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This thesis discusses the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC), a public-private redevelopment agency, and its work in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s promoting the redevelopment of several areas and neighborhoods located in the Center City district of downtown Philadelphia. Leading up to and during its involvement in the planning of the Market Street East (formerly, East Market Street) and The Gallery mall projects, the OPDC imposed on its ventures a set myths about the city’s place within the American legend, Market Street’s history as a majestic shopping corridor, and the centrality of Philadelphia’s downtown to the metropolitan region. It did so as a means for controlling various aspects of Center City urban renewal and for bringing suburbanites back downtown to shop and enjoy leisure time. This thesis argues that although these myths remembered East Market Street as the domain of middle class and affluent whites, the OPDC ignored the realities of changing metropolitan economic, cultural, and population trends in favor of adherence to its self-created narrative, leading the corporation and its redevelopment cohort to make many miscalculations and missteps in its attempts to revitalize the area.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .............................................................................................................................. iv

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION: GENESIS OF THE MYTH, GENESIS OF THE IMPULSE ................................................................. 1

2. PHILADELPHIA’S REDEVELOPMENT BUREAUCRACY: AUTHOR AND PROTECTOR OF CIVIC MEMORY ................................................. 16

3. CAPITALIZING ON SUCCESS: EXPANDING THE NARRATIVE ................................................................................. 48

4. THE BOUNDARIES OF CIVIC LOYALTY ........................................................................................................... 89

5. ADAPTING THE MYTH ........................................................................................................................................... 99

6. CONCLUSION: THE REALITIES OF MARKET STREET EAST AND THE ABANDONMENT OF COSMOPOLITANISM ....................................................... 109

7. EPILOGUE: THE LIMITS OF MYTHOLOGY ............................................................................................................. 113

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................................................... 114
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: GENESIS OF THE MYTH, GENESIS OF THE IMPULSE

The most pressing problem affecting the decline of urban commercial profitability in the post-war era stood as the flight of middle class and affluent whites to the suburbs, or as developers initially called them, "new towns." These residents of means could choose between the city and the suburbs, and more often than not, they selected to make new homes in the latter. Downtowns, once the domain of the wealthy and powerful, felt the sting of this rejection, and like any jilted partner longing for the return of a halcyon past, they often sought to repair their relationship with desired patrons and residents and remake themselves in the image of the new culture. Even so, as the urban historian Robert Fogelson suggests, those groups who could leave had little tolerance for communing with those who lacked the ability to relocate. Likewise, he notes, downtown leaders rejected the lower-income patrons white flight had left behind. Their presence, these men believed, acted as an enduring blockade preventing a return of desirable patrons. Minorities and low-income residents remained in the core; whites with money and personal ambition moved to the periphery of cities. By the late 1940s, the population of the counties surrounding Philadelphia began increasing at a ratio of four-to-one to that of the central city. Large retailers started opening multiple branch stores along new suburban byways. This reversed a trend. Early suburban pioneers had found retail options lacking and mostly still shopped downtown. But as shopping centers opened in places like Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania and the far-removed Northeast Philadelphia neighborhood of Cheltenham, suburbanites had fewer reasons to return downtown. "By 1960," writes shopping center historian Stephanie Dyer, "Philadelphia's suburbs contained more residents than the city itself." Meanwhile, as the city's white population declined throughout the 1950s and 1960s, during the same period, its African-American population continued to grow. With each new calendar, downtown Philadelphia began to appear to Center City (the name for the city's downtown district) leaders and on-looking suburbanites as reflective of what cities had become: a space where minority and working class residents congregated.
Middle class and affluent whites no longer felt as safe and in control there, and such an egalitarian leisure space could no longer maintain those groups' sense of self.¹

East Market Street in Center City contained Philadelphia’s most storied department stores and its most crucial monuments to the local downtown mythology. Gimbels, Wanamaker’s, Lit Brothers, Strawbridge & Clothier (known, collectively, as the “Big Four”), and Snellenburg’s all rose to prominence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mirroring the ascension of Philadelphia as a world-class city. After World War II, though, the city’s rise halted. Kenneth Jackson, a noted historian of consumerism, explains, “From 1954 to 1963, Center City’s share of the total retail sales in metropolitan Philadelphia declined from 38 percent to 26 percent and total sales from $466 million to $419 million.” He continues, noting that the closing of Snellenburg’s in 1963 “symbolized . . . the changing shopping habits of metropolitan Philadelphia,” but, really, all of the signifiers had quietly reared their heads at least a decade previous. In fact, although by 1946 the U.S. contained only eight shopping centers total, the Philadelphia region had constructed two, both located in suburban areas: Upper Darby Center (1927) in far West Philadelphia and Suburban Square in Ardmore (1928). Center City had been losing sales to the suburbs since 1948, when the East Market Street department stores had first begun opening branch stores. By the late 1960s, as the RA lamented, “Market Street [would account] . . . for less than seven percent of all retail trade in metropolitan Philadelphia.”

The downtown department stores, which Philadelphia’s municipal and redevelopment leaders saw as loyal civic institutions as much as self-interested businesses, shot themselves in the foot and winged Center City right in the heart when they opened branch stores in the suburbs. Strawbridge’s collaborated with developer James Rouse on Cherry Hill Mall, located just a few miles from East

Market Street. As Dyer illustrates, the four other stores also opened multiple branches in the 1950s, and by the end of the decade the new stores “encircled the city itself on all sides . . . thus creating a decentralized landscape of retail competition that had a decisively negative effect on the downtown.” Consequently, the large department stores and other retailers in Center City came to rely more and more on only residents of Philadelphia for sales. Feride Oymak, in his dissertation on the city’s Bicentennial Celebration, writes, “It was pointed out in 1964 that Center City’s 37,000 residents could hardly support even the remaining downtown department stores by themselves.” Although they remained an important part of the downtown landscape of Philadelphia, the department stores quickly turned to addressing the needs of their new customers in the suburbs and squabbling amongst themselves for the last remaining shreds of downtown dominance rather than upholding their end of the social contract with the city and working together to solve Center City’s problems.

Department store branches and their attendant shopping mall enclosures obviated the need for more traditional retail experiences. Affluent and middle class shoppers themselves took easily to this transfer of dominance. They preferred the ease of traveling to shopping malls by car and enjoyed predictable retail experiences. The gradual, but irreversible, shift of wealthy and middle class consumerism from downtown to the suburbs bore out in statistics as well. Between 1948 and 1958, department stores in downtown Philadelphia lost eight percent of their share of regional sales, a trend that would only become starker as the wider region siphoned off residents from the city and grew as self-contained communities throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The large Center City department stores

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could hang on as luxury shopping experiences, but at what real benefit to traditional patrons of such consumer outlets? Even though East Market Street would probably have experienced a similar level of commercial decline in the post-war era without direct competition from its department stores’ branches, the Big Four’s speedy regional growth certainly hastened the area’s debility. Gimbels alone, even as it seemed to demonstrate its commitment to future Center City retailing when it hosted the 1948 Better Philadelphia Exhibition, opened at least seven branches near the city between 1954 and 1974. Philadelphia’s redevelopment cohort prized the major department stores as monuments, crucial to preserving the downtown narrative. In turn, the heads of those retailers understood that they had the upper hand in negotiations. By the mid-1950s, city leaders of all stripes became convinced that government needed assistance in order to mount a successful downtown revitalization.

The Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC), a public-private alliance between business leaders and municipal redevelopment agencies, quickly took up that mantle. The work this organization accomplished and attempted during its involvement in the redevelopment of East Market Street is vitally important to the story of post-war urban renewal. Much of the organization’s muscle stemmed from its institutional ambiguity, appearing, at turns, as a benevolent non-profit or as a ruthless government agency. Critics could not attack it as they would a governmental agency, and yet the OPDC, for many years, possessed final say regarding its projects. John P. Robin offered this meek description: “The OPDC is a non-profit citizen’s organization. It has no public powers. Its strength comes from its acceptance by public officials as a disinterested associate in seeking what is best for Philadelphia.” The corporation’s members certainly fought for what they believed were the city’s best interests. Even so, the OPDC possessed very real civic authority. It could wield such influence because many of its officers stood as the city’s most fluent civic actors; indeed, membership in official city redevelopment agencies and the OPDC often overlapped. William Rafsky, the Redevelopment

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3 Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*, 268; Dennis Durden to Edmund Bacon, (March 28, 1962), PCA. Durden was a representative of Larry Smith & Company; Dyer, “Markets in the Meadows,” 242-243, 246-247; Gimbels, (press release, “News from Gimbels: Gimbels Market Street East,” May 7, 1975), PCA; H. J. Grinsfelder to members of the OPDC Market Street East Committee (memo, Market Street East Committee, 1967), PCA. Although I found the document containing Grinsfelder’s comments undated aside from the year, through context I can confidently estimate that he must have issued the statement some time shortly before February 20, 1967, when the OPDC passed the resolution to which he was responding.

4 CPDC, *Remaking Center City*, viii.
Authority (RA) director, transitioned directly from that post to OPDC leadership. Gustave Amsterdam made a similar move. Mayors and city councilmen sat alongside department store heads in the OPDC executive board. As a result, private firms possessed unadulterated access to local government leaders. Essentially, the goals of the Redevelopment Authority and City Planning Commission (CPC) melded with those of downtown business interests. Still, the OPDC wielded an even more crucial civic tool. In order to gain support for its projects, the corporation played on and played up the mythology of downtown and of Philadelphia as a cosmopolitan American city. Specifically, it pointed to a memory narrative of East Market Street as a majestic shopping corridor, one where affluent and middle class white residents and visitors shopped and enjoyed leisure time. Additionally, it held up the city as both crucial to the narrative of American legend and central to the metropolitan cultural and economic orbit. Philadelphia’s downtown, its members believed, deserved to maintain this set of images. Few red-blooded Philadelphians, regular citizens and the powerful alike, could argue against an organization whose goals appeared to be merely keeping their city economically and culturally robust. Although interplay between government and public-private organizations has informed past urban renewal studies, until now, few scholars have interrogated how these organizations exploited civic mythology and memory to accomplish large-scale redevelopment goals. The OPDC and its cohort believed that private citizens had largely written the narrative of downtown and, should Center City regain regional dominance, they should continue to own primary authorship. Still, private concerns needed to harness the power of local government. For the city that wrote the book on public-private civic cooperatives, this thesis fills in many gaps in Philadelphia’s narrative arc as well as the broader narrative of American post-war redevelopment. Of particular consequence was the ongoing conversation between pure business interests, local government, and the liminal territory the OPDC occupied. All three sectors bought into a static and antiquated story of downtown and American urban life. Studying the tensions and relaxations of these civic muscles allowed for a more complete understanding of how downtown revitalization posed such tantalizing manna for redevelopment boosters. This method also revealed the core of this ideal’s flaws. In turn, the opposition of expected outcomes and frustrating results forms the crux of my arguments.
The OPDC and other redevelopers pitted the memory of a dominant East Market Street against the supposed causes and symptoms of such conflated concepts as slums, blight, and decline. These discussions, both public and behind closed doors, largely centered on redevelopers’ opinions of who should have access to Center City. Racial and class demarcations served as a primary thrust for planning negotiations. Redevelopers referred to East Market Street interchangeably with one of the above terms. Still, as Fogelson concludes, all had a singular purpose: to define diminished real estate as “a national disgrace.” The OPDC described the street as “a liability to the city.” Rafsky, a former municipal leader, after taking the Executive Vice President post for the corporation in 1963, noted, “The center must be the magnet of attraction, the power that dissuades people from escaping to the suburbs. Once the flight outside gets out of control, a city disintegrates.” To the end of maintaining allure for desirable patrons, downtown redevelopers attacked independent retailers on East Market Street with a very malleable definition of blight. Essentially, the OPDC and the city’s Redevelopment Authority (RA) could tailor its parameters to suit nearly any structure or area. “Inadequate . . . conditions”; “economically undesirable land use”; and “excessive land coverage” stood as just some of the ambiguous phrases its leaders mentioned in their disparagement of the small shops in Center City. As branch stores encircled Philadelphia, rents for commercial space on East Market Street became less expensive and allowed smaller retailers to open businesses along this shopping corridor. At the same time, manufacturing jobs left for the open suburban environs along with commercial and residential opportunities. Factories and workshops gave way to the new service economy. Center City’s industrial infrastructure became vacated, adding to the appearance of decline. The Housing Association of Delaware Valley (HADV), though, claimed that the term “blighted . . . turned out to be the definition by one group of another’s facilities,” describing “a clientele which is not as desirable to the large department stores because it is less affluent.” Still, Philadelphia planners had long enjoyed the ambiguity of blight’s definitional parameters. “A ‘blighted area’ is a district which is not what it should be,” pronounced the city’s secretary of the Comprehensive Plans Committee in 1918.5

Even so, the origins of the Market Street East project arose out of a less dichotomous redevelopment philosophy. Nearly every city in the 1950s formed some kind of organization to target and reverse the problem of downtown decline. In Philadelphia, Edmund Bacon first began floating the idea of a reimagined East Market Street to his colleagues in the late 1940s. Primarily, he proposed a plan for improving downtown traffic flows. Ultimately, though, the existence of the city's federally funded Redevelopment Authority allowed for both the size and scope of such a project, as well as public-private cooperation. In 1942, the Urban Land Institute (ULI), projecting a need for a widespread, post-war urban revamp, developed the first federal plan for redesigning central cities, essentially drawing up a blueprint for future municipal redevelopment agencies. The ULI proposed allocating funds for cities to condemn and purchase structures in blighted areas and "sell or lease the parcels to the private sector for redevelopment." Its outline gave way to the Federal Urban Renewal Program in 1949. Quickly, a more millennial purpose emerged from Philadelphia's planning circles. The city's Centennial celebration, which brought in over nine million visitors, propelled Philadelphia to the forefront of American urban life. Center City redevelopers believed that completing Market East in time for the Bicentennial would help thrust Philadelphia back to a stature of economic and cultural prominence. They hoped they could present the revitalized area to its targeted groups in time for the celebration. Following from this stipulation, the OPDC and its cohort argued that the city required modern amenities in order to attract these groups. Soon, the OPDC's support for enclosed luxury shopping overtook the CPC's less-enthralling and open-ended priorities of transportation consolidation, stimulation of growth, and ensuring the "continued prosperity of existing commercial

The problem of deindustrialization also soon disappeared from the OPDC’s list of concerns. The opposition of the purported and actual goals of the OPDC formed an important device for discussing its usage of narrative in its promotional efforts. In its upper-class residential projects, Society Hill and Washington Square West, the OPDC towed the line between advocate for the elite and conservator of the city’s most sacred shrines. Located a few blocks south from Independence Hall and a few blocks southeast of East Market Street, Philadelphia’s first residents settled these neighborhoods early on in the city’s history, and wealthy families owned houses in those sections for centuries. This arrangement figured heavily in the OPDC’s understanding of Philadelphia’s place in national mythology. Gradually, the affluent moved away from Society Hill and Washington Square West. As of the early 1960s, mostly minority and working class residents occupied those neighborhoods. This change, the OPDC assumed, subverted a major component of the Center City narrative. The corporation and the RA used this particular myth to declare eminent domain and pushed these undesirable residents out. Redevelopers rebuilt and rebranded the area as an exclusive neighborhood, and within a few years hundreds of wealthy families against owned homes in the area. In this case, the OPDC fought to keep the powerful content (and, more importantly, physically present the city) while portraying its mission as benefiting the many, benefiting an increasingly abstract and unassailable image of public space. This impulse extended to its work reinvigorating the city’s downtown shopping districts. The important downtown department stores—monuments to local consumerism and assumed maintainers of city pride—held as much sway for the OPDC as did signifiers of the city’s role in American legends and its projects reclaiming historic housing tracts for the affluent. In fact, the corporation viewed a reenergized downtown shopping district as a social glue.

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ensuring both a sealing off of Society Hill and Washington Square West from North Philadelphia and added incentive luring the “right” sorts of people to take up residence in Center City.

The corporation’s most ambitious projects, Market Street East and The Gallery mall, most clearly distilled the machinations through which this public-private organization blurred the boundaries of the two sectors. The OPDC oriented itself with the city’s redevelopment hierarchy in order to both pursue operational autonomy as well as to consolidate all of its Center City projects into a single entity separate from other parts of the city. But these undertakings also demonstrated how the corporation adapted the downtown myth in order to lure suburbanites back to the city. In addition, as proprietors of banks, law firms, department stores, and other downtown business, OPDC members, as providers of ostensibly public services, believed the goals of their companies and corporations mirrored the interests of the public, whether all sectors of that public understood or not. Those projects also served as poignant embodiments of the city’s desperate elite in the post-war era. Envious of the clean and prosperous suburbs, fearful of their own weakened stature as kings in a diminished land, and true believers of the city that had given them so much power and influence, leaders on both sides of the public-private divide propped up an image of downtown Philadelphia that may or may not have ever existed, but, at the very least, was long gone. In any case, they clung to a vision of Philadelphia reflecting their values; with their values threatened, their city became in need of repair, in need of finding itself again. Members of the OPDC remembered Center City as a place of clear divisions between race and class, as a destination that was special, in part, because of those social demarcations. It was a place where decent people wanted to go, not a place in which those who had not fled had to remain because they could not escape. My research illustrates these elite views, and reveals how that cohort hoped to reverse the trends of demographic ambiguity downtown. In the midst of visible economic decline on East Market Street, the location of several august department stores, OPDC members sought to consolidate the elite shopping destinations, pushing out the so-called “marginal” businesses, and retrieving shoppers who had fled to the suburbs. In drawing up its plans, the corporation largely ignored the fact that beginning in the early 1950s, all Center City department stores opened one or more branches in the Philadelphia suburbs. This thesis interrogates the motives of Philadelphia’s business elite, intelligent men who believed in the greatness of the city as whole, but
who felt, in lieu of aggressive housing and jobs programs, a combination of old-school respectability and new pathways of consumerism seemingly natural to the suburbs would save the downtown and the entire city. Furthermore, I demonstrate how, when forced, the OPDC exploited the new directives of local reform politics—bureaucratic simplification, modernization of urban infrastructure and architecture, and political transparency—in order to accomplish its goal of revitalizing downtown as the domain of middle class and affluent whites. Stepping back, it becomes clear that persistence of downtown mythology embodied all of these impulses.

It would have been simplistic to point to racism and classism alone as factors steering OPDC’s energies. Nonetheless, the corporation believed Market East and The Gallery would attract suburbanites back to Center City. African-Americans and low-income residents stood as tacit barriers to redevelopers reclaiming the downtown for the well to do. The OPDC and other local redevelopment boosters consistently pointed to racial and class signifiers in their discussions of downtown decline. This thesis explains why the corporation believed suburbanites returning downtown to shop and socialize would accomplish a reclaiming of the downtown myth, but I also have illustrated why the OPDC thought it could entice those who had fled the city in the first place as well. Why did the OPDC—really an encapsulation of Philadelphia’s post-war elite—willfully ignore the economic force of suburban department store branches? Ultimately, such conduct points to a fundamental belief in the power of downtown Philadelphia as a magnetic center, as upper class myth. Why did it persist amongst this particular elite? How did such beliefs trickle down, occupying the imagination of the city as a whole? How did the OPDC expand the definition of blight to encapsulate all that had become offensive to their own sensibilities and by extension, their assumption of white suburban sensibilities? Moreover, how did the corporation pose that mutated concept against the notion of Philadelphia as a once-and-forever great city? My thesis answers all of these questions, both through an examination of the OPDC’s real actions and interactions, but also through a discussion of the philosophy of members’ civic beliefs regarding the transformation of East Market Street, and, to a lesser extent, the wider Center City area. This particular conversation remained crucial to proving my arguments because, though members often possessed of themselves a devotion to reform policy, they also had collectively determined that a massaging of elite values could accomplish a far-reaching benefit for a wider
Philadelphia that would not directly profit from an economic resurgence downtown. Therefore, the OPDC allowed exclusionary policies to inform its projects.

Although my thesis focuses on the OPDC’s involvement in the planning, design, and funding of the Market Street East and Gallery projects, discussing the OPDC’s Society Hill and Washington Square West projects was also crucial to my narrative. The corporation considered all of its ventures in the eastern sector of Center City in tandem. The long pathway to Market East is just as important to my analysis as the actual planning of the project. In addition, I allocated a great deal of my thesis to contextualizing the circumstances of the OPDC’s founding as well as the motives, ideologies, and roles of certain influential members.

With the election of Mayor Frank Rizzo in the late 1970s, the corporation’s role on Market Street diminished. Certainly, once these large projects opened, the narrative continued. Additional research and discussion of this area’s successes and failures from its opening to the present day is warranted. Such work should occur, and could easily occupy another student’s thesis or dissertation. In the map of my own thesis, though, all roads lead to the design and plan for Market East and The Gallery. Prior this work, no study has concentrated so exclusively on Market Street East and The Gallery. Christopher Klemek and Stephanie Dyer, in their dissertations, both mention the projects, but merely in a context of quick conclusion to the Philadelphia metropolitan region’s retail story. Their work certainly informed my own, especially their discussions of the area’s retail decentralization of the 1950s and 1960s. Some scholars also have touched on the role of the OPDC in Center City redevelopment. I took issue with these works in particular because few discuss the corporation’s reimagining of East Market Street much deeper than in passing, and those that do present obvious and obstructive biases against the OPDC. Although the OPDC’s motivations were clearly flawed and its methods exclusionary, my thesis does not present its members as one-dimensional caricatures, but, rather, as intelligent men toiling in the dark with outmoded tools.

This thesis argues that the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation formed as a creation of Philadelphia’s elite city leaders for the consolidation of political and business redevelopment power. Using a mythological narrative as an ideological wedge, its membership steered the corporation’s public image opposite to that of its actual purpose and level of clout as a means for maintaining elite
control of redevelopment funds, influence, and focus. It upheld its self-created memory narrative as a means for safeguarding projects explicitly benefiting the affluent over the poor and minorities, and for rebranding the Center City area as attractive to suburbanites. Ultimately, it hoped its public-private partnership could serve as an antidote to the racial and class dimensions it perceived as contributing to Center City's economic decline. This thesis also contends that the OPDC, in its devotion to mythology, ignored other factors related to downtown decline and the processes of urban renewal. Because that method had little foundation in reality, it eventually proved incapable to accomplishing the goals the corporation laid out.

Naturally, this thesis contains frequent references to class and racial demographics. Often, it employs terms that, at least in popular usage, have drifted into a state of imprecision. In lieu of using statistics to support arguments, this thesis stresses qualitative evidence. In large part, concerning Market Street East and other post-war redevelopment projects, quantifiable measures were beside the point. The OPDC, RA, and other bodies in Philadelphia’s redevelopment circle operated much more from a standpoint of immediate appearance and conventional wisdom rather than hard numbers. They offered the ideals of affluence, luxury, the middle class, and the suburban almost interchangeably. Taken together, these terms refer to a monolithic group of upwardly mobile white residents of the region. Downtown redevelopers never spelled out their target market much clearer. Ultimately, they planned Market Street East less as a venue for a particular strata of society and more as a medium through which the racial and class ambiguities growing in Center City could be collapsed into the above homogeneities. Because they refused to deal in less abstract language, I cannot and should not elaborate on the obviously varied demographics present downtown and throughout the region. I do, however, unpack the desires and cultural signifiers redevelopers attributed to this group. In fact, much of the myth and memory-making redevelopers coaxed out of the by-gone downtown culture sprung from these assumptions. Still, I was careful to not allow my terms to become jumbled. When I describe a group of people, a place, or a cultural signifier as “suburban”, this designation means that the described entity is actually located in the suburbs, self-identifies with the suburbs, or contains an overwhelmingly suburban extraction or influence. Likewise, in my analysis, “middle class” refers to a normative post-war identity rather than an income level. Certainly, income provided post-war
Americans to buy a house and other luxuries, maintain a single-income household, and move from the city to the suburbs—all components of middle class identity. But far-reaching cultural signifiers provided greater underpinnings for inclusion in this cohort. I clearly differentiate between using the terms “middle class” and “suburban,” even though these qualities often overlapped. Redevelopers frequently conflated “affluent” (and its obvious synonyms) with “middle class,” seeming often to connect both of those terms with an abstract notion of “luxury” and “decency.”

I went to great pains to delineate them, parsing out a temporal division rather than a hierarchical one. In my thesis, the truly affluent play only a minor role. They remained an insular and tiny population of mostly city-dwellers well divorced from the middle class. The latter remained connected to the former only through a thin fiber of admiration and ambition. Again, the assumed possibility of future affluence distinguishes those in the middle class.

I allowed the full body of my research to shape my conclusions as I conducted it. I accomplished most of my research at the Philadelphia City Archives and the Temple Urban Archives at Temple University’s Paley Library. I could not have pursued this topic without those resources. At the City Archives I poured through the files of the agencies and organizations listed above, which included correspondence, annual and weekly reports, as well as documents outlining the planning, design and funding of The Gallery, Market Street East and other important projects. At the Temple Urban Archives I studied various individuals’ personal papers and speeches, none as valuable as those of William Rafsky. His philosophical conflict over the changing nature of urbanity and the role of local government in reconciling tensions inherent to urban renewal provided me a great deal of insight.

