and videos/moving images projected from nearby locations.
- In addition, by making the vacant building into a destination in an atmosphere of celebration, it increases the odds for the building to be purchased, renovated and/or developed.

With this in mind, the focus of this project will be on the former support theaters for the Boyds Theater (1912 – 1918 Chestnut Street) which currently lie vacant and provide an excellent forum for this exercise. The proposal will look at several of the different ways the buildings can be morphed into an interpretive and celebratory space through drawings and renderings. Amongst the main opportunities that will be explored will be exhibition/gallery spaces and the façade as a canvas for interpretation.



You Can't Window-Shop without Windows:

How the design of storefronts tells the story of America's relationship with shopping.

Brendan Beier

You Can't Window-Shop...

1682
In Philadelphia's early days, most goods were sold from food stalls or at the open-air market stalls that gave Market Street its name.

1700
As the city grew, larger windows were sometimes added to the fronts of existing houses, in order to display wares and attract customers away from the growing competition.

1800
Although the image is of a nineteenth-century storefront, it reveals that the trend of adding storefronts to residential buildings (or cottages) on the edges of the city's commercial areas.

1900
The late nineteenth century was a time of great innovation. Many of the retail practices that we take for granted today were then just brand new. Innovations such as artistic, colorful advertisements led to a greater emphasis on the visual aspects of retailing.

Technological advances made it possible to have larger, stronger, and clearer plate glass windows, which were quickly adopted to all shapes and sizes of storefronts. Shop windows were the picture frames, giving passersby a glimpse of the goods on offer.

In later decades, some storefronts were made of glass, attracting modern pedestrians used to film and television, with more models like the view of the store and its merchandise.

Famous department store owners, like Philadelphia's John Wanamaker, took advantage of new ideas about advertising. Many of Philadelphia's department stores, along Market Street, created underground display windows, aimed at attracting the attention and curiosity of users of the city's new subway system.

2005
Branding – the creation of an immediately identifiable image for a company or product – is an important part of today's business world. This emphasis on creating and maintaining a brand has led many chain stores to import their look, facade design and storefronts, often disregarding the style of the rest of the building.

Streets were widened to create multi-lane roads and parking spaces, leaving less room for pedestrians on the sidewalks. In response, many stores altered their facades to include setbacks or recesses – providing window shoppers with a quieter, less crowded place to linger and admire the displays.

As many people now drove down the street instead of walking, shops had to find a new way of attracting customer attention. It became popular to cover the upper stories of a building with a large blank facade – essentially turning the storefront into a roadside billboard like this example on Market Street.

The invention of the automobile, and its ever-increasing popularity during the mid-twentieth century, had an enormous impact on the use and design of urban shopping areas.

The layers visible on many of the buildings' facades are evidence of the changing nature of storefront design over the decades, and the lasting effects that these changes can have on the character of a place and the behavior of a people.

... without Windows

How the design of storefronts tells the story of America's relationship with shopping.

Chestnut Street has been an important commercial corridor of Philadelphia throughout the city's history and the majority of the street's ground-floor spaces are now storefronts. As such, innovations and trends in commerce, merchandising and advertising have had a substantial impact on the physical character of the street over time. The layers visible on many of the buildings' facades are evidence of the changing nature of storefront design over the decades, and the lasting effects that these changes can have on the character of a place.

It may be difficult for people to believe that many of the merchandising and advertising tools that are so prevalent today have not always existed. This may be in part due to the original intention and the success of these strategies – they have now blended into the everyday lives of the public. Even such currently common sights as storefronts with large plate-glass windows and elaborate window displays were once considered innovations. Evidence of these trends and innovations has been left behind in the various facades of Chestnut Street, documenting and affecting the behavior of the purchasing public.

The design of storefronts tells a story about America's relationship with shopping, and this brochure attempts to tell that story to a general audience. Sponsored by the proposed Chestnut Street Association, the brochure could be included in the bags of shoppers purchasing things from participating stores on Chestnut Street, reminding them that, even when shopping, they are participating in an activity with a rich history.

Chestnut Street: Doorway to Jewelers' Row

Jenna Higgins

One of the oldest industries in America, the jewelry industry of Philadelphia has long been located along Chestnut Street. Present day Jewelers' Row is primarily located on Sansom Street between 7th and 8th Streets, but historically, Chestnut Street may have actually started along Chestnut Street. This individual project researched the history of jewelers on Chestnut Street and how this industry changed over time.

Using primary resources such as business directories, a graphic timeline displays how the jewelry industry transformed along Chestnut Street. As a result, it has been concluded that the jewelry had a stronger influence on Chestnut Street during the 18th and 19th centuries, and dropped during the 20th century to the present day. With Jewelers' Row attracting such a large number of shoppers and tourists, it is imperative that this piece of history is interpreted for them. A report has been comprised that has only begun to describe this important industry's history in Philadelphia. Additionally, an interpretive sign has been proposed for placement at the corner of 8th and Chestnut. This sign, along with additional research, will hopefully provide visitors to Jewelers' Row an understanding and appreciation of the influence Chestnut Street had on the jewelry industry and vice versa.



