

# INside

2015-2016

## ALLENTOWN

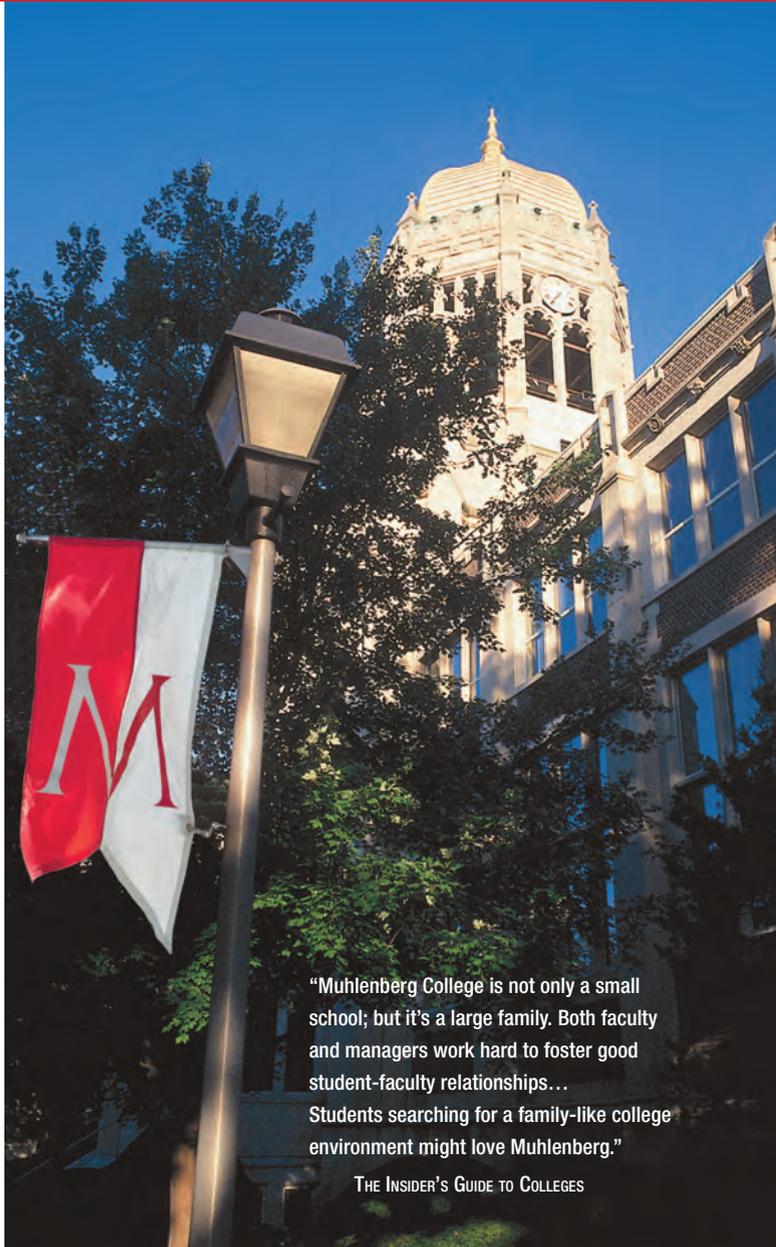


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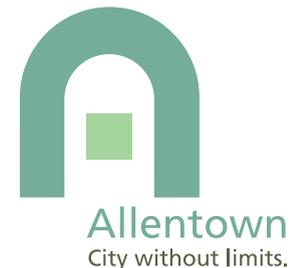
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As the mayor of Allentown, the third largest city in Pennsylvania, I’m proud to report that so many great things are happening that I can’t begin to cover them all here. A few highlights include:

- PPL Center, an 8,500 seat minor league hockey and 10,000 seat concert venue, opened in 2014 at Seventh & Hamilton streets and is home to the Lehigh Valley Phantoms, the top minor league affiliate of the NHL’s Philadelphia Flyers.
- New development totalling \$1 billion is energizing our downtown thanks to Pennsylvania’s only Neighborhood Improvement Zone.
- An exciting blend of new and established restaurants and nightclubs benefits downtown employees and area residents.
- Coca-Cola Park hosts the Philadelphia Phillies Class AAA affiliate, the Lehigh Valley IronPigs.
- Arts and cultural activities abound.

I invite you to learn more about Allentown and discover a city without limits!



## WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES.



To paraphrase an iconic quote from the film *Field of Dreams*, I'd like to think that I always believed "if you build it, they will come." But if truth be told, I never thought – at least in my lifetime – that Allentown would experience a renaissance such as the one happening right now.

As someone who has lived and worked in downtown Allentown for several decades, it's extremely heartening to see this city on the rise again. The incredible resurgence that we are experiencing due to the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) –

and the hard work performed by so many folks in so many capacities – is really paying off. And I couldn't be happier!

In one short year, we have seen the PPL Center go from what was essentially a hole in ground to a multi-million dollar complex where hockey fans can see their beloved Phantoms score and music lovers can dance to the Eagles, Tom Petty, Judas Priest and Neil Diamond.

Amazing new fine dining and casual restaurants have come into downtown Allentown, creating a food lovers' sanctuary right in the heart of the city. In 2014, The Hamilton Kitchen, Roar Social House, The Dime, Chickie's & Pete's, Crust, Tim Hortons and Johnny's Bagels opened their doors and received well-deserved fanfare for their distinctive culinary personalities. Each place offers something different to the thousands of people arriving downtown for games, concerts and other events at the PPL Center, as well as to area residents looking for new dining experiences – making downtown a destination in itself.

Not to mention Allentonians have been able to get a slice of the economic pie that this rebirth has offered. Seventy percent of all the recent job openings created by the NIZ have been filled with current Allentown residents. That population, along with all the new office workers and young professionals moving downtown, is creating an unprecedented and vibrant work-play environment. Clearly, downtown is a place where you can finish your long workday and then meet friends for cocktails or dinner – or hit the gym – all within walking distance of one another.

The genuine cooperation of all these diverse "players" sparks a contagious excitement, marking the return of Allentown as the true urban center of the Lehigh Valley. Be it the latest haute cuisine restaurant, the newest ultra-hip bar, the elegant, world-class hotel or the bold artistic directions of such cultural institutions as Miller Symphony Hall and the Allentown Art Museum, all participants are on the same page, helping each other on a journey that spirals ever upward. Truly, we travel together as a "City without Limits."

*Miriam Huertas*

# IN side ALLENTOWN

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As we celebrate the new Allentown, I am incredibly proud of our 6th annual INside Allentown guide and the creation of our first downtown edition. My heartfelt thanks to Anne Schauer, Lenora Dannelke, Mike Krisukas, Peter Lewnes, Liz Regan and Mary Himmelberger for their expertise and passion for this project. This is indeed a labor of love for me and it helps when people help me "carry the water"! Thanks also to the professional writers and photographers whose creativity shines throughout this guide.

And I could never make this project happen without the assistance of my wonderful partners – Lehigh Valley Health Network, Muhlenberg College, City Center Lehigh Valley, Community Action Development Corp., and all the advertisers. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

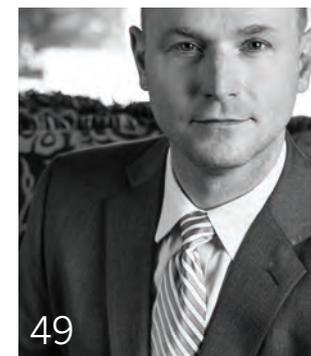
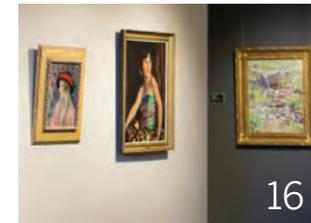
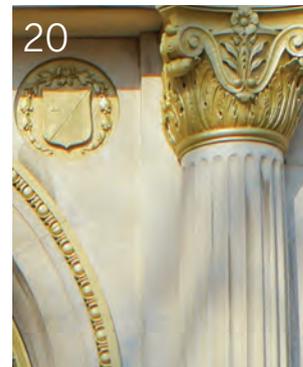
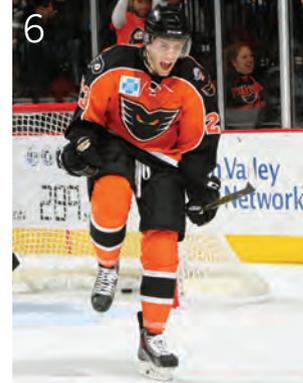
Finally, I wish to dedicate this guide to the memory of two very special downtowners – Ed Leggett and Dick Cowen! Rest in peace, guys; we will continue to carry Allentown's torch in your honor.

Cover photo by Hub Willson from the Trifecta building.

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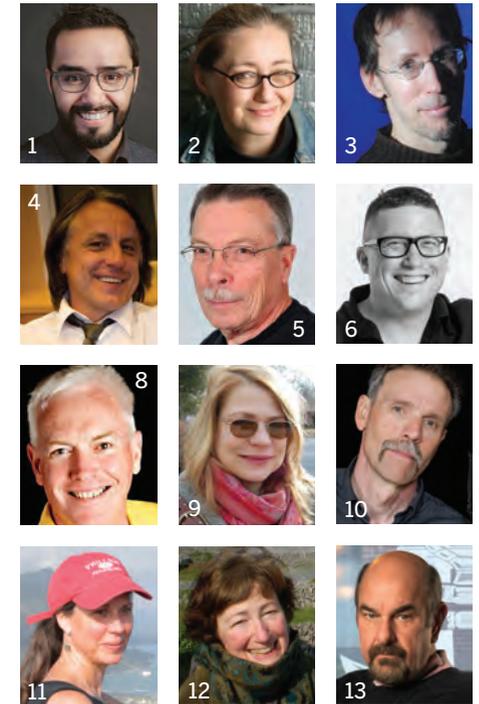


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# PPL Center

Open since September 2014, the PPL Center has helped Allentown's vibe morph from sleepy to scintillating. The arena has attracted hundreds of thousands of fans to hockey games, circus shows and concerts starring the Eagles and Neil Diamond. It's also boosted business for new businesses, including a hotel, a sports fitness center and a Prohibition-style saloon.

By Geoff Gehman, photography by Peter Gourniak.

The rafters are rocking in the PPL Center, the new hockey-and-concert arena that's rocking downtown Allentown.

The crowd roars every time a member of the hometown Lehigh Valley Phantoms scores a goal or bashes a Worcester Shark into the boards. Men bang the glass to cheer a check that jars vital organs. Boys yell the name of Zack Stortini, the Phantoms' tall, long-haired enforcer. Women pose for photos with MeLVin, the Phantoms' furry, cheery mascot. Girls mimic the moves of female high-school dancers who perform during intermission.

Virtually everyone rises to clap when a Vietnam veteran receives a scoreboard tribute. Even the Phantoms join the act, saluting the local hero by rapping their sticks on the ice.

Named for an electricity supplier, the PPL Center has been electrifying Center City since it opened in September 2014. The arena has triggered the transformation of a struggling downtown into a booming destination for new office buildings, restaurants and residences. It's attracted hundreds of thousands of spectators to hockey games, circus shows, rodeos, pro wrestling matches and concerts by stars like Neil Diamond, who started his world tour at Seventh and Hamilton streets. It's not only changed the game, it's changed the games.

The PPL Center is the decade-old dream child of Jim and Rob Brooks, owners of the Phantoms and longtime fans of sports, envisioned as an agent of economic and charitable development. They learned athletic, civic citizenship from their father, Robert Sr., who in the 1990s invested in two major-league teams – the baseball Pirates and the hockey Penguins – to help keep the franchises from leaving Pittsburgh, their original city.

The Brooks family raised the community ante by buying the Penguins' minor-league affiliate in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, then building an 8,300-seat arena. The brothers switched their hockey allegiance when they purchased one of the Penguins' rivals, the Phantoms, a minor-league affiliate of the Philadelphia Flyers. They began switching their allegiance to Allentown because of three attractions.

One, the greater Lehigh Valley is a hockey-mad market dominated by diehard Flyers fans eager to watch professionals play in their backyard. Two, local leaders promised to build a multi-purpose, 8,500- to 10,000-seat arena and make it the hub of a dramatically revamped Center City. And, three, an unusually large number of Boomer-aged Allentown natives were dying to keep their downtown from dying. They wanted Center City to thrive even more than it thrived when the late Pennsylvania Stage



Company staged new musicals and the now demolished Hess's department store hosted fashion shows hosted by celebrities.