As the early 1950s reform ideals gave way to the cynical competitive and free-market godheads of the 1960s and 1970s, the local redevelopment cohort mutated the myths and memories of downtown to suit their shifts in renewal priorities. One can trace the widening net redevelopers cast over the project as its purposes became less defined over the course of the twenty years between proposal and completion. As such, chronological organization lends itself well to my themes of myth and memory making in long-standing downtown shopping districts and the re-creation thereof. At the same time, certain historical themes arose during different time periods. At points, I provided evidence from outside the chronology if it gave my arguments a crucial level of support. I divide my narrative into

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7 I gained much of my understanding of how to define all of these terms from Lizabeth Cohen’s book *A Consumers’ Republic.*
four major chapters, each representing both a distinct theme and chronological period in the OPDC and Market East saga. In chapter 1, I discuss the formation of the OPDC, where its chief officers fit into the hierarchy of the downtown elite, and how those members shaped OPDC policies and general downtown redevelopment wisdom. I also unpack the corporation’s core beliefs, powers, methods, and ideals as they appeared during its initial foundation. I devote the bulk of this chapter to contextualizing the OPDC and its Market Street East project through a lengthy discussion of the corporation’s earlier and interrelated residential projects in the Washington Square West and Society Hill neighborhoods. I also concentrate on the emergence of blight defining and targeted condemnation as a main feature of the OPDC’s line of attack. In chapter 2, I shift my focus directly to the planning of Market East itself. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the myth and memory of pre-war downtown Philadelphia began to coalesce around elite discussion of modernity, revitalization, and the nexus of the two. But these two ideals also formed around the tensions between a new class and racial ambiguity brewing in Center City, and a far-flung suburban homogeneity gaining currency outside Philadelphia’s borders. I also interrogate the OPDC’s shifting public and covert images it developed for itself and its projects during this period, a matrix that the corporation would cultivate throughout its existence. Additionally, thickly woven into my narrative are the mechanics and sociality through which the RA and OPDC (with the CPC as a junior partner) used each other’s resources and civic positions in order to accomplish mutually beneficial redevelopment goals. I demonstrate how downtown myth and memory infiltrated these relationships as well. In chapter 3, I interrogate the fictional loyalty between downtown business and the city as it materialized within the Market East and Gallery projects. In the mid and late-1960s, the four major downtown department stores found themselves at loggerheads as to how their physical plants would integrate into the new project. Ultimately, they sacrificed the notion of mutual benefit on the altar of competition and brought the entire project to the brink of disintegration. In my last chapter, I pick up the narrative in the late 1960s as the project neared its final planning phase. The disagreement between the department stores had led to a loss of federal funds for the project. During the period of reapplication, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development took on new requirements for dispersing monies for CBD revitalization projects. Chief amongst these conditions included major outlays and preparations for dealing with urban unemployment among poor and minority citizens.
Immediately, the OPDC began rewriting its Market Street proposals to reflect redevelopers’ commitments to this priority. In this final chapter, I describe how myth and memory of downtown Philadelphia pressed up against the demands of the Civil Rights Era. In this case, as the OPDC and RA evinced, these tensions engendered a particularly cynical adaptation of social programs for the benefit of private enterprise.
CHAPTER 2

PHILADELPHIA’S REDEVELOPMENT BUREAUCRACY: AUTHOR AND PROTECTOR OF CIVIC MEMORY

Essentially, the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, like the Redevelopment Authority or the City Planning Commission, existed as a part of the city’s redevelopment bureaucracy. Although, officially, it remained outside of government purview, like any other municipal agency, it dealt with a specific set of duties for the accomplishment of an explicit goal. Still, in Philadelphia, the corporation stood alone: the OPDC tasked itself with developing and adapting a myth of downtown shopping and elegance for the purposes of promoting its chosen projects. It first began cultivating a memory narrative for the city when it partnered with the RA on the Society Hill and Washington Square West neighborhoods. Both were high-end residential renewal projects, and both encouraged the OPDC to persist in its methods and its ideology. Eventually, all of these efforts led to the design and planning of the Market Street East and Gallery mall renewal areas. First, though, it is necessary to discuss how the OPDC arrived at its particular narrative and how it distributed this myth to its redevelopment peers, municipal leaders, and the wider public. How did race, class, suburban expansion, white flight, and the exclusionary impulse of redevelopers function within this myth? This chapter grapples with that question. Likewise, it is also of value to describe the circumstances under which the OPDC formed and to contextualize its founding goals. Although this chapter roughly covers the years 1956 to 1965, at times it was necessary to introduce evidence from outside of this period when thematically relevant. Lastly, this chapter introduces the most important actor in this thesis’s narrative: William Rafsky. He best illustrates the tensions attendant to Philadelphia redevelopment ideology: preserving downtown prestige and maintaining high tax revenues on the one hand, and protecting democratic use of the city on the other. As this section will demonstrate, the city’s planning cohort typically concentrated on the former to the detriment of the latter.

Philadelphia historians Anita Summers and Thomas Luce explain that prior to the end of World War II, the Philadelphia region’s economic and population trends pointed to a “uninucleated” distribution map. Most of the area’s employment, retail, industrial, and cultural activities revolved around downtown Philadelphia, and the surrounding counties remained bedroom communities of the
city, deriving their civic and cultural identities from the core. Even as the suburbs expanded during the immediate post-war era, Philadelphia’s leaders of all stripes continued to believe in the ability of Center City to hold its own (unlike other fracturing downtowns) against pro-suburban trends. Real estate magnate Albert Greenfield, a major proponent of post-war Center City revitalization, initially posed these movements of decentralization as indication of the strength of the central city. In a 1956 *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* column, he wrote, “There rests on us . . . the responsibility of seeing that Center City is as attractive as it is useful, and that the services on which people and businesses on our outer limits depend are efficient and convenient.” As Philadelphia’s suburbs developed self-contained economies in the ensuing years, Greenfield and his cohort would change their tune. In fact, though, the problems always lay in clear view. “Philadelphia emerged from WWII burdened by creaking infrastructure and a housing shortage, its Center City business district underperforming against rival cities,” writes urban historian Scott Gabriel Knowles. But, in any case, as Summers and Luce highlight, in short order, “bedroom communities” became an outmoded phrase for referring to the region’s suburbs. Completion of the Schuylkill Expressway portion of Interstate 76 in late 1959, as well as the proliferation of other highways around the city allowed for more efficient population movements to the counties. With the people went jobs and retail. High city property taxes and cheap suburban land available for expanding industrial infrastructure further enhanced these shifts. Clearly, by this point, markedly different kinds of residents lived in the suburbs and the city. The contrast would become only greater during the 1960s and 1970s. Historian Joseph S. Wood writes of downtown-suburban population trends, “The tenet is simple: if the appearance of a place changes, most assuredly persons who inhabit it are also changing.” Philadelphia would only take on harsher and harsher signifiers of urbanity—perceived disorder in the form of aging structures, the conspicuous presence of minority and working class residents, as well as the impression of crime and dirtiness—as the suburbs became seemingly more bucolic.9

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Although many other factors—including the growth of specialty and discount retailers—contributed to department store sales losses on East Market Street, population loss and branch stores quickly became the direst issues. Indeed, Center City felt the initial pinch almost immediately. In 1953, two East Market Street department stores closed due to declining sales, including the luxuriant Frank and Sedar store. Located squarely in the heart of the East Market Street shopping corridor at 11th and Market Streets, the business had enjoyed 38 years of retailing at the location. Even so, by the early 1960s, Philadelphia’s downtown boosters and their consultants touted Center City as remaining vibrant and influential as ever. In particular, a representative of the Larry Smith consulting group claimed the city’s downtown had “rounded the corner.” The Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (OPDC), the city’s most influential public-private redevelopment organization, employed Larry Smith, who maintained that the “better downtown merchants” had “taken the necessary steps to adjust to the new, more intensive competitive framework that does exist” in the region. Furthermore, he dubiously insisted that the East Market Street department stores had actually increased sales volumes despite the proliferation of store branches. Concurrently, Philadelphia planning guru Louis Kahn pointed to the unsubstantiated idea of the continued centrality of downtown as indicative of a strong future for Center City retailers. These consultants as a whole also upheld the abstract importance of downtown Philadelphia to the city and the region as a preserving force for Center City’s economic and cultural significance.  

Armed with the largely unregulated power of eminent domain, Philadelphia’s Redevelopment Authority—the nation’s first—incorporated on May 24, 1945. In looking forward to the formation of the OPDC, oddly, the RA had already taken up the mantle of private sector collaboration. Moreover, the Authority funded itself through an issuance of its own bonds. City government directed it to “promote


10 Durden to Bacon, (March 28, 1962); “Paraphrasing of Lou Kahn Seminars—Market East Proposal: Tape No. 1—First Meeting with Lou Kahn” (undated), PCA. Based on context and archival location, I estimate that these lectures must have taken place sometime in the summer of 1961; William Rafsky, “Introduction” (notes and outline for lecture on Market Street East project, undated), TUA. Rafsky, I have concluded from contextual clues, must have written the cited document sometime in early 1968.
the elimination of blight" as well as to "supply sanitary housing," and provided a limp balance of power in positioning the City Planning Commission (CPC) as a vague waypoint of final review. Although city directives bestowed the CPC with authority to select sites for redevelopment, prevent discriminatory actions, and prepare actual redevelopment plans, once it approved a site the RA could proceed with whatever methods it chose. According to historian Cyril Roseman, the CPC "hoped to treat the entire eastern portion of the central business district (CBD) as one urban renewal area." The CPC also weakened its own power in placing the OPDC and RA alongside its own position in a downtown architectural review board. Robert Fogelson explains that urban redevelopment agencies largely possessed independent power. Like their counterparts in other large American cities, the OPDC and RA together held a limitless ability to "ride roughshod over . . . residents" in their quest to revitalize Center City mostly for non-residents. The year the OPDC formed, 1956, the corporation's initial organizing force Albert Greenfield explained, "Buildings and land will be acquired by negotiation where this is possible, and by condemnation when other means fail." Essentially, for its entire existence, the OPDC would operate from that exact posture in order to push its Market East plans and other projects on the public. Indeed, the RA weathered much of the criticism from minority and low-income activists. "This program was sold as a social development. But it really was designed to help the capitalist, to increase ethnic and racial prejudice, to fool and hoodwink the poor," said activist and scholar Bayard Rustin in 1975, years after redevelopers set their plans for Center City in motion.11

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The Old Philadelphia Development Corporation formed out of a reform assumption that
government was simply ill equipped to handle grand redevelopment projects without, at the very least,
counsel from the city’s business community. This precept, no matter how capricious, persisted as
unimpeachable testimony protecting the corporation’s activities and philosophy until at least the
mid-1970s. Whereas, in the mid-1960s the United States Department of Housing and Urban
Development (HUD) began providing funds primarily for badly needed urban housing, urban historian
Alison Isenberg explains that “the alliance of business executives and concerned public officials
became especially skilled at bending the broad designs attached to federal urban renewal money
so that it could be used for downtown redevelopment.” Philadelphia’s 1951 Home Rule
Charter—which lessened the power of City Council and gave greater decision-making authority to the
mayor—further permitted such a climate to emerge around redevelopment. The legislation behind the
RA’s formation specifically allowed for private participation. As a complicating factor, none of the city’s
many official redevelopment agencies could truly claim final authority, even as they often pretended as
though they could. Series of negotiations and bargaining between both public and private bodies had
long formed a de facto protocol. The private sector’s role in redevelopment had normalized at the time
of the OPDC’s charter.²

That is not to say business eschewed all government as obstructive. According to the OPDC
and its cohort, city hall had encouraged the sort of environment downtown in which business could
again flourish, laying a significant foundation for unfettered redevelopment. The RA and CPC made
business development the priority, which put private enterprise on a strong footing and instilled
confidence in its backers. Growth in this sector, along with increases in homeownership, offered the
city the surest pathway to greater tax revenues. These agencies had identified, with OPDC and
business leadership assistance, areas of decline. According to a promotional film the Central
Philadelphia Development Corporation (CPDC, the present-day name of the OPDC) produced in

² Carolyn Adams, et al., Philadelphia: Neighborhoods, Division, and Conflict in a Postindustrial City
(Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 113; CPDC, Remaking Center City, v; William Rafsky,
“Private Opportunities in Government Urban Programs” (lecture outline, 46th Annual Conference of
National Association of Mutual Savings Banks, May 17, 1966), TUA; Finney to CRPC members,
(memo, “Draft report . . . ,” July 1966); Isenberg, Downtown America, 171; John G. McCullough,
“Philadelphia’s Movers and Shakers: No. 1; Potent Core of Civic Giants Molds City’s Destiny,”
Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, June 6, 1965, TUA; Roseman, “Public-private Co-operation and
Negotiation in Downtown Redevelopment,” ii, 1, 111.
2007, they allowed the corporation to “choose which structures to raze and which to rehab.” In doing so, city hall made businessmen equal partners in the reversal of troubling downtown trends. A 1978 Philadelphia Tribune article asserted that the RA was “extremely responsive to pressure from downtown businessmen and elected officials” alike and “more concerned with development projects and plans that would aid business” than projects assisting low-income residents. Ultimately, these directives had narrowed the OPDC’s focus from the beginning. After all, publicly sponsored business projects bolstered business confidence, not housing and jobs programs. The decline of major retailers on East Market Street during the 1950s and 1960s had weakened the area’s investment potential. The corporation, then, formed primarily for the purpose of attending to this select group of retailers.13

As of the mid 1950s, most U.S. cities had formed public-private organizations to coordinate downtown business development. The OPDC was the first of its kind in Philadelphia, but it gave way to many more in its image. This trend spoke to the urgency with which civic leaders perceived the dire state of downtown decline and the crucial position business itself could play in stanching white flight and reversing decay. Still, Philadelphia’s platform, which arose out of a sea change charter revision, constituted a special case. Redevelopers continued to view the purposes of renewal through a 19th-century lens and the pre-charter Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM) directives, but the OPDC fell in line with a new program of “improved city services, professional reform, and—above all—aggressive city planning,” urban planning scholar Christopher Klemek suggests. He also claims that the GPM had sought to “circumvent the conservative Chamber of Commerce and rally support from the private sector for the implementation of . . . planning proposals.” The OPDC began with less sweeping purview. Even so, as the corporation’s self-history notes, it still continued a “reform era

pattern of reciprocity between the boards of private non-profits and public agencies.” 1960s redevelopment historian Jeanne Lowe suggests that the GPM’s elite membership lobbied the hardest of all business groups for the new city charter’s passage, which it believed, in redefining city hall with a strong mayorality, would free up the private sector to impose their own ideas on redevelopment projects. The aggressive private sector could then also potentially benefit from dealings with a more centralized authority. 14

What differentiated the OPDC from the GPM came as the former’s chief purpose of fighting blight through business development. Part of that goal entailed identifying specific areas for renewal unlike those of the GPM. In addition, the GPM entered into no formal agreement with the city and counted no public officials among its roster. Though many other cities created similar public-private organizations, Lowe claims the OPDC was more “intricately orchestrated and multi-layered” than other such groups. The OPDC and other like-minded Philadelphia redevelopment bodies controlled redevelopment planning more than their city hall counterparts. “It’s board of directors . . . included the mayor, the president of city council and several key members of . . . [the] cabinet,” the CPDC’s self-history confirms. Lowe also maintains that in forming around a basic exchange between municipal leaders and businessmen, the corporation provided public officials a less visible roost from which to direct redevelopment and the private sector “unprecedented intervention.” The CPDC notes that a major component of this collaboration involved “evaluat[ing] the Planning Commission’s broader master plan for Center City,” essentially putting the private sector in charge of a city agency. Still, like the GPM membership, which overlapped with that of the OPDC’s private coterie, much of the corporation shared a suspicion of politicians and connected self-interest with municipal improvement. Banker and member of both organizations, William Kelly said, “The future of our companies . . . is tied to the growth of our city. When I spend time on civic affairs I’m in effect working on the bank’s business, too.” Such was the indistinctness of the OPDC’s private loyalties from its public ones. Like the GPM, though, Philadelphia’s public sector and its redevelopment officials created the corporation,

in addition to its actual renewal activities, as a dedicated public relations office for both attracting new companies as well as strengthening the businesses of its longtime peers. As referenced in the OPDC film, in 1963, the RA asked the OPDC to form a “national . . . campaign in which companies would be solicited to establish home offices or major branches in . . . Center City.” Rafsky, in his many speeches and lectures, also advocated for the private sector’s “help . . . in mobiliz[ing] public opinion for important downtown projects.” Likewise, he also hoped the OPDC would blur “the distinction between the two major economic and governmental forces.”

In 1948, the GPM organized the Better Philadelphia Exhibition. Housed at Gimbel’s department store, the exhibit drew tens of thousands and contributed greatly to the city’s redevelopment revolution. It underscored, for the public, press and civic leaders, the transformations possible given the right motivation. By the time the exhibit concluded, its subject had won the good graces of all three groups. Eight years later, the OPDC film explains, Mayor Richardson Dilworth sought out Albert Greenfield, Philadelphia’s most visible real estate mover and shaker, to form the OPDC as a means to “speed the revival of the central city,” Architect Oscar Stonorov, Edmund Bacon, Greenfield, and Greater Philadelphia Movement (GPM) leadership met with Dilworth at city hall to hash out the new non-profit’s domain. From his post as City Planning Commissioner, the film notes, Greenfield, “recruited the private sector leaders in business, finance and culture.” Through force of personality, he shaped the OPDC mandate in conformity with his values as a real estate magnate. Philadelphia scholar Carolyn Adams writes, “Greenfield went on to insist that ‘the entire 1000 acres southeast of Independence Hall, an area that formed one quarter of Center City, . . . should be certified for urban renewal.’” She suggests that Greenfield and other renewal boosters understood redevelopment as a mechanism for the “revalorization of downtown property.” He envisioned the OPDC as a non-profit having undefined and pliable powers: as encouragement for local and national real estate investment, as merely a liaison between city hall and redevelopment agencies, or as an actual redeveloper. Prominent bankers and businessmen possessed a common language with

investors, and Greenfield believed they would most assiduously coax members of their own cohort into believing in a coming Philadelphia revitalization. Furthermore, the OPDC could maintain its membership and goals even as members of city government came and went. At the same time, many of Greenfield’s planning colleagues feared he would too stringently control the corporation’s mission. Members of the CPC quit in response his appointment as its commissioner. Dilworth, even as he understood the CPC head’s importance as an organizational force for uniting government and the private sector, also considered Greenfield potentially obstructionist. Most members of the OPDC kept one hand in company business and the other in municipal affairs. Greenfield, however, practically embodied the blurring of public and private sectors. Lowe writes, “He had owned, or brokered, at one time or another, half of Philadelphia, and had vast holdings in department stores, office buildings and hotels . . . downtown.” Although Greenfield cut all formal connections to the real estate business prior to taking his post heading the CPC, at the time, he qualified the terms, stating, “his interest from then on would be ‘a sentimental one, not of material interest’.”  

Rafsky began his career in Philadelphia redevelopment politics as the city’s Housing Director under reform Mayor Joseph Clark in 1952. Within a decade, he rose to become the most influential player in Philadelphia’s downtown renewal efforts. During his ascent, unlike many other OPDC members, Rafsky never directly benefited from participation in business, but he still represents the most salient blurring of Philadelphia’s public and private sectors. After making several lateral moves within the Clark and Dilworth administrations, first as Clark’s executive secretary and later as Development Coordinator, Dilworth appointed Rafsky director of the RA in 1958.  

His rise through city bureaucracy might seem the normal career trajectory of a particularly ambitious civil servant, but


17 Lowe, Cities in a Race with Time, 333.
the connections he collected with each rung climbed allowed Rafsky a greater fluency for negotiating the often incongruent redevelopment demands of local government and downtown business.

During his tenure at the helm of the RA, Rafsky, like his contemporaries, concentrated mostly on slum clearance in North Philadelphia. Slowly, though, he came to understand that starting from scratch with large swaths of open land amidst blocks of surrounding ghetto areas would not entice the sort of prestige development his cohort hoped would stanch the movement of whites to the suburbs. He soon turned the RA’s efforts to targeted blight removal, and the agency began both to identify blighted areas downtown and confer with OPDC leaders about potential projects that could alleviate problems in those areas. At an urban renewal conference years later, Rafsky said of the agency’s purpose, “Redevelopment . . . is the ability of government to acquire and control, either by purchase or by legislating certain types of actions, private property in order to ensure that . . . [it] . . . is used . . . for suitable purposes . . . and if necessary to make [it] available to private entrepreneurs for their redevelopment.” Rafsky added that the authority’s goals followed this directive through the 1960s.18

Rafsky’s influence grew immeasurably in 1963 when he accepted the executive directorship of the OPDC. Retaining his services officially stood as a bellwether for the OPDC and other redevelopment boosters because it offered them unprecedented access to the mayor’s office and other government channels. Also, City Hall now had a man in the OPDC, which had grown in stature following its residential neighborhood successes. Though he had worked closely with the corporation since its founding, his new position allowed both Rafsky and the OPDC as a whole to operate as if under the aegis of government while maintaining primary allegiance to business leaders. Indeed, the former RA chief stayed on the mayor’s cabinet in an unofficial capacity. “Rafsky is my no. 1 lieutenant . . . and I have an understanding with the OPDC that he will continue to be so,” said Mayor Tate at the time. Under mayors Dilworth and Tate, Rafsky’s word on downtown redevelopment carried the most influence. Midway through the 1960s, a Philadelphia Evening Bulletin article succinctly characterized his power: “Over the past 12 years [he] has had more to say about the shape and form of Philadelphia than any other person.” Clearly, by 1963, he had already enjoyed a long period bending the ears of public officials. Philadelphia historian John Bauman notes that when it came to urban renewal: “The

mayor [Dilworth] listens to no one else.” Greenfield first cleared his idea for the OPDC with Rafsky before proceeding with organizational plans. The new executive director had already spent years amassing a vast address book of powerful collaborators and honing great skill for coordinating between private redevelopers and government agencies. Urban scholar Guian McKee suggests Rafsky took the post at the OPDC explicitly because it allowed him to “consolidate his authority and enhance his role as ‘the real coordinator.’ Upon his acceptance, he said, “We are very close to a total coverage of Center City as one great renewal area.”19 Ambitious projects lay ahead.

Even so, Rafsky, in the course of his career, exhibited personal conflict over the effectiveness and suitability of the city’s redevelopment projects. It would be simplistic at best to characterize him as a pawn of the business community. In an op-ed to the Bulletin a year before becoming RA director, he noted, “Crime, delinquency, health and housing in near North Philadelphia . . . [are] . . . perhaps the most important long-range problem[s] that . . . affect . . . the growth and development of Philadelphia.” Rafsky, thoughtful and studious, understood early the multivalent forces affecting downtown decline. Whereas other redevelopment proponents spoke merely of transforming downtown into a whites-exclusive promenade, Rafsky, amidst the Market East ramp-up, reminded his peers, “The country is affluent enough to support an all-out attack on city problems, and those of us who have ‘made it’ should be prepared to share our affluence with those who have not.” Though in the same speech, he warned that, “The pendulum may swing too much the other way in which the major progress and highest priorities will be assigned exclusively to dealing with the underprivileged at the expense of physical improvement programs.”20 Rafsky, indeed, embodied the tension inherent to reform politics that Philadelphia redevelopers tried to reconcile.

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On the other hand, founding OPDC president William Day is most responsible for shaping the corporation’s public image as downtown’s savior. In addition, his PR campaigns most effectively convinced city hall, the press, the public, and downtown leadership in general that recreating Center City to serve middle class and suburban whites would surely reverse economic, demographic, and physical signs of decline. As chairman of the downtown-based First Pennsylvania Bank and Trust Company, like other OPDC members, Day had a vested interest in preserving the exclusive character of his business’s environs. Although the corporation stressed its commitment to the city itself over the interests of the metropolitan region and its posed its members as life-long city residents, Day resided in suburban Devon, Pennsylvania. Still, Day lavished the city with promises of a grand return to regional centrality. The OPDC “will provide guidance and stimulation for programs which we believe will result in joining . . . this entire area [Center City] together into one united plan that will make the center of our city the envy of the world,” he said in late 1965. Breathless exhortations aside, Day’s true promotional coup came as his repeated disparagement of the smaller East Market Street merchants and their patrons. He could barely control his disgust: “Its unchecked blight had made it one of the worst appearing retail business districts in the nation,” he wrote in an OPDC press release. Of the city’s endemic poverty amongst minorities, he offered, “I am convinced that the malaise of Philadelphia [stems from] a fundamental shortfall in matters of the spirit. We have lost faith in ourselves—we think negatively and our priorities are all mixed up.”

Of all the corporation’s elite redevelopment boosters, Day most fervently evinced a belief in the OPDC mission of coaxing “decent” people back to East Market Street.

Membership in the corporation generally reflected what Feride Oymak, in an unpublished (and resolutely Marxist) dissertation, characterized as “members of the middle bourgeoisie who either do not want to join the ranks of the ruling class or who have not been able to do so.” Oymak also offers a more even-handed assessment. He also describes members as “professional citizens.” Still, taken

together, his descriptors construct a vivid and accurate rendering of the OPDC’s cohort. No doubt, the stature of its membership provided for much of the organization’s visibility. Although it would be misguided to characterize the OPDC as sinister and simplistic to call it racist, like with many public-private redevelopment groups, the corporation’s members operated from a normalized vantage of racial exclusion and civic shortsightedness. Furthermore, the OPDC, though it basically set redevelopment policy, was not accountable to an electorate. Even the OPDC’s own recent self-history remarked, “To serve on the board . . . , members had to be president or board chairman of their firm.” Still, in the mid-sixties, as the OPDC entered its strongest period of authority, local press underscored the organization’s fat-cat reputation, suggesting members’ ability to intimidate and easy access to capital qualified them far more than their commitment to civic loyalty and fair-minded benevolence. True, the corporation’s members prized political independence over governmental accountability and projects bolstering downtown reputation over more charitable undertakings. But they also relished and cultivated a status as downtown’s civic angels. “Even in a great city such as Philadelphia, the burden of civic responsibility seems to fall inevitably on only a small group of individuals,” wrote Day in June of 1967. Constructing an image of dutiful and put-upon citizens allowed the OPDC a great deal of leeway and support in pushing projects through city hall that, more often than not, hurt as many Philadelphia citizens as they benefited. Additionally, the corporation upheld itself as a varied group of urban experts—typically as a roundtable of businessmen, educators, civic servants, and union leaders—most equipped to lead the whole city out of its decline. Its rosters, however, offered a much narrower characterization: almost all OPDC members headed large banks, retail giants or powerful law firms. The designation of “educator” applied only to the presidents of Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania, two institutions committed as well to walling themselves off from surrounding ghetto neighborhoods and redeveloping residential blocks through aggressive exercise of eminent domain. In fact, since the OPDC mainly encouraged grand-scale business development, members unaffiliated with Center City commerce would be of little use to the organization. Many hoped business interests could secure official influence. In a 1966 speech, Rafsky explained, “Top civic leaders and businessmen should be involved directly in the problem by having them as citizen members on agency
boards . . . Every effort should be made to avoid compromise and settling for lower level community leaders."

Furthermore, even as it positioned itself as a quasi-governmental body, the OPDC and its allies at city hall also took great strides to align the corporation within an apolitical scope of volunteer non-profits. Founding executive director John P. Robin insisted, “The OPDC is a non-profit citizens’ organization. It has no public powers. Its strength comes from its acceptance by public officials as a disinterested associate in seeking what is best for Philadelphia.” Its members also positioned the OPDC as fighting for the best interests of all Philadelphia citizens. Even more benignly, the organization just as often declared itself a historic conservator of William Penn’s original layout and vision. Cloaking itself under the guise of history provided the OPDC a thick shield behind which it could deflect public criticism. Indeed, it frequently announced itself as opposed to increased commercialization in the eastern sector of Market Street, in particular, near Independence Hall. In 1962, Day remarked, “It is the belief of the . . . [OPDC] . . . that public exhibits . . . should be carefully limited to . . . displays of authentic character and indisputable good taste. Every effort should be made to prevent any projects which would detract from the high purpose to which the area is dedicated.”

Rafsky, on occasion, stressed the importance of hearing neighborhood criticism rather than merely offering token reception. Clearly, with Rafsky, internal frictions over redevelopment abounded.