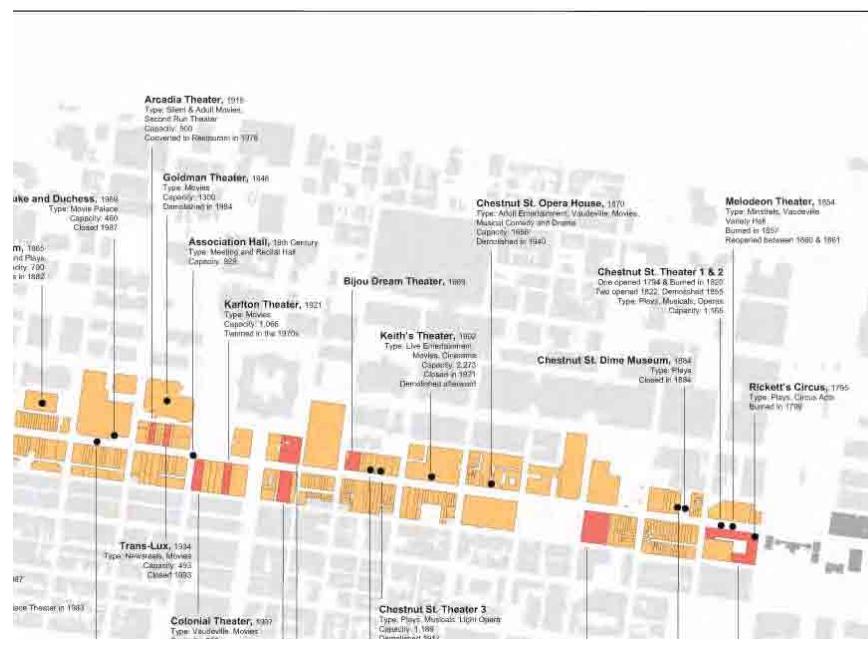
Performing Chestnut Street

Dina Kanawati and Anny Su

Performing Chestnut Street is an attempt to revive a part of Chestnut Street's multi-layered social history, to engage and educate patrons of Chestnut Street about Philadelphia's theater culture that reaches back in time to the founding of the country. Long forgotten is the premiere role that Chestnut Street theaters once had in the lives of Philadelphians. Prior to the motion picture, the invention of the television and the automobile, the act and process of going to the theater was, to say the least, a "production".

The history and evolution of Chestnut Street is reflected in its theater history; from 6th Street, the site of Rickett's Circus and the first Chestnut Street Theater, to 19th Street, the site of the Boyd's motion picture theater, the chronological progression of theatrical institutions down Chestnut Street is intimately tied to the westward settlement and movement of Philadelphians from the Delaware to the Schuylkill river. The rise of theatrical entertainment other than the opera such as vaudeville, etc., reflected the rise of Philadelphia's middle-class. The boom of theater construction in the first quarter of the 20th century was in concert with technological innovations, and a fundamental change in the entertainment industry from live action to moving pictures. Going to the movies in the 1920's and 1930's attracted a broader audience; it was wholesome, affordable, and a refuge from the time of depression and mass unemployment. World War II, the mass distribution of televisions, and the incursion of commercial enterprises were only partly responsible for the decline of Chestnut Street's movie theaters by the 1970's and 1980's.

Remarkably, while Chestnut has witnessed the construction as well as demolition of most of its theaters, only a few buildings still survive and none of them as theaters. It is one of the goals of this tour to heighten the awareness of these few remaining structures, to celebrate them, and to incorporate their existence into the local culture and community that exists today on Chestnut Street. As Philadelphia theaters today are in the midst of a revival, Chestnut Street Theater History tour is a timely endeavor as it takes part in this upswing and evokes the live action once widely associated with Chestnut theater culture. Thus, while the tour aims to recapture a sense of this history, the goal is not necessarily an "authenticity of experience". Rather, Chestnut Street, like no other street in Philadelphia, will reveal the performance potential of its public space—what better way to recount its theater history than to enact it through theatricality.



Getting to Know Chestnut Street

Logan McClintic-Smith

The purpose of this individual project is to introduce anyone and everyone to the architecture that surrounds them and engage them with an environment about which they might otherwise be unaware. By selecting buildings that are emblematic of some aspect of Chestnut Street - type, style, use - , this guide will encourage people to “look up” at the buildings of the Street and perhaps begin to appreciate it in a whole new way. The supplemental information is intended to animate the buildings and engage an audience that is larger than those exclusively interested in architecture and its history. As the information is aimed at people of every age, it is presented in a fundamental and straightforward

manner so as to be totally accessible.

HORN AND HARDART, 818-820 CHESTNUT STREET

The Horn and Hardart Building was built in 1892 and is the first building in Philadelphia to have an elevator. The building is in the Beaux-Arts style, designed by the firm of Horn and Hardart. It is a prime example of the Renaissance Revival style. The building is a landmark of the city and is a fine example of the work of the firm of Horn and Hardart.



Do You Know How High the Building Is?