The Brooks brothers met some of these local loyalists on September 12, 2014, the night the PPL opened with a concert by the Eagles. Rob Brooks was especially impressed by a man who hadn't visited downtown in twenty years. The fellow returned to Center City because he couldn't resist the "unbelievable" chance to christen a first-class facility with a famous rock band. He teared up, which made Rob Brooks tear up.

That evening the brothers Brooks watched their dream child walk confidently. "You're taking a big risk with a project this big," says Rob of launching the PPL Center and the Phantoms. "You're hoping it happens, and that it happens happily. It felt right before that night. After that night we knew we could make it feel more right, for sure."

The PPL Center feels right, for sure. The acoustics are exceptionally crisp. Pucks slap the glass with a cracking thwack; celebrations of goals and fights are supersonic. Every seat has an exceptional view. Action on the ice is easy to follow even up in the press box; it's exceptionally easy on the concourse ends, which offer an exciting panorama with an almost living-room intimacy.

Concession stands serve a wide range of dishes: brisket, lobster mac 'n' cheese, and shrimp-topped burgers. Crust, a gourmet-pizza restaurant, has a street-side window, making it livelier than the average arena cavern. Outdoor and indoor windows brighten the first Lehigh Valley branch of Tim Hortons, a coffee-and-pastry chain founded by a retired Canadian hockey player.

Outside the arena fans eat at Roar Social House. The Dime restaurant and other new businesses created to feed off events at the arena. Inside the arena fans enjoy a host of colorful, novel promotions, including specialty game-used jerseys presented by players to auction winners in their seats.

Fans have practically adopted MeLVin, the limber-limbed, irrepressibly energetic mascot. They've practically made a folk hero out of enforcer Zack Stornini, a 6-foot-4 veteran of a dozen teams, minor and major, for more than thirteen years. They love his nasty checks, his vicious punches, his crazy courage.

The Phantoms run the PPL arena as the center of a community center. The "Hometown Heroes" series honors military veterans with a scoreboard tribute and a team jersey. Players visit schools to promote GOAL (Get Out and Live), a healthy-life program. After a neighborhood boy lost a stick signed by a Phantom in a fire, he received a stick signed by all the Phantoms.

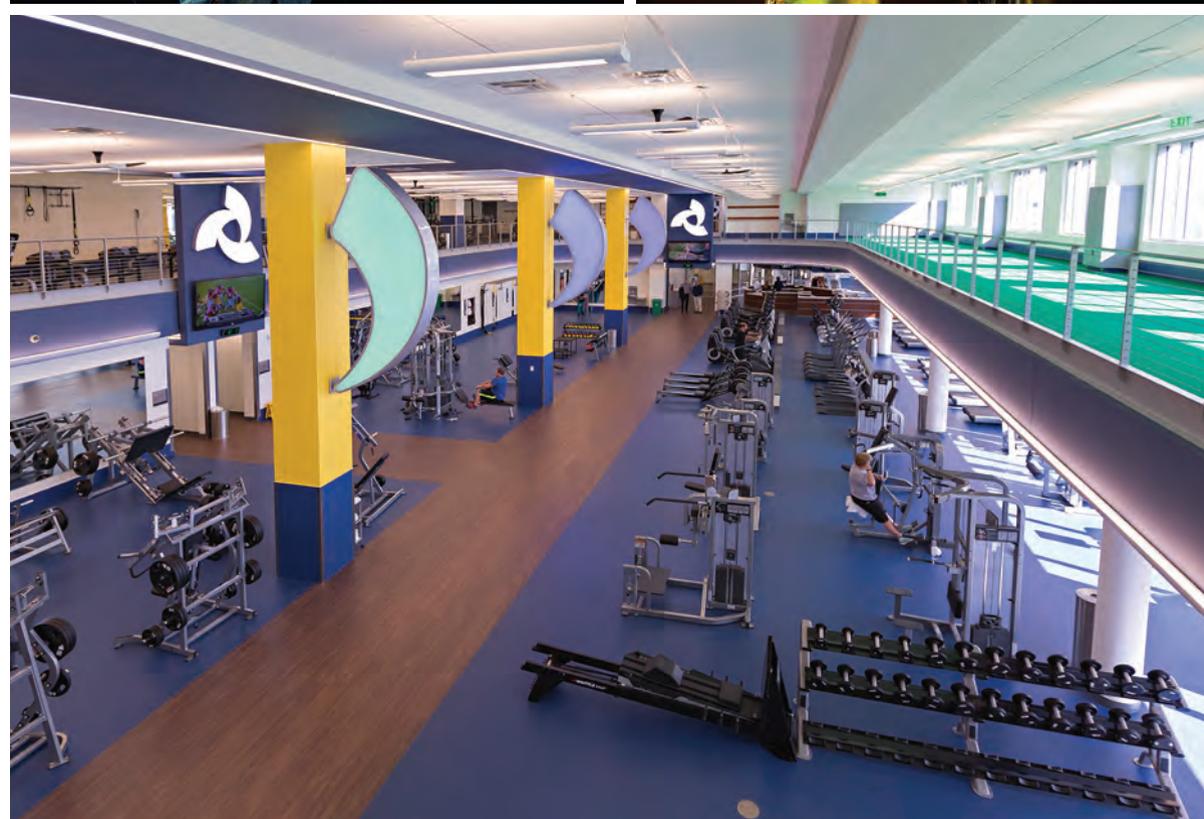
The Brooks brothers studied good citizenship with their father, now mayor of their hometown of Murraysville, Pa. "He told us that if you want to live in a great community, you have to support it," says Rob. "If you want to make it greater, you have to support it better."

The Brooks brothers offer better support in a next-door sports fitness center they helped design for the Phantoms. Run by Lehigh Valley Health Network, the facility contains 17,000 square feet of state-of-the-art machines and services. A two-level, loft-like exercise center features the latest cardio and weight equipment. A wide range of classes, from Cycling and Zumba to high-intensity Functional Fusion and Boot Camp workouts, are offered six days a week. A multitude of body issues are addressed by a small army of specialists: occupational therapists and nutritionists, orthopedists and concussion experts. Relaxation is available from a café, stimulation from a sports simulator.

One of the fitness center's attractions is the chance to meet the Phantoms after a massage or a yoga session. At the very least, amateur athletes can sprint on the same turf track, rehab lower-extremity injuries on the same antigravity treadmill, receive MRIs from the same technicians. They can even play the same hockey game on the sports simulator. Ron Hextall, the Flyers' general manager, recently scored 19 virtual goals on 20 virtual shots. That's a remarkable record for anyone, especially a retired goalie.

The PPL Center is igniting Phantoms fever throughout the city, especially among kids who may not have cared about hockey before last fall. They should care even more when the Phantoms introduce hockey programs for inner-city youngsters.

"It may sound corny, but we're here to make a difference," says Rob Brooks. "We don't just sell tickets; we sell memories."





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## Refined Retreat

The 170-room, \$65 million Renaissance by Marriott Allentown is a unique boutique hotel. It has the Art Deco façade of a bank, an elegantly industrial décor, a ballroom with a balcony, a restaurant with a panoramic view, bedroom iPads for ordering meals and meeting rooms that could be mistaken for luxury boxes above a hockey arena.

By Geoff Gehman, photography by Ryan Hulvat.



The lobby belonged to a bank. The restaurant resembles a penthouse. Meals can be ordered on an iPad. And where else can executives meet in suites overlooking a hockey arena?

Old-fashioned vibes greet new-fangled services at the Renaissance by Marriott Allentown, Center City's first new hotel in thirty-five years and the Lehigh Valley's first boutique hotel with a full menu of bells and whistles. Wedged neatly into a corner of the PPL Center, it offers upscale, neighborly lodging for a newly upscale neighborhood.

The Renaissance renaissance starts with the Art Deco facade, built in 1925 for the Dime Savings and Trust Company building, a member of the National Register of Historic Places since 1985. A picture of a 1942 dime anchors a huge photographic mural in the two-story lobby, which is sleekly industrial to honor the Lehigh Valley's long history as a manufacturing center.

The mechanical motif continues in the third-floor lounge, where a wall holds a Mack Truck grille with working headlights. The lounge leads to The Dime restaurant, which has antique-style honeycomb floor tiles and table bases made from Bethlehem Steel girders. The bar is framed by a giant see-through cooler and a two-story window with a drop-dead dramatic view of Center Square's Soldiers and Sailors Monument, a nineteenth century shrine.

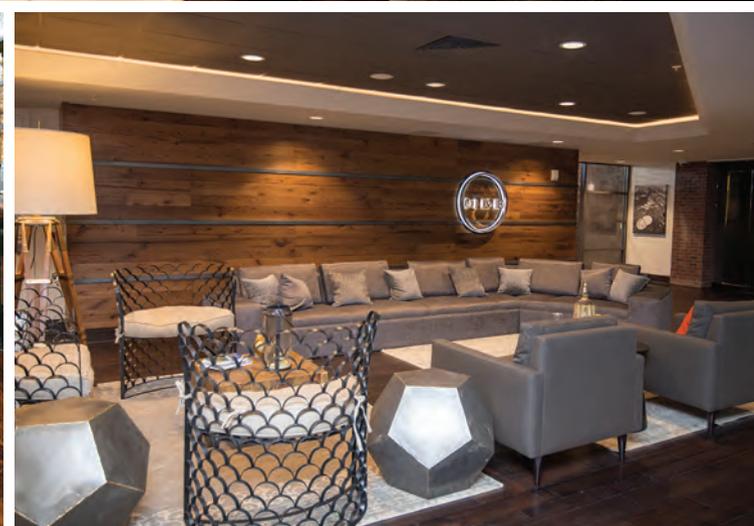
According to general manager Scott Bullock, the Renaissance is a unique addition to the Renaissance line of full-service hotels customized to their settings.

The fireplace screen in the mezzanine lounge, for example, originated as a Dime bank railing. The ballroom has chandeliers made with pipe fittings. Guest bathrooms feature a blown-up X-ray of the Liberty Bell, stowed in a nearby church during the Revolutionary War. Guests can use an iPad to request dishes from The Dime, which specializes in American food with Pennsylvania ingredients, including pork rib braised in Yuengling beer.

Guest hallways are opened by key cards as extra protection from non-guests wandering in from the PPL Center. Guests can work out in an adjacent 17,000-square-foot fitness center, a lair for members of the hometown Lehigh Valley Phantoms. Executive suites above the hockey ice could be considered luxury boxes.

Bullock expects the Renaissance will help make Allentown a conference magnet. He predicts the hotel will be a gateway for a new complex of apartments and shops and a visitor center for area attractions, part of the Renaissance "Live Life to Discover" campaign. Don't be surprised if your concierge, or navigator, discusses the America on Wheels transportation museum, which is attached to a former meatpacking plant designed by the Dime bank's architect.

"We're a piece of a global puzzle," says Bullock. "Our goal is to create an experience for everyone – to please, comfort and even awe you. We want that boomerang effect: Come once, love us, come back again – and again and again."





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## Art for All

The Allentown Art Museum of the Lehigh Valley has long been known as the home of a library designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Now it wants to be known as a center for telling stirring stories of diversity, identity and history. Its motto? “Today is so yesterday.”

By Geoff Gehman, photography by Marco Calderon.

David Mickenberg likes art objects that tell stories across genres, generations and groups. One of his recent favorites is a four-color, six-foot-high woodcut of a young African-American woman eating cotton. Alison Saar, a bi-racial artist who often addresses racism and sexism, printed the portrait on old sugar sacks to protest the poor quality of government programs aimed at reducing poverty.

Mickenberg bought “The Cotton Eater” in late 2014 for the Allentown Art Museum of the Lehigh Valley, which he serves as president, CEO and chief story supervisor. He placed the woodcut in “Interventions in Printmaking,” a 2015 exhibit he co-curated of largely political, radical works by three generations of African-American women.

“Cotton Eater” and “Interventions” exemplify Mickenberg’s quest to make the museum illustrate more tales of diversity, identity and history. On his watch, which began in November 2013, the museum has added wall texts in Spanish, a festival of folk arts and a program that will turn citizens into curators. Its past-is-present mission hangs on a banner over the front steps: “Today Is So Yesterday.”

The museum has been a downtown mainstay since 1958, when it moved from a city-owned house by a municipal rose garden to a former Presbyterian church by City Hall. For decades it was best known for three components: a wide range of distinctive textiles, a library designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, and a collection of fourteenth to eighteenth century paintings donated by a foundation devoted to bringing art by big names to small places.