Calling any stretch of East Market Street an area of good taste and authentic character allowed the OPDC to define the terms of preservation, public usage, and scope of retailing along the entire corridor. As in Society Hill and Washington Square West, it could then demand, as a means for honoring historical intent, the redevelopment of a formerly low and middle-income neighborhood exclusively for the affluent. The corporation could also pick and choose which buildings it believed fit in with its preservation goals. When convenient, the OPDC posed historical preservation as crucial to the survival of downtown. Slums and blight, it insisted, "cheapen[ed]" the old sections of Philadelphia, which stood as some of the city's most valuable assets.  

At its chartering, City Hall bestowed the OPDC with official, if occluded, duties and designations, but examining the meanings of those roles offers more obfuscation than illumination. For all its grandiloquence, the corporation's official line, "It will serve as a coordinating and expediting force in bringing together the work of the CPC, RA, the federal, state and city governments . . . The most important aspects of the work is to release the energy of private initiative in developing the area" could not have more skillfully avoided clarification. "Channel of communication between government and private enterprise" and "formal consultant to the . . . Redevelopment Authority for all matters of center city renewal and development policy" offered even less. Although it remained unclear exactly what the OPDC did, to a large degree that was the point. The corporation held such sway in matters of redevelopment precisely because no official body explicitly imposed limits on its powers or oversight on its activities. As its consultant, the OPDC assisted the RA on a wide range of plans, including selection of architects, schedules of evictions and demolitions, project timelines, and, most importantly, areas for inclusion in the renewal project. Such a designation belies the actual relationship. In truth, the corporation acted as a proxy for directing the RA's activities in Center City. Indeed, OPDC vice president Gustave Amsterdam became RA chair in 1961, completing another cycle of public-private overlap. In 1967, Rafsky "reported that the RA had indicated that it is prepared to act promptly on the Market Street East project after it receives approval of the plan by the OPDC

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24 Alfred Blasband to James H. J. Tate, October 25, 1966, PCA. At the time of this correspondence, Blasband was either the owner or some other representative of the Yellow Cab Company of Philadelphia; Forsythe, "New Life at Our Birthplace"; Greenfield, "Greenfield Sees Further Gains In Phila. Area"; Isenberg, Downtown America, 167.
In fact, the OPDC possessed at least equal power and influence to that of the RA and exceeded the power and influence of the famed CPC.

The corporation exploited its shrouded position in harnessing redevelopment potential for its business peers, as well as for the business interests of actual members. Philadelphia scholar Andrew Feffer suggests “downtown corporations and real estate interests” controlled the OPDC from its very formation. Local press assumed the entire scope of downtown renewal rested solely on its efforts to align the wills of a complex government hierarchy and impatient business leaders. These theories hold water, as local government itself felt, at best, in need of assistance in translating a multivalent commercial impulse into a downtown revitalization. Initially, at least, city hall imagined the OPDC as a more equitable waypoint, actively considering the views of non-members and smaller merchants, remaining passive to RA directives. Rafsky, in a 1968 speech to the Governors’ Conference on Housing, waxed sanguine: “what is called for is a partnership between government and private enterprise, where the ability of business is harnessed to a democratically based policy in which there is full participation by those affected.” Whether speaking coyly or hopefully, Rafsky’s suggestion stood at quite a distance from the reality of downtown redevelopment. Cutting the other way, in previous speeches, Rafsky and other OPDC leaders expressed a desire for business leaders having a hand in directly setting policy.

Kirk Petshek situates the OPDC’s redevelopment role as occupying sinister terrain. In the 1960s and 1970s, Petshek published various works on Philadelphia urban history and wider race relations studies, but he also sat on several of the city’s planning and redevelopment boards. As such, he could view those agencies from the inside and from a scholarly distance. He defines the OPDC as

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25 CPDC, Remaking Center City, 3, 9; Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, Annual Report, 1972, PCA; Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, information packet, undated, PCA; Old Philadelphia Development Corporation (minutes, executive committee, July 26, 1967), PCA.


an "informal pressure group" and a “fourth power [of government, a] . . . largely self-selected minority of citizens wielding tremendous influence over the affairs of government.” Although Petshek obscures much of the mechanics behind the corporation’s founding and operation and believes the OPDC naive rather than self-interested, he correctly labels its ultimately capabilities. Unlike official redevelopment and planning agencies, the OPDC acted at the behest of neither the public nor elected officials. “They exert awesome influence on Philadelphia’s day-to-day doings . . . In this unofficial . . . branch of government there are layers within layers,” suggested the Bulletin in 1965. Likewise, they avoided conflict in appearing outside the scope of a current political climate, staunchly connecting their goals with the abstraction of the city’s best interests.27

Additionally, though it directed RA policy from behind a two-way mirror, the OPDC also took on the task of warding off criticism of its official counterpart. In this way, the corporation, as Roseman espouses, “cushioned project plans against the slings and arrows of adversely affected citizens.” Moreover, in his unpublished dissertation, Roseman writes, “OPDC support of administration plans was useful to the city in squelching criticism of bureaucratic high-handedness.” Although this writer often fawns over the corporation and defines its role downtown as an unqualified success, his painting of the OPDC as RA bulldog is apt. Rafsky bolstered these claims when, in 1969, as Market Street East progress derailed, he explained, “when confronted with political power interests which are opposed to the planning proposals, the planner undermines his effectiveness if he becomes the bargainer.” Planners, Rafsky continued, interacted best with opposition through an informed proxy. “The planner, therefore, should not be afraid to make bold recommendations just so long as they are not aimed at destroying the system,” he concluded.28 The OPDC, then, could construct redevelopment plans as well as act as its own independent defender.

Identifying the OPDC (and other such quasi-governmental groups) as volunteer organizations contradicts the professional aspects of its structure and activities. Explained Philadelphia Magazine in 1972, “As a consultant, OPDC carries behind it the weight of practically every establishment name and


business firm associated with the center city area.” Although frequently given to overstatement, the article correctly identified its subject as more a consultant to the business leadership than City Hall. Furthermore, Greenfield’s contributions ensured the OPDC handsomely paid its executive committee. Oymak points to Robin’s “annual salary of $35,000—one higher than received by any Philadelphia [public] official.” Additionally, the Bulletin portrayed the city’s public-private membership as employed full-time for their causes, more so than their governmental counterparts. Upon taking his OPDC post, Rafsky entered into a highly lucrative delayed compensation plan with the corporation.29

The RA and OPDC did not endeavor to completely level East Market Street and start over. Their combined leadership, as well as their consultants, understood the value of allowing certain cultural institutions and sections of the corridor to remain somewhat unchanged. Unsurprisingly, these pockets had already long appealed to the wealthy and respectable demographic. The RA, OPDC, and the entire coterie of redevelopment boosters consistently but subtly segregated identifications of race and class under a rubric of housing stock quality and personal initiative. In a confidential report to Center City’s Community Renewal Program members, the organization suggested, “The differences reinforce themselves. Wealthy families protect their housing and environment. Poor families have neither the resources nor the sophistication to protect their living areas.” Ultimately, such missives allowed the OPDC to point to a hand urban circumstances had forced it to play in redeveloping Washington Square West and Society Hill for affluent whites. Center City merely needed areas of prestige in order to thrive again, the corporation ventured. The OPDC, it implicitly acknowledged, held no sway in changing who happened to occupy such economic space. Still, its critics abounded. Local social justice activist, George Dukes, rightly identified the corporation as wielding stronger control over the fate of neighborhoods than residents of those areas themselves.30 Although his point should not evince surprise, it underscores the power the OPDC possessed in deciding which aspects of an area would persist and which would cease.


Jewelers’ Row, though hardly unified in terms of appearance and patently obsolete when compared to the grand cohesion redevelopment boosters had planned for East Market Street and its environs, never risked demolition. In the OPDC-commissioned Market Street East study, the firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) praised the Arch Street block: “Despite their unpretentious appearance and low rent, these buildings [and firms] constitute an irreplaceable asset, . . . [serve as] . . . ‘incubator space’ in which new business ideas of every kind can be tried, . . . [and] contribute to the vitality, variety and availability of highly specialized services which set Center City apart from the suburban centers.” Seemingly, the accolades SOM paid Jewelers’ Row also described the adjacent areas redevelopers planned to demolish. The OPDC hoped to excise other such retail spaces, but recognized that Jewelers’ Row, unlike the bars and pool halls further south on Market, continued to draw whites from the suburbs and affluent downtown enclaves. As sellers of jewelry—markers of time and exclusivity for those who could afford them—it quaintly contributed to the mythology and remembered glamour of Philadelphia’s downtown.31

Indeed, exclusion, for the corporation and its cohort, formed a significant component of its motivational framework. Redefining whom the downtown would come to welcome assured the city’s renewal boosters that redevelopment could, as the CPC hoped, “re-establish values.” Downtown had not actually died so long as transformation could promise a new beginning. In this way, the corporation’s notion of value and loss became bound up in its goal of bringing an elite memory of downtown back to a temporal surface. Of course, this objective presupposed three additional assumptions. One, that transformation could reverse the complex changes of time. Two, that whites on either side of the metropolitan divide would respond to a transformation as the OPDC intended. Fogelson reminds us of a third, and most dangerous, pitfall: that redevelopment boosters rarely avoided, “clinging to values that never existed or that . . . [had] . . . long since disappeared.”32

Certainly, staking out territory for prestige to flourish first required the corporation and its collaborators

32 CPDC, Remaking Center City, vii; Fogelson, Downtown, 353; CPC, (memo, “Center City Redevelopment Area Plan,” December 1967); Wood, “Suburbanization of Center City,” 328.
to identify downtown as its majestic kingdom in purgatory. But conflating myth and value posed great, if perhaps unforeseeable, problems for the Market East and Gallery projects in the future.

As such, revaluation through redevelopment, as the OPDC understood it, called for reinforcement of physical, temporal, cultural, and economic barriers. The RA, CPC, and the developers who carried the agencies’ plans had learned the importance of creating borders during their combined slum clearance campaign. Local construction company owner and RA project partner, Norman Denny, like other members of the redevelopment coterie, encouraged the RA to leave wide bands “of demolished houses between . . . construction areas and the nearest slum.” Rafsky, as the driving force behind the RA and OPDC, retained this concept even as he eschewed slum clearance. He believed blight, as a cancer, easily affected nearby areas. The OPDC’s projects, if strong enough, provided Center City with both prestige and a buffer. The corporation understood building barriers as crucial to maintenance of redevelopment success. Speaking of his work in the OPDC, a draft of Rafsky’s official biographical sheet explained that the corporation’s head “was able to concentrate on the heart of the renewal program, which was the revitalization of . . . Center City, from which it derived much of its economic strength.” But, as if to demonstrate the organization’s true allegiances and ostensibly in preparation for a final copy, an unnamed editor scratched out the subsequent clause from Rafsky’s bio: “that enabled it to continue its program throughout Philadelphia.” George Dukes concurred, connecting the OPDC’s eastern sector renewal projects and later attempts to build an expressway along Center City’s southern border as sealing off downtown for the benefit of well-to-do whites, suburban and urban.33

Urban renewal boosters, though they publicly prized Philadelphia’s architectural history and applied such tropes to shield sweeping and exclusionary projects from criticism, often dropped their commitments when convenient. Rafsky defended a new office building erected within eyeshot of

33 “Accomplishments of Development Coordinator,” undated, PCA. This document outlines William Rafsky’s accomplishments when he held the position of Philadelphia’s Development Coordinator; Norman D. Denny to James H. J. Tate, (November 9, 1961), PCA. At the time of this correspondence, Denny owned Denny Development Corporation, a private construction firm. Tate sat on Philadelphia City Council; Dukes, (remarks, public hearing on Cross Town Expressway, undated); “Paraphrasing of Lou Kahn Seminars—Market East Proposal: Tape No. 2—Second Meeting with Lou Kahn” (undated), PCA; Roseman, “Public-private Co-operation and Negotiation in Downtown Redevelopment,” 123-124, 128.
Independence Mall, saying, “I think its modern design is in good taste.” He and Bacon both relaxed their historical vows when it came to the coming Bicentennial. Rafsky spoke of a modern corridor leading visitors to America’s birth site. Bacon informed the press that the city’s redevelopment agencies would not insist new buildings near Independence Hall have colonial designs. Later, as the RA stepped up its demolition of East Market Street, OPDC meeting minutes discussed the removal of the Friends Meeting House near Twelfth and Market Streets. In the same report, the corporation reaffirmed itself as at “the forefront in the efforts to preserve and maintain historically significant buildings in the City of Philadelphia.”

Clearly, the OPDC viewed its role downtown as rather elastic. The methods by which the OPDC re-imagined downtown also spoke to the reform/progressive Philadelphia’s only superficial commitment to civil rights. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, African-American activists continually railed against discriminatory renewal projects. Even in the 21st century, the Central Philadelphia Development Corporation (the OPDC’s current name) characterized the protests as stemming from the African-American community’s “rising expectations and impatience.” As early as 1963, Rafsky rather callously summed up the collateral damage of redevelopment thusly: “Renewal . . . often means hardship and pain. There’s no getting away from that. People get used to a neighborhood--it’s been their home, maybe for generations. The neighborhood crumbles and must go.” Boosters pointed to the 1964 North Philadelphia riots, which had intensified white outcry against perceived Democratic support of African-American rights, as both confirmation of minorities’ unsuitable downtown presence and those same groups’ preference for living in the ghetto. At the same time, Rafsky understood the true motivation for the black frustrations boiling over in the neighborhoods only a few miles from Center City. To protect downtown investments, he offered an agenda of placation. Rafsky suggested implementing a program through North Philadelphia churches that dangled the possibility of moving out to the suburbs to qualified parishioners. “The impact on any suburban community would be minute because only a handful of families would be sponsored by any one church”, Rafsky explained. Aside from using “Negro ministers” and “snitches” as a means for keeping tabs on future unrest, he also recommended city

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34 Forsythe, “New Life at Our Birthplace”; William White to members of the Board of Directors of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, (memo, April 22, 1971), PCA. At the time of drafting this memo, White was OPDC President.
agencies, the police and redevelopment offices anticipate coming anger and prepare responses. The power of local law enforcement and success of downtown renewal were, according to Rafsky, closely related. “Such a review need not in any way reduce the effectiveness of police operations,” he concluded, “The basic purpose would be to satisfy the public that every step has been taken to avoid police brutality, and that those who raise the charge are doing do out of ignorance or out of malice.35 As in his efforts to stymie minority critiques of the OPDC’s Center City project, Rafsky also believed the ends of white perception justified the means of minority silencing.

Redevelopment and public relations successes also allowed the corporation to expand its role publicly. In 1964, as a response to self-shaped demands, the OPDC announced it would begin consulting the RA on all Center City redevelopment projects. The corporation had not made this request of the Authority, so much as it had, subtly and over time, convinced the agency, city hall, and the press of the urgency of its calling. According to Roseman, the Washington Square East and Society Hill projects had already been “marked by OPDC action in far more than its formally recognized of consultant to the Redevelopment Authority and redeveloper for historic home restoration.” The OPDC had initially presented a submissive posture to that of official channels in order to commence what it believed important shifts in redevelopment protocol without appearing to shake up the established order. Even so, the corporation had never intended to remain a mere voice of suggestion. As the CPDC reports, during the planning stages of its Washington Square East project, members “lobbied city, state, and federal officials, . . . publicly endorsed projects, . . . and worked behind the scenes to mediate between preservationists and modernists, . . . funded design studies, and attracted developers to Philadelphia.” Neither the corporation’s members nor their peers felt content to allow the revitalization of Center City to come at its natural pace. The OPDC felt itself, even at the point of its chartering, an equal to the RA in terms of both policy-making and civic righteousness. As early as 1961, the corporation said, “we are happy to acknowledge a high degree of intelligent

35 CPDC, Remaking Center City, 11; Matthew Countryman, Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 123, 163; Knight, “A City Must Plan—or Die”; William Rafsky, “Delaware Valley’s Housing Needs and New Directions” (lecture, RCEO Council Meeting, Philadelphia, PA November 29, 1967), TUA; William L. Rafsky to James H. J. Tate, (memo, “Handling the problem of the Negro ghetto in view of the Los Angeles riots,” August 25, 1965), PCA. At the time of this correspondence, Rafsky headed the OPDC, and wrote to Tate (then the city’s Mayor) in that capacity.
cooperation to the men and women in government who have accepted the Corporation as a sister agency working in a common public cause."

That same year, the OPDC reaffirmed its purview on East Market Street when it formed the Market Street East Committee (MSEC). George Rincliffe, president of the Philadelphia Electric Company, headed this particular branch of the corporation. In effect, the MSEC consolidated the interests of the most powerful retailers on Market: the street’s four largest department stores. Still, the OPDC publicly demurred, posing its new “responsibilities . . . [coordinating] all development from river to river, Spring Garden on the north to Bainbridge Street . . . on the south” as a measure preventing “private investors working in fragmented ‘islands’ of development in various sections of the core city completely unrelated.” Rafsky and the bulk of its membership aimed to also consolidate the temporal boundaries of Center City. This subtle remapping of downtown allowed the OPDC to both casually redefine its public image and also suggested to city hall the interconnectedness of the corporation’s projects. The corporation was able to instill public and municipal confidence in its motivations as well as its abilities. In this way, the OPDC gained even more influence and power in downtown redevelopment matters. It had taken on so much responsibility already, mostly lightening the load on the RA, that wresting new powers permitted the corporation to appear as coming to the aid of government and it also allowed public officials to be grateful. Furthermore, the OPDC bolstered its own role in the East Market Street crisis, announcing it as “of increasing importance in the execution of this renewal project.”

Public officials could sit back and watch along with the general public.

It should be of no surprise that the OPDC was founded under the impulse of private business consolidation. Most of the members worked for major corporations and law firms. They thought of themselves as Philadelphians, and, thereby, believed they held vested interests in maintaining the status quo downtown. This cohort had long sought to get their way unrestricted. Philadelphia and the

36 CPDC, Remaking Center City, viii, 1, 3, 9; Member of Old Philadelphia Development Corporation executive committee to James H. J. Tate, (September 30, 1965), PCA. The person writing to Tate (then Mayor) was, judging from the familiar tone, Rafsky or, possibly, William Day; Roseman, “Public-private Co-operation and Negotiation in Downtown Redevelopment,” 112, 135-136.

nation presented Bacon as the savior of downtown. Still, even before the OPDC chartered, he became well accustomed to seeking approval for his ideas from the GPM, and the private business and development communities on top of City Hall. Though well qualified as an urban planner, Bacon’s CPC could merely propose areas and projects to the more bureaucratic and autonomous Redevelopment Authority. Indeed, as Dilworth’s Development Coordinator, Rafsky brought in the already tenacious GPM to form the OPDC as a means for mediating Bacon and the CPC’s control of Center City redevelopment with that of the aggressive business leaders. The latter dealt with few of the controls binding the former, and self-interest proved an efficient motivator. Moreover, Rafsky had clashed with Bacon as far back as the Clark administration, and Rafsky had often pushed the mayor to fire his rival.

The independence of OPDC actions allowed the restrictions Rafsky’s own offices faced to fall away somewhat. Greenfield, in early press comments, predicated as much. The corporation, he reported, “will have Redevelopment Authority powers.” In 1968, as the OPDC approved the Gimbels move, city hall bestowed the organization with authority to “borrow monies for projects involving slum clearance and redevelopment.” In a speech given at the 1969 National Planning Conference, Rafsky said of his participation on either side of the public and non-profit line, “There can be little dispute . . . that there are many . . . opportunities where planners can maximize, and even exceed, their recognized areas of responsibility.” In many of the Market Street East negotiations between the city and redevelopers, the OPDC stood as the final authority. The corporation evaluated architectural and economic plans for the project, dismissing Victor Gruen over his unorthodox ideas and later courting James Rouse. At best, the RA and OPDC acted as two halves of Philadelphia’s redevelopment brain. The corporation set the pace of the Market Street East project and demanded new approaches of its consultants. Executive committee minutes of a late July 1967 meeting reported “that the Redevelopment Authority had indicated that it is prepared to act promptly on the Market Street East project after it receives approval of the plan by the OPDC executive committee.” Although city council

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ultimately controlled the municipal purse strings, the RA effectively handed the reigns over as far as the corporation’s Center City projects were concerned. The transfer hardly caused any pain, though, for as Adams explains, city hall had long taken only a “supporting role . . . from time to time.” She locates much of the scope of downtown redevelopment as within the command of public-private organizations. Although a 1970 National Academy of Public Administration study criticized Philadelphia’s redevelopment structure for failing to address “poverty amidst affluence” and an “[in]appropriate mix of revenue sources,” the OPDC essentially acted with impunity.\(^{39}\)

The OPDC (and, by extension, the RA) believed restrictions on government had, in part, caused decline in Philadelphia’s downtown areas. Its very formation ventured the notion that redevelopment should control government funds without government interference. Rafsky blamed these restrictions—arduous application processes, shifting government priorities, among others—as giving the more homogenous suburbs a significant leg-up. The OPDC, as an intermediary, could promote and push redevelopment policies with the strength of the RA but under the radar and out from under the stringency the restrictions applied to its official counterpart. The RA took much of the heat from local opposition and dealt with bureaucratic oversight. The OPDC retained its independence and concentrated on pleasing developers. The corporation membership, assuming the righteousness of its goals, felt government restrictions should not have applied to its projects.\(^{40}\) Still, why did the OPDC, as an independent body, even carry on with the pageantry of equal government participation if it held official protocol in such low esteem? Why not simply serve as a proxy for businesses and developers? The answer is straightforward. Although the corporation could encourage the RA to condemn certain tracts, it could not act independently on this front. As particularly grand-scale, the OPDC’s projects

\(^{39}\) Adams, et al., *Philadelphia*, 116; Peter Binzen, “U.S. Study Finds Gulf Between Tate, Business,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, January 21, 1970, TUA; Day to OPDC executive committee members, (memo, Market Street East project, July 24, 1967); Lowe, *Cities in a Race with Time*, 327; OPDC executive committee meeting (minutes, July 26, 1967); William L. Rafsky to Edmund N. Bacon, (May 9, 1963), PCA.

entailed control over large swaths of clear land. The RA solely controlled the final decision of how and what to coordinate eminent domain and condemnation. Through these procedures, the Authority took ownership of the area at low cost, both absorbing part of the risk for developers and providing land assemblages much more efficiently than private capital could accomplish alone. In fact, in areas like Society Hill, Washington Square East, and East Market Street, it would be nearly impossible for a private business to amass such an uninterrupted land assemblage unassisted. Its hopes for cohesive and consolidated redevelopment paramount, the OPDC also bristled at the option of organizing groups of independent developers for any one project. Rafsky noted this power as the only crucial element of government involvement in downtown renewal. Leadership in this domain, he asserted, should land wholly on the public side of the coin.41

The OPDC’s first two projects, Society Hill and Washington Square East, were adjacent housing redevelopments, and so, should be discussed together. The former sat roughly between Chestnut, 7th, Lombard Streets, and the Delaware River; the latter, just to the northwest of the former. So, in turn, just south of East Market Street. The corporation and the RA designed them as reclaimations of former luxury neighborhoods. They also hoped the new environments would entice wealthy suburbanites and current city dwellers to resettle in Center City, displacing lower-income residents. As such, these projects constitute the OPDC and RA’s tentative, if aggressive, first steps at social engineering. In terms of a complete plan for Center City, Society Hill and Washington Square East influenced redevelopers’ decision to intensify their re-imagining of East Market Street. Both neighborhoods, as of the mid-sixties, though not by any stretch slums, had broken from their history as upper class areas, now containing many black families and many boarding houses. Though Edmund Bacon fomented the idea, and the OPDC and RA largely followed his framework through to the end, they quickly took the reins. Bacon had not intended this stage of neighborhood renewal as an explicit appeal to suburbanites in the aggregate. Rather, as Klemek suggests,42 the extremism of Bacon’s . . .

project lay instead in his desire to counter the suburbanization of Philadelphia elites.” In fact, he and other redevelopers envisioned the projects as “smashing the image of the core surrounded by a ring of the lowest income group moving outward in an ever widening circle leaving a sea of devastation in its wake,” Klemek writes. He designed these luxury neighborhoods as proof against increased minority presence downtown, but the corporation expanded their use as barriers from encroaching blight from North Philadelphia. The CPC, OPDC, and RA alike, Klemek surmises, felt the mingling of history and exclusivity made for attracting people who were "affluent but passionately convinced that suburbs are wrong and cities are the place to bring up children.” To create the right sort of residential climate, redevelopers--especially the OPDC--hand-picked new buyers (no renters) committed to the corporation’s settled-upon ideal and able to restore the houses to a narrow colonial standard.42

Exclusivity created demand. The OPDC created a resident selection committee and went after figures of great reputation. As if to send an instantaneous message of transformation, the OPDC coaxed Mayor Richardson Dilworth into signing one of the first Society Hill mortgages (for $150,000 when most African-American families in the neighborhood earned around $2,000 per year). The RA served notice on 567 houses in Society Hills, issuing ultimatums of restoration or eviction. Most low-income families (and many middle-come ones) had no choice and moved. Squashing any doubt, Dilworth claimed, “we’ve got to get the white (leadership) back . . . We have to give the whites confidence that they can live in town without being flooded.” Confidence, euphemistically, amounted to little more than well-groomed homogeneity. In short order, “Society Hill [and Washington Square East] became . . . ‘fashionable address[es]’ once more,” writes Oymak. With much fanfare but little consideration, the two projects ushered in an era in Philadelphia of moving low-income housing plans below urgent proposals for retaining affluent whites in the local docket of redevelopment plans. Rafsky said as late as 1968, “Redevelopment should be applied not only for housing of low income families

but also for housing, where necessary to hold on to other population groups which may be leaving the city." Rafsky’s, in a previous draft, had substituted “where necessary” with “for the well to do.”

In addition to transforming the neighborhoods demographically, downtown redevelopers recreated Society Hill and Washington Square East to bolster the city’s tax revenue. Affluent areas simply rated higher in tax rolls than others. They also required far less in city services. Projects such as these were such a boon to Philadelphia because the RA purchased properties at their current lower worth and then sold the properties to buyers or developers at much higher prices. The city received profit from the sales, subsequent increased tax revenue, and an attractive new neighborhood. Leo Adde, a scholar of 1960s urban renewal projects, writes, “The gain in property tax revenues in Society Hill . . . [increased] roughly three to one.” In a downtown bleeding taxes into the suburbs, social engineering through redevelopment seemed the right course.