- It is one of the tallest buildings in Philadelphia.
- It is one of the tallest buildings in the city.
- It is one of the tallest buildings in the city.
- It is one of the tallest buildings in the city.
- It is one of the tallest buildings in the city.
- It is one of the tallest buildings in the city.



The building was designed by the firm of Horn and Hardart. It is a prime example of the work of the firm of Horn and Hardart.



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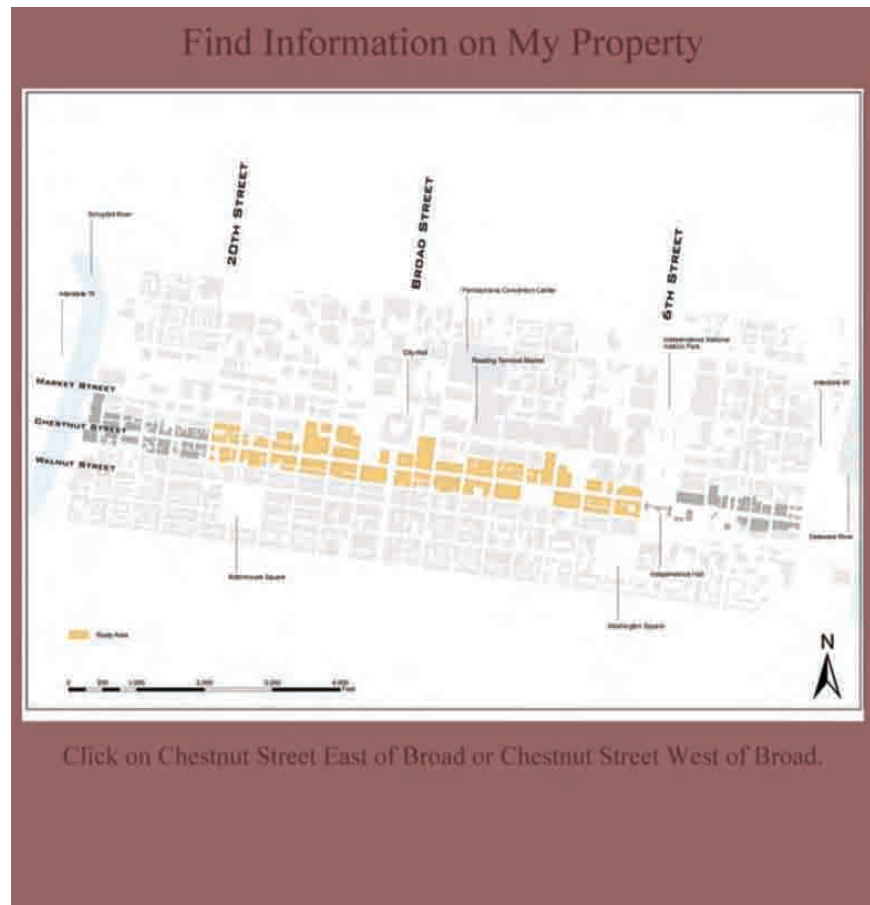
Although this project targets six specific buildings – 719 Chestnut Street, 818 Chestnut Street, 901 Chestnut Street, 1326 Chestnut Street, 1708 Chestnut Street and 1900 Chestnut Street – the approach could be expanded to any other buildings on the Street, or in the City, that have significant architectural fabric and detail.

Property Owner's Information Page

Mary Grilli

This interactive website will serve as a resource for property owners on Chestnut Street. By finding their property on the above map, site users will be able to access property-specific information. The project will serve as a prototype, picking a few representative properties in the study area, and demonstrating how, through targeted information, property

owners can more fully understand what combination of regulations are in place for their individual property, and what incentives are available for improvements. Making such information easily accessible will, hopefully, encourage and facilitate property owners to become better stewards of their buildings.



7. CONCLUSION

The primary challenge for our studio has been determining an appropriate way to manage an ever-evolving streetscape while remaining guided by sound preservation principles. Our overarching goal for Chestnut Street has therefore been to encourage strategic change through the protection of historic fabric, the interpretation and dissemination of information, and the streamlining of administrative procedures. Like the street itself, our approach is layered – relying on the traditional regulatory tools of preservation but also incorporating a great deal of self-management, education, and awareness as methods to collectively manage such an unwieldy site.

We believe that these goals can be accomplished most effectively in four ways. First, the designation of a discontinuous historic district will preserve the significant architectural fabric along the street. Second, the creation of a Chestnut Street Association will unify business and property owners and help to maintain the predominance of small-scale businesses. Third, establishing a preservation presence at the Center City District will enforce the consideration of preservation in the street's future management. Finally, extensive interpretive schemes will heighten awareness throughout the community and beyond.

Although Chestnut Street is neither a typical preservation project nor a typical candidate for an historic district, this is perhaps the most urgent reason for its recognition as such. Most people perceive preservation as an activity done by and done for an elite population, but this project is a chance to bring preservation to a broader community and an opportunity to emphasize the real Philadelphia, instilling in residents civic pride and giving outsiders an understanding of what the city is really like. While the future will certainly bring new forces to bear on the street, we have hopefully developed a framework within which preservation and change can happily, fruitfully and permanently coexist.

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