Over forty years the museum presented a fair share of colorful, novel shows of everything from comic strips to paintings of technological progress. It’s been a more adventurous exhibitor over the last decade, displaying everything from medieval armor to photographs of famous rock musicians. During the same period it’s significantly expanded its footprint, opening an arts park and a nearly 10,000-square-foot addition featuring an atrium-like café.

Mickenberg has been all over the map, too. The Brooklyn native began his curatorial internship by volunteering at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, where he discovered Inuit sculptures, early computer images and how diverse objects can reach, and teach, diverse visitors. Before coming to Allentown he led four museums, two attached to universities, from Oklahoma to Massachusetts. He helped build a new home for a museum, directed the early years of a \$66 million museum in a renovated red-light district, and curated “The Last Expression: Art and Auschwitz.” The show ended its tour at the Brooklyn Museum in a space where Mickenberg once communed with nineteenth and twentieth century bronze statues.

The Allentown position had four major attractions for Mickenberg, who has fond memories of visiting his grandparents’ cabin in the Poconos. He admired the museum’s collections, including a first-rate assortment of textiles and costumes. He looked forward to working with eclectic, ambitious neighborhood associations. He envisioned exciting opportunities within a new enterprise zone of offices,



restaurants, apartments and shops, all keyed to a new hockey-and-concert arena.

The area's large number of colleges appealed to Mickenberg, a veteran teacher of museum studies. So did the museum trustees' mandate to improve relationships with academics. "I figured it was time to put my money where my mouth was," says Mickenberg, who lectured at the Louvre and the Getty Leadership Institute.

Under Mickenberg's direction, the museum has become more user-friendly. A case study is a 2014-15 exhibit of prints and sculptures by Robert Indiana, creator of "LOVE," "HOPE" and other iconic, ironic signs. Visitors were guided by a bubbling Pop Art timeline and wall captions in Spanish, a nod to the museum's largely Hispanic neighbors.

Also under Mickenberg's direction, the museum's oldest installation seems newer. "Past Present: Conversations Across Time" is an exhibit of works by nine contemporary artists that riff off works in the Kress Collection of Renaissance and Baroque paintings and sculpture. The show, which ends on May 17, 2015, was organized by college professors Pat Badt and Scott Sherk, contemporary artists married to one another.

"A museum is not alive without contemporary living artists engaged with exhibits and educational programs," says Mickenberg, who has four daughters and four rescue dogs with his wife, Judith, a psychiatric

social worker and strategic planner. "Art has always been a dialogue with the past and present. We're asking: What does the Kress Collection say about architecture, culture, society? How have we learned from the past?"

This summer, in 2015, the museum will share a pair of panoramic ventures. "Woven Welcome" is a community-wide weaving project co-directed by textile artist Jill Odegaard, a Cedar Crest College art professor. "Shared Legacy" is a festival of folk sculpture, music and poetry. It will be anchored by a traveling exhibit of art objects created in rural America in the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, including a Pennsylvania German decorated chest and a dentist's sign shaped like teeth.

On the horizon are partnerships with two visionary civic organizations. Building 21 Allentown is an innovative high school set to open in September 2015. Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley is a collective of agencies that help children progress from childhood to young adulthood. Inspired by a Promise Neighborhoods survey, the museum has initiated the HeARTHstone Project, which will feature programs that train youngsters as peer docents and citizens as curators.

"We want everyone to feel comfortable here, to feel that they have a voice," says Mickenberg. "We're trying to give life to the statement that a museum is not about something, it's for somebody."



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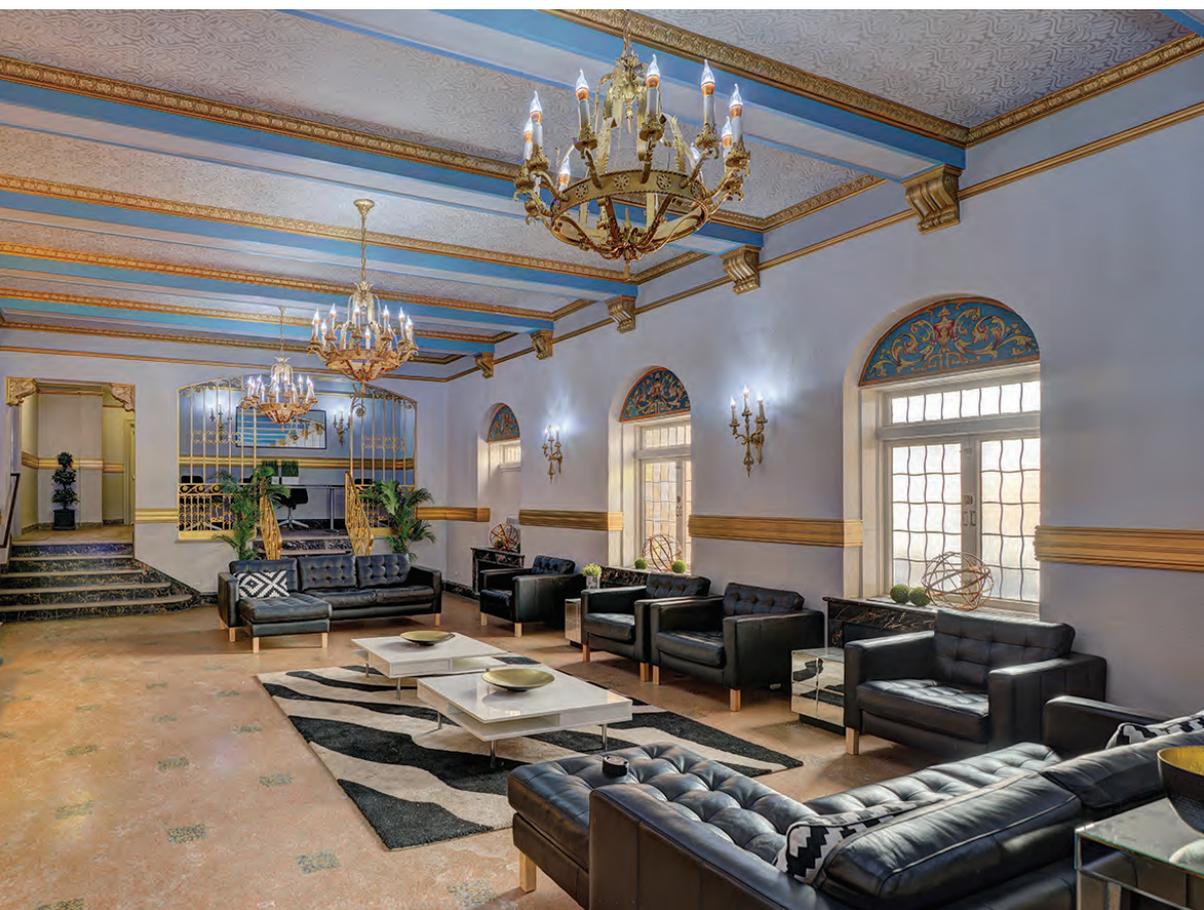
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## Living History

For a good part of the twentieth century some of the most sought-after addresses in Allentown were the stately Victorians and row homes along Seventh Street where doctors and lawyers once held sway, and The Livingston, home to those who were so often literally at the center of city life. Times change. Class endures. By Joe McDermott, photography by John Harry.



Once again, spurred in part by the ever-evolving renaissance of Allentown's commercial core, both areas are seeing renewed interest from professionals who want to be part of the excitement that is quickly restoring Allentown's rightful title as the "Queen City" of the Lehigh Valley.

Take, for instance, the lavish Livingston on Hamilton Street, built in an era that saw the construction of such city icons as the PPL Tower and the Americus and Traylor hotels that once served as the iconic bookends for Allentown's booming retail district. Its residents were numbered among the most well-to-do and the address itself was considered so prestigious that the number alone – 1411 – conveyed the allure attached to the building.

Even today the unique skyline view and distinct Spanish-Moor style arches that adorn the rooftop garden harken back to a day when Allentown's most elite wined and dined their friends as they overlooked a view of the Valley that stretched from Trexlertown to Bethlehem and beyond.

The building languished for decades as the loss of the retail district and the decline of the urban core prompted many upscale residents to flee to the suburbs and beyond, but it has been rescued and restored. Real estate investor and developer

Nat Hyman, who grew up in Allentown, purchased the building in 2011 and began a multi-year effort to reestablish the building's reputation as one of "the places" to live in the city.

"I knew it as a beautiful, regal place," says Hyman, who recalls the elegance the building's original architects and builders worked to imbue. "We took great pains to be sure we kept everything in the context of the original construction. I think it is a very unique property in Allentown."

The six-story structure includes one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments adorned with high ceilings, inlaid wood floors that have been totally refinished, granite countertops, cedar closets, nickel hardware in the kitchens as well as the sconces and chandelier, French doors and all new appliances. Throughout the building the plumbing and wiring have been replaced and WiFi is available, says building manager Kathleen Nagle, a professional designer who oversaw the renovations.

The lobby, which mirrors the building's Spanish-Moor style, is promoted as a common space for tenants who want to host visitors or even business meetings in the small conference nook at the back of the room. Nagle is now working to renovate and upgrade the rooftop garden and has already



created a dog park for four-legged residents in a small courtyard on the east side of the building.

On the right side another courtyard will be furnished as a patio area for tenants to enjoy.

"I love living here," says tenant Mel-Vina Spann Johnson, a professional sales representative who hosted an Independence Day barbeque in the rooftop garden in 2014. "One of the things I love about living in this building is that Kathleen has made it very community friendly.

But The Livingston isn't the only classic apartment building enjoying new life.

The Park Building at 402 North Seventh Street has been totally transformed, renovated and updated to provide quality housing for individuals and small families, says owner Kevin Park. Park, a contractor by trade, began rehabilitating the 12-unit building in 2011 and was renting them by spring 2012. Unlike many Center City apartment buildings that were originally single-family homes, 402 was designed and built for apartments, which means the floor plans and access are intended to be functional for multi-family living.

"It took about a year to complete," Park says. "We installed all new plumbing and electric, gas and other utilities. We redesigned the kitchens and bathrooms. The floor plan here was very well-designed but we altered it a bit to modernize things, such as shifting the bathrooms and kitchens in some units."

Working with the Allentown Redevelopment Authority and the Seventh Street Main Street program, Park also completed a façade upgrade to beautify the exterior and bring it into adherence with the interiors.

The attractiveness of the location is further enhanced by Seventh Street's emerging draw as a destination for Lehigh Valley residents seeking unique ethnic dining and nearby restaurants feature just about everything from Ethiopian to Mexican fare.

"Kevin took a leap of faith," says Seventh Street Main Street Manager Peter Lewnes. "He was a little early getting things done, but we are seeing more and more people moving downtown and buildings like his will be part of the solution here."

Mark Smith, a veteran realtor who has long specialized in city rentals and home sales, says both Hyman and Park are on the cutting edge of a revolution in downtown living.

"I think these two guys are sitting in a real good situation here. They are on the front end of what's



coming to the rest of Center City," Smith says. "I like that, a lot. I'm excited."

The Livingston, he says, is a classic main-stay that offers a refined architectural gem to its residents, while Park's work on another classic downtown apartment building has brought renewed life and promise to the neighborhood.

"I love it," Smith says of Park's property. "I love it for what is happening now. He has put a lot of money into it and it is a fabulous building. I think he is ahead of the curve and the city is going to grow into him and those areas."

Hyman and Park both note that they began their projects before the state Legislature forged the Neighborhood Improvement Zone (NIZ) legislation that has financed the PPL Center arena and the new office buildings erected by City Center Lehigh Valley – which do include new apartment living options right in the city's core – but both say they are pleased with the progress.

"The old maxim that it is better to be lucky than smart probably applies to me," jokes Hyman, who has several other properties – primarily former industrial and warehouse structures – currently under renovation or reconstruction for apartment living. He hopes to attract tenants from the pool of new employees coming downtown to work.

Studies have shown that the younger urban professionals, attracted by unique architecture and the

tight-knit feel of city neighborhoods, prefer urban living where both their workplace and amenities such as restaurants, coffee shops and entertainment are within walking or cycling distance.

Becky Bradley, Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, says the rental markets are particularly attractive to the younger professionals because they are both more mobile and more saddled with debt, which often precludes home ownership. In addition, they value several key factors when seeking housing that Allentown's housing stock offers them: A good HVAC system, Internet access, and socialization opportunities.

"You have a super-educated, young workforce. You also have the Baby Boomers, which are a huge group that is beginning to downsize. Allentown has a nice, linear downtown and that all feeds in to provide for all kinds of social interaction you wouldn't have, otherwise," Bradley says. "People are looking for human interaction and urban environments provide that."