Revitalizing Society Hill and Washington Square East created a new space for affluence to flourish, but they also served as evidence for the potential long-term success of two risky experiments. Furthermore, for Philadelphia’s redevelopment cohort, these projects also demonstrated the continued viability of cities. Fogelson explains, since the end of World War II, redevelopment boosters the country over had asked, “Why would the well-to-do return to a city that was ‘rotting at the core?’” Successfully redeveloping these neighborhoods prompted downtown redevelopers to believe they had discovered a means for finally removing that question. They taught the OPDC and its enablers two lessons. One, to produce new areas of prestige, redevelopment worked much better than slum clearance. Rejuvenation, they assumed, stimulated renewal in surrounding neighborhoods. Two, to transform an area from one of perceived decline to one of prestige, changing the demographic was

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43 CPDC, Remaking Center City, 3, 13; “Introduction,” The Revitalization of Center City. Here, I have paraphrased Walter D’Alessio’s remarks; Lowe, Cities in a Race with Time, 352; Oymak, “Bicentennial Tales,” 169, 172-173; Rafsky, “Humanizing the City”; William Rafsky, “Latest Developments in Urban Renewal” (lecture summary, Philadelphia Board of Realtors, Philadelphia, PA, November 6, 1967), TUA. Rafsky gave this lecture on November 2, 1967; Wendell W. Young to James H. J. Tate, (February 2, 1970), PCA. Young was the President of the Retail Clerks Union Local No. 1357.

44 Adde, Nine Cities, 18, 34; Damon Childs to Anthony P. Zecca, (memo, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, June 29, 1970), PCA. At the time of drafting this memo, Childs was Acting Executive Director of the CPC. Zecca was Deputy to the Mayor; Fogelson, Downtown, 346; Petshek, The Challenge of Urban Reform, 227; Rafsky, “Introduction” (notes and outline for lecture on Market Street East project, undated); Roseman, “Public-private Co-operation and Negotiation in Downtown Redevelopment,” 4.
half the battle. These experiments stood as confirmation for redevelopers that poor and minority residents prevailed as the most crucial components of blight and decline. Former residents, the OPDC implied, had not sufficiently appreciated the history of their neighborhood. The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin reported that affluent buyers, on the other hand, appreciated “the fact that they were lived in by people who helped found our nation.” In this way, redevelopment confirmed not only decency and taste, but also level of citizenship.45

In addition to bearing out the virtue of restoring historic neighborhoods for the affluent, Society Hill and Washington Square East underscored certain ancillary effects of urban renewal. Since they successfully walled off a portion of Center City from so-called blighted areas and slums, the OPDC and other redevelopment boosters assumed the potential for an expansion of these barriers and subsequent enhancement of downtown cache. Moreover, the corporation and the RA believed reinforcing the gains they had made renewing residential areas depended on creating adjacent redevelopments for mutual support. In any case, the expenditure of capital, both political and monetary, ensured that these neighborhoods could not stand as mere isolated enclaves. They would lead immediately to nearby developments. For the OPDC, redevelopment in these areas entailed fine attention to detail, both in terms of housing restoration and social engineering through evictions and resale. Still, it also depended on a policy of negation. The OPDC recreated Society Hill and Washington Square East as timeless entities, collapsed signifiers of a Philadelphia myth. As such, conscientious relocation and care of former residents figured very little into the OPDC and RA’s plans. Many residents facing eviction complained that redevelopers hijacked their diverse neighborhood for the sole benefit of the wealthy. Faced with ardent criticism, the OPDC adopted a posture of rationalization. Robin claimed, “We must justify the enormous expenditures of money. We must provide a sound base for the section . . . Residents . . . have to compromise their desires with those of

45 Finney to CRPC members, (memo, “Draft report . . . ,” July 1966); Dukes, (remarks, public hearing on Cross Town Expressway, undated); Fogelson, Downtown, 319; “Introduction,” The Revitalization of Center City; Lowe, Cities in a Race with Time, 334, 340; “‘Old City’ Redevelopers Want Big New Police-Fire Center”; “Under the Knife, or All For Their Own Good,” Time, November 6, 1964, 83.
others and the city.” Compromise, for the OPDC would remain something the corporation would demand but rarely contribute.46

New residents in Society Hill and Washington Square East, at least according to their patrons in the OPDC, demanded and deserved retail amenities. The corporation could not claim a justification of historic restoration in the same way, but it could pose East Market Street blight as a threat to nearby neighborhoods. Redevelopment boosters, locally and nationally, pointed to the chaos and incongruity of urban life as a major cause of suburban growth and a major predictor of further downtown decline. In Downtown America, Isenberg writes of, “a national investment strategy motivated by the vision of a new Main Street—a dignified and simplified retail corridor, as opposed to the existing . . . hodgepodge of individualistic storefronts.” Furthermore, Philadelphia redevelopers indicated a diverse downtown community as keeping middle class suburban whites away. In a 1968 speech, William Rafsky starkly admitted, “The cities . . . have become a gathering place for the impoverished and disadvantaged.” As it winded down its promotional cycle in Society Hill and Washington Square East, the OPDC began a campaign hammering the appearance of East Market Street. Isenberg points to national trends. “They wished to reverse the declining ‘quality or class of shopper, a complaint that usually had racial overtones,” she explains. Though the OPDC and its cohort made no mystery about whom it hoped to attract, publicly, at least, it cloaked its targets for removal indirectly and in terms of environmental appearance and competing meanings of urbanity. OPDC leaders often spoke of working “many, many hours in an endeavor to find some logical way to proceed on the rehabilitation of this street which is a disgrace to our city” or of “eliminat[ing] a major dark spot on East Market Street.” Its consultants echoed these claims, reposing them as deficiencies in infrastructure. Still, the affect was the same; both acknowledged downtown’s liability as an urban milieu in comparison with the order and

convenience of the suburbs. As such, with the OPDC leading the way, redevelopment boosters sought to streamline East Market Street and recreate it in order to perform double duty as a barrier and as a lure. In large measure, their plans depended on constructing a reflection of suburban order and homogeneity, while retaining whatever aspects of urban individuality could fit in with the transformation.⁴⁷

In this early part of the narrative, certain crucial themes emerged. The OPDC formed as a pathway for both circumventing government interference, as well as for harnessing the power and legitimacy of official structures. That aspect reflects national trends in the 1950s and 1960s. Still, the corporation consolidated business influence within downtown redevelopment projects for the distinct purpose of attaching its mythic narrative to governmental and civic underpinnings. In that way, the OPDC’s promotional efforts located a fulcrum for stabilization and normalization within wider Philadelphia culture. How did redevelopers define their goals when they set them against the concepts of business cultivation and whiteness? Their collective myth remembered a time of exclusion on East Market Street, but it oriented race, class, and the discursive space where that matrix met with notions of success into the more quantitative concepts of value, success, and taxation. Evolution is another theme. The OPDC grew out of the pre-charter GPM, but expanded its role within the city’s redevelopment sphere. It took on certain quasi-governmental powers like blight identification and use of eminent domain, allowing its chosen myths and a selective civic memory to direct such activities. Its varied and aggressive PR program reflected a direct connection and primary commitment to business. But it also revealed the nebulous boundaries and identities of its membership structure, public persona, and operational objective. At the same time, Rafsky’s own personal and professional ideologies evolved and expanded as well. He stands as the most salient embodiment of redevelopers’ decision to include large-scale targeted renewal projects—not just slum clearance—in their tool

cheats. This point is important because even though demolishing slums fell by the wayside, redevelopers absorbed the process of cutting barriers between prestige projects and slums into the evolved urban renewal ideology. The following chapter elaborates on these themes as they expanded in the wake of the OPDC’s harder adherence to methodology and its Society Hill and Washington Square West successes.
CHAPTER 3
CAPITALIZING ON SUCCESS: EXPANDING THE NARRATIVE

The previous section identified how the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation came to its ideas about what made for successful renewal projects. This chapter contextualizes those processes within what the corporation pointed to as its most significant battles. The OPDC posed its redevelopment ideology and its mythological concepts against a set of adversaries. These opponents, it believed, prevented Center City from attaining signifiers of success. These goals included: renewed national prestige (as a function of publically accepted cosmopolitanism), greater tax revenues than service costs, the appearance of safety and cleanliness, and cultural and economic centrality within the region. The OPDC concluded that commercial and economic growth in the suburbs and massive white flight of affluent and middle class Philadelphians to the surrounding counties constituted a major threat to continued downtown dominance. The corporation and its redevelopment peers, in their quest to maintain the myth of Center City majesty, set out to lure suburbanites back to that area with amenities and a character already present in the suburbs. Center City, redevelopers insisted, had to become a place where decent people visited, and they wanted these visitors to experience downtown Philadelphia as a place of comfort and casual enjoyment. They wanted suburbanites to spend money downtown repeatedly, and they wanted them to consider returning to the city to live. In order to entice suburbanites to return, they assumed, the city would need to redevelop certain of its downtown neighborhoods (like Society Hill and Washington Square West) specifically for these groups. Still, this returning population would also require adjacent commercial developments (like Market East’s Gallery mall). This chapter mostly covers the years 1965 to 1967, but also makes room for important supporting evidence from outside this immediate chronology. It also identifies where race and class fit into the OPDC’s methods for rebranding the area and uses those discussions as a means for introducing the Market Street East project. In that instance, discussions of demographic tensions attendant to redevelopment projects rub up against the evolution of Market East’s proposed purposes. Indeed, the OPDC, as this project changed, adapted its downtown myth to fit with any planning
changes. Additionally, this chapter brings the public, the press, the Bicentennial more clearly into focus within this discussion.

Indeed, the OPDC’s problematic racial concerns stemmed from actual populations trends rather than misguided perceptions. Between 1940 and 1950, the City of Philadelphia lost 90,000 white residents to the immediate suburbs. The city gained nearly as many non-white residents during the same period. To city leaders, this change indicated a fundamental obsolescence of downtown social, economic, and planning forms. Center City’s minority population began a major period of decline in the late 1950s and 1960s. According to Bayard Rustin, during this same period, all down the column of Philadelphia’s white social hierarchy, voices “were opposed to the presence of large numbers of blacks.” Major department stores on East Market Street felt the absence of well-to-do whites particularly as they lost more than a third of sales volume to the suburbs by 1958. In explicit terms, Philadelphia’s redevelopment coterie pointed to these trends as leading to an unrecoverable loss of downtown’s regional supremacy. “We have learned the hard way that despite our greatest period of affluence and prosperity the cities contain a sizable portion of poor people,” said William Rafsky in late 1967. Although he connected increases in the city’s service expenditures to increased minority residence, Rafsky failed to consider (publicly, at least) the powerful motives pushing both population shifts. He merely bristled at the directions his city’s character seemed to be heading compared with America’s general post-war economic success. Using Washington, D.C. as a fable, he spoke aghast of a future Philadelphia existing as “a 100 percent Negro city,” adding “that is not going to happen here” and promising that “the White House is going all out to see if something can be done to insure that the capital of this country does not become a city that failed.” Rafsky, in the same speech, spoke of his cohort’s commitment to balancing out the liability of low-income housing projects with new developments aimed at keeping suburban-inclined whites downtown. Clearly, the tensions Rafsky felt in his various redevelopment roles contained many vectors. At the same time, though, he recognized the relative artificiality of methods with which planning, even via public-private cooperation, attempted to steer comparatively natural population movements.\footnote{Dyer, “Markets in the Meadows,” 247; Finney to CRPC members, (memo, “Draft report . . . ,” July 1966); Lowe, Cities in a Race with Time, 352; Rafsky, “Delaware Valley’s Housing Needs . . . ”; Rafsky, “Economic Policy and the Urban Crisis”; William Rafsky, “Making Our Urban Areas Livable}
In the *Washington Post*’s society column from the same year, the writer opined, “[Philadelphia] . . . has always seemed to me a vast urban mess to which rich people commuted on a train from some place called the ‘Main Line,’” adding, “Philadelphia is still something of an urban nightmare. There are many narrow, congested slum streets full of broken-down houses.” OPDC members surely knew which people between Washington and Boston would have read and discussed such articles. Most likely, they would have been cultured, cosmopolitan members of the region’s middle and affluent classes: exactly the group renewal boosters hoped would return to Center City. The corporation also dealt with East Market Street’s major department stores, which expressed displeasure with increased presence of blacks on their formerly pristine shopping promenade. Stephanie Dyer notes that throughout the 1950s, the retail giants loosened employment restrictions, allowing black employees on the sales floor, but they still mostly balked at “courting the growing African-American community” as actual customers. Owners worried far more about losing their more mobile, white customers. Additionally, reluctance to integrate from leadership standpoints reflected a general white anger. During the reform era, whites in Philadelphia perceived a local Democratic Party commitment to African-American social and economic gains. At the same time, they felt--both politically and economically--abandoned for a poor and criminal class.\(^{49}\) Rafsky and the OPDC understood the balance between exploiting such tensions for political capital and maintaining downtown allure through promotion of a magnificent future.

Certain critics, like Rustin, viewed Philadelphia’s public-private cooperatives as playing up such fears as a means for taking over areas where African-Americans either ran businesses or spent money. Speaking of East Market Street, as well as larger downtown renewal trends, Rustin claimed, “It was a matter of taking a racial, social policy, backed up by billions of dollars, to establish more racism in this country.” He added, “They were particularly out to get, not the Blacks who were in the worst slums, but the Blacks out in areas which had capital potential.” As such, the OPDC extended its policies of social engineering it began in Society Hill and Washington Square East to the public spaces

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in and around East Market Street. It believed, in order to reverse the trend of the city absorbing 3500 new low-income households a year, it had to create spaces attractive to middle class whites. Still, even as the downtown department stores began implicitly courting black shoppers, the corporation and its official counterparts in city hall never addressed the narrowing availability of retail outlets in low-income and minority neighborhoods. Moreover, the press and the white public merely hoped the so-called “black trade” would up and disappear. Reflecting general postwar tendencies, the city’s public-private cohort created policies as a means for isolating Center City from the rest of Philadelphia. For the benefit of affluent whites on either side of the city line, minorities remained underserved in retail sectors. For these reasons, the downtown redevelopers dealt with much criticism. The Citizens Urban Renewal Exchange wrote Mayor James Tate, asserting, “Here to fore pitted only against the poor and the apathetic, urban renewal is now moving into areas occupied by people who have more education, more income and more . . . [importantly] know how to fight back politically and legally.” Most unsuitably, it claimed, the RA’s “programs are demolishing sound money-making, tax-producing homes and businesses with substantial payrolls, for no other reason than the planners want to do something else with the land and the area.” What had begun as the corporation’s most salient motive had become its most visible lightning rod: using public funds to aid a set of speculative development opportunities over the interest of existing and long-standing independent businesses and their patrons.  

The OPDC perceived that East Market Street’s dingy appearance, cheapness of its retail goods, and demographic appeal warded off middle-income and affluent whites from participating socially downtown. In this way, redevelopment boosters imagined both the perceived chaos and the urban character of downtown in tandem. They did not differentiate between the appearance of dirtiness and crime on the one hand and diversity of the urban experience on the other. Was a tightly

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controlled downtown—a rejection of its urbanity—still a downtown? The OPDC and its cohort never considered these questions. Instead, the corporation posed East Market Street renewal as a zero-sum competition between either luxury residential and retail bolstering or housing and jobs programs for low-income Philadelphians. As mentioned previously, these latter programs provided little in the way of tax revenue and prestige. These ends, the OPDC believed, both strengthened its members’ and their peers’ bottom line and also could potentially provide funds for the city’s charitable endeavors. “Merely fixing up portions of the city, adding new housing or space for schools, cultural or recreation facilities, will not be sufficient unless it is part of a process leading to the staged rebuilding of the total urban environment,” suggested John Gallery, the city’s development coordinator, in 1968. A decade later, the *Philadelphia Tribune*—a daily aimed largely at the city’s African-American population—published sections of RA reports from the early and mid-1960s. In the reports, OPDC and RA leader, Gustave Amsterdam cautioned his colleagues and Mayor Tate against providing funds to social programs that the city could contribute instead to projects like Market Street East. “He did not want the Authority to undertake any program that would sidetrack any projects that would curtail business interests in favor of housing for the poor and needy,” the *Tribune* noted. That publication may have exercised certain biases, but other evidence bears out that account. City hall and its agencies, as well as the OPDC, even in the face of strong housing advocacy criticism, felt redevelopment money best spent on luxury retail and residential projects.51

Even so, Rafsky and others posed the luxury/social program debate as a matter of balance, both between the downtown and neighborhoods as well as between the public and the individual. “Is it better to build the airport runway and defer a badly needed hospital on the concept that airport improvement will generate tax revenues which will make the hospital possible within a short period of time?” said Rafsky in 1969. In the same speech, he described housing and recreational projects as “glamorous” and highlighted them as civic mirages for planners. In his OPDC role, Rafsky focused on


projects that would bring cosmopolitan visitors and residents back to the city as well as quickly generate tax revenues. At turns, Rafsky, even as he upheld equality of redevelopment as crucial to saving the city, pointed to housing advocates as “bickering” over the distribution of planning funds. In that way, he bolstered the reputation of redevelopers as even-handed. Elsewhere, he described the balance between housing and commercial projects as formerly tipped in favor of the latter but realigned fairly in the 1960s. In any case, Rafsky and his cohort went to great pains to stress the importance of commercial redevelopment. These priorities, he emphasized, stood as the city's only hope of balancing expenditures of services and attenuating the loss of middle class residents to the suburbs. Housing advocates chafed at these efforts. “The city decided to give its renewal priority and therefore virtually all of its varied resources to rebuilding the downtown and attempting to bring upper income groups back from the suburbs,” said George Dukes. Rafsky, more or less, concurred. “Philadelphia cannot neglect its commercial needs . . . the choice is not one or the other.” Retail clerks unions called for the RA to consider the social problems arising out of redevelopment as much as it paid to “the acquisition of land and developers.” All the while, the OPDC acted as the RA’s case-makers, warding off attacks from less connected organizations.

Additionally, the corporation wavered between chiding suburbanites for abandoning downtown Philadelphia and begging them to return to Center City. Rafsky demanded, “New town policy should be predicated on having a cross section of all income groups in relation to their distribution in the population. At the same time, new towns should not be permitted to undermine existing communities by attracting commercial and business activities away from older developments.” With OPDC countenancing, he claimed the suburbs should offer housing and jobs to minorities and the poor, often

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52 Dukes, (remarks, public hearing on Cross Town Expressway, undated); KYW, (Market Street East debate press release, undated), PCA. Broadcast of these debates took places on December 16, 17, and 18 of 1969. Press release must have been issued in the days or weeks prior to broadcast; KYW, (press release / transcript, “Another Point of View,” undated), PCA. This portion of the debate over Market Street East featured William Rafsky. Broadcast of the portion of this debate took place on January 21, 22, 24, and 25 of 1970. Press release must have been issued either in the days prior or subsequent to the debate broadcast; David Neifeld and Wendell W. Young to Edmund Bacon, (January 2, 1970), PCA; Rafsky, "Economic Policy and the Urban Crisis"; Rafsky, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of a Planning Program"; Rafsky, "Humanizing the City"; Rafsky, "Phila. Must Set Priorities . . . "; William L. Rafsky, "Refining Our urban goals," Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, December 8, 1977, TUA; William Rafsky, "Unity Without Uniformity," (lecture, March 13, 1968); Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia, (memo, “How Market East Will Economically Affect the Unemployed and Under-employed,” undated), PCA.
referring suburbanites in such terms as “pious hypocrisy.” Diversity, assumed both Rafsky and the OPDC, should be foisted upon all communities, a burden for all. They believed Center City to be the center of regional orbit, and, so, unfairly the owner of all the region’s problems and decline.\textsuperscript{53}

Victor Gruen biographer Jeffrey Hardwick writes that by the late 1950s, “seven hundred [American] cities had published central business district plans.” He explains that redevelopment consultants like Victor Gruen called for cities planning “parking, entertainment, pedestrian malls, landscaping, and modernized stores” (much like they had in the suburbs) as a means for combating blight and bringing suburban shoppers back downtown. Political imperatives of the times demanded new, modern construction as a direct antidote to blight, rather than plans for attacking the root cause. In Philadelphia, these directives largely replaced overarching slum clearance as the primary method for tackling the declining Center City appearance and economy. Although blighted areas might never have become full-on slums, the possibility persisted in the minds of the public as well as public officials, allowing redevelopment agencies to demolish non-slums areas as they saw fit.\textsuperscript{54}

The OPDC employed concepts—both real and self-invented—of blight to create a general public impression of downtown decline in order to bolster a sense of urgency around its projects. A general assumption of the direct progression from blight to slums had well leeched into the redevelopment consciousness by the time renewal boosters began promoting the Market Street East project. Prewar redevelopers pointed to blight as “incipient slums” and “potential slums,” Robert Fogelson explains. Likewise, to them, slums were “advanced case[s] of blight” and “the greatest threat which confronts the American people.” A Temple University political scientist and countless others


\textsuperscript{54} Nicholas Dagen Bloom, Merchant of Illusion: James Rouse, American Salesman of the Businessman’s Utopia (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 87. Rouse, as I will discuss in the coming pages, developed The Gallery mall and other portions of the Market Street East project; City of Philadelphia v. Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) and Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia, 4747 Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas (1972), PCA; Fogelson, Downtown, 340-346; M. Jeffrey Hardwick, Mall Maker: Victor Gruen, Architect of an American Dream (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 162, 166.
defined blight as “civic cancers.” It mattered less how so-called experts defined the two stages, as redevelopers often conflated blight and slums. Though hardly ironclad, these studies gained a powerful purchase on the field. After World War II, as in most other urban areas across America, Philadelphia redevelopers allowed blight to perform double duty: both as an indicator of vague and pliable problems, as well as a beacon for pliant saving through redevelopment. Once identified (as slums, blighted, or merely obsolete), these areas could but wait for the wrecking ball. Once singled out, redevelopers manipulated the meanings of blight in order to attach a stench of crime, filth and worthlessness to older neighborhoods and commercial buildings. In its survey and planning application to the city, the RA and OPDC reported, “84% of the structures contain one or more deficiencies. The area itself contains environmental defects necessitating public action to eliminate the further spread of deterioration and blight.” Mayor Tate, clearly channeling his colleagues in the OPDC, described the areas around East Market Street as “breeding places for rats and all sorts of sordid crime and vandalism.” Rafsky, more alloyed, explained “that there is a direct correlation between slums . . . on the one hand, and on the other, high crime rates, extensive delinquency, above average disease incidence, [and] marital and family problems.” The OPDC and RA, then, vested blighted areas with great responsibility: a whole panorama of urban social problems. At the same time, manipulating the meanings of blight also offered the corporation and Authority team a very simple concept to work against. It began with the notion of inappropriate and obsolete land usages.


56 Gustave Amsterdam, et al., Survey and Planning Application, Market Street East Urban Renewal Area Unit No. 1, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia, September, 1967, (submitted to Harry I. Sharrott, Assistant Regional Administrator for Renewal Assistance, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Region II, Philadelphia, PA), PCA, R-103, R-103-2; Fogelson, Downtown, 355; Michael to Martin, (March 27, 1968); William Rafsky, “What Are the Human and Dollar Costs of Urban Congestion?” (lecture, Planned Parenthood World Population Conference, Denver, CO, May 8, 1967), TUA. Someone, most likely Rafsky, handwrote the name and location of the conference, as well as the date of Rafsky’s lecture, in the margins at the top of the first page of this document; James Tate, (lecture, National Commission on Urban Problems, Denver, CO, undated), PCA. Although I found Tate’s untitled speech undated, an attached letter puts the speech shortly before November 14, 1967, when the Commission sent Tate a copy of his remarks for the purpose of him editing the speech prior to general publishing.
Though still relatively nascent, Philadelphia's redevelopment efforts had caught the attention of many influential kingmakers. The RA, with the Penn Towne and Spring Garden Homes projects of the mid-to-late 1950s, had completed the first and fourth redevelopment projects under the federal government's Title I funding, respectively. Even though Rafsky shaped redevelopment ideology to a much great extent, *Time Magazine* featured Ed Bacon on their cover in 1964, praising him as Philadelphia's redevelopment overseer and the city for its urban leadership. Subsequently, "Philadelphia became a standard bearer for postwar liberalism's flagship urban program of public/private partnership," noted Christopher Klemek. *Fortune Magazine* rated the city "# 1 in urban renewal. Local editorials and even academic studies fawned over the RA's efforts as infallible. As a result, the OPDC and RA became emboldened in their redevelopment of established neighborhoods, none so much as with their Market Street East project. Rafsky explained, "In order to preserve the sound element of a community and to protect the improvements brought about by renewal and development, the community should adopt meaningful zoning controls. Zoning should be designed to upgrade the community." Prior to 1933, the city had hardly employed zoning, allowing various usages to overlap in many neighborhoods. The RA essentially recreated zoning as a means for reversing decline and keeping it at bay. For the city, blight and redevelopment potential became one in the same.\(^5\)

Indeed, the OPDC and RA put all of their stock in the idea that blight had caused the decline on East Market Street. Members, both as part of the corporation and within their private capacities, decried the strip as an "area of appalling economic blight." Aside from affecting business, the OPDC bolstered its policies with claims the area’s appearance negatively affected "humanism and the good life." Its consultants ensured that removal of blight would negate its residual effects. Moreover, as Alison Isenberg writes, the entire national redevelopment coterie alleged, "that the residents of 'slums'..."
adjacent to the downtown threatened to ‘cheapen’ and ultimately destroy the vitality of urban commercial life.” Likewise, the local contingent argued a similar line. “Although there are undoubtedly some acceptable homes in the two block area under question, the greater number of buildings are either sub-standard or are used in such a way as to blight the neighborhood,” wrote Mayor Dilworth to a skeptical resident in 1957. The OPDC and RA team claimed prerogative over determining which areas required blight elimination. Often, they planned projects as levies for preventing an uncontrolled flood of decline.58

Oddly enough, though, the corporation’s members, even as they re-designed Society Hill and Washington Square East in the late 1950s, initially argued against East Market Street’s inclusion in early Central Urban Renewal Area (CURA) plans. “‘No top drawer [department] store’ had left the CBD, Richard Bond, president of . . . Wanamaker’s, pointed out.” Albert Greenfield offered even less debatable confirmation. “The growth of business and industry in Philadelphia generally ran parallel with that of the nation. The outlook for the new year in Philadelphia is equally secure and worthy of our confidence,” he said early in 1956, just months before forming the OPDC. The Philadelphia press reported that shortly thereafter, amid the CURA planning, Greenfield “refused to certify as blighted the only midcity section not yet included . . . the area . . . between Broad and 7th sts., from Market to Sansom.” He and other renewal boosters believed—as business advocates and businessmen did themselves—they should support the reputation of the city’s most visible shopping district. In his argument against East Market Street blight, Greenfield listed Gimbels, Snellenberg’s, and Wanamaker’s, all of which eventually closed or experienced great sales declines in the coming years. He offered up the sanctity of East Market Street as self-evident and “estimated that 75 percent of existing structures can be economically rehabilitated.” In the late 1950s, he hardly mentioned the appearance of this corridor in terms of liability. Even as the RA and OPDC commenced Market Street

58 Richardson Dilworth to Mrs. Alex M. Thorn, (April 23, 1957), PCA. Mrs. Thorn, it can be assumed, had previously written Dilworth a letter of complaint, to which, in the cited document, Dilworth was replying; Fogelson, *Downtown*, 347; William A. Forsythe, “Midcity Rebirth Is Vital to Suburbs As Well as Phila., Four Tell Forum,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 15, 1961, TUA; Isenberg, *Downtown America*, 167; OPDC executive committee member to Tate, (September 30, 1965); Rafsky, “Humanizing the City”; Stockton Strawbridge to H. J. Grinsfelder, (November 30, 1966), PCA.
East plans in 1958, certain downtown realtors balked, claiming it “not necessary to remove a flourishing major commercial area.”

Such hard and fast definitions of blight had already come to mean little. In April 1957, the RA assured Dilworth, “if the city has no funds in the capital budget for this purpose [redevelopment] and if the city planning commission can declare the area blighted for any reason, and if they will prepare an area plan for the area showing the need for future recreational use,” then the RA and the city could both raise funds through rent. Blight, essentially from its discovery, carried little with it in the way of precision. Downtown redevelopers all over the country exploited the term’s vagueness as an unstoppable tool for pushing through urban renewal. More often than not, the subterfuge benefited large businesses at the cost of the less powerful. Fogelson makes an important point about national redevelopment trends. In Philadelphia, like in many other large American cities, the RA and OPDC “tended to choose areas that were rundown enough to justify demolition, but not so rundown as to scare off developers.” The corporation and the Authority could merely throw the full power of municipal weight (e.g., the Department of Licenses and Inspections) at a roadblock to send it toppling.

Certainly, though, common citizens and their advocates tried. Up until the bulldozers finally arrived in 1973, independent businesses on East Market Street clamored against the RA’s definition of blight. The Golden Dawn hosiery store “contended the area is not blighted and the purpose is to acquire commercial land for development by private business corporations.” Its owner filed a motion against condemnation. The judge in the case dismissed Golden Dawn’s complaint, stating, “City Council’s ordinance in 1969 . . . describes the area as blighted and the Redevelopment Authority has

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59 Frank G. Binswanger to Edmund Bacon, (March 28, 1958), PCA. Binswanger owned the Frank G. Binswanger Real Estate company, which brokered a large portion of the real estate on the west side of Market Street in Center City; Fogelson, Downtown, 383; Greenfield, “Greenfield Sees Further Gains In Phila. Area”; Joseph M. Guess, “Private Cash To Be Sought For Program,” Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, date unavailable, TUA; “Planners Reject ‘Blight’ Tag For Mid City Store Area,” publication name unavailable, date unavailable, TUA. No byline. Through context, I can venture that these two articles with incomplete citations were most likely published in 1956 or 1957 (though the latter article could have been published in 1954 or 1955), early in the OPDC’s history. The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin almost certainly published the latter article.

60 Fogelson, Downtown, 361, 365; HADV, (newsletter, “To Our Members,” No. 3, March 1970); Michael Von Moschzisker to Richardson Dilworth, (April 24, 1957), PCA. At the time of this correspondence, Von Moschzisker chaired the city’s Redevelopment Authority. Dilworth sat as the city’s mayor; Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, (minutes, Market Street East Committee, February 20, 1967), PCA.
the power of discretion over what are to be considered in that category.” Rustin charged the RA with leaving the slums as “absorbing” spots, taking only “solid neighborhoods.” The retail clerks’ unions lobbed the most vociferous protests, charging the Authority with “treating . . . the present businesses and their employees callously or even harshly.” Those organizations called for wider inclusion of the East Market Street community in redevelopment decisions. They also objected to a catchall definition of blight. Moreover, they asserted Gimbels and other retail giants had received “preferential treatment” from the OPDC and RA. One union leader “charged that . . . [the four major department stores] were ‘exact[ing] their pound of flesh’ at the expense of other businesses in the redevelopment area.” Like the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA), he also “opposed the use of federal renewal subsidies to lower the cost of land to private redevelopers.”

Rafsky sided with the unions’ demands for fair compensation, at least in theory. “Clearly, it is insufficient to compensate only for property and moving expenses. Replacement and special benefits are necessary,” he said in late 1968. Although he specifically attached these beliefs to housing redevelopment, it follows that the city could reasonably extend such consideration to displaced businesses. Adding clarification, earlier in the year, Rafsky noted, “It is not fair to a renter if the housing supply forces him to pay more for a residential unit than he had paid before.” Obviously, these sentiments ran contrary to Market Street East project goals, but they also reaffirm the unavoidable tensions inherent to the Philadelphia planning cohort’s redevelopment ideology. Likewise, in speeches from the mid to late 1960s, Rafsky upheld greater citizen participation and support for displaced small business. “The program must show how they can be taken care of as a result of dislocation,” he said.

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Conversely, the OPDC and RA primarily offered consideration to the major department stores’ demands.

Philadelphia’s redevelopment cohort had already exhibited a long history of riding roughshod over residents of targeted neighborhoods. In 1968, residents of the Spruce Hill section of West Philadelphia decried the RA’s blight certification as derailing the neighborhood’s own self-improvement program, severely diminishing property values, and harming some residents’ efforts to sell their homes. Residents put forth a “unanimous vote to request the City Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Authority to remove the certification for redevelopment” at a public hearing. Likewise, many owners and tenants on East Market Street undertook similar upgrades. The RA and OPDC ignored these efforts. Truly, these labors and appeals to reason held little sway for redevelopers. In 1967, the corporation reported communication between the RA and a private developer:

One obstacle is the unwillingness of the owners of the Lafayette Building on the northeast corner of 5th and Chestnut, who have recently spent substantial sums in renovation, to sell . . . The developer was requesting OPDC’s help in the purchase of the Lafayette Building either through Redevelopment Authority condemnation or through persuasion.

Clearly, this redeveloper understood that the corporation possessed de facto powers of eminent domain and condemnation. Moreover, he also understood that the OPDC would use its power to help large redevelopers downtown first and foremost. As early as 1964, the RA purchased property through eminent domain even though a separate city agency had already removed that area’s blight. Philadelphia renewal boosters, like those across urban America, believed in aggressive use of condemnation as a pathway to revitalization. Center City redevelopers used eminent domain not so much as a fulcrum for revitalization (their chosen nomenclature) but for assertion of control through re-creation and reconstruction. Still, when they wanted to, the OPDC and RA cut out blight with a scalpel. Though squarely located within an area renewal bodies identified as blighted, the

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63 Clarence G. Alhart to members of the Market Street East Coordinating Committee, (memo, January 17, 1966), PCA; Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, 29; Childs to Zecca, (memo, CPC, June 29, 1970); OPDC executive committee, (minutes, April 26, 1967); Petshek, The Challenge of Urban Reform, 233; Saul Schraga, “A New ‘Penn Center East’ Envisioned,” Philadelphia Inquirer, May 25, 1958, TUA; Nathan Sherman to James H. J. Tate, (March 11, 1968), PCA. At the time of this letter, Sherman was President of the Spruce Hill Property Owners Association.
corporation’s planning application indicated special exemption of the major department stores from renewal. An “obvious high level of maintenance”, for the OPDC, excluded these properties from condemnation. The corporation also pointed to the department stores’ efforts to improve East Market Street’s appearance prior to redevelopment. Furthermore, the department stores had largely kept their workforce segregated, offering sales and managerial positions only to whites. Likewise, they discouraged African-American shoppers. As such, they maintained an image of racial and class exclusivity. In turn, the OPDC supported these institutions as preservers of Center City’s reputation.

In the late 1950s, the CPC and RA proposed the Market Street East project as a means for streamlining transportation. The confusing amalgam of buses, cabs, rail, and automobiles, they believed, stood as the primary catalyst of decline. The agencies took on the basic task of wedding transit improvements with an up-tick in jobs infrastructure and hoped revitalization would occur naturally. In short order, though the OPDC and RA quickly commenced a program of rebranding East Market Street as Market Street East. The slight rearranging of words, however, amounted to a sea change of intent. In 1966, Architectural Forum reported, “The basic objective of ME is to bring suburban ease to downtown shopping, in the typical suburban pattern of a mall joining large department stores and to relate it to other functions of the core.” Center City’s renewal fell in line with national goals: “to attract the suburban middle class and their money back to the city.” In Philadelphia, some combination of the affluent, the white, and the middle class stood as far-away signifiers of downtown’s potential resurgence “as a thriving, economically viable place.” The OPDC latched onto minute aesthetic rebranding—including signage—as a means for recapturing “those high-income families and individuals who for the past two or more decades have abandoned the inner city for the suburbs.” The corporation, “assuming the upper-middle-income class of future residents of the downtown area, . . . reasoned that a ‘fresh start’ in the eastern section would be more appealing to such prospective buyers.” Consequently, the city’s redevelopment coterie shifted its concerns to the

perceived aversions and desires of suburbanites. It reordered transit priorities as a means for providing "direct services to suburban areas as distant as Bryn Mawr and Glenside or Chester and Hatboro." Though redevelopers hoped retail would lead to long-delayed office development, the RA and OPDC steered the Market Street East project strongly in the direction of the former. Both chose consultants committed to suburban development: Larry Smith; Victor Gruen; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; James Rouse.65

The corporation also began positioning Market Street East as a protector and bolsterer of Society Hill and Washington Square East. In 1966, OPDC President William Day said, "It is our conviction that Market Street must be saved, otherwise the restoration of Society Hill and the Independence Mall area will have no permanence or meaning." The corporation, as self-appointed stewards of Center City revitalization, bristled against the notion of building self-contained enclaves. As an acceptable end-goal, unsusceptible to blight, it imagined and demanded only a total re-creation of downtown. "The whole must be considered as integral to our plans . . . One project has lead [sic] to the other," Day added. Indeed, it put forth its projects as a series of buffers to the north and south. Market Street East, combined with geographical aid of the existing department stores, would serve as a powerful keystone in the gate. Still, the OPDC posed the connection between its residential projects and Market Street East as a provision of shopping amenities for new, wealthy residents. More likely, the corporation viewed a new downtown as a suburban analogue. Explained Rafsky, in a hand-written note, "New towns now protect existing communities."66 The OPDC planned its projects as walled-off islands as much as they planned them as improvements.

65 CCCP, Report No. 108, March 1965, " 'White Paper' "; "Exhibit C: Justification of Center City Commuter Connection," PCA. Contextually, I can venture that the OPDC or Redevelopment Authority presented this document to Philadelphia City Council sometime in the mid-1960s; Hardwick, Mall Maker, 203-204; Office of the City Representative, (news release, November 27, 1962); "Philadelphia's Giant Shopping Machine," 34; Rafsky, "Introduction" (notes and outline for lecture on Market Street East project, undated); Lammer to Sharrott, (memo, Redevelopment Authority, "Market Street East Second Report . . . ," March 28, 1968); Roseman, "Public-private Co-operation and Negotiation in Downtown Redevelopment," 119; "Slide Presentation," undated, PCA. Based on archival location, the Philadelphia City Planning Commission prepared this presentation in the spring or summer of 1970; Victor Gruen Associates, A Report Concerning Redevelopment Possibilities of the Market East Area, 3; Victor Gruen to John P. Robin, November 13, 1962, PCA.

Redevelopers considered the expectation of increased property and wage taxes no small factor. The OPDC and RA expected "a successful Market St. East could mean an additional $25 million dollars in real estate tax revenues to Philadelphia," noted one local editorial in 1967. The figures rarely remained consistent—only consistently high—but the city and its proxies saw dollar signs in this section of downtown. They soon dominated the conversion. Like most cities, Philadelphia spent great sums on neighborhood and social services. It raised those funds primarily through property taxes. As members of its tax base moved to the suburbs, the city lost revenue. Philadelphia officials feared losing more middle and upper class whites to the outlying regions if it raised taxes even more. Market Street East seemed an excellent mechanism for avoiding tax increases.

But the eternal downtown promise of Center City as the City of Brotherly Love’s urban gateway impelled the OPDC with a less reconcilable pull than taxes and wealthy residents. Though the corporation and the RA pushed them both aside, Edmund Bacon and Louis Kahn provided the exact dimensions of this dream. Bacon wrote,

The new development stretches from City Hall to the Department Store Cluster at Eighth Street, with plazas, esplanades and fountains, recognizing that it is here that the great mass of shopping is done . . . This finally establishes the prestige of East Market Street as a commercial area, and assures the continued prosperity of the Department Stores bordering on it.

All across America, from giant shopping boulevards to quaint main streets, “businesspeople, city officials, and planners worked toward accomplishing an unobstructed, sweeping corridor view," says Isenberg. Assuming it possible, Philadelphia redevelopers sought to resurrect the most “monumental central core” of all. University of Pennsylvania planning guru Louis Kahn imagined Market Street East as “a lobby of the city . . . [with] a different architecture from any that we have known.” In short, Bacon and Kahn envisioned an unimaginable Elysium, a complex of indeterminate place and time as well as

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irresistible magnetism. Market Street East became, for the entire downtown planning and redevelopment community, a force for both downtown revitalization and suburban obsolescence.\(^68\)

Members of the OPDC and RA believed in downtown Philadelphia as the once-and-forever center of orbit in the metropolitan area. Even though East Market Street had experienced significant decline, they imagined an aggressive retooling of Center City would cut a direct path to its rightful place. Downtown leaders conceived of suburban economic ascendancy as a temporary fad. “The central city is still the key to overall regional growth and living quality,” said Rafsky in 1973. For them and other supporters of the central city, downtown—with its “greatest concentration of retail business that exists,” as one Bulletin writer claimed—stood as the purest form of American civic expression. They could not allow the core to die at the hands of the suburbs. “The precise role of Center City must be postulated,” said Rafsky in 1966. Redevelopment boosters took ensuring the cultural and economic supremacy of downtown as their quest. Rafsky and his cohort held up Center City’s mythic advantages as proof of its eventual return to regional centrality. Local proponents of urban renewal believed Philadelphia had, thus far, “failed to capitalize” on them and, as a result, had allowed decline to occur. “The street was one of the commercial wonders of America. The retail life of a region was centered about it,” read one local article in 1967. For the OPDC and RA, this metropolitan position had not arrived accidentally. In fact, it still existed, but in dormant form. The retail corridor lay between monuments at City Hall and Independence Mall. It stood at the crisscross of storied rail lines. As a symbol, East Market Street needed only a firm polishing to shine once more. The corporation also expected a wave of returning affluent, older couples and new childless, young professionals to take up residence downtown in the coming decades. As such, the OPDC envisioned Market Street East’s suburban-style shopping as the focus of downtown.\(^69\)


Furthermore, the corporation and the Authority pointed to East Market Street and Center City as central in terms of services, institutions, and culture. Banks, they noted, kept their headquarters downtown. These qualities, they believed, bolstered the adjacent commercial corridor as an important shopping strip. Redevelopers often viewed expansion in the suburbs as indicative of a strong core, not middle class preference. Redevelopers chased an ideal, Fogelson explains, and in “planning for the future” were “weighed down at the very start with devotion to the past.” Jeanne Lowe writes, “They are typically Philadelphia in their conservative goal: to save what exists that is good and to build on it.” A sense of urgency permeated downtown leaders’ promotion of Market Street East. They upheld the business district as the most crucial component of downtown vitality and regional prosperity. The OPDC’s 1966 annual report decried the closing of two department stores and the proliferation of dingy independent retailers—not rampant poverty and unemployment—as a wake-up call for the city to immediately reverse East Market Street decline. “A careful weighing of all of the factors would indicate that our urban communities have no alternative. Either they plan for growth and sound development of downtown or the city will deteriorate,” said Rafsky in the same year. He failed to mention which factors should be weighed, but he had already made up his mind. Revitalizing downtown—the first impression visitors received of Philadelphia—provided the only successful path. Even so, redevelopment leaders could not bring themselves to consider the obvious: East Market Street, for their target affluent and middle class suburbanites, no longer offered a supreme retail and social destination. Private enterprise possessed a limited ability to shift culture in this way. Ironically, in 1962, William Rafsky gave a speech arguing against planning with hopes. “All too often,” he said, “like the early astronomers, we have let our theories be shaped by our hopes and dreams, aided by mis-applied analogies, rather than by objective observation and analysis.” The narcotic of private intervention, it would seem, could cloud redevelopers’ judgment.


For Rafsky’s peers, the future depended on revitalization. They feared downtown would soon become “islands” of poor and minority commerce. The PHA asserted “institutional (and often unconscious) racism and exploitation of the poor” in building projects the RA intended mostly for affluent use. Though “most policymakers and investors avoided discussing racial issues publicly,” Isenberg defines redevelopers’ use of the phrase “city problem” (or “urban problem”) as code for “negro problem.” Subtle as they worked, the OPDC employed the myth of East Market Street as a means to identify who would belong on Market Street East. OPDC consultants Skidmore, Owings & Merrill highlighted Philadelphia’s singular stature in American mythology in its 1966 Market Street East renewal plan: “This district is the original site of the city conceived by William Penn in 1682. It has always contained the city’s primary centers of government, commerce, and culture;” Deterioration, for the OPDC, contained a strong racial dimension, one that ran contrary to its members’ understanding of downtown mythology. Tradition kept the myth alive and compelled leaders to protect it; change submerged the myth.71

Public morale formed the most salient concept of downtown meaning. The OPDC exploited this metric for promotional gain. In 1964, Day claimed of the Market Street East project, “It has given Philadelphians something to be proud of—a lift in morale, a relief from the pessimism of statistics which have been all too often disheartening and disquieting to its citizens.” According to the OPDC, the project “would sweep aside the dark clouds of decline,” offering a metaphor with both racial and mythological elements. Philadelphia’s residents, the corporation explained, as Center City’s harshest critics and most committed advocates, most deserved a revitalized shopping district. The OPDC’s success in selling Market Street East to the Philadelphia public came as no surprise. Kenneth Jackson


71 HADV, (newsletter, “To Our Members,” No. 3, March 1970); Isenberg, Downtown America, 189, 191-192; Petshek, The Challenge of Urban Reform, 217; William L. Rafsky to James H. J. Tate, July 26, 1967, PCA. At that time, Rafsky was Executive Vice-President of the OPDC. Tate was Mayor of Philadelphia; SOM, Market Street East, 7.
writes, “Americans have shopping centers. They are the common denominator of our national life, the best symbols of our abundance.”

The coming Bicentennial also offered the corporation manna for promotion. Boosters in the local press demanded swift completion of the project “not only for . . . [its] own intrinsic worth but because of the urgency of completing . . . [Market Street East] by the Bicentennial year, 1976.” Even so, the OPDC did not cynically approach this aspect of the project. The year 1876 had served as a coming-out party for Philadelphia and helped position it as a city of national influence. Scott Knowles suggests, “The Centennial was certainly a turning point in American life, the first time that a complete picture of industrial life was displayed, in a city that was itself rapidly modernizing.” Redevelopers hoped the city could recapture a similar momentum, using Market Street East as a giant, unifying red carpet for the occasion. The city would sell prestige in 1976 and it offered control of environment as a prominent accessory. The OPDC strove for a shopping district that would “convince people that there is a purpose in coming to Philadelphia for our 200th Anniversary.” Editorials claimed the project would “create a whole new tone for the Center City area.” If the end climate downtown would more closely resemble the middle class, white suburbs, what was its current opposite? Certainly the downtown appeared chaotic, but for redevelopers, it also appeared populated by minorities and the poor. The promise of prestige offered an antidote for race and class ambiguities, a negation of urban problems.

“America’s understanding of its cities is inextricably bound up with the problems of poverty, crime, abandonment, and above all, racial tension,” writes Isenberg. Without the benefit of hindsight, though, the corporation merely tried to provide an environment for “decent” people of the whole region in time for a major event. “What better gift could the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation bring to the feast then a completed Center City?” it mused in its 1968 annual report.

72 Fogelson, Downtown, 389; Forsythe, “Renewal Cost In Midway Set at $1 Billion”; Jackson, "All the World’s a Mall," 1111; OPDC, Annual Report, 1966.

Nationally, cities threw the weight of ambition against decline and blight. Philadelphia, like many other areas, employed the services of planner-consultant Victor Gruen. Hardwick notes that for the most part, this planning iconoclast wielded a single, but attractive, tactic: by “bringing suburbia back downtown, he believed he could spur on urban renaissance.” He elaborates, “Downtown, because it seemed finite and measurable, became an object that planners and politicians could manage, rearrange, and correct.” Rafsky and other redevelopers connected the determination of redevelopment bodies in Philadelphia with a surety of successful revitalization, both in terms of reputation as well as economics. To them, downtowns merely needed a shot in the arm. “There is no other city that has as large or comprehensive a program,” he said in 1975. For Rafsky, acknowledging the problem provided much of the solution. “I have seen pedestrian-type projects turned into glamorous, high-yielding opportunities because the planners applied their imagination and ingenuity to a development objective,” he explained six years earlier.74

The OPDC put forth the value of downtown as an unshakable, intrinsic quantity. The corporation upheld its “unique flavor and interest,” and claimed, “The end result [of redevelopment projects] must be something in which Philadelphia will take pride for generations.” Members prized the strengthening of existing institutions and department stores with a suburban-style mall. With that in mind, the OPDC formed the Market Street East Committee (MSEC) in the early 1960s to “promote the project and encourage private investment.” The corporation “held a romantic notion that Market Street East would reverse the suburban shopping patterns, and that people who never came downtown from suburban areas would once again come here because it was so nice,” said former member James Martin decades later. In 1967, the MSEC recommended firing Gruen as a consultant and requested a plan that preserved all city streets to automobile traffic. The committee also served as “a sounding board of major retailers and businesses for evaluating the plans and concepts developed by the planners.” It also ensured general conformity to the aesthetics of the plan. For the cohort, city council included, sheer ambition proved urban control, and attractiveness acted as a pure negation of blight and unattractiveness. Though they dismissed Gruen because he demanded to close off Center City to

automobiles, the OPDC fully bought into many of his ideas. Hardwick surmises that Gruen’s most influential tenets were the “removal of the impediments to the consumer impulse” and explaining, “shoppers will be so bedazzled by a store’s surroundings that they will be drawn . . . to shop.” These two directives formed the most important impulse driving the OPDC’s involvement in planning Market East’s mall.

Ultimately, Center City redevelopers longed for signifiers of success, assuming them as equal to real success. Those signifiers formed out of the perception of desired patrons’ perceptions. Within this matrix, the OPDC viewed smaller retailers of all stripes as more liability against the achievement of those signifiers of success rather than encouraging of them. Initially, on the surface at least, the corporation imagined many small retailers would relocate to the pedestrian mall. “The success of the small retail tenants will depend upon the underground mall acting as the spine of the shopping traffic pattern,” Gimbels’ consultants reported in 1967. At this stage, planning focused on how the department stores and independent businesses would successfully interact under one scheme. Within a few short years, though, the RA and OPDC began turning their attention almost entirely toward powerful retail giants. They decided to relocate “displacees that will not be desired in the Mall, to less desirable locations [a couple of blocks north] such as Arch Street” even though the small shops on East Market Street “depended on a transient trade which Arch Street frontage could not provide.” The RA also suggested moving non-luxury retail several blocks south to South Street, since the CPC had identified that area as “a regional retail center for less expensive goods.” The Authority entertained the idea of displacees improving sparser downtown districts. In response to protests from shop owners facing eviction and their employees, redevelopers volleyed unsubstantiated claims that most East Market Street displacees were happy to relocate and supported the project. The RA also vaunted its own tepid program for helping displaced shop owners.76

75 City of Philadelphia ordinance, April 10, 1969, PCA; Day to OPDC executive committee members, (memo, Market Street East project, July 24, 1967); Hardwick, Mall Maker, 2; “Market Street East,” The Revitalization of Center City; Old Philadelphia Development Corporation to Frank L. Rizzo, November 2, 1973, PCA. Draft of letter; Petshek, The Challenge of Urban Reform, 227.

76 Gimbels to Old Philadelphia Development Corporation Market Street East Committee (MSEC), (memo, Market Street East Committee, February 15, 1967), PCA; Francis J. Lammer to Paul D’Ortona, (memo, “Market Street East Urban Renewal Area,” December 30, 1969), PCA; Gerald M. Maier to Relocation Task Force, (memo, “Market Street East Urban Renewal Area,” October 21,
Crucial to its vision of downtown renewal, the sprawl and unevenness of most East Market Street blocks ran contrary to the OPDC’s plans for Market Street East grandness and exclusivity. Its members viewed the project as a deserved amenity for “decent” Philadelphians. For this cohort, whether consciously considered or not, wealth bequeathed the added benefit of increased citizenship. Postwar consumerism, as Lizabeth Cohen illustrates, “carried the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Consuming, in safety and with full and fair access to markets, became a right to which all Americans supposedly were entitled.” Still, shopping in an area like Market Street East would require access to social capital and lifestyle out of reach for many Philadelphia residents. The OPDC put forth the idea that only a middle class, affluent, and white set of shoppers would be welcome upon completion of this project. Consuming on Market Street East, the corporation planned, would bolster the idea of a dignified downtown esplanade, one that urban areas would come to aspire to.  

Local press provided a substitute for earned public approval. “The long range goal is the strengthening of Center City as the major retail and employment center of the metropolitan region,” read one 1966 editorial. Both local and national outlets posed urban redevelopers as heroes fighting against a wave of chaos. The Bulletin praised corporation members as “involved in nothing less than the fight to save the heart of Philadelphia. The city’s dailies upheld the OPDC’s public-private template as the key to recovering from downtown decline and competing with the suburbs: “Greater Philadelphia cannot succeed in renewal, much less in building for the glittering future that the planners envision, unless civic and political responsibility are also renewed.” The press latched onto the notion of Market Street East as a beautiful, convenient cure-all to the city’s urban problems. Likewise, it joined redevelopers in condemning East Market Street as a worthless strip of cheap retailers. These seemingly unbiased sources of support allowed the OPDC to further narrow its plans for the project. By the late-1960s, redevelopers turned their attention to building infrastructure conventional planning


wisdom had underlined as attractive to affluent and middle class whites. They pointed to the transportation mall aspects of the project and concurrent expressway construction as likely to draw shoppers in from the suburbs. Ultimately, their methods extended from Philadelphia renewal boosters' beliefs that suburbs constituted only passing threat to downtown and that Center City could recapture its past consumerist glory. Only blight and decline stood in its way. Richard Graves, executive vice-president of the public-private Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), said in 1961, "Sure, there are suburban centers . . . and stores will always follow people. But the thing that is important to recognize is that the maintenance of the great home downtown retail store is vital to the life of the whole region." Though his logic surely sprung from the general font of local revitalization boosterism, he, too, failed to explain how preserving urban department stores benefited the larger region.