In addition, the rapid evolution of the NIZ district and the new work, entertainment and social options offered in Allentown make it a prime destination for a generation that is known for selecting where it wants to live, first, then looking for employment in that location – good news to those who have invested in the city.

"That's obviously a target audience for us," Hyman says. "We would love to get some of the younger, professional people into our buildings."

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## Dining Downtown

The blossoming of a great restaurant scene is one of the most exciting stages of a city's revitalization, and Allentown is approaching full bloom. The latest dining destinations springing up around the new PPL Center present a vibrant mix of styles and cuisines – and offer experiences you won't find anywhere else in the Lehigh Valley.

By Kate Scuffle, photography by Ryan Hulvat.



## The Dime

12 North Seventh St. | 484-273-4010  
thedimeallentown.com

The intersection of Seventh and Hamilton is where Allentown's past and present meet; it is the very heart of the city's rebirth. The Hamilton Kitchen on one corner, the dazzling new PPL Center on the other, and connected to the arena, the city's first new hotel in thirty-some years, the upscale Marriott Renaissance. The Renaissance designers have honored the city's past by smartly incorporating the historic 1925 Dime Savings & Trust Building into the new hotel.

Step through the arched brick doors into what was once the Dime Bank's grand lobby, take the hotel elevator up, and emerge into the future in the Renaissance's stunning restaurant, The Dime. Wrapped in breathtaking floor to ceiling windows high above the entrance to the PPL Center, the restaurant seems to float. The décor, echoing the area's industrial past, has an edgy-yet-elegant steampunk vibe, from the metal mesh curtains to the vintage-flavored lighting, and the touches of copper, iron and steel. Commissioned works by Valley artists hang on the walls and gleam in the corners, and smartly placed drink rails by the windows encourage lingering over the view of city and mountains. The chef's tables by the open kitchen encourage another view, that of Chef Jason Viscount and his talented team creating their own works of culinary art.

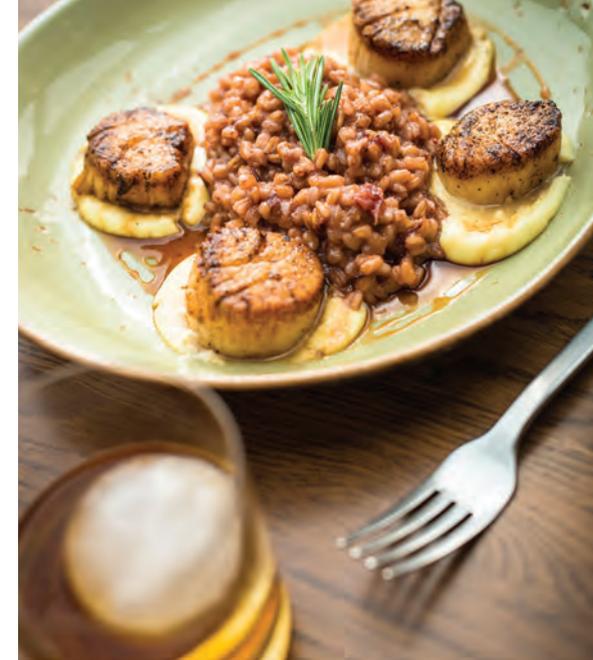
Viscount has designed a menu that is both locally inspired and locally sourced; a seasonal celebration of Pennsylvania and its heritage, from the hearty farm meals of Amish country to the ethnic mixes of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Signature Pennsylvania-infused dishes include handmade pierogi with red wine-braised short ribs, roasted Lancaster County chicken and mushroom rice fritters with spicy chow chow vinaigrette. The roast veggies, the farmhouse cheeses, the meats – it's all fresh, all local. Even the beautiful breads and brioches, pastas and pastries are made on-site in The Dime's own bakery.

The chic, comfortable bar with its gleaming glass-walled cooler offers 24 draft beers, highlighting local breweries. Dozens of wines are available by the glass, and there are more than 300 selections on the wine list. Signature handcrafted cocktails, such as the Wise Mule and the Affumigato, encompass a masterful mix of classic and contemporary tastes.

Restaurant Manager Rodrigo Marin is excited to be part of the transformation happening all around him and his restaurant. He admires City Center's vision of a walkable urban core offering offices, eateries, and apartments, as well as an arena and the visitors it brings. He moved here precisely to be a part of this adventure, and is smitten with his new home – the Arts Walk, the museum, the architecture, the quality of life. Then there's the exploding restaurant scene, the hallmark of any urban revitalization. "What's great is that it's not a competitive scene," he says. "We all support each other, and we all complement each other. We all want folks to really live the downtown experience – have cocktails here, maybe dinner at the Hamilton Kitchen, dessert somewhere else."

In keeping with the Renaissance Hotel's focus on local culture, The Dime plans to showcase the Valley's charms for visitors by hosting live music, arts events, sommelier and tasting evenings, and social happenings such as cocktail hour mixers. Marin envisions it as "the place" to be in town, a social hub for visitors and locals alike, a place of many moods, from a quiet evening over cocktails at the bar to a business meeting; from a romantic dinner to a great party crowd after an arena event.

Sitting in that smartly elegant-yet-relaxed dining room, enjoying a memorable meal that reflects Pennsylvania's rich culture and natural bounty, and gazing out those windows at that view like no other, the new Allentown glitters in the dusk like an avenue of dreams – and suddenly no dream seems too big for it.



### Roar Social House

732 Hamilton St. | 610-434-1230 | roarallentown.com

Designing an extraordinary restaurant is a creative act, one that takes vision and a dream. It is truly a labor of love.

For Don Saylor and his family of restaurateurs, their newest masterpiece began when they fell in love with a building, a historic beauty whose story is the story of Allentown itself: its growth, its hard times, and now, its rebirth.

It's clear that Saylor delights in the historic character of Roar as he points out the 1850s brickwork and ancient wooden beams. The original structure was rebuilt by Allentown Band director and businessman Amos Ettinger after an 1848 fire – set by two disgruntled stable boys – destroyed this block of Hamilton Street.

As they peeled back the building's layers, the Saylor had an epiphany – a vision of a Prohibition era-inspired, Roaring Twenties-style supper club, complete with classic cocktails, suspended servers sporting bow ties and silent films flickering in the glow of Edison light bulbs. Thus, Roar was born, followed soon by Hush, the softly lit, exquisitely mysterious speakeasy hidden in the back, whose alley door has a discreet peep-hole.

Roar now boasts a dramatic three-story tall

entrance and an intimate mezzanine for meetings and parties. The long, elegant bar serves artfully crafted cocktails, with tin ceilings overhead and Italian tile underfoot. An open kitchen with chef's tables, a Saylor signature, leads discreetly to Hush – a drinks-only lounge with an intriguing, exclusive cocktail list.

Chef Chris Noonan's menu mixes up contemporary and classic tastes, with locally sourced steaks, fresh seafood, a raw bar, charcuterie boards, imaginative appetizers and a robust lunch menu. His is a heady mix of cuisines: pork belly mac and cheese balls with bourbon maple BBQ; cast iron-seared scallops with sweet potato hash. Even sandwiches are an event – whether a Korean BBQ braised short rib wrap with gojuchang mayo or a “blind pig” burger stuffed with bourbon pulled pork, topped with aged cheddar and onion straws, and accompanied by steak fries and house-made pickle.

But this is just the beginning, says Saylor. He can already see the new apartments rising nearby, the planned outdoor addition to Hush, the downtowners walking to their “local” for a cocktail on a snowy night. And thus, through vision are a building – and a city – brought back to life.

### The Hamilton Kitchen & Bar

645 Hamilton St. | 610-433-3535 | thehamiltonkitchen.com

It was July, months before the PPL Center would open. Downtown Allentown was still an endless, uninspiring construction site. Until one hot summer night, when an elegant patio with a sleek outdoor bar, alive with music and happy diners, suddenly appeared like a mirage. The gleaming glass façade glowed invitingly, while the classic, neon-edged “Hamilton” sign seemed like it had always been there.

That's the thing about The Hamilton – it (suddenly) feels like it's always been here. Which is exactly what restaurateur Donny Petridis wanted when he made the leap of faith to come downtown. There's a patina about it – the 1940s look of the menus, the old Allentown photos and maps. The rich leather, aged brick, and reclaimed wood give warmth to the urban industrial style of the décor. It's spacious, with a soaring vaulted brick ceiling, yet intimate and welcoming at the same time.

“We didn't want The Hamilton to be intimidating,” says Petridis. “We wanted it to feel comfortable, a place for jeans as well as suits, a place to enjoy an after-work cocktail or a relaxed brunch, as much as a steak dinner.”

The eclectic menu offers fresh takes on classic comfort foods like mac and cheese, chicken pot

pie and deviled eggs. Chef Drew Stark highlights seasonal, regional American fare, from steaks and chops to seafood stews, po' boy sandwiches to lusciously topped flatbreads and fried Point Judith calamari. There's a delicious Southern influence, too, as in the popular spiced shrimp and grits or the fried chicken and waffles on the weekend brunch menu.

Old meets new again at the friendly bar, with over 300 whiskeys – 250 of them American, the largest whiskey selection in Pennsylvania. Credit General Manager Jason Lonigro with developing an outstanding beverage program that showcases hard-to-find small batch bourbons, New World wines and regional craft beers. Classically-inspired cocktails like the Church Street Bramble or the Brown Derby feature fresh-squeezed juices, house-made syrups and even their own rock 'n' rye.

Petridis always believed that if he built it, they would come – and never doubted that Allentown was about to be re-born. “It's rewarding for all of us downtown to be building this legacy, to be part of putting Allentown back on the map as a great city – again. There's so much momentum – this train's coming thru fast. It's not a question of ‘if’ anymore, just how big and how fast.”



### Chickie's & Pete's

701 Hamilton St. | 484-273-4507  
chickiesandpetes.com

If Crust is the hip, gourmet bistro of the PPL Center, and Tim Hortons is the welcoming coffee shop, then classic sports bar Chickie's & Pete's is where the party is.

The wildly popular Chickie's & Pete's Crab House in South Philly has been named the nation's top sports bar by ESPN, and their Wells Fargo Center location is hockey-central for Philadelphia Flyers fans, both before and after the game. But even those Philly fans are impressed when they step into the enormous new Chickie's & Pete's here at the Phantoms home arena. With 8,000 square feet, two full-service bars, seating inside for 275, and 50 more outside, as well as a Service Electric broadcast booth, this is one of their largest, most extravagant locations, open seven days a week.

Warmly done in rich woods and glass with an industrial touch, beautifully lit, the space is ringed with flat screen TVs offering every sport imaginable, with a spacious sit-down dining area overlooking the comfortable, made-for-mingling bar areas.

Chickie's & Pete's started out as a family chowder house, and their bountiful menu is still a celebration of all things seafood – fresh shrimp, lobster, mussels, clams and crabs. *Especially crabs.* More of a landlubber? Try a thin crust veggie or buffalo chicken Pete-zza, a classic Italian sandwich, burger or cheesesteak, or one of the myriad varieties of nachos. And then there are those deservedly famous Crabfries – golden crinkle cut fries with that trademark mix of crab seasoning and spices, with hot, creamy cheese sauce on the side.

The Chickie's & Pete's vibe is family-friendly, fun, and welcoming, says manager Lindsay Saunders, and especially here in Allentown, with the high-energy buzz downtown. While hockey and sports brought them here, the staff enjoys watching locals and visitors alike discover that Chickie's & Pete's is also a warm, comfortable, affordable spot for lunch, after-work drinks or a family celebration. "It's just so exciting for us to be a part of what's happening here in Allentown, and the amazing future still to come," she says. "It's going to be spectacular!"



### Crust

701 Hamilton St. | 484-273-4506  
pplcenter.com

Crust, the unique coal-fired pizza restaurant and bar in the PPL Center, has a sleek, hip vibe to it, with exposed red brick and gleaming ductwork in an airy, open space. There's even a garage door opening out onto Hamilton Street for an urban version of al fresco dining on summer nights.

But at the heart of Crust is an old tradition that has become new again – cooking with the intense heat of a coal-fired oven as Italian immigrants did in the 1800s, substituting Pennsylvania's anthracite coal for the wood used in the old country.

Those coal-fired ovens made bread – and pizza – with a deliciously smoky flavor and delicate crispness that was lost with the switch to gas and electric ovens. Lost until recently, when artisanal pizza makers rediscovered the robust, moist, flavorful pizzas that come out of a coal-fired oven.