Philadelphia redevelopers in the 1950s and 1960s became convinced that the suburbs owned the primary locus of cultural capital in the region because the suburbs possessed such a high percentage of affluent and middle class white residents. Still, many renewal consultants, like Victor Gruen, questioned the validity of shopping centers as urban planning. Others, like future Market East developer James Rouse, mustered only vague pronouncements. “People are hungry for something to do and spend large amounts of money when things are offered to them,” Rouse told Bacon in 1963 when Center City’s redevelopers first courted his services.79

Unsurprisingly, the RA and OPDC rarely acknowledged the futility of remaking East Market Street for suburbanites. Even so, many factors rendered Market Street East incapable of reclaiming

79 Edmund N. Bacon to James W. Rouse, (May 20, 1963), PCA; Hardwick, Mall Maker, 205, 218.
shoppers it had lost to the surrounding environs. Downtown developers targeted female consumers, but women (and all shoppers) had firmly changed their shopping habits by the early 1960s. The grand pageant of department store shopping no longer fit into most suburbanites’ daily lifestyle, no matter how ambitious public-private organizations were in their efforts to reverse decline. Isenberg asks, “Could any shopping environment induce most middle class women to want to spend all day shopping and homemaking?” The suburbs “grew more than four times as fast as the central cities . . . in the 1940s” and continued to expand in the following two decades, Fogelson writes. Simply put, most of redevelopers’ desired patrons lived far away from the city center and would not regularly travel downtown. Suburban residents could access all the goods they wanted close to home, obviating the pull of downtown shopping districts. This spatial reality clashed with downtown leaders’ hopes that suburbanites were actually Philadelphia citizens living in regional purgatory. Furthermore, they believed non-residents in the suburbs held greater purchase on downtown participation than East Market Street’s current undesirable patrons and shop owners. As such, they planned retail and transportation amenities for suburbanites (rail, highway access), rather than for the city’s citizens, as a means to affect a greater shift toward exclusivity. Above all, the RA and OPDC believed in the power of redevelopment to accomplish social engineering. Moreover, the OPDC sought to help suburban shoppers avoid the city while downtown. Corporation members promoted the concept of building “separate bus terminals [that] will bring long distance and commuter buses from New Jersey into the Market Street East complex directly from the Vine Street Expressway.” Victor Gruen, a lasting influence on OPDC plans, recommended constructing direct connections for automobiles from outlying highways to massive parking garages. Furthermore, he prized designing urban centers to mirror those in the suburbs. Other Market Street East proposals outlined a plan for “connecting bridges above street level [that] will enable shoppers to walk to all five major Center City department stores without crossing a street.”

Redevelopers planned shopping and consumer amenities to lure desirable visitors and residents downtown, assuming only retail centers mirroring those of the suburbs would offer a sure bet for survival. The OPDC and RA applied rules of environment control, unity, cohesion, convenience, as well as race and class segregation suburban malls had created for the new group of regional citizen consumers. Claimed one 1964 Bulletin editorial, Market East “aimed at taking the best--but only the best--of the suburban shopping center pattern.” This goal persisted through the project’s completion when the Rouse Company said, “Here, in effect, we’re building a suburban mall on a downtown site.” The corporation and Authority proposed and gravitated toward plans for creating “one management that controls the environment,” a “concentration of stores,” a “unifying character,” and “a space experienced simultaneously.” Additionally, Philadelphia’s downtown renewal cohort prized “a major integrated facility which provides access, attractiveness, and a coherent framework for new development,” as well as an expansive and inclusive redevelopment zone, reduction of “confusion and visual clutter,” and “a more compact and upgraded business section.” In terms of convenience, some downtown leaders, like Snellenberg’s president Alfred Blasband, had long called for expanded and simplified transportation and longer hours on East Market Street. By the mid-1960s, though, redevelopers began vaunting more and more the benefits of large parking garages. Lastly, the OPDC also proposed subtle Market Street East policies designed to perform the same task as restricted suburban access. Mostly, it intended to price out the non-middle class. Either taken individually or in the aggregate, these redevelopment directives extended directly from those of suburban retail.

Another of the OPDC’s major planning fallacies stood as the corporation’s application of the nature of convenience only to space, not to distance as well. Members assumed a similar complex

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downtown to those in the suburbs would attract the same set of consumers. They did not realize that downtown and suburban centers were not diametrically opposed in terms of ability to lure shoppers, that they could not be understood as simple choices. Cohen emphasizes that suburban developers "set out to perfect the concept of downtown, not to obliterate it." Likewise, Fogelson writes, "In 1954, Gruen portrayed downtowns and suburbs as interchangeable spaces that begged identical solutions for their merchants." Throughout the 1960s, Center City boosters vaunted plans that reflected this tenant. They planned downtown as a direct response to the suburbs, but they did not realize that suburbs provided a brand-new configuration of consumerism and social interaction. "It has been widely recognized that in the development of major regional shopping centers, we are really building new, well planned central business districts," said James Rouse, years before he turned his attention to cities. Suburban centers, essentially, acted as those residents' downtowns, but they were newer and in-tune with the sensibilities of newly christened citizen consumers. Regional shopping malls offered nearby residents the same sense of place that downtowns had provided shoppers in the past, but with a heightened focus on environmental management and control. Removing blight and other signs of obsolescence stood as only one battle in redevelopers' war to reclaim regional economic supremacy.82

Fear of low-income and minority residents—which planners and local civic leaders in American cities often coded as "urban problems"—and dissatisfaction with the appearance and environment of old downtowns offered only two incentives for white city dwellers to move to the suburbs. The lure of more space and less centralization had emerged out of "an increasing focus on professionalism in government" and an eschewing of urban patronage customs, suggests Nicholas Dagen Bloom. But new towns also provided fresh and comforting living, consuming, and socializing matrices. Sharon Zukin, urban historian and author of Point of Purchase: How Shopping Changed American Culture, explains that shopping in the suburbs satisfied beneficiaries' "expectations of normalcy" and their "need to socialize." Continuing, she notes that this activity also defined "spiritual territory" in the lives of suburbanites, and provided them with the "most available means of creative

82 Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, 110; Cohen, A Consumers’ Republic, 261; Dyer, "Markets in the Meadows," 333-334; Hardwick, Mall Maker, 3-4, 163.
expression." Unlike the old downtowns, these malls offered nearby residents a sense of control over self and class identity. Developers of suburbs like Cherry Hill, New Jersey catered to these new middle class demands. Even Philadelphia’s own Redevelopment Authority (RA) understood that, in doing so, suburbs created of themselves the pull of “communal value” within the lives of their residents (much as downtowns radiated a similar level of magnetism for many city dwellers). Outside of suburban borders, their forms became irreplaceable and irreproducible. American consumerism scholar Lizabeth Cohen explains that the suburbs quickly developed into places of removed urbanity, offering “variety without confusion, colorful appearance without garishness, [and] gaiety without vulgarity.” The expanding meaning of suburban living stood as the most profound shift in post-war American culture. New citizen consumers bestowed with new rights contained within shopping and lifestyle directives both shaped their own destinies afar from downtowns, and, in turn provided a medium through which business and retail could shape the fabric of American society. The clean-slate suburbs offered both groups a canvas and a needle, the subject and the medium.83

The surrounding Philadelphia suburbs were once disparate counties with identities formed organically around local industry and ethnic populations. In the late 1940s and into the 1950s, the culture of the outlying regions coalesced around a singular concept of exclusivity and self-determination. As these changes solidified, certain other unified cultural amenities arose. Racial homogeneity presented suburbanites with a level of comfort in home and social life that they found harder to attain in the city. Dyer concludes, “Many of the expressed reasons for preferring life in the suburbs seems to be an elaborate code for racial attitudes.” Suburban malls recognized white flighters’ prejudices, and managements actively threw up roadblocks to racial co-use while continuing to employ Black porters and janitors. Aside from merely creating an extension of segregation, the suburbs also allowed residents to fully-realize, renew, and enjoy signifiers of race and class demarcations. Zukin explains, “We separate ourselves from others by deciding where to shop and what to buy.” This ritual extended from the store counter to the kitchen counter, as suburban culture in the decades after World

83 Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, 109; Cohen, A Consumers’ Republic, 108, 119, 265; Dyer, “Markets in the Meadows,” 276, 278, 317, 330; Fogelson, Downtown, 319; Gillette, Civitas by Design, 84; Isenberg, Downtown America, 188; Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia, Annual Report, 1965, Philadelphia City Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I have abbreviated all subsequent citations of this archive as PCA; Zukin, Point of Purchase, 2, 7, 30.
War II set itself against the racial unrest and increased crime of downtown. One reason the white middle became so drawn to the suburbs was because they persisted as racially homogeneous. Still, more than race was in play. The suburbs also offered residents and potential residents the instantaneous fulfillment of cultural and economic superiority. The federal government offered new residents low interest home loans; striving was not a prerequisite. In this case, location itself, not necessarily education or profession, bestowed elevated class identity. These shopping malls, Zukin adds, aided this image, satisfying "cravings for individual identity, social status, and a sense of membership in a national culture." Many suburbanites fled from working-class neighborhoods of Philadelphia, and escaping from the city tendered the immediate attainment of middle class standing, an achievement much more abstract in the core. The sense of accomplishment suburbanites could gain from owning a house and plot of land combined with the renewable experience of shopping to render a total matrix of superior living to that of the city. Suburban shopping completed the circuit, both in its democratization of luxury as well as in its locational exclusivity.

Mostly, they misunderstood the qualities the suburbs themselves bestowed upon their shopping malls. Philadelphia's redevelopment cohort, like so many across the country, did not realize the incompatibility of suburban forms downtown. Joseph Wood indicates, "Suburbs no longer function solely as bedroom communities." Center City redevelopers believed that a stronger force tied suburbs to central cities than actually existed. But the very nature of what suburbs had become by the late 1950s amounted to much more than mere economic self-sufficiency. Suburban malls offered vastly divergent possibilities for control of environment from those of downtown. "Not only would space be better managed, but cultural and community life would also be directed . . . Beginning in the 1960s . . . cultural and civic life of . . . malls was not merely symbolic, but functional," supposes Bloom in his biography of James Rouse. Downtown shopping districts still operated under the aegis of many decades of history, memory, and change. Suburban shopping arrived fully formed and without any

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84 Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, 114; Dyer, "Markets in the Meadows," 303, 305; Kowinski, The Malling of America, 158; Summers and Luce, Economic Development within the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area, 15; Stephanie G. Wolf, "The Bicentennial City, 1968-1982" in Philadelphia: A 300-Year History, ed. Russell F. Weigley, with the assistance of Nicholas B. Wainwright and Edwin Wolf (New York: Norton, 1982), 709. I might mention that this chapter, while it hardly shaped my narrative or arguments, provided me with the initial inspiration for researching Market East and The Gallery; Wolfinger, Philadelphia Divided, 2, 129; Zukin, Point of Purchase, 2, 14-15.
such urban baggage. Additionally, suburban consumers experienced space in new town malls much differently than shoppers had come to downtown. Arriving by car and parking in giant lots provided them with a greater sense of autonomy and power over consuming.\textsuperscript{85} Downtowns demanded middle class consumers either give themselves over to the majesty of the retail kingdom or intimidated them with unforeseen ambiguities and an inexorable urban climate. Raw setting amounted to only one component of suburban shopping; simply, the meanings of consuming diverged greatly between suburbs and downtowns. The latter wrote its rules of culture making, community building, and identity forging instantly and in accordance with new citizen consumer directives. The former contended with rules long written, entrenched, and obsolete.

It is unclear what, if anything, the RA and OPDC team could have proposed as a vehicle for driving the sort of redevelopment outcome it wanted. Because, as Fogelson contextualizes, of “the huge postwar migration from the rural South to the urban North, many blacks began to go downtown for the first time.” Also, East Market Street provided the most accessible retail option for minorities, as well as the variety and experience not available in their own neighborhoods. Redevelopers could not steer the divisions of culture, trading black shoppers for white ones. But they ignored such realities, pushing past the rooted class, race, and status affirmations regional shopping centers offered middle class suburbanites. Those outlets specifically promoted such distinctions. “We are a type of organization that caters primarily to middle-income groups,” representatives of the suburban Macy’s Garden State Plaza claimed. The \textit{Journal of Marketing} put it more explicitly: “Tone and physical character of their advertising permit the shopper to make social-class identification,” it reported of new shopping malls.\textsuperscript{86} The OPDC aimed at a similar climate for Market Street East, but failed to realize the separation between public-private ingenuity and the diminished marketing capacity of downtown retail. It needed to reconcile its goals with the incompatibility of suburban solutions. Instead, it attempted to beat the suburbs at their own game with handicapped plays.

The new citizen consumer matrix bestowed greater value on convenience and routine than on the grand pageant of shopping. Quite simply, suburbanites did not need to go downtown to satisfy their

\textsuperscript{85} Bloom, \textit{Merchant of Illusion}, 116; Jackson, “All the World’s a Mall,” 1116; Wood, “Suburbanization of Center City,” 325.
\textsuperscript{86} Cohen, \textit{A Consumers’ Republic}, 265; Fogelson, \textit{Downtown}, 396.
consumer imperatives. From 1952 to 1962, 90,000 jobs moved from the city to the suburbs. Typically, transplants' social and job lives revolved around their new neighborhoods. "Complete department stores generated greater loyalty among suburban customers, who could obtain everything they needed at their local store," concludes Dyer. Downtown department stores, then, faced two battles: distance and consumer identification. "Communal value was what moored a shopping center's economic success," noted Rouse in the mid-1960s. Shopping mall developers adhered his this tenet. In that regard, the suburbs held the advantage. From their homes and social networks, imagination, for these residents, offered only the flimsiest of connections to Center City. In fact, one major problem with the OPDC’s goals stemmed from the change in the very meaning suburbanites eventually attached to their own shopping centers. As they began to populate the sides of highways and next to office parks, shopping malls began to normalize. Going to them became less special and more habit. Rouse explained, “the shopping center . . . was more attuned to new social values that stressed informality.” The OPDC proposed creating a wonderland of retail, sadly misunderstanding suburban mores. It put too much stock into the belief that Philadelphia remained, as it had during the initial suburban expansion of the 1940s, what Anita Summers and Thomas Luce refer to as a “uninucleated” magnet to the suburbs.87

Transportation to downtown provided an egalitarian delivery system for all segments of urban society. For the most part, regular shopping at suburban shopping malls required owning an automobile. A bit less than twice as many suburban families owned cars as did families in the cities. Cohen notes that the routine and habit of shopping far from the downtown corridor stemmed from those shoppers' “preference for using automobiles over public trans” and the ease with which they allowed for multiple trips. Buses to these centers originated from middle class areas, not low-income neighborhoods. For these reasons, as well as sheer quantity, the novelty of shopping centers had worn thin on suburban residents. Still, normalization in no way connoted a willingness of suburbanites to return downtown to shop. “The 'revolution is over and the present hierarchy of suburban centers

may very well be fixed,” write urban historians Joseph Oberman and Stephen Kozakowski of this final shift. The OPDC also ignored this reality.

Well before Market Street East and The Gallery entered their final planning stages, many observers doubted the ability of urban shopping complexes to bring about a rebalancing of regional economic dominance. Mathias Vito, one of the eventual overseers of the Rouse Company’s development of Market East, assumed, “the mall is not the salvation of every city.” Just because a new amenity existed, no matter the bells and whistles supposedly adding value (transportation, suburban-style appearance and convenience) that did not mean the desired patrons would use it. Unlike the clean slate suburbs, urban areas had to contend with built-in barriers. “In some ways they are very malleable to external needs and conditions, but they cannot violate their natures as unified, planned, and controlled entities, and that is why they alone can’t save the city,” explains mall historian William Kowinski. Planners located Market East amidst long-standing structures and a long-gestating urban culture, all of which were bound to contribute to how consumers experienced the final product. The OPDC, however, understood the complete redevelopment scheme as creating a vacuum downtown. Even so, Market East would come to sit within the urban landscape, with all of its problems, perceived and real. “As the segmentation of consumer markets became the guiding principle in postwar commerce, no amount of revitalization could make a city whose population was becoming increasingly minority and poor attractive to the white middle class shoppers with money to spend,” writes Cohen, adding a damning note to the ambitions of downtown redevelopment. Ultimately, the OPDC’s belief in the myth of downtown Philadelphia caused it to create Market East for a segment of society content with a lifestyle far different than the city could hope to offer.

Even with a mountain of doubt bearing down on Center City’s redevelopment cohort, the OPDC never wavered from their position that the finished project would act as a transformational force downtown. Gimbels department store, one of the primary East Market Street magnets, voiced

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concerns in 1967: “It is well known that the history of the success of previous underground concourse
malls has been mixed.” Edmund Bacon warned against “linear thinking” and “arrogance based on the
assumption that we are capable of preconceiving the final product.” For the OPDC, final say over the
design and end purpose of its projects became bundled up in the corporation’s strivings for power and
influence. Bacon added, “Probably the single greatest issue in planning at this moment is whether or
not the planners are really going to be capable of swallowing the bitter pill of sharing the power.”
Certainly, the OPDC imposed its influence on downtown projects to the exclusion of other voices. In
1970, RA director Francis Lammer confessed that the planned Gimbels move within The Gallery mall
would cut its property taxes by more than half. The PHA echoed his concerns, estimating resultant tax
revenues as “substantial, but less than the annual increment needed to maintain present levels of
service,” adding, “Obviously, while Market East will help somewhat, it will not allay our fiscal crisis.”
Two years earlier, amidst the corporation’s greatest push for project commencement, Rafsky admitted,
“There will be more efforts to involve massive private investment in solving the assorted urban ills. The
realistic prospects of achieving significant breakthroughs through the approach, however, are limited.”
The capacity for Market East to improve even its immediate surroundings also came under scrutiny.
Victor Gruen, the most devoted proponent of building suburban-style developments downtown,
questioned the project’s influence on the wider Center City district. “We . . . are concerned about the
possibility that this gain will be localized solely to these four and one-half blocks and to a smaller
degree to the existing department stores on the north side of Market Street,” he reported just prior to
his dismissal. Future Market East developer James Rouse initially expressed similar misgivings,
rejecting the OPDC’s overtures in 1963. At that point he doubted whether the project (though he
considered it “dramatically important”) could yield the sort of social and economic gains the
corporation wanted.⁹⁰ He only agreed to develop Market East after enduring years of diminished

⁹⁰ Edmund Bacon, Pomeroy Memorial Lecture: Planning 1968 (Chicago: American Society of
Planning Officials. 1968), PCA, 4; Gimbels to OPDC MSEC, (memo, MSEC, February 15, 1967);
William Rafsky, “What’s Ahead” (lecture outline, MAPC-NAHRO Conference, June 7, 1968), TUA. In
this document, Rafsky or a member of his staff crossed out the date of Thursday, June 6 and wrote
“Friday, June 7”; James W. Rouse to William L. Rafsky, (memo, January 6, 1964), PCA; Victor Gruen
professional reputation. If Market East’s most fervent boosters voiced grave doubts over the project’s suitability, it simply amazes that the plans were neither scrapped nor underwent significant alteration.

The OPDC never could get past its desire for suburban residents’ to celebrate a new Philadelphia downtown, and that fantasy persisted as the corporation’s most important barometer of success. As a result, it posed different strata of the metropolitan population against each other, often disparaging the city’s poor and minorities as unworthy of their city. Ultimately, the OPDC’s conceptualization of the worth of downtown was bound up in notions of class and racial exclusivity. It believed in only that one pathway to creating value, and it never considered how other groups might determine the value of city spaces. For success, Market East had to deliver an unalloyed middle class. The OPDC’s ideal downtown future featured a transplanted suburban milieu smothering out all vestiges of urban ambiguity and uncertainty. Hardwick proposes that Gruen believed, “American downtowns--‘anonymous, ugly, dirty places’--were to be remade.” Joshua Olsen identifies that “Market Street to the east of City Hall was, as one reporter described it, left ‘lined with noisy sound stores, class D discounters, purveyors of triple knit fashions, plastic shoes, and dog hair wigs.’” The OPDC swallowed these directives hook, line, and sinker, allowing the perceptions and meta-perceptions of a finicky press, self-serving planning consultants, and a monolithic suburban public steer the redevelopment of their city. It looked across the Delaware River to Rouse’s Cherry Hill Mall (the “Disneyland of shopping”) for inspiration on “anchoring social value to the landscape of consumption,” illustrates Dyer.91 Indeed, the corporation viewed value downtown through a telescope aimed at Philadelphia’s surrounding counties.

By the mid-1960s downtown redevelopers existed entirely within the expectation of a bright downtown future, assessing the current East Market Street value with a conceptual future Market Street East worth. Any value the area retained for this coterie became a total function of the assumed future value. This meaning leached into general public acceptance. Philadelphia Magazine reported in 1972, “The adult book stores thrive on Market and Arch . . . A string of small-time entrepreneurs have a

cliente which, like them, will vanish with the coming of the Transportation Mall." Grand plans could push forward just as soon as the city washed the dirt and crime away.\textsuperscript{92}

The OPDC, with support from the press and its consultants, convinced itself that preserving the status quo was the true path. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s mid-1960s Market Street East study claimed, “the city’s recent accomplishments in renewal signal its determination to deal effectively with the fundamental causes of downtown decay.” By the late 1960s, the corporation vaunted the idea that The Gallery and Market East would exist primarily for the pleasure of all but those who lived in the wider reaches of Philadelphia. An early Gallery promotional brochure listed off statistics and descriptions of Center City workers and wealthy residents, seasonal suburban shoppers, and tourists, each section concluding with an absolute: “These people will shop at The Gallery.”\textsuperscript{93}

OPDC members believed it could re-engineer East Market Street’s social dimensions through cultivation of higher brows of taste. Taste, by definition, is subjective. So, the OPDC subjected the ambiguities and diversities of downtown to its own notions of appropriate taste. Race and class drove many of its opinions but not to anything but the vaguest of distinctions. “The overriding importance of quality as opposed to a mediocrity has been overcome. This we feel is a major accomplishment,” read one section of the corporation’s 1965 annual report. Aside from an abstract concept of suburban mall forms, the OPDC pushed for accomplishing a negation of decline signifiers with a promotion of nebulous revitalization models. As with Society Hill and Washington Square East, the corporation sought to control aesthetic choices for Market Street East. It believed high cost and appearance of large expenditures would insulate the project from middle class and affluent dismissal. “The engineering for these developments was complex, the architecture was spectacular and the interior was costly,” read the OPDC’s annual report the year The Gallery and Market East opened. It decided, as most involved in downtown renewal, its members owned the right to create meaning on Market


Street East. Furthermore, it implicitly demanded the primarily role in deciding who had the right to participate in the Center City social and consumer milieus. This matrix of control, the corporation believed, would allow it to set values. Most renewal boosters and observers placed wealthy and middle class families above reproach and defined most other Philadelphians as unworthy. In 1972, *Philadelphia Magazine* supposed most white East Market Street visitors shared in their disdain of the area. It wondered if any of its readers shopped at the corridor’s independent retailers: “Chances are, if you don’t, you are white, middle class, and while on your Saturday trek between Strawbridge’s and Wanamaker’s, you’ve passed these stores hundreds of times without ever looking at their names or going inside them.” The writer added, for emphasis, “Most of the trade is black.” Boosters utilized the concept of obsolescence selectively. Decline and the effort to reverse it had become woven into Philadelphia’s postwar narrative. In 1964, Day explained, “The old and decrepit are slowly but inevitably giving way to the new and vigorous as plans for a proud Philadelphia unfold.” The RA and OPDC damned East Market Street as obsolete even as both also positioned themselves as conservators of Philadelphia’s grand downtown character. Since they wrote both concepts so broadly, they could pursue both goals with straight faces. Modernizing, redevelopers assumed through a course of linguistic gymnastics, did not run contrary to preservation. Modernization provided an antidote for obsolescence via an unobtrusive swapping of capitalistic forms, not complete revision.94

New structures, the Philadelphia’s renewal coterie claimed, supplied downtown with important rebranding signifiers. They believed Market Street East less susceptible to blight critiques if the city could point to brand new infrastructure and buildings. The OPDC’s consultants pointed to this idea as most crucial to the project’s success. “A new department store would be extremely helpful to the area because it would provide visible evidence that the street would have a new look. The shopping area would be enhanced by an exciting major feature,” consultant Philip Klutznick submitted of the new Gimbels store. Louis Kahn and OPDC members echoed this directive. Conversely, redevelopers

spoke to obsolete structures and businesses as having no worth. They drew no distinction between vacant, marginal and declined structures. "Most of the buildings in the area are obsolete in that they are not being used to full capacity," read one section of the RA’s survey and planning application. For them, new buildings offered a one-to-one replacement of obsolete ones, and thereby, a congruent substitution of worthlessness with unshakeable value.95

At the same time, though, the OPDC imagined the downtown as a place culturally separate from the suburbs. "What was needed was not just another shopping center of the type proliferating in the outlying parts of the region . . . [it] had to be unique, unusual, and unsurpassed," proposed the corporation. They upheld a compacted version of diversity, cosmopolitan but far from uncertain. "Market Street East has been said to display as dazzling a display of humanity as it does retail comparison goods. The diversity of Market Street East is its true strength," suggested one section of the corporation’s sixteenth annual report. Still, that same report tempered its celebration of urbanity with more conservative comments: “Where OPDC set its sights on reversing the negative trends in Market Street East, it sought at the same time to build on the strengths of the area without impairing either vitality or diversity.” Certainly, the organization’s annual report—more promotional brochure than dispassionate account—left a great many questions unanswered or obscured. But, in fact, even as the corporation strove to stamp out all cultural ambiguities downtown, it thrived in promoting its goals through ambiguous language. Still, as the OPDC came to realize that downtown needed to be differentiated from the suburb in order to lure the middle class away from places like the Cherry Hill Mall, it re-defined the meaning of diversity. In 1966, Rafsky narrowed the definition of downtown benefits to “the opportunity to mix with neighbors and friends.” Diversity, in this reading, remained familiar. For the OPDC, diversity became less about cultural and social interweaving and more about celebrating the all-purpose myth of downtown economic centrality. The 1972 annual report encapsulated this motive:

From river to river, Vine to South Streets, Center City Philadelphia has the greatest concentration of diverse and specialized activities in the entire region. Combining the

95 Adams, et al., Philadelphia, 103; Amsterdam, et al., Survey and Planning Application, R-103-2; Day to OPDC executive committee members, (memo, Market Street East project, July 24, 1967); OPDC, (minutes, executive committee, March 21, 1967); "Paraphrasing of Lou Kahn Seminars—Market East Proposal: Tape No. 1—First Meeting with Lou Kahn"; Title Unavailable, Philadelphia Inquirer, November 5, 1972, TUA. Unknown if article had byline.
birthplace of the nation with the most avant-garde in contemporary life, downtown offers an unparalleled selection of cultural opportunities, historical treasures, professional resources, retail shopping, restaurants, and institutional service.

In this way, the OPDC also sought to control with meaning of diversity in Philadelphia. It restricted it to the inanimate, pushing out all that existed to the north and south. Redevelopers pushed for new amenities, but also agonized over every detail and implication. "There is a genuine fear of the influx of more shops of lesser quality and taste, and what this will do to the character and economic health of Chestnut Street," one CPC presentation noted. The department stores even expressed concerns over new benches, worried that they might "attract hippies and bums who must be ejected by the police." In its program of both design and experience on Market Street East, the OPDC harbored public pretensions of preserving the character of downtown, all the while imposing policies designed to narrow the boundaries of downtown culture. “To conform to the modern, plus Old Philadelphia character of the city, the new Gimbels will be contemporary in design, but with classic detailing. Concrete panels and clear glass will be accented by marble columns and marble framing around the unusual 12 display windows on the street level,” explained the department store’s press release from 1975. ⁹⁶

The OPDC and its peers painted East Market Street as worse than it actually was. "It is apparent, even to a casual observer, that a sickness has set it," read one 1967 editorial, arraying the symptoms of “hamburger stands, pizza pies, barbecue chicken, vegetable stalls, and cut-rate drugstore and distressed merchandise shops.” When the Snellenberg’s department store closed in 1965, the OPDC laid the blame for “economic, physical, and spiritual deterioration” squarely on the shoulders of the “influx of hole-in-the-wall shops.” The corporation attacked these politically powerless merchants because they understood the value of a visible scapegoat. Other articles decried East Market Street’s so-called “captive” patronage of poor and minority Philadelphians, relegating the group’s status as acceptable collateral damage of necessary renewal. These people imposed an

unworthy culture, renewal supporters suggested, and they took up the space desirable white shoppers
might occupy.  

Even so, the OPDC, CPC, and RA also encouraged businesses it intended to evict to remain
in their East Market Street locations for the time being. They planned to demolish structures and
construct The Gallery and Market East in stages, as they did not want to let a no-man’s land persist in
the area for several years. As long as Gimbels remained at its 8th Street plant, redevelopers implicitly
tolerated the business independent retailers conducted. The RA posed this design as assistance to
future displacees, informing merchants, “It is the intention of the Authority to stage the relocation of the
businesses so that they will not all be required to move at the same time.” Still, the RA only planned to
offer continued support to merchants it believed could pay higher rents and fit in with the concept of
Market East. Center City’s return to high stature and prestige persisted as redevelopers’ chief
concerns. They viewed the retail giants and nearby financial, government, and transportation
institutions as agents of cohesion for the entire region, their decline at the hands of so-called “marginal
businesses” as symptoms of regional disintegration. “[What would] New York [be] without Fifth
Avenue; Chicago without the Loop; or Philadelphia without Market, Chestnut and Walnut Street?”
asked a Philadelphia realtor. ‘Destroy these business areas, and you destroy the city.’ And if you
destroy the city, ‘there would be no reasons for city sub-centers’.

Ultimately, the OPDC, RA and James Rouse rediscovered mutual affinities and commenced
official collaboration in the early 1970s. Philadelphia redevelopers had always hoped Rouse and his
company would redevelop East Market Street, and now the inimitable suburban planner had decided
to turn his attention to remaking and reviving cities. Olsen explains that he had “long ago abandoned
his fetish with ‘sophisticated’ architecture . . . , [and was now] impressed with buildings and setting that
made people comfortable.” Rouse’s realignment of personal tastes fell right in line with the OPDC’s


98 Executive Director Edmund Bacon, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Weekly Report to the
Mayor, December 29, 1966, PCA; Day, (press release, OPDC, “Action Taken on Market Street East
project,” July 26, 1967); Fogelson, Downtown, 389. I pulled the quote regarding the importance of city
centers from this citation; Francis J. Lammer to Market Street East merchants, (memo, November 3,
1969), PCA; Francis J. Lammer to Paul D’Ortona, (memo, November 12, 1969), PCA; Rafsky, “Making
Our Urban Areas Livable and Meaningful”.

hopes for Market East. Additionally, Rouse had built shopping malls in the nearby suburbs of Plymouth Meeting, Willowbrook, Echelon, Woodbridge, and Cherry Hill. If anyone could bring the suburbs downtown, it was James Rouse. He christened Market Street East’s future mall as “The Gallery” after the famed Galleria in Milan, Italy, and imbued the center with his ideas of quality. As reported in the *Bulletin*, Rouse and his company leaders described suburban residents as “‘frustrated urbanites’ who are eager to find exiting things to do in the city.” Even so, “like many American businessmen, Rouse frequently confused consumer choice and fundamental democratic processes,” writes Bloom. This particular tendency for conflation fit in with the OPDC’s exclusionary motives. At the same time, Rouse allowed other leaders in his company to dictate the ambiguous stance the company would take on race. “We are not going to be bigoted, nor are we going to be crusaders,” Rouse said of an earlier suburban development. By ignoring the suburbs’ side effects of racial segregation, Rouse tacitly condoned the OPDC similar goals, that of eliminating “social undesirable land use” in Center City.99

Chapter 3 elaborated on how the OPDC used targeted blight identification, removal, and rehabilitation as a means for perpetuating its mythological concepts for revitalizing various projects in Center City, including and leading up to Market Street East and The Gallery. Its members, especially William Rafksy, swung between wanting to do what it considered best for business and what it believed would benefit the wider city. Often, they expressed these opposing sectors as two sides of the same coin: what is best for business is best for the whole city. This chapter also introduced the rhetoric and methods through which advocacy groups, certain private citizens, and other municipal agencies pushed back against the OPDC, the RA, and the mythology redevelopers imposed on planning projects. They opposed renewal boosters’ use of public funds and public power for projects benefitting private companies. The OPDC used its Philadelphia downtown myth to quash these groups’ objections. The corporation never wavered in its belief that restoring Center City to its remembered grandeur would ensure successful revitalization. Still, the myth was only a narrative. It did not reflect reality, and it could neither produce the increases in population nor the attendant retail

spending necessary for commercial redevelopment to work. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the myth would collapse even further in the face of intense commercial competition.
CHAPTER 4

THE BOUNDARIES OF CIVIC LOYALTY

This section interrogates one of the main assumptions of redevelopers' downtown Philadelphia myth: the major department store owners were loyal to the city and emotionally and altruistically invested in the revitalization of East Market Street. Did the heads of those companies see their Center City locations as part of the same downtown memory narrative as redevelopers? Or were they merely concerned with whether or not redevelopment of the corridor would improve sales? Although the heads of the department stores all sat on the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation board, they did not come to decisions regarding Market East and The Gallery as a unified decision-making body. Rather, they ignored notions of aggregate benefit, and proceeded from a standpoint of competition. These tensions exposed major fractures in the ability of the myth to bring about a successful renewal, but the owners’ selfishness also prevented the myth from reaching its maximum effect. Ultimately, in 1967, when negotiations between the four department stores ground to a halt over the arrangement of their stores around the future mall, the public, city leaders, and even redevelopers lost faith in the power of the downtown culture myth. Regardless of whether its narrative could have affected major revitalization, the nature of the power structure within the OPDC stanched any further hope for that possibility. The corporation would ride out the rest of the 1960s severely wounded.

As previously noted, the RA and OPDC upheld the major department stores as Center City monuments, both to retail, as well as to the abstract Philadelphia downtown myth. Retail giants like Strawbridge & Clothier, Wanamaker’s, Gimbels, and Lit Brothers, writes Alison Isenberg, “had cultivated the belief that they underpinned and embodied the city’s prosperity.” The 1966 Architectural Forum article on the Market East project identified Wanamaker’s as “scarcely less a local institution than City Hall across the street.” Redevelopers understood reviving the department stores as crucial to the revitalization of Center City. The OPDC lamented the decline of these department stores (and the closing of some) as a symbol of prosperity gone. Following from this logic, redevelopers saw the
landscape of small shops (with varied patronage) as further symbols of decline. Their appearance and the demographic profile of their patrons led the OPDC and RA assume these shops “which appear to suffer under marginal business conditions” possessed no real worth compared to the major department stores. In 1965, the RA issued questionnaires to East Market Street businesses concerning employee habits and demographics in order to discern what kind of people these stores employed. Through these statistics, it concluded which shops would fit in with the Market East concept. Redevelopers “feared that as the shopping centers spread throughout the suburbs, the downtown stores would be forced to resort to ‘bargain basement retailing’ for whatever customers emerge from the encroaching slums.” These sorts of statements contained indelible racial connotations. In its damming of independent East Market Street retailers, the OPDC swung between describing them as a “plague” or merely “unused or underutilized.” Essentially, since middle class and affluent whites did not shop in these establishments, the OPDC did not believe those businesses contributed to its redevelopment goals. In any case, the corporation felt these businesses beneath its consideration. Additionally, redevelopers found the independent stores poor replacements for past retail majesty. Moreover, they thought it improper for department stores and marginal businesses to occupy the same area. They held the department stores as the only valuable retail use on East Market Street. The OPDC and RA never removed themselves from a major department store-influenced mentality. Within the downtown retail hierarchy, redevelopers assumed reviving the department stores would bolster elite and middle class culture downtown.¹⁰⁰

Downtown redevelopers believed in a mutual commitment between the city and its major department stores. For decades, that relationship appeared stable. East Market Street decline revealed the fractures in that tacit agreement. Stephanie Dyer writes, “As the Big Five began to open branch stores, they began to conduct their own consumer surveys of suburban areas in order to learn how to meet the wants and needs of suburban customers.” Most of these new branch customers had initially shopped, as loyal consumers, at the flagship stores on East Market Street. Dyer explains that after World War II,

Many firms decided that the best way to insure their economic security would be to divest from the downtown despite the fact that this would break from their civic commitment to the city. Several firms entered sale-lease back arrangements for downtown store properties, thus allowing them to maintain the facade of being tied to the downtown without the economic burdens attendant to it.

In short, the position of centrality both redevelopment boosters and department store leaders themselves pointed to as crucial for downtown survival persisted as a myth and nothing more. Most department store sales were made in branch stores by the mid-1960s; the downtown stores could close without much damage to overall bottom line. Even as it publicly supported the Market East project (and sat on the OPDC board), Strawbridge & Clothier’s management tried to block Gimbels from moving closer to City Hall, perhaps worrying that a competitor’s new store might hurt its visibility. Lit’s also felt “no obligation to remain at 8th and Market Streets” due to the Gimbels move, which Strawbridge’s exacerbated when it refused to allow The Gallery corridor to pass through its building and open up to the front of Lit’s.101

Despite the attenuated affinity between the East Market Street department stores and the downtown, the retail giants retained the upper hand in Center City’s power hierarchy. Indeed, they had learned, as in the suburban shopping malls, how to appear necessary. Dyer concludes, “Department stores were able to wield so much power because developers needed to have anchor stores in place before financial backers would agree to pay for land purchasing and construction.” The OPDC

believed Market East stood as an across-the-boards savior of Center City (prestige, taxes, residents, jobs), and by extension, Philadelphia. It located the survival of the department stores at the pivot of the project’s success. The department stores served as the city’s connection to the suburbs, connection to the human capital of suburban residents. Branch stores were still just branches, and they cut their images and operating styles largely from the trunk. Additionally, like in the suburban malls, the department stores in Market East would serve as anchors and lines of demarcation. “The inclusion of Wanamaker’s is necessary to bring the Market Street East project to a sound boundary,” claimed the OPDC in 1968. The department stores also bound Philadelphia redevelopers in only agreeing to stay on East Market Street on the condition that the city undertook a major urban renewal project. “The promise of urban renewal is a significant factor in the decision of two department stores to remain open in Center City,” the corporation revealed the same year.102

Indeed, the department stores provided a major component of a perceived return to downtown prosperity. “We can’t go on on Market Street the way things are now . . . The department stores need new plants. They are good tax ratables and should be encouraged,” said Mayor Tate in 1969. “Certainly, the retention of Lit’s and Gimbels in Central Philadelphia is one of the very important issues before the City at the present time,” read a CPC’s weekly report to the mayor in October of 1966. Philadelphia redevelopers had not chosen to focus on East Market Street arbitrarily. “This memory distance connecting Penn Center and Society Hill make the Market East location a natural entrance place. I feel that there should be an architectural expression of that entrance,” mused Louis Kahn. Though downtown’s renewal cohort had refined its design ideas since the early 1960s, the general Market Street myth-making Kahn had vaunted then remained the central planning tenant for the RA and OPDC. Developers’ prizing of the department stores’ roles gave the retail giants not just a powerful hand to play, but a whole deck. They could make demands freely and know they would be honored. According to Dyer, “Gimbels refused to support the project unless it included a new store for them on the north side of Market Street that could be accessed directly from the mall.” The OPDC and RA met this demand. Gustave Amsterdam, OPDC member and RA head during the arduous

negotiations between the department stores, formally represented Lit’s. In 1967, he said, “Lit Brothers would be placed in a difficult position should the Mall not go through the front of Strawbridge & Clothier’s store.” Amsterdam “stated that it would be a must for Lit Brothers to accept any Market Street East plan.” Likewise, representatives of Gimbels and Strawbridge’s often steered OPDC meetings and offered resolutions.\textsuperscript{103}

Ultimately, the department stores enjoyed partnership in the redevelopment process, both within the OPDC structure as well as within their roles as private businesses. The 1966 \textit{Architectural Forum} article indicated that the OPDC “represents the department stores and other center city interests.” It follows, then, that the few department store leaders helped steer a project redevelopers assured would benefit the city as a whole. The OPDC did not merely represent the department stores. Often, leadership of the OPDC and the department stores occupied the same space. The corporation expended copious amounts of effort wrangling the department stores into agreement over the project plans. The attention the OPDC paid to a narrow group of downtown retailers engendered a fair amount of criticism from the public and certain politicians. “What I really object to is moving out private enterprise for more private enterprise,” complained one displaced merchant in 1973. Feride Oymak asserts, “Redesign of the Market East project in accordance with the demands of the department store presidents was an example of ‘community input!’” One city council member quipped, “I wasn’t elected to City Council to subsidize Gimbels.”\textsuperscript{104} Clearly, the OPDC intended Market East as a benefit only to some.

In the late 1960s, the OPDC found itself embroiled in a dispute between the four major department stores over how the retail institutions would fit into the Market East plan. Of most concern were Strawbridge’s intentions to file “legal proceedings” should the RA allow Gimbels to move. The

\textsuperscript{103} Dyer, "Markets in the Meadows," 337; Executive Director Edmund Bacon, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Weekly Report to the Mayor, July 28, 1966, PCA; McKenna, “Market East Still Alive?”; OPDC executive committee, (minutes, April 26, 1967); OPDC, (minutes, executive committee, March 21, 1967); “Paraphrasing of Lou Kahn Seminars—Market East Proposal: Tape No. 1—First Meeting with Lou Kahn”.

MSEC, which had approved of the “final” underground pedestrian mall concept, acted as both an agent of consensus and of provocation. It attempted to please all department stores, both appeasing demands and acting as mediator. Eventually, it allowed progress to break down. “To sacrifice such a forward-seeing proposal because of difference of opinions between two or three people would seem tragic,” suggested Gimbels’ consultants. In the end, the MSEC did essentially that. Perhaps naively, the OPDC never considered conflict of interest amongst the retailers as so inherent to this public-private arrangement. Instead, the corporation believed the aegis of common cause would prevail. One 1967 local editorial, summed the problem up in a few sentences: “Perhaps the toughest [crisis] lies in a quite rational conflict of interest between the various big retailers of the area. Some are more under than gun of time and space to move than others. None can reasonably be expected to give commercial advantage to a competitor.” Still, the OPDC aimed to please its member benefactors, noting, “The success of the Market Street East plan depends in great part on the full support of the major land users, such as the department stores.” Strawbridge’s, however, posed the Gimbels move as destructive to the retail balance. President Stockton Strawbridge insisted keeping the stores in their current locations but around the new mall would preserve the “total composition of retail space” and the natural consumer traffic flow between the four department stores. He also declared the Gimbels move conflicted with the advice of many consultants, could prompt a similar demand from Lit’s, and would further diminish the retail pull of East Market Street’s eastern sector. Strawbridge’s also feigned concern for the smaller area merchants, whom it said the Gimbels move would displace from the western sector of East Market Street. Most revealing, Strawbridge objected “because the Market Street East plan was never intended to be used as a vehicle for overcoming the problems of an individual business.” Ultimately, he and his consultants asserted the Gimbels move would leave a large, difficult-to-rent space at the corner of 8th and Market Streets, further depressing real estate values in the eastern section. Strawbridge’s did not believe (or did not care) that the very old Gimbels plant could not be renovated to meet modern standards. They also ignored the OPDC and RA’s warnings that delaying a final plan would jeopardize loss of federal funding.105

105 CPDC, Remaking Center City, 15; Day to OPDC executive committee members, (memo, Market Street East project, July 24, 1967); William L. Day to James H. J. Tate, (June 23, 1967), PCA; Gimbels-Philadelphia to members of the Old Philadelphia Development Corporation, (“Statement to
Gimbels, perhaps unsurprisingly, assumed almost the exact opposite: “Heretofore, an imbalance existed . . . the new alignment—two department stores on each end—is more in line with major regional shopping centers.” The store even offered to redevelop the old site itself. As of the summer of 1967, the OPDC found itself “in the position of being unable to obtain agreement from the heads of the four department stores as to an acceptable plan.” Needing contented department store leaders as a major component of the final project plan, the OPDC prized keeping the four retail giants on East Market Street above an abstract sense of propriety. The corporation never ruled out Gimbels and Lit’s demands, and often bristled at Stockton Strawbridge’s truculence even though one of its consultants, Larry Smith & Associates, “emphasized that one of the basic assumptions of the project had been changed by two stores wishing to relocate and that major planning reviews would have to be made to reflect the new conditions.” Certainly, some members of the OPDC criticized Gimbels and Lit’s for dropping such a bombshell, but they also needed to keep all of the department stores in order to preserve the downtown myth.106

For its part, Gimbels questioned Strawbridge’s motives, challenging each of its competitor’s criticisms in succession. Gimbels’ consultants supported their client’s demands for a new plant as “a refinement that can be satisfactorily incorporated into the Transportation Mall.” It admitted, “Gimbels’ move will poorly affect the east end in the short term,” but also explained, “once the mall opens, all adjacent lands will become more desirable.” This point fit into OPDC assumptions. Moreover, Gimbels posed its move as providing the first major investment on Market Street East. Additionally, it supposed the new plant would generate an initial “spark” and noted that a catalyst was very important for creating momentum for such a project. Planners like Edmund Bacon publicly praised Gimbels initiative. At its core, the debate between Strawbridge’s and Gimbels centered around which store’s

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demands would better emulate suburban retail on Market Street. The former upheld "retail consolidation"; the latter, investment in new structures and evenly spaced anchors. Gimbels also pointed to the new residential projects and institutional renewals of Independence Mall like the Federal Mint as shoring up values in Market Street East's eastern sector. It suggested, "An assumption has been made that the plan will not work if Gimbels relocates." The store's management, most convincingly, indicated that it would transfer its business to West Market Street if the OPDC and RA did not meet their demands. Wanamaker's also supported the Gimbels move (which Strawbridge's assumed it offered only as a measure to improve traffic near its own store). In the end, much to Stockton Strawbridge's chagrin, the OPDC and RA's priorities aligned more closely with those of Gimbels. Also, Gimbels relocation outside of Market Street East would have struck a catastrophic blow to the project, from both a promotional and an economic standpoint. In the meantime, though, another problem had arisen.

As of 1954, the federal government began funding urban renewal projects. Cities' redevelopment bodies, up to 1967, held much of the power in determining how it spent those funds. When squabbling amongst the department stores allowed the RA's HUD application to expire, the OPDC assumed it could merely resubmit the paperwork and reclaim the funds. At the suggestion of HUD Secretary Robert Weaver, the OPDC quickly obtained a shaky consensus from the department stores and the RA jammed through a hasty re-submittal. Already, HUD had begun restricting the funds it dispersed for commercial projects. Dyer writes, "Because most federally-funded urban renewal projects were earmarked to improve residential land (however loosely defined), there was little money available to directly aid the solidly commercial streets at the heart of the downtown." Enhancing

107 Edmund N. Bacon, (memo, "Statement of Edmund N. Bacon," December 11, 1969), PCA; John C. Melanipny, Jr. to Stanley E. Gilinsky, (March 17, 1967), PCA. At the time of this letter, Melanipny was the Vice President of the Real Estate Research Corporation, a consultant representing Gimbels. Gilinsky was Gimbels' Director of the company's Corporate Expansion Division; Gimbels to OPDC members, ("Statement to OPDC," March 21, 1967); OPDC, (memo, "Further Justification for Eligibility . . .," July 3, 1968); OPDC, (minutes, executive committee, March 21, 1967); OPDC, (minutes, MSEC, February 20, 1967); Real Estate Research Corporation, The Affect of the Gimbel Store Relocation on Downtown Philadelphia, 1, 4, 5; Strawbridge & Clothier, A Statement of Position, 9.

108 Executive Director Edmund Bacon, Philadelphia City Planning Commission, Weekly Report to the Mayor, June 22, 1967, PCA; CPDC, Remaking Center City, vi; Dyer, "Markets in the Meadows," 253; OPDC executive committee meeting (minutes, July 26, 1967); Semonski, "Market East Project Snags Again . . ."
restrictions on downtown renewal, while the OPDC hemmed and hawed, HUD imposed far-reaching criteria on commercial redevelopment funds.

The corporation and the Authority operated under the assumption that the Market Street East project was entitled to HUD funding. They believed it crucial to reviving an important urban space. Moreover, the cohort supposed its demonstration of commitment to success and planning ambition had proven the project’s importance to national urban redevelopment trends. “The planning effort behind Market Street East, the man-hours and money that were spent on this project over the past ten years have not been intended as an academic exercise in city planning with no other goal than replacing a group of obsolete structures with new ones,” reported RA chief Francis Lammer to HUD in 1968. The previous year, HUD had insisted that federally funded commercial redevelopment projects include explicit jobs provisions for the hard-core unemployed (among other stipulations). The federal government defined these jobless residents as “people who don’t get jobs even when the economy is working at its maximum potential” and “unskilled people who ordinarily have failed to complete high school, frequently have police records,” and have been unemployed for some time. Additionally, the hard-core unemployed were often young black males. To be fair, Philadelphia redevelopers had explained from the outset that the Market East project would reduce the city’s unemployment figures, though they had not always expressed this priority explicitly. Rather, they often pointed to the potential loss of jobs should the project not move forward. “The direct and immediate result of the loss of two department stores would be the elimination of approximately 4,000 jobs,” the MSEC reported in 1967. Still, the original Market Street East application “indicated that the project has a potential of creating between approximately 30,000 and 80,000 new job opportunities.” Subsequent promotional statements back up such claims. Redevelopers also reminded HUD that Market East would even out the economic balance with the suburbs, which had siphoned jobs away from the city. Additionally, Philadelphia redevelopers thought urban commercial areas should have topped HUD’s priorities and that cities should be free to use funds as they saw fit. “The basic failure to arrest urban unrest has been the inadequate resources, rather than program concepts. Although there should be some reallocation of national priorities to favor urban areas as against farm aid,” suggested William Rafsky in 1968. Lastly, William Day claimed, “that the delay was beyond the control of the Redevelopment
Authority," but also emphasized that "the success of the Market Street East plan depends in great part on the full support of the major land users, such as the department stores." In essence, the OPDC asked HUD for a mulligan. But the corporation also bristled that HUD had offered no advanced notice of the coming restrictions and that it also applied them retroactively to applications already processed. 109 Redevelopers also pointed to the honor HUD had awarded the project for design excellence in urban transportation. For these reasons, the OPDC and RA felt HUD should make an exception in this case.

As this chapter demonstrates, when the OPDC and the rest of the redevelopment cohort positioned the four major department stores as the pivot around which a successful revitalization of East Market Street could be possible, the corporation gave the heads of those companies a high level of negotiating power. Essentially, the stores knew the city needed their presence: for tax ratables, for prestige value, and for a foundation on which to rebuild the majesty of Center City. The stores, on the other hand, possessed enough locations in other cities and branches in the suburbs. They did not truly need to maintain outlets in downtown Philadelphia. It would have been painful for the stores if their Center City locations closed, but they would carry on. Philadelphia, on the other hand, risked the collapse of its entire retail corridor should it lose its four major department stores. The myth demanded a unified impulse; the department stores were not prepared to cooperate with that requirement. Even though the OPDC and the RA eventually regained its federal funding for Market East, they could not count on the department stores to cooperate with HUD’s jobs requirements. The following chapter further explores how Philadelphia’s redevelopers amended their narrative to suit the shifting national political climate.

CHAPTER 5
ADAPTING THE MYTH

Between the first months of 1967 and the fall of 1968, Philadelphia redevelopers faced yet another challenge on Market East. Intractable disagreement between the department stores prevented the Redevelopment Authority from submitting a final plan for the renewal area. As a result, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development rescinded funding for the project. Due to new HUD regulations, Philadelphia redevelopers now had to prove to the federal government that the project would contribute to national jobs programs. This chapter explores how the OPDC and its peers in the municipal government reordered their priorities (or just their appearance) for the purpose of reclaiming federal funding from HUD. In doing so, they tried to adapt the legend in order to satisfy themselves, the Philadelphia public, local city leaders, and the federal government. The OPDC and Market East became even easier targets for competing city agencies, advocacy groups, other local organizations, and private citizens. When faced with so many fractures in the apparent viability of the downtown redevelopment myth, why did Center City redevelopers eternally cling to the tenants of its self-created memory narrative? Were they too invested or did they still truly believe? Why were they unable to see the error in allowing sometime intangible to direct the focus of its activities? Did redevelopers’ new priorities reflect a continuation of hope, a moment of clarity, or a last cynical stab at reckless ambition? In this section, civic faith and political expediency finally came to loggerheads, and the myth, along with the downtown public-private cooperative’s role on Market East, collapsed under the weight of its own immutability and irrelevance.