Crust offers just such artisanal, made-to-order pizzas. Have your pie made with traditional, whole wheat or gluten-free almond dough; sauced with marinara, béchamel, pesto or spicy arrabiatta, and topped with Kalamata olives, marinated tomatoes, exotic mushrooms or prosciutto. There are house specialty pizzas like the Liguria with its coal-fired chicken, or the Camille – peppered bacon, honey chèvre, caramelized onions, garlic and oil.

Actually, everything on the menu – bread, meatballs, wings – is cooked in the custom-built oven that takes center stage at Crust. Working with a coal oven can be daunting, according to Manager Gabriel Negron, as coal burns at up to 900 degrees. "But our oven is just so well-designed – it's a work of art! We start it with mesquite charcoal for flavor," he explains, "and to heat the oven enough to burn the Reading anthracite coal, which burns really cleanly."

Everything is fresh and made in-house; Negron and his team start their mornings making fresh mozzarella, dough, dressings and mayo from scratch. Non-pizza creations are equally tempting pleasures, like chèvre- and feta-stuffed Anaheim peppers or a Candied Apple Cider Salad. But it's that smoky crust, that gorgeous pizza, that will bring you back long after the hockey season ends.





### Tony Luke's

806 Hamilton St. | 610-433-2800  
tonylukes.com

There was a line out the door when Philly's own Tony Luke's opened on Hamilton Street, and the buzz hasn't stopped since. It's SRO at the brightly tiled Italian sandwich shop when the Phantoms are playing, and lunchtime tables are pretty hard to come by too.

The award-winning, fast-growing Tony Luke's and its wildly popular cheesesteak has long been loved by Phillies and Eagles fans, but the Allentown shop marks their much-anticipated Valley debut. "We're thrilled with the welcome", says owner Praveen Vig, "and excited to be part of what's happening downtown. The diversity of styles and menus in this new restaurant scene is great – and this is just the beginning!"

Why all the fuss about a cheesesteak? Because Tony Luke's has taken the South Philly sandwich experience and upped the ante. This is not "fast food"; this is home-made, slow-cooked, and decadently delicious.

Every meal is made to order, with fresh – not frozen – ingredients. The warm bread is baked daily; the meats are all-natural, antibiotic- and hormone-free. Their signature sliced (not chopped) Black Angus rib-eye steak is cooked at lower temperatures, keeping it juicy, tender and flavorful. For the chicken cutlet sandwich – founder Tony "Luke" Lucidonio's personal favorite – the cutlets are marinated and breaded on-site, while pork for the roast pork Italian sandwich is slow-roasted with herbs and spices.

Even the fries are natural, hand-cut, and delicious on their own. But order them seasoned with chipotle BBQ, Cheez Whiz or Maryland-style and you'll taste another reason why Tony's fans are so loyal.

Tailor your sandwich to your taste with cheese, bacon, hot peppers, broccoli rabe and more, or have it made "hoagie style" with lettuce, American cheese, tomato, pickles and mayonnaise.

You can even add marinara to your cheesesteak, Lehigh Valley-style. But Praveen and his staff encourage you to take a chance and savor the rich flavors of this one-of-a-kind cheesesteak by ordering it the true South Philly way – "whiz wit." Translated: Cheez Whiz and soft fried onions. Mm-mmm – decadent indeed!



### Tim Hortons

701 Hamilton St. | 484-273-4508  
timhortons.com

When hockey legend Tim Horton opened his first restaurant in Ontario, Canada in 1964, there were only two things on the menu – coffee and donuts. But those coffee and donuts went on to create a business that became the largest of its kind in Canada – that's how good they were. As Tim Hortons has grown, so has their menu, which now features iced cappuccinos, bagels, sandwiches, soups, chili and more, as well as those delicious donuts and rich Arabica coffee that made Tim Horton a hit on and off the ice.

So when the Phantoms brought hockey to Allentown, how better to celebrate than by opening a Tim Hortons in the shiny new PPL Center? The first Tim Hortons in the Valley was met with so much excitement that even their "soft" opening turned into a huge event. "I've never seen an opening anything like it," said General Manager George Arce, "the excitement, the anticipation – it's just been unbelievable." Adoring Tim Horton fans have been making the trek from Easton, Lancaster, even Maryland to get Tim's famous ground coffees to take home, or to get their "Timbits" (doughnut holes) fix.

Key to Tim's success is the homemade freshness of everything on the menu, as well as refreshingly reasonable pricing. The bountiful baked goods – huge bagels, pumpkin muffins, scrumptious donuts and pastries, even the popular apple fritters – are baked in batches throughout the day, and the famous coffee is made anew every twenty minutes. That's right: No Tim's coffee is ever more than twenty minutes old.

Tim Hortons at the new arena already has a huge takeaway business, and is jam-packed when the Phantoms are in town, but Arce notes that it's also a comfy, upscale urban coffee shop with free WiFi, a welcoming fireplace, and plenty of quiet corners to work or chat in while savoring a caramel latte or Tim's own Earl Grey tea. It's the perfect spot for a relaxed business meeting over a Tuscan chicken panini, or a morning get-together over a turkey sausage and egg breakfast wrap. And if you can't escape the office, "Take Tims" catering will bring the meal – and that coffee – to you.





photography left to right: Paul Pearson, Ryan Hulvat & Hub Willson

## Downtown and Seventh Street dining resources:

### HAMILTON DISTRICT

**Allentown Brew Works** | Brew Pub

L-D-FL-ENT-O-CT  
812 Hamilton St. | 610-433-7777  
thebrewworks.com/allentown-brewworks

**Baby Got "Que"** | Barbecue | L-D-CT

851 Jackson St. | 610-351-2992 | babygotque.com

**Beijing Wok** | Chinese | L-D

966 Hamilton St. | 610-770-6020

**Billy's Downtown Diner** | American | B-L-O-CT

840 Hamilton St. | 610-432-5484 | billysdiner.com

**Bon Appetit Cafe** | Cafe | B-L-O-CT

835 Hamilton St. | 610-435-1112

**Center City Diner** | Diner | B-L-D

845 W. Linden St. | 610-432-1234

**Chickie's and Pete's** | Seafood, Sports Bar | L-D-FL

701 Hamilton St. | 484-273-4507

**Cosmopolitan** | Contemporary American

L-D-FL-ENT-O  
22 N. Sixth St. | 610-435-3540 | ourcosmopolitan.com

**Crust** | Pizza, Italian | L-D-FL-O

739 Hamilton St. | 484-723-4506

**Deli Plaza 2** | Café, Deli | B-L-O-CT

840 Hamilton St. | 610-776-2970

**Delicioso Pizza & Subs** | Pizzeria, Italian | L-D-O-CT

1032 Hamilton St. | 610-433-2559

**El Rey Del Mofongo** | Dominican | B-L-D

937 Hamilton St. | 610-439-2400

**Gash Food Deli** | Cafe, Deli | B-L-O-CT

963 Hamilton St. | 610-434-4440

**The Hamilton Kitchen & Bar** | American | L-D-FL-O-CT

645 Hamilton St. | 610-433-3535

thehamiltonkitchen.com

**Island in the Sun** | Jamaican | L-D-BYOB

921 Hamilton St. | 610-435-4347

islandinthesun.vpweb.com

**Johnny's Bagels & Deli** | Deli | B-L-CT

640 Hamilton St. | 610-439-1122

johnnysbagelsanddeli.com

**Kow Thai** | Thai | L-D-BYOB

1201 W. Linden St. | 610-770-9100 | kowthai.com

**Kyle's Courthouse Deli** | Deli | B-L-CT

535 Hamilton St. | 610-434-6601

**Luna's Bakery** | Bakery | L-CT

1120 W. Linden St. | 610-432-3255

**Manifiesto Restaurant** | Spanish | L-D-FL-ENT

904 Hamilton St. | 610-351-3301

manifiestorestaurant57.com

**Marco's Pizza** | Pizzeria, Italian | L-D

801 Hamilton St. | 610-433-6688

**Momma Croc's Pizza** | Pizzeria, Italian | L-D

520 Hamilton St. | 610-351-0363

crocodilerockcafe.com

**Nana's Café & Grille** | Café, Deli | B-L-D-CT

722 Hamilton St. | 610-351-3279

nanascafeandgrille.com



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O: Outdoor Dining ENT: Entertainment CT: Catering



photography left to right: Hub Willson (2) and Ryan Hulvat

**Pasta Alla Rosa** | Italian | L-D-CT-BYOB  
602 Hamilton St. | 610-774-9500 | [pastallarosa.com](http://pastallarosa.com)

**Philly Pretzel Factory** | Pretzel | L-D-CT  
809 Hamilton St. | 610-821-7000

**Pizza Mart** | Pizzeria, Italian | L-D  
539 Hamilton St. | 610-432-7997

**Subway** | Fast Food, Deli | L-D  
512 Hamilton St. | 610-435-5385

**Roar Social House** | American | L-D-FL-O  
732 Hamilton St. | 610-434-1230

**Taste of Soul Cafe** | Soul Food | L-D  
931 Hamilton St. | 610-433-8937

**The Bay Leaf** | New American & Asian | L-D-FL  
935 Hamilton St. | 610-433-4211  
[allentownbayleaf.com](http://allentownbayleaf.com)

**The Café at the Allentown Art Museum** | Café | L-CT  
31 N. Fifth St. | 484-602-6349  
[karenhuntercatering.com](http://karenhuntercatering.com)

**The Dime** | Locally sourced, Pennsylvania American  
B-L-D-FL | 12 N. Seventh St. | 484-273-4010  
[thedimeallentown.com](http://thedimeallentown.com)

**Tim Hortons** | Bakery, Coffee | B-L-D-CT  
701 Hamilton St. | 484-273-4508

**Tony Luke's** | Cheese Steak Shop | L-D  
806 Hamilton St. | 610-433-2800

**Venny's Pizza and Restaurant** | Pizza, Italian | L-D  
840 Hamilton St. | 610-437-4040

**SEVENTH STREET**

**Casa Latina** | Dominican | B-L-D-O  
527 N. Seventh St. | 610-821-2748

**Chan's Chinese Restaurant** | Chinese | L-D  
201 N. Seventh St. | 610-439-3115

**China Wok** | Chinese | L-D  
333 N. Seventh St. | 610-439-6005

**Cuchifrito** | Dominican | L-D  
105 N. Seventh St. | 610-434-1788

**El Patron Mexican Restaurant** | Mexican | B-L-D-BYOB  
405 N. Seventh St. | 610-433-2900

**El Vacano** | Dominican | B-L-D  
147 N. Seventh St. | 484-221-9415

**Ecu Atlantic Seafood** | Seafood, Sales | L-D-O  
621 N. Seventh St. | 610-434-8755

**Happy Garden Chinese Restaurant** | Chinese | L-D  
501 N. Seventh St. | 610-432-9328

**Hop Po Chinese Takeout** | Chinese | L-D  
647 N. Seventh St. | 610-821-8668

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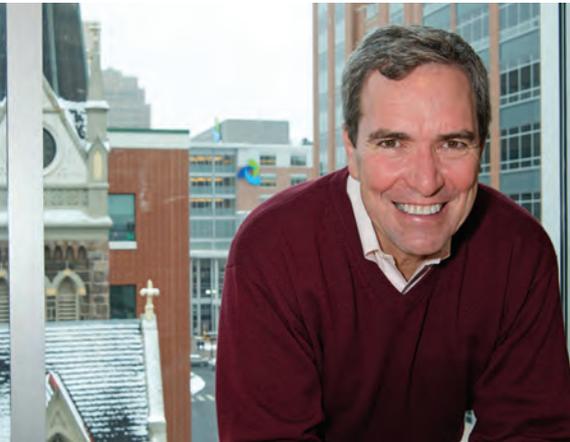
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# Hi-Tech on Hamilton

Let's get technical here. No, that's not the invitation to a heated debate – it's just an apt description of the power phrase that speaks to a quartet of new tech-based companies that have plugged into the new vibe on Hamilton Street.

By Joe McDermott, photography by Hub Willson.



**Trifecta Technologies Inc.**  
612 Hamilton St. | 610-530-7200 | trifecta.com

Anyone who knows Doug Pelletier knows he is a man with a vision. But he is also a man with a view – maybe one of the most unique views in the history, and on the history – of Allentown.

Thanks to the six-story window wall that has transformed the once-stodgy Schoen's Furniture building into an icon of Allentown's renaissance, the founder and CEO of Trifecta Technologies looks out from his desk on a view that encompasses the centuries, from the historic Zion UCC Church where the Liberty Bell was once hidden to the towering City Center II and, just beyond that, to the PPL Arena and home of his beloved Lehigh Valley Phantoms.

Pelletier was one of the early adapters when it came to Allentown's Neighborhood Improvement Zone, recognizing quickly that it presented an opportunity to transform his company into an East Coast lure for the talented techies that might otherwise be drawn to Silicon Valley or similar destinations. He was one of the first to announce he would move his international business into Center City and worked with both city officials and property owners to find just the right space for his growing company.

"We are not just here to work," Pelletier says. "We are here to drink at the bars, eat at the restaurants, go to games and events at the arena. And we have also 'adopted' Jefferson Elementary and we are working



with Miller Symphony Hall to help them raise funds and awareness for the great programs there."

In many ways, Trifecta's relocation to Center City is a homecoming in itself. Founded in 1991 with two employees in the back of an old warehouse at Twelfth and Green streets, Trifecta had moved to a former insurance adjustment claims office off Brookside Road as it grew and needed more space.

It now occupies approximately 20,000 square feet in the historic building in downtown Allentown.

Pelletier built Trifecta as a business specializing in helping companies migrate from antiquated IBM mid-range computers to high-speed UNIX servers. It has evolved into an industry leader in creating transformational custom web, mobile and e-commerce solutions by leveraging key partnerships with cloud technology pioneers such as salesforce.com, Heroku and IBM. Since moving downtown, however, he has realigned the company by selling off the part that focused on IBM's "smart sales" software and partnering closer with salesforce.com.

Clients include nationally known brands such as Disney, Starwood Suites and Varsity as well as local luminaries such as Musikfest, SunGard and even Lights In the Parkway, an Allentown holiday destination for almost twenty years.

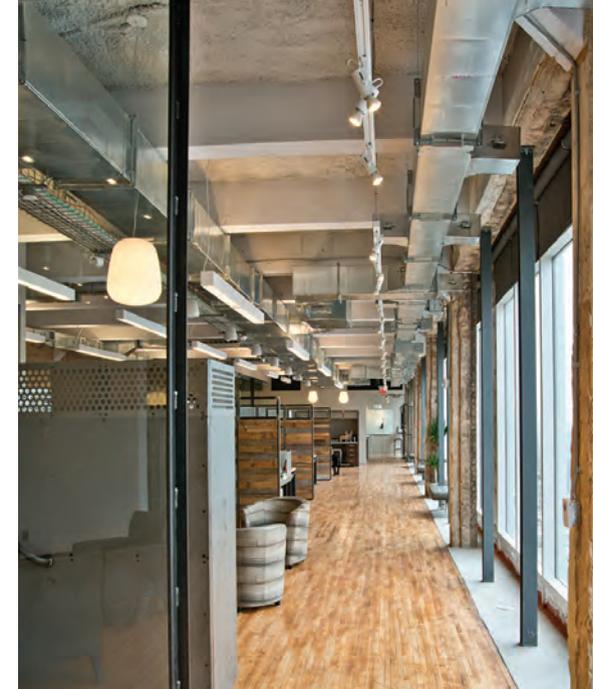
"About 40 to 45 employees went with the sale and that left us with about 80. We have already grown back to just about 100," he says. "I'm looking to grow another 30 to 40 percent."

One of the things that will spur that growth, and help him recruit the talent needed to support it, is the new Center City location, he says.

"Coming downtown has really paid off for us," Pelletier explains. "There is a demand now to 'live where you work.' Millennials and younger workers want to be able to ride their bikes or walk to work or wherever they want to go."

But Trifecta offers much more than just a great location. Employees get memberships to the Lehigh Valley Health Network fitness center in the arena building and Pelletier has put his name or the company's name on three of the apartments under construction in the new Strata building at Seventh and Linden, which will be used to house employees visiting from off-site offices or recruits who need a crash pad while they seek more permanent housing.

The company is one of four with an ice-level



suite at the arena, which includes twelve seats for events and nineteen for hockey games – almost exclusively reserved for employees, and Pelletier long ago initiated barbeques and "Beer Fridays," which begin in the late afternoon when the boss blows his whistle and the team gathers for a couple cold ones near the always-stocked fridge.

He also has at least a few employees already looking to live downtown.

"I think that will happen," he says, confidently. "We'll all grow together."

"I love being downtown."



### Digital Feast Inc.

840 Hamilton St. | Suite 520 | 610-433-4013 | digitalfeast.com

After the economy collapsed at the end of 2008, mortgage brokers Ken Unangst and Phil Osborne kicked off one of the most profitable eras in their 14-year business relationship and friendship.

They did it by recognizing and blending the power of two forms of communication that had captured the public's attention – video and the internet. That epiphany and the lessons learned from the mortgage/real estate business led to the founding of Digital Feast in 2013, and the company now employs seven full-timers who produce top-quality video marketing for a wide variety of businesses and non-profits throughout the Lehigh Valley.

Unangst and Osborne were already well-versed in the power of mass communication to build business. Their weekly radio show touting the local real estate market had propelled them to national rankings in the mortgage industry. They had already begun to move that show to the Internet when they realized the potential for video.

"People weren't really into education. What was sexy to them was the property, itself," says Osborne, who handles client relations and the

creative side of the business while Unangst applies his financial background to management and operations.

Video home tours, they learned, created buyers. "We were forced to create a video company because of the demand," Unangst says. Pooling their resources once again, the partners began producing marketing videos out of a studio at Keller Williams Real Estate Bethlehem office and that eventually accounted for about 50 percent of their mortgage business. Between 2010 and 2013 they produced about 700 real estate videos.

"We knew we were in command of a marketing tool that most people knew nothing about," Unangst says, adding that Digital Feast was created in 2013. "In mid-2014 we finally left the mortgage industry."

The partners say that the move to Allentown was one of the best decisions they have made. "We almost went to Bethlehem. It's an artful community," Unangst says. "But our business is a marriage of art and business. To come down here was a challenge but it was a chance to be part of the rebirth of Allentown."

### Sarbari

806 Hamilton St. | 484-866-9700 | sarbari.com

It's no coincidence that Sarbari is located above one of Allentown's newest eateries – in this case, Tony Luke's steak shop. The software developed by the fledgling company – the first official graduate of the Velocity business incubator – was created to help restaurants streamline their supply and inventory processes by bringing those tasks into the twenty-first century and creating an accountability trail for owners.

In some ways, it is a short distance for founder Sebastian Serra, a restaurant veteran who grew up in the produce business. In other ways, it shows how far the Sicilian native has come from his North Boston roots.

Serra graduated from Northeastern University with a degree in finance and accounting, but before he could land a job in his chosen field he was asked to help supply a local restaurant with avocados. Ten years and \$10 million later, he sold that business to spend more time with his growing family, which includes his wife and three sons.

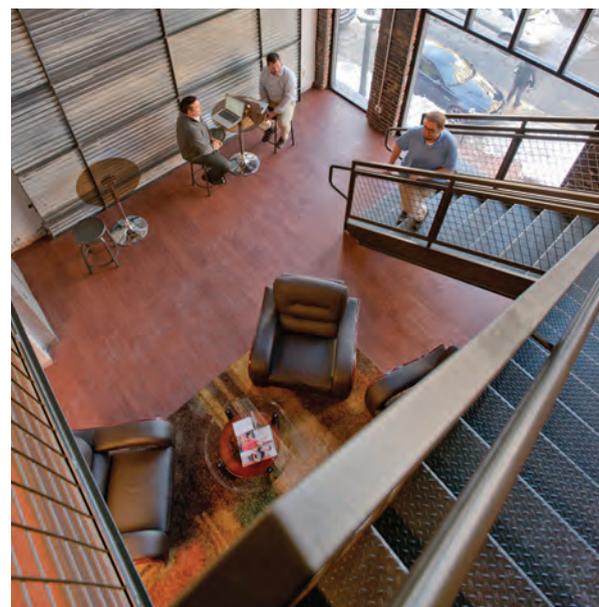
"I wanted to stay in the business. Once you get into the restaurant business, it becomes a passion," Serra says. "I saw the need for technology in what we call 'the back of the house.' The buying decisions have traditionally been emotional decisions. I wanted to automate that and make the providers accountable."



The initial model was tested and proven at a Massachusetts hospital. Meanwhile, IBM representatives referred Serra to Trifecta Technologies to help develop the code for a web application. Trifecta founder Doug Pelletier is now an investor and his former COO, Andy Derr, joined Sarbari to help Serra grow the company.

"It's been about two years since we launched the product. During that time I came to Allentown frequently and Andy would bring me down here and show me the progress," said Serra, who was convinced to move his family and his business to the Lehigh Valley. "We raised the capital, hired the key people and we outgrew Velocity before it even opened."

Today, thanks to Serra's Massachusetts roots, Sarbari – which means "save and conserve" in his native Sicilian – has a strong base in the Boston market, and, thanks to Derr's Bucks County roots, is building its market in the greater Philadelphia region.





## Velocity

532 Hamilton St. | 610-625-5519 | velocityia.com

The revitalization of Allentown's urban core has brought some of the Lehigh Valley's biggest corporations to Center City – companies with such easily recognizable names as National Penn Bank, Air Products and Lehigh Valley Health Network. Together with the PPL Center arena and the plethora of great eating and drinking establishments along Hamilton Street, they are putting thousands of new faces on the street each day.

But not all of the new businesses are so big, or recognizable. Yet.

That's where Velocity comes in. Launched by City Center Lehigh Valley as an incubator for small and growing innovative businesses, this unique coworking space offers a Greenwich Village feel created by City Center designer Jane Heft. With exposed brick walls, open ceiling joists and cable carriers accented by gallery-style walls to give the two floors a connected, urban appeal, Velocity provides the amenities needed by a growing business combined with the common areas that promote the collaboration a new business needs to grow.

"Coworking spaces are enhancing the business culture and cool factor of every major innovative city in the country," City Center President J.B. Reilly says. "City Center aims to empower entrepreneurs who are passionate about cultivating their ideas in Allentown and network them with the rich pool of colleges and universities in the Lehigh Valley. Velocity's members are passionate about helping to build a vibrant downtown community and they will make a big impact here in the years to come."

One of those companies making an impact is Sarbari (see *related story on previous page*), he said. The company started at Velocity but quickly outgrew the space and now has its own offices in the 800 block of Hamilton Street above Tony Luke's restaurant. Current Velocity members include The Social Station, ConsumerTrack, Rising Tide Therapeutics, Morganelli-Caetano IT, Four Score LLC, Woodward Rusnock Consulting, Eleven Eleven Social, The Life Collective and Zeke Zelker Studios.

While several of the tenants – The Social Station, Morganelli-Caetano IT, Eleven Eleven – are focused

on web development and social media, others range a bit further. Woodward Rusnock, for example, is an economic development firm that helps clients guide construction and other projects through to completion; Rising Tide Therapeutics is an emerging biotechnology company developing therapies to treat rare diseases; and Zeke Zelker Studios is a video production company.

Alex Kalogeropoulos, founder and CEO of The Social Station, says the space is perfect for his growing company, which moved to Velocity in August 2014. "It's everything we need," he says. "We are still growing and look to get to the point where we can move into one of the other spaces downtown. But the look and feel here is exactly what the tech companies like. It's a cool vibe."

These and other tenants are not just bringing jobs from other communities, they are creating jobs in the city – and, just as important – they are providing the opportunity for young adults to stay in the Lehigh Valley while pursuing tech-based careers. Kalogeropoulos and his small but growing team, who all grew up in and around Allentown, exemplify that trend.

"I grew up on the south side of the Eighth Street bridge," developer Ron Heft says. "I never thought I'd be back. But there is starting to be a real tech scene here and I didn't have to go to New York City or somewhere else to do what I want to do. It's amazing how many people are getting into the tech scene, and there is such an entrepreneurial spirit here now."

Kalogeropoulos agrees.

"As the owner of a company that is starting and growing, it is great to be able to grow along with Allentown," he says. "And it's not just Allentown – it's the Lehigh Valley as a whole. But the highlight is what is happening right here."

Lauren Smith of Eleven Eleven also grew up in Allentown.

"I was extremely excited to hear about the revitalization of downtown Allentown," she says. "I've lived downtown in the Historic District for the past two and a half years, but now working in the same area is even better. The best part is I am able to walk to work, walk to lunch and even walk for drinks on the weekend. It's thrilling to see Allentown come alive again!"



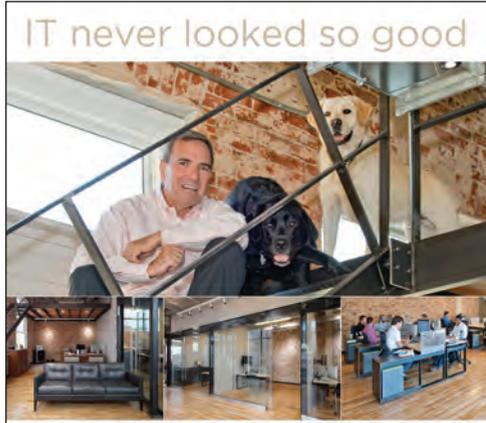


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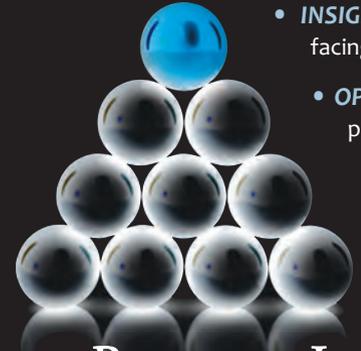


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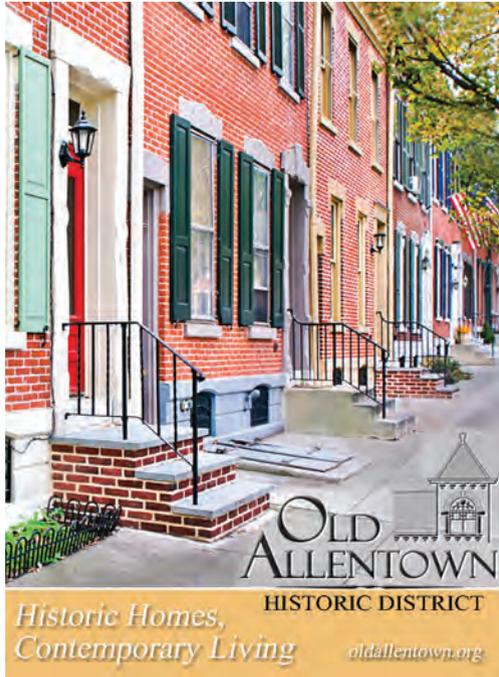
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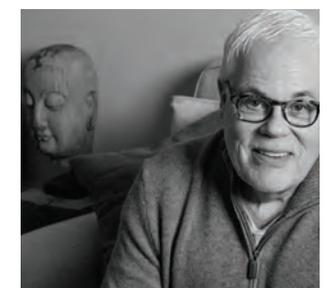
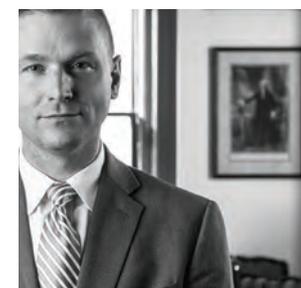
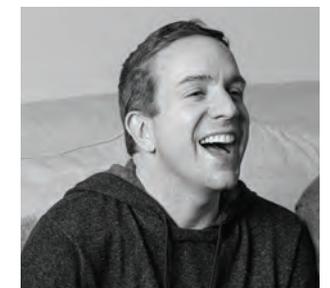


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# City Folk

The following profiles represent nine very different people, with very different jobs and interests. However, these individuals also have much in common: a love of living in an expanding urban community, the joy of working in a city with renewed economic opportunities, and the excitement of having a ring-side seat to the realization of their shared vision of downtown Allentown. By Bathsbeba Monk, photography by Ryan Hulvat.



## All Routes Lead to Allentown

A quick look at the LANtaBus system map ([www.lantabus.com](http://www.lantabus.com)) will show how much bus service runs into Allentown. Whether for work, shopping, entertainment or recreation LANtaBus can get you there quickly, economically and safely.



[www.lantabus.com](http://www.lantabus.com) 610-776-RIDE(7433)





## Bike Cops

When Police Officers Dan Miller and James Stanko – Allentown bike cops who are the face of officialdom in the evolving downtown – enter a shop like Johnny’s Bagels they know the names of patrons and employees, and people are eager to come up and greet them. These engaging patrolmen are clearly an integral part of the community they serve.

Another thing you might notice about these bike cops is “our incredible physiques, right?” quips Stanko, who was a successful competitive body builder in the mid-1990s.

“You do have to be in shape for this job,” Miller adds with a laugh. This Allentown native and graduate of Allen High is a dedicated runner, a discipline he picked in Camp Lejeune as a Marine.

These partners, as well as officers Scott Magill and Leonard Fritzinger – with whom they alternate shifts in the Hamilton Business District – attended an International Police Mountain Bike Association course before riding patrol. This course teaches skills for safe and effective use of the bike, off street handling of the bike, and using the bike as a patrol vehicle. First, of course, they must be graduates of the Allentown Police Academy. Miller joined the police department in 2006 and has been a bike cop since 2010; Stanko became a police officer in 2009 and joined the bike patrol in 2012.

The officers ride Trek bikes and several area businesses and organizations are stepping up to donate these specialized bicycles: PPL, IBEW and Main Street Lehigh Valley to name a few.

Beyond the sheer physicality of maneuvering a bike in the city, the ability to interact effectively with people is an equally important qualification. “We’re here for everyone, not just the business owners,” says Miller. “When someone has a problem and doesn’t know where to go, we’re the people they ask. We’re accessible.” Problems can range from knowing where polling places are located to where to go to get out of the cold, find a hot meal or receive medical attention – and the officers are proactive about seeking out

vulnerable populations who may be reluctant to ask for assistance. The officers have information prepared by their supervisor, Captain Glen Dorney, which is used to help citizens find the assistance they need. And they make it a point to be constantly visible.

Ask Stanko what he enjoys most about his job and he’s quick to reply, “The people. I love people.” He also notes that his former job as conductor for the New Jersey Transit Commuter rail system for twenty years was similar in many ways to being a bike cop – interacting with people and maintaining order. He also notes that it’s uplifting to witness “the heart of the city pumping. It’s great to see people shopping and hanging out.”

Miller – who also notes that he’s a “people guy” – reports that he’s seen an upbeat difference in the pulse of city life in the recent past. “The difference is drastic. One of the best things about what’s happening downtown is people I know from the neighborhood coming up to us and announcing that they have jobs. They can walk to work. And people who are working and making money create a positive change. It’s great to be a part of it.”

Of course, the bike officers are also empowered to take action to solve problems. “Our intervention saves time for the cruiser cops,” Stanko said. “Officers on bikes give the community a sense of security and accessibility they may not get in a patrol car.”

“We’ve built a rapport with the people downtown that makes them comfortable with us,” Miller adds.

Stanko notes that the bike cops’ function fits right in with the Police Chief Joel Fitzgerald’s vision: “To make Allentown the safest city by aligning our community’s resources with our strategic direction.”

And that’s how law and order rolls downtown.



brick and plenty of light from a wall of glass. "It's a once in a lifetime project," Davis says. In fact, the innovative design won an American Institute of Architects (AIA) award for Easton's R+D Architecture, the firm Davis hired.

"I started out as a glazier," Davis says. "Right out of the Marine Corps. My apprenticeship in the glaziers' union was a sixty-plus story all glass building [One Liberty Place in Philadelphia]." While working as a union glazier, Derrick studied construction management at night, quickly becoming a union carpenter during the recession of 1990. He moved up to foreman, supervisor, then spent ten years as a construction superintendent, project manager and project director at Allied Building Corporation, first in the Scranton area and eventually the Lehigh Valley.

Then he joined forces with his partner, Craig Rankin, who owns one of the biggest roofing companies in Pennsylvania. Their entry into Allentown was winning the bid to build out the Fegley's Allentown Brew Works fourth floor office space, which received an AIA Award for Excellence two years ago. From there Davis and Rankin won the bid to renovate the Schoen's building, and also to build three PPL Arena restaurants – Crust, Tim Hortons and Chickie's & Pete's – for the Brooks Group.

Davis and Shane Patrick are happily growing with Allentown. He's lived in downtown since 2009 – when Shane Patrick started operations here – and moved from the Farr Lofts to a home he bought in the Historic District. And he is going to be moving to another historic home nearby with fiancée Omaira Vega, a registered nurse who pitches in part-time at Shane Patrick, and her daughter Savannah, who attends St. John Vianney School. They love the urban lifestyle of downtown Allentown and the community they find there. "We've already had several grazing dinner parties," he said. "And roof parties [at The Trifecta Building]. Great in the summer."

And as an aesthete Davis loves the architectural detail that is still intact in lots of downtown properties, including his new house. "The chestnut staircase alone, you just can't find them like this anymore. It's what sold me on this particular house."

But the best part of both living and working in downtown Allentown? "I can walk to work," Davis says. That's awesome. Great. Cool.

"Who would have thought five years ago, we would have this view," says **Derrick Davis**, looking out on Hamilton Street from his corner office on the sixth floor of The Trifecta Building, which his construction company, Shane Patrick Associates, Inc., is building out. "This is Allentown sick."

Sick is urban slang for awesome, great, cool. The redeveloped Schoen's Furniture Store at 612 Hamilton Street is all of those. The first floor of the building owned by Charles Street Capital and Trifecta Technologies is suitable for a high-end restaurant and the rooftop is being tricked out with a luxurious terrace. Floors in between are filled with lofty, high-tech office spaces adorned with sleek metal furnishings, reclaimed barn wood, exposed

"It's so exciting to be a part of what's happening in Allentown," says artist **Ann Elizabeth Schlegel**, whose Studio 606, a workspace and gallery, is located steps from center city in the former Solomon Jewelers store.

And Schlegel is a huge part of what's happening in Allentown. City Center Lehigh Valley commissioned her to create ten paintings for the recently opened Renaissance Hotel and Dime restaurant. "I felt so exhilarated painting them that I wound up creating twelve!" Schlegel says. All of the paintings, abstractions of the Mercury dime – which pay tribute to the historic Dime Savings and Trust Company that once occupied the new hotel complex space – have been installed and are featured with original works by other local artists. "Being part of the ribbon-cutting was the greatest feeling," Schlegel says. "It was joyful."

Schlegel had come off a low period when she lost more than sixty-five major paintings to fire and burglary. "It was a time of great emotional struggle. A tremendous loss for a painter. I needed and welcomed the creative boost that the commission afforded me," she says.

Schlegel is the dynamic force behind the Allentown Art Squawk events that launched in 2012. These walking tours of downtown artist studios coincide with Allentown Art Museum exhibit openings, and festivities at her studio reflect the theme of the shows. For example, a French accordionist and cancan dancers entertained guests during the Toulouse-Lautrec exhibit debut. Schlegel also offers refreshments in a bistro-like setting at the rear of the studio.

This fine-arts painter, born and raised in Allentown, transferred to William Allen High School in her junior year specifically to be mentored by the late James Musselman, the distinguished artist and educator who headed the art department at that time. Schlegel continued her studies at notable schools in Philadelphia as well as Ecole Nationale Supérieure Des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France. Formerly a resident Banana Factory artist, Schlegel has had solo exhibits in Schwaebisch Gmuend, Germany, and was the first artist-in-residence in Antibes, France. She's also been recognized with the Allentown Arts Commission's Arts Ovation Award.



Since 1998 Schlegel has done what a lot of artists find impossible: she has supported herself through her work alone. Recent commissions include painting the official portrait of Bethlehem Mayor Bob Donchez and creating a poster for the inaugural Allentown Jazz Fest in 2015.

And she's invigorated to be working in the heart of her beloved hometown – sometimes quite literally. You might spot her setting up an easel outdoors under the studio's roof canopy for an urban *plein air* painting session. "I feel like Allentown had been resting all these years, and it's coming back in a big way. I'm so happy to see people discovering the city," Schlegel says.



**Eric Johnson** has one of those faces you would swear you've seen before. In his case, however, it's very likely you have. Johnson has been a professional model and actor for seven years now, appearing on stage and in such films as *Up in the Air*, starring George Clooney. And you may have recognized him as a featured model with Lehigh Valley Fashion Week and their *Inside Look* magazine.

Living in Allentown makes it convenient for Johnson to travel to New York City or Philadelphia for photo shoots and auditions – which he fits into his busy schedule as Senior Project Manager of Operations at Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN). But that's not why he chose Allentown as a place to live and

work. "I fell in love with the diverse community," he says. "It's that simple."

Johnson lives in The Farr Lofts on Hamilton Street. What he didn't know when he first moved in is that the building is on the site of a Revolutionary War hospital. "I was so excited when I learned that," he said. "I have an affinity for Colonial times, and George Washington is one of my heroes. His picture is hanging in my living room." And Johnson also happens to be related to the father of our country.

Johnson loves the historical richness of Allentown, but even more he loves the urban lifestyle and being in the center of the action. "My friends who live in New York and work in health care or who work with the military are looking at Allentown as a reasonable place to live," he says. "It's affordable and an increasingly exciting place to be." That's quite a positive assessment coming from someone who has lived in lots of exciting places, most recently, Afghanistan.

Five years ago, Johnson – then an Air Force hospital administrator working on assignment at the LVHN hospital on Seventeenth Street – resigned his commission from the United States Air Force. The very next day he took a position as part of the LVHN team that was committed to being a founding partner of and anchor tenant at One City Center. The \$39.6 million campus of LVHN-City Center, dedicated to sports medicine, fitness and rehabilitative care, opened in mid-2014. "I was part of the journey well before there was a hole in the ground," he says. "It's exciting and humbling. But even before we opened in July, it felt like the revitalization of Allentown was already in the rearview mirror. The success of the community's efforts is more than demonstrated!"

The downtown campus is also the official sports medicine facility of the Lehigh Valley Phantoms, and the athletes warm up in the state-of-the-art fitness center that serves a wide cross-section of the community. "That's a perk of working out here. It's a real 'wow factor,' Johnson laughs.

Although not an avid ice hockey fan prior to the arrival of the Phantoms, Johnson now relishes using his season ticket to games played around the corner from his home. "It's become a treasured part of my week," he reports.



"I credit my parents with how comfortable I am in thinking outside the box," **Jane Heft** says. "My father was an award-winning Pennsylvania State Trooper, but he understood that you have to let kids push the envelope to develop creatively." Today this design doyen is putting an indelible creative mark on Allentown as Vice President, Director Project Design and Brand, for City Center Lehigh Valley.

After graduating from the Art Institute of Pittsburgh at age 19, the Coopersburg native took a job in the advertising department of a 130-store Allentown-based retail fashion chain. When the art director left unexpectedly, Heft was promoted to Director of Advertising for the entire company. "I was 21 years old and given this tremendous responsibility," she says.

She continued to hone her skills after relocating to New England, where she eventually worked for the Donaldson Group, a leading design firm. In her career, she's picked up over 100 design awards, including the CLIO – the pinnacle award in world-wide advertising – in 1999 for her work with Orvis. "Receiving a CLIO is what you dream about as a designer," Heft says.

However, it was her work on the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts in Connecticut that caught

the eye of Allentown Symphony Hall and ArtsQuest management. She returned to the Lehigh Valley – began her own design firm, enze, and worked helping to develop SteelStacks and expanding the ArtsQuest brand. She later tackled projects rebranding Miller Symphony Hall and branding PPL Center and the Phantoms hockey team.

When the City Center project got traction four years ago, Heft was excited to be involved. "The city is being elevated, and it's rewarding to give back to my hometown," she says. "J.B. [Reilly, City Center Founder and President] values pushing the boundaries to create memorable experiences that are unique and unexpected." Her vision and bold concepts link architecture with interior design to forge striking experiential spaces. "I want people to go home from a place I helped create and talk about what it felt like to be there." Her dynamic design influence also extends to such outdoor spaces as pocket parks and the ArtsWalk.

Heft takes her inspiration from everyday life: for example, a red stop sign on an otherwise bleak winter landscape. She notices things as if seeing them for the first time. It is, she says, an organic approach, and one that clearly fires her imagination.



“Coming back to Allentown was like coming home, coming back to my roots,” says **Ed Leggett**.

Leggett returned to downtown Allentown in 2013 to work as a stylist at Cut Outs Salon and Spa, a long-standing presence at 950 West Walnut Street. Previously Leggett had owned a salon that he relocated from Allentown to Whitehall when it looked like that was the up and coming place to be. Things have changed since he made that move in the late 1990s.

Happily, a lot of his friends are still here. “There’s a stream of new people coming in, especially young people,” he says. “But many of my associates, business people and friends, who were here forty years ago when I was starting out are still here.” They are, he says, the backbone of the city.

Back in the late ‘60s, he says, Allentown was a funky urban oasis. “Lots of music. It’s where I first met Steve Brosky. Lots of jazz musicians. There was a vibrant art scene.” Of course, 1969 was also the summer of love and Allentown was feeling the beat. Leggett, who earned his BA in economics from Ursinus University, managed Cinruss Creations’ Upper Story, a retail hippie heaven on Hamilton.

Perhaps inspired by the British influence on those post-Woodstock times, Leggett trained with Great Britain’s great hairdresser, Trevor Sorbie. “It was there that I got my passion and my vision for my work,” he says. He eventually opened his own shop, Hair Today, in Allentown, which he operated successfully for thirty years.

Leggett thinks the hockey rink is great. “I didn’t know I liked hockey until I went to my first game a couple of months ago,” he says, laughing. “It’s very exciting.”

And while he is grateful for the big money that is creating the infrastructure, it’s the little clubs, the mom and pop businesses that will breathe the soul into the downtown. “Maybe not in the NIZ [Neighborhood Improvement Zone], but there are lots of neighborhoods that surround the NIZ that are perfect” for the kind of development he foresees: smaller venues for music, specialized shops. “Not all development has to go through government channels. There are many ways to change your life for the better that don’t make the news. I think the next ten to fifteen years in Allentown are going to be a fun trip. And if there’s anything I can do to enhance it, I’m for it.”

“What we wanted,” **Dr. Michael Carbone** says, “was a non-traditional urban space.”

After an extensive search, Carbone and his partner, **Joel Powell**, discovered exactly what they were looking for in a renovated moving and storage-facility-turned-upscale-apartments on Eighth Street in downtown Allentown.

The property, located on the edge of the Old Allentown Historic District, offers a distinctive style contrast to the Victorian homes in the area. The aura of the former storage company lingers in the exposed pipes and vents, giving the apartment an industrial urban feel. And a restored freight elevator is a useful amenity for moving large pieces of furniture.

Their desiring a change in living arrangements coincided with agreeable spaces coming available. Carbone, who has been chair of the Education Department at Muhlenberg College for thirty-one years, had lived in Allentown’s West End as well as downtown before moving to New Jersey when he couldn’t find the alternative living space he was looking for in the immediate vicinity. Eventually, he tired of the commute.

Powell, a registered nurse at Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) who recently took a position at their new One City Center campus, was living in Salisbury and decided he wanted to walk to work. Neither Powell nor Carbone like driving.

They had been together for fourteen years when they decided three years ago to consolidate their lives and “buy new things!” Carbone says. The partners looked at a former law office converted to apartments, but instead opted for their current space because it was almost twice as big. Having garage space for their seldom-used cars was another plus.

Being steps away from his job is an enormous perk for Powell. “It gives you the gift of time,” he comments. “Sometimes I don’t drive my car all week.” Some of that bonus time not spent behind the wheel allows him to go directly from work to the gym located at the LVHN campus.

Carbone and Powell share their city home with Iris, a long-haired miniature dachshund who’s an enthusiastic watchdog. One of their joys is walking Iris in the neighborhood.

They moved in right when the downtown began metamorphosing into a more modern self. “For two and a half years we watched the arena go up,”



Carbone says. “And then the restaurants. It’s very exciting. We go out to eat every weekend and we’re able to walk to them. It’s just what we wanted.”

Carbone and Powell have settled into downtown and the urban life. They’ve met a congenial circle of friends, many of whom live in the adjacent Historic District, and it seems as if the more people move there from the suburbs the more it becomes the place to be.

Their wish list? “A grocery store is critical. We heard rumors of a pharmacy moving in. And, of course, we would like more music venues. A place to go after dinner,” Carbone says. “It’s all coming together.”

And these urbanites will be in the right place to enjoy every new option that the burgeoning downtown has to offer.

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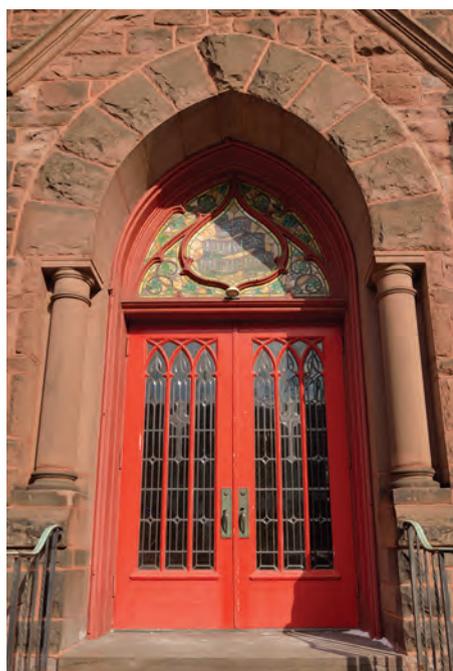
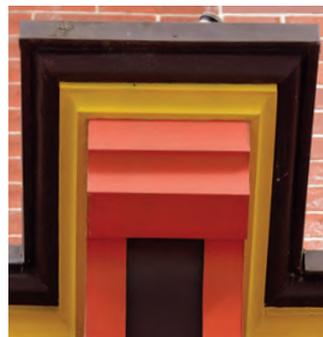
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# Eclectic Seventh

Before the Neighborhood Improvement Zone, before hockey, before the Eagles sang and spirits soared, Seventh Street had already undergone a transformation with a colorful mix of shops, housing and ethnic restaurants that draw discerning diners from across the region. By Kathleen Kapila, photography by John Harry.

The street, which has been one-way southbound since 1959, offers a diverse mix of small retail, professional offices and restaurants offset by single- and multi-family homes that are starting to attract the younger professionals coming to the city for work in the banking, finance and tech industries. Colorful business facades are intended to create a distinct identity for the broad boulevard, and streetscape improvements facilitated by the Seventh Street Development Committee have only enhanced that effort.

Once the domain of doctors, lawyers and other professionals who owned the brownstones and Victorians that line the streets from Allen to Linden, Seventh Street – like much of Center City – fell on hard times during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

The revitalization began in 2006 when Seventh Street was designated part of Pennsylvania’s “Main Street” economic redevelopment program under the direction of Manager Peter Lewnes. With the support of essential institutions such as National Penn Bank and PPL, an ever-evolving crew of business owners, contractors, designers, artists and local volunteers have literally transformed the street.

“The key to Seventh Street is it is more than one thing. It is more than just the major traffic artery into Allentown, it is a regional artery,” says Becky Bradley, Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, who says the street’s role as a gateway has an impact beyond the city limits. “As the downtown continues to improve and the neighborhoods improve,

there will be more and more people who want to come down here. We are super, super interested in what is going on with the planning there right now.”

Maybe the most important ingredient in the recipe for a new Seventh Street is the myriad of locally owned ethnic restaurants that dot just about every block.

Want Chinese? Check out Happy Gardens on the corner of Liberty, where the Lin family quickly prepares lunch and supper from an extensive menu.

Crave Caribbean? Francisco Durand and daughters cook Dominican fare at Casa Latina up the street and Winston’s is the place to find a plate of spicy jerk chicken served by smiling owner Winston Barnes.

Monif Hanna’s Sindbad restaurant is the place to go for fresh sliced filets in a beef shawarma if Mediterranean suits your palate, and if your taste buds would rather head south of the border, try Taqueria Los Amigos where Angel Hernandez and his wife Angelika are always busy. Bill Bosques’s El Patron, the newest entry into the market, also offers a full menu of authentic Mexican dishes.

Been there, done that? Then check out the Ethiopian food cooked up by Bele Mulata in her kitchen at Mariam’s Restaurant.

Lewnes says the eateries and eclectic housing stock put Seventh Street in a great position to lure “Gen X” and “Millennial” demographic groups. “We do need some coffee shops with WiFi, and a bakery would be great,” he says. “The mix of business and residential buildings is attractive to incoming populations.”

# The 'Berg View

Allentown's downtown is poppin' – and Muhlenberg students have noticed! Suddenly the city is a destination for food, entertainment and fun. Here are some student perspectives on the many changes happening downtown.

Photography by Paul Pearson.

## Billy's Downtown Diner

840 Hamilton St. | 610-432-5484 | [billysdiner.com](http://billysdiner.com)

By Carly Miller, class of '17.



What do you think of when you hear the word "diner"? Simple, greasy, open 24 hours, soggy pickles? If any of those come to your mind like they did to mine, I beg you to throw them away instantly when you enter Billy's Downtown Diner. Before my friends first brought me

to Billy's one Sunday