By mid-Summer 1967, this team decided to reframe its goals to suit the HUD requirements. It re-submitted the renewal application with a jobs program listed as a major Market East project priority. Obviously, redevelopers changed up the official renewal purpose out of necessity, but did this alteration merely enhance existing ancillary priorities or did the RA and OPDC insert new claims out of cynical and desperate ambition? That July, the Bulletin reported, “[William] Rafsky said he believed the city could meet the new HUD criteria on the grounds that the new development—which will bring a
minimum of $250 million in private money into the area—would create employment for low-income persons and is integral part of the overall city redevelopment program.” On the one hand, the cohort wrote its adaptation on the basis of HUD advice. “The city practically was assured it would get the money, but was told to make a new application under a different program—the Neighborhood Development Program. The old one was under the regular federal renewal program,” reported the Bulletin in 1968.110

Even so, HUD enforced these new restrictions more stringently than it had its previous criteria: “To qualify under goal 2, a project . . . must exhibit a deliberate planned effort . . . to provide jobs for the lowest strata on the job market.” HUD also required cities receiving funds under this designation to implement outreach and training programs specifically aimed at the hard-core unemployed and under-employed. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly in the case of Market East, HUD also stipulated that a qualifying project “must have had at its very inception” these provisions included in its plan. Again, Philadelphia’s renewal cohort balked, insisting that “the specific requirement of a project being conceived for a plan to recruit and train hard core unemployed is impossible to infer from the LPA letter.” Certainly, the Market East project had evolved greatly over the course of a decade. Perhaps reasonably, the RA waxed incredulous at the sudden and seemingly capricious demands HUD imposed on downtown redevelopment projects. Had the department tied its purse strings to a close reading of Goal 2, Market East could never have met such criteria. The project would have been disqualified from receiving federal funding and perhaps would have died in the imaginations of RA and OPDC officers. Even so, HUD allowed for exceptions “where local programs already contribute to each of the national goals and where the exceptions contribute to a better balance in a local renewal.” Naturally, the RA and OPDC believed “that Market Street East contributes to a balanced local urban redevelopment program and that it qualifies for HUD approval on this basis.”111

HUD permitted the RA to resubmit its application on the assumption that, even with the restructuring of project priorities, Market East would satisfy goal number two. Officially, and especially


111 “Market Street East Report on National Goals,” undated; Rafsky to Tate, (memo, OPDC, April 27, 1967).
in its dealings with HUD, the RA and OPDC fronted a facade of progressivism. “The authority will require all redevelopers to agree to participate in the job program in order to qualify for selection for a project,” reported the Bulletin in 1968. By 1973, the redevelopment team posed its “unique manpower program” as an original component of the plan. It “was initially created as an integral part of the Market Street East project,” the RA’s annual report announced, celebrating the program’s current and future successes. Still, little doubt exists that redevelopers realigned official priorities as a means for receiving federal funds. In September 1967, the OPDC confirmed “that Market Street East could qualify under the national goal of providing jobs for the hard core unemployed,” adding, “such an exploration would be of value.” The D.C.-based National Academy of Public Administration’s 1970 study of Philadelphia’s public-private cooperatives found evidence of the private sector’s focus on alleviating low-income and minority social problems. Even so, the report tempered its findings with qualifiers: “It should be mentioned, however . . . that this point did not meet with unanimity on the part of the local panel, in particular as to the motivation, thrust and true scope of such endeavors.”

To what extent, though, did redevelopers promote jobs as a main redevelopment priority after drafting a new HUD application?

The Market Street East jobs statistics the RA submitted with its new application and the methods through which it derived them came under intense criticism from the PHA and other activist groups. “The projections are based simply on the number of square feet of office and retail floor space to be provided,” reported the PHA in late 1969. “These jobs will not, in fact, serve the hard core unemployed. They are predominantly low wage positions, paying less than adequate incomes for a family of four, and offering no opportunity for advancement,” it added. Market Street East boosters pointed to the city’s “urgent need” for non-skilled and semi-skilled jobs, and propped up the project as a sweeping provider of these positions in the retail, maintenance and service, construction, and office employment sectors. Many problems attended the RA and OPDC’s logic. Indeed, calculating the number of new employees from a hypothetical estimation of future square footage omitted many variables. Moreover, renewal job stats overestimated the availability of opportunities for the hard-core.

unemployed. The figures did not account for the loss of jobs through eviction of small shops, nor did they account for Gimbels' smaller new building. Rafsky and his peers continued to assume the immigration of disadvantaged peoples and economic factors like “the mechanization of agriculture” afflicted cities more than lack of urban jobs programs and inattention to housing needs. Rafsky acknowledged private enterprise’s inability to affect meaningful social changes, even as he upheld it as crucial to reviving the downtown. Bacon, writes Guian McKee, “had little understanding of the implications of deindustrialization” and “had little grasp of how other variables--low wage work, employment discrimination, failing schools, rapid economic change--interacted with the environment.”

The planners and redevelopers steering Philadelphia’s downtown ship never attacked the problems causing Center City decline, but, rather, tried to cover up the symptoms. They held that revitalization would work backward to lift up the wider city. McKee also notes that Bacon’s mentor, Walter Phillips, “saw a bleaker future in which obsolete, crowded factories would interact with a changing economy and a racially segregated population to create an environment inhospitable for economic survival, much less growth.” The Community Renewal Program (CRP) estimated that Philadelphia would experience a housing shortage of 45,000 units by 1970 and reported that the city lost 90,000 jobs between 1952 and 1962. Accord to its projections, there would be “an estimated gap of 75,000 jobs in Philadelphia for Philadelphia residents by 1970.” From 1952 to 1967, total employment in Philadelphia declined from 1.096 million to 1.040 million. During that same period, total employment in the metropolitan area increased from 0.591 million to 0.902 million. From 1957 to 1967, the resident labor force in Philadelphia increased from 0.866 million to 0.880 million. Taken together, these statistics add up to high employment in the city, often reaching above ten percent. Also, as early as 1962, redevelopers promoted Market East as capable of increasing downtown sales figures to gigantic proportions, most fantastically from three percent to 27 percent of metropolitan retail sales. Still, some municipal leaders, like planner Abe Gottlieb pointed to a lack of “any objective justification of this projection.”

113 KYW, (press release / transcript, “Another Point of View,” undated), PCA. This portion of the debate over Market Street East featured Edwin D. Wolf of the Housing Association of Delaware Valley. Broadcast of the portion of this debate took places on January 12, 13, and 14 of 1970. Press release must have been issued either in the days prior or subsequent to the broadcast; Finney to CRPC members, (memo, “Draft report . . .,” July 1966); Abe Gottlieb to Edmund Bacon, (memo, Comprehensive Planning Division, October 10, 1962), PCA; HADV, (memo, “Market Street East Renewal Plan,” November 19, 1969); Lammer to Sharrott, (memo, Redevelopment Authority, “Market
At the same time, the RA did not merely put up an attractive facade of Market East job
creation, and HUD did not accept the RA’s new position solely on the basis of the agency’s word. The
Authority sought out and hired competent and committed manpower consultants. “[He] speaks of
specific ways for securing minority / disadvantaged employment; others basically say nothing,
speaking in generalizations,” noted RA leaders of their chosen candidate. Also, in 1972, the Authority
signed far-reaching agreements with several local construction unions to hire chronically unemployed
minorities. These unions would then receive Market Street East project contracts. In these ways,
redevelopers honored their commitments to new national priorities. At the same time, though the RA
and OPDC understood the requirements, they also sought out loopholes. HUD demanded
redevelopers demonstrate that employment stemming from federally funded commercial projects
constituted “new employment opportunities.” In the case of Center City, the department also required
the RA to “demonstrate an effective mechanism for securing adherence on the part of the new
employers in Market Street East to a program of job recruitment and training for the city’s hard-core
unemployed.” In addition, though it confessed uncertainty on how to achieve such a measure, HUD
implied that the RA would need to compel the department stores—entities not under RA contract—to
adhere to these requirements as well. At the same time, early on in 1968, the RA and OPDC admitted,
“Anything we do in attempting to comply with this requirement should of course be reviewed very
carefully in order that we do not find ourselves tied in by inflexible rules at some undetermined future
time.”\footnote{Richard Deasy, “2 Unions Open Doors to Blacks,” \textit{Philadelphia Daily News}, December 14, 1972, TUA; James Martin to Walter D’Alessio, (memo, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia, January 22, 1968), PCA. At the time of issuance of this memo, both Martin and D’Alessio sat on Philadelphia’s Redevelopment Authority board; Richard L. Olanoff to Francis J. Lammer, (August 21, 1969), PCA. At the time of drafting this letter, Olanoff sat as the City of Philadelphia’s Executive Director of the city’s Manpower program.} Regarding the employment priority, downtown redevelopers hoped they could have their
cake and eat it, too.

Street East Second Report . . . ("March 28, 1968); McKee, “A Utopian, a Utopianist, or Whatever the
Heck It Is,” 66, 69; William T. Peterson to Philip R. T. Carroll, (memo, "Market Street East Manpower
Program, Contract with Frank Borda & Associates, Inc," August 1, 1973), PCA. At the time of drafting
this memo, Peterson was the city’s Manpower Administrator. Carroll was Deputy Mayor; Prokop,
Rafsky, “Potential and Limits of Private Enterprise on the Urban Front”; Redevelopment Authority,
(memo, "How Market East Will Economically Affect the Unemployed and Under-employed, undated).
Based on archival location and chronological context, I feel confident that the RA issued this memo in
early 1968.
On the one hand, once learning of the new HUD priorities, the OPDC and RA began positioning the Market Street East project as providing a social benefit as well as a commercial and economic one. In this way, redevelopers believed the imposition of jobs programs could add value to the project’s image. The OPDC and RA became overnight participants in an egalitarian social benevolence. “Philadelphia is the only U.S. city which has successfully tied urban renewal to job placement and training for the poor and unemployed,” read the RA’s 1973 contract with Manpower. Regardless, the department stores had tied the hands of redevelopers. They could not be made to adhere to the jobs requirements. "No one single public or private agency can bring about changes in department store personnel policy," the RA reminded HUD in late 1967. The retailers could only be encouraged to sign pledges. The OPDC did spearhead that effort—which HUD had accepted in lieu of long-standing commitment—but it still left the decision up to the department stores.

Existing businesses in Market Street East will not be called upon to enter into a formal disposition agreement with the Redevelopment Authority and will not therefore be subject to the more binding controls possible through disposition instruments. Nevertheless, existing businesses in Market Street East will be called upon to sign up in the job program,” the RA informed HUD the same year.

In the run-up to Market East and The Gallery construction, various groups attacked the project’s suitability, both in terms of providing jobs and as a potentially homogenizing force downtown. Displaced owners and tenants of small, so-called “marginal retailers” objected to the apparent advantage the RA and OPDC gave the department stores. These complaints pointed to the selection of Gimbels as redeveloper of a new, perhaps unnecessary, plant on the corner of 12th and Market Streets. Also, many told of RA harassment “in its repeated attempts to dispossess them after condemnation.” Though it hardly would have mattered, shop owners also protested the city’s high taxes, which, they said, left them with less funds for physical upkeep. The PHA sounded a missive against the appropriateness “in this time of urban crisis, of using federal subsidies for commercial redevelopment.”

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115 Feffer, "Show Down in Center City," 791-825; Gordon, "Market St. East Merchants Lose Appeal to Save Stores"; HADV, (newsletter, “To Our Members,” No. 3, March 1970); Lammer to Sharrott, (memo, Redevelopment Authority, “Market Street East Second Report . . . ,” March 28, 1968); OPDC to Tate, (memo, OPDC executive committee, November 16, 1968); OPDC, (minutes, executive committee, September 19, 1967); OPDC executive committee meeting (minutes, 1968), PCA. Based on archival location and context (details of the November 16, 1968 memo), I can confidently venture
Aside from diminishing the RA and OPDC’s projections for Market East job creation, the PHA also attacked the redevelopers’ realigned plan that came in the wake of the new HUD priorities. Most damning, in late 1969, subsequent to the department’s acceptance of the RA’s new application, housing advocates reported, “Since the date of that agreement, the Housing Association has itself negotiated a lease in a building managed by one of these agents, without mention of employment opportunities.” The PHA may not have fit the profile of most tenants seeking operating space on Market Street East, but the RA’s oversight left the Authority open to easy criticism. It allowed local housing and social justice advocates to portray the jobs requirement as tacked on and toothless. The Housing Authority suggested, “A better use of renewal funds would be in small neighborhood projects closer to the homes of the ‘hardcore’ unemployed.” Its spokespeople grumbled that the RA had not considered these options “primarily because the employment opportunities allegedly created by the Market East project were analyzed after the project had been designed.” The hard-core unemployed did not have the experience or credentials to apply for most office jobs, they said. Indeed, the PHA surmised, most new opportunities on Market East would fall under this category. Employment the hard-core unemployed could receive offered pay well below a living wage and an absence of advancement potential. Not all positions, it reported, would be full-time. The PHA’s complaints were not unfounded. Its late 1969 report on Market East noted, “The original redevelopment proposal . . . lists the four development goals of the project as achieving changes in land use, providing land for needed public facilities, eliminating blighting influences, and removing impediments to land disposition and development.” Only after receiving notice of the new HUD priorities, the report pointed out, did redevelopers insert a fifth goal “of providing new job opportunities for the hardcore unemployed.”

HUD itself expressed skepticism over the RA’s planning shift. The department knew the jobs program “was not the prime intent of the Market Street East GNRP.” “However,” Harry Sharrott, HUD’s Assistant Regional Administrator for Renewal Assistance, added, “recognizing the importance the city places on the development of Market Street East, we wish to give you every opportunity to supplement your material with respect to justifying the GNRP under Goal 2.” Late in 1967, the department’s that this meeting must have taken place on November 19, 1968; Peterson to Carroll, (memo, “Market Street East Manpower Program . . . ,” August 1, 1973).

regional office requested additional information on the new jobs program. It asked for details concerning how job increases on Market East would benefit the whole city, not just the immediate renewal area. It also requested an explanation of how the program would directly seek out hard-core jobless and underemployed individuals. Moreover, the department demanded assurances “that the expenditure of urban renewal funds will contribute directly” to the job training and employment program. Furthermore, it asked for an explanation of how “the employment opportunities in Market Street East would be related to the degree and nature of the unemployment problems in Philadelphia.”

Clearly, HUD was not prepared to give the RA both funding as well as a long leash. “Prior to funding any projects emanating from the GNRP, this office must be satisfied that the GNRP significantly contributes to Goal 2 . . . at this point, this has not been satisfactorily demonstrated,” Philadelphia’s regional field office informed Francis Lammer in late 1967. As in its local promotions and purported goals, the RA and OPDC offered HUD the vaguest of evidence. “In view of the uncertainty of the developers in the GNRP area, it is essential that you insure the commitments of future developers to the job program and its underlying philosophy . . . The means for gaining this assurance should be specifically described,” the HUD letter added in response to the initial RA application resubmission.117

HUD demanded confirmation of the Market Street East project’s effectiveness as a citywide employment booster, not just an isolated hot spot. “Market Street East is not identified with a particular residential area and does not therefore draw its employment from a limited surrounding area,” offered the RA. Clearly, though, as previously discussed, the RA and OPDC grouped the project in temporally with the environs of Center City and the luxury neighborhoods of Society Hill and Washington Square East. The Authority also provided little elaboration of the project’s supposed breadth of employment opportunities, merely claiming Market East would generate many jobs as well as types of jobs. Additionally, it merely offered HUD the tepid promise of high local commitment to the jobs program. True, the city had, as early as 1962, supposed the project would both “bolster ‘a wasting Center City’” and “benefit larger sections of Center City,” but redevelopers in the public and private sectors alike had always seemed tentative on how Market East would aid the wider city or even the further reaches of

downtown itself. Even Victor Gruen, prior to his dismissal, had expressed such doubts. In 1966, he informed the OPDC, "We are concerned about the possibility that this gain will be localized solely to these four and one-half blocks and to a smaller degree to the existing department stores on the north side of Market Street."\(^{118}\) Certainly, if a paid consultant balked, then those in charge of distributing federal funds were well within reason exercising even greater discretion.

HUD demanded evidence that the RA would implement an efficient, centralized system for reaching the hard-core unemployed. Furthermore, the department also requested confirmation that the Market Street jobs program would actually help this group of local citizens. In response, the Authority explained, "There will be a meaningful single-contact system that would efficiently be able to match an available position with the right applicant." Additionally, according to the RA, employment obstructions due to police records or educational deficiencies would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The Authority also offered a "meaningful promise of future promotions." The PHA had noted that HUD had found the Authority’s initial resubmission of the application for federal funds "not entirely satisfactory," and housing advocates used this discrepancy in all its attacks against Market East. Still vague but persistent, the RA challenged skeptics at the PHA and HUD, insisting, "It is in the non-skilled and semi-skilled job categories that there is an urgent need for employment in Philadelphia."\(^{119}\)

Ultimately, the RA and OPDC prevailed in their convincing of HUD and the department, officially stating that the new plans met national requirements under Goal 2, reinstated the funds for the Market Street East project. In October 1968, with the ink barely dry on HUD’s decision, downtown redevelopers again promoted the major department stores as coming together in a spirit of collaboration to overcome a financial impasse. Indeed, the RA and OPDC reported that the heads of the retail giants were now willing to cooperate with "programs relating to the hiring of hard-core unemployed."\(^{120}\) Though redevelopment boosters had not managed to commence the transformation


\(^{120}\) Day to OPDC executive committee members, (memo, Market Street East project, July 24, 1967). This portion of Day’s memo quotes a statement by George Rincliffe, chairman of the OPDC Market
of East Market Street by the late 1960s, they had managed to prevent the image of the department stores from drifting into a territory of bloat and obstruction. Moreover, they were able to portray the department stores as heroes in this particular narrative. In this way, the OPDC clung to the myth to the bitter end. But because they forged their redevelopment ideology and planning concepts on the basis of a subjective and specious memory narrative—essentially, a hoped-for outcome rather than a model based on the objective state of East Market Street commerce and culture—it failed to produce the workable results an examination of the real situation could have delivered.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: THE REALITIES OF MARKET STREET EAST AND THE ABANDONMENT OF COSMOPOLITANISM

Market East never captured that sense of loyalty and grand arrival. Developers swept aside all that Louis Kahn and Edmund Bacon had hoped the area could accomplish in favor of easy consumerism and well-tread comforts. “Under great pressure from Center City retail interests,” the historian Guian McKee writes, “much of the original planning concept was torn away. Market East’s four-block sweep shrunk to just two blocks, its innovative commercial concourses morphed into a commonplace suburban shopping center.” When The Gallery finally opened at the end of the summer of 1977, a full year after the Bicentennial celebration, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported, “New Jersey saw a noticeable increase in riders to its stop below The Gallery,” but the new attraction held the attention of suburbanites for only a brief moment. The Rouse Company, despite offering some major shops space in the expanding Cherry Hill Mall, failed to convince luxury retailers to place stores in The Gallery. Conventional wisdom among redevelopers defined urban downtowns as unsuitable for commercial reinvestment, but the OPDC and RA fell short of recreating East Market Street as something special or alternative, or even something specific to Center City. The pallor of Market East and The Gallery loomed merely as transplanted suburban forms, peculiar and fascinating in their recontextualization, but hardly approaching the regional monuments redevelopers had planned they would become. The array of stores and amenities mirrored those available to consumers in the near suburbs, only slightly shabbier and less varied. Moreover, its planners had long claimed the area would accomplish that exact feat: bring the suburbs to the city. But Market East only brought the idea and the forms of the suburbs, not its people or its culture. Quickly, the complex came to resemble what Rouse biographer Howard Gillette describes as a “self-contained fortress,” jammed in between the cheap outlets redevelopers had hoped it would flatten.121

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Clues to Market East’s long slide from grand promenade to scaled-back consolation prize arose throughout its planning history, but none as prescient and prevalent as the problems that came in the years after the project lost its initial federal funding. In 1972, city solicitor Martin Weinberg brought charges against the Redevelopment Authority for “corruption, criminality, mismanagement, waste, conflicts of interest and practices inconsistent with the public weal . . . [and] demeaning [to] the real purpose of these authorities.” Furthermore, Weinberg found that the RA “was not eliminating areas of urban blight and rebuilding: it fact, it was creating great areas of waste.” After some reorganization and staff shake-ups, the Authority resumed unfettered operations, but being hauled into court cast a pall on the RA’s concurrent projects, activities, and anything associated with them.

Malls and their attendant forms became less and less exceptional as planning projects, even in the suburbs. The OPDC and RA had come much too late to the ball. Nicholas Dagen Bloom writes, “Plantings, fountains, and numerous public events must have made malls appear as satisfactory substitutes for older forms of urban space.” By the late 1970s, though, these decorations had long occupied a default setting in the development playbook. Mostly, malls had come to represent a narrow definition of consumerism and had gradually shed all pretensions of community and civic unity. Market East and The Gallery fell right in line with this distillation, and in 1977, still cloistered in its tireless purpose of erasing downtown racial and class ambiguities, it offered only the faintest hint of togetherness. In this way, the project helped to further cast the eastern sector of Center City as an area containing the most disposable forms of consumerism and culture. In deciding to remove “much of the confusion and visual clutter” on East Market Street, Philadelphia’s downtown redevelopment cohort birthed an entirely different sort of structural noise. Market East and The Gallery, boxy and windowless, stood between Market and Arch Streets with finality, not arrival.

Election of tough-on-crime Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo as mayor in 1971 presented the OPDC with an insurmountable setback. Rather than using the federal funds the corporation had struggled for more than a decade to secure and then re-secure, Rizzo “decided to move ahead with Market Street East as a pork barrel project,” and planned to “use bond initiatives to pay for the project.”

122 City of Philadelphia v. PHA and Redevelopment Authority, 4747 Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas (1972); Rafsky, “What Was Attempted,” R8.

123 “Agreement Between Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia and Gimbel Brothers, Inc”; Bloom, Merchant of Illusion, 124.
writes Stephanie Dyer. This sudden shift alarmed the OPDC, who still believed the project should have employed federal funds and that that arrangement would encourage business confidence. Even though unions with which the OPDC had formed close partnerships supported Rizzo during the election, many members of the corporation had endorsed his opponent. The new mayor, known for cronyism and patronage, squeezed out the corporation as payback. His Market Street East Council, established in 1974 to perform the same function as the Market Street East Commission, torpedoed the corporation’s plans for a 5000-car parking garage connected to Market East, leading members to wonder if such a project would draw suburbanites without space to park their cars. Still, even with OPDC power diminished, Rizzo demanded that the city “move ahead as rapidly as possible with a development that is first-class in all respects.” The corporation railed against the mayor’s subversion of the long-standing redevelopment hierarchy, namely, the centrality of its influence and its Market Street East Plan. They also begged the mayor not to undercut the project’s public-private cooperation. “We request in the current evaluation of the project you take our concerns into account and that no plan modifications be made if they undermine the creative and sound development policies which have guided Market Street East until recently,” members wrote Rizzo in the fall of 1973. Rizzo essentially ignored the corporation’s complaints and proceeded as he saw fit, even as OPDC leadership insisted that members had become loyal to his administration. Even so, under his direction, Market East proceeded with the same fundamental priorities the OPDC had previously promoted: drawing middle class and affluent suburban residents into the city, replacing “socially undesirable land uses,” and reviving the central business district. And, in this way, even though Rizzo perpetuated similar motives and hopes as the OPDC for the end goal of Market East, shortsighted planning and design lead to a further diminishing of Philadelphia’s downtown myth and memory.

124 “Agreement Between Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia and Gimbel Brothers, Inc”; CPDC, Remaking Center City, 23, 25; City of Philadelphia, (memo, “Market Street East Policy Meeting,” February 8, 1974), PCA; Dyer, “Markets in the Meadows,” 337; Economics Research Associates, Anticipated Impact of the Market Street East Transportation Mall on City of Philadelphia Tax Revenues, Prepared for Redevelopment Authority of the City of Philadelphia (Los Angeles: Economics Research Associates, 1970), PCA, 3; “Exhibit C: Justification of Center City Commuter Connection”; OPDC to Rizzo, November 2, 1973; Redevelopment Authority, Annual Report, 1965; William White to Frank L. Rizzo, (June 30, 1972), PCA. At this point in time, White was President of the OPDC, and wrote to Mayor Rizzo in that capacity; William White to Frank L. Rizzo, (August 21, 1975), PCA.
Decades later, OPDC leaders admitted to holding onto the “romantic notion that Market Street East would reverse the suburban shopping patterns, and that people who never came downtown from suburban areas would once again come here because it was so nice.” Furthermore, they acknowledged ignoring the potential for wider social problems arising from East Market Street redevelopment. At the time, though, the corporation remained ardent throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in its quest to stymie the suburbs with their own development forms and to “minimize the influence of commercial development outside the city limits.” Improving the ways the city itself actually worked took a secondary role. “Impact . . . on the older cities can be serious if the new towns compete and further drain away the economic strengths of the older urban areas,” said Rafsky in late 1968, referring in the subjunctive tense to trends that had already long befallen his city. Suburbs and the idea of an eternally majestic, cosmopolitan shopping corridor occupied the greatest amount of temporal real estate in the consciousness of local redevelopers. Ultimately the myth was just a myth, a hope built on sand. It was not an appropriate stand-in for the measured weighing of regional realities of culture, demographics, and economics. Had redevelopers considered these factors in tandem with its memory narrative, it might have come away with a plan that worked for the city. In the end, though, the myth collapsed under the weight of their own inflexibility.

125 “Introduction,” “Market Street East,” The Revitalization of Center City. Remarks quoted are those of James Martin; Rafsky, “Economic Policy and the Urban Crisis”; Larry Smith to Edmund Bacon, (September 17, 1960), PCA.
CHAPTER 7

EPILOGUE: THE LIMITS OF MYTHOLOGY

In 2013, traveling either eastbound from 11th Street station or westbound from 5th Street station on the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) Market-Frankford Line in Philadelphia (also known as “the El” or “Blue Line”), riders hear a robotic, lonesome female voice intone, “Next stop: 8th Street—for the Ridge Avenue Spur, the PATCO High Speed Line, . . . and The Gallery . . .” The ellipses are significant. Even before I decided to study the Market Street East district of Center City, Philadelphia and its Gallery mall, the announcement the automated voice makes at this particular stop on the El always struck me as more self-aware than the others. It is the only time, I am sure, that I have heard a synthetic voice pause amid routine performance of its solitary charge to . . . sigh. Whereas The Gallery once stood as the city’s gleaming hope for downtown cultural and economic revitalization, it now appeared last in the voice’s informational roster of largely forgotten civic projects. First, the unfinished Ridge Avenue Spur, a two-stop spoke off the north-south Broad Street Line. Second, PATCO, an odd parallel subway system that takes riders from Center City through downtrodden Camden, New Jersey and into the suburbs on the other side of the Delaware River, away from Philadelphia. Coming in last, the mall, twenty years in the making, which did not even come close to accomplishing the intent of its planners. Strikingly, the voice does not even identify what The Gallery is, much less encourage Blue Line riders to visit it. I imagine initial promotional efforts to highlight The Gallery’s benefits must have reflected the hope and anticipation many Philadelphia residents, urban planners, and municipal leaders felt when it opened in August 1977. Throughout its planning, construction, and for a few short years after The Gallery commenced operations, downtown redevelopers and municipal leaders prized the transportation mall complex as the city’s mythic savior, only to later disown The Gallery as a failure. The voice echoes their disappointment, as if to ask, “What went wrong?”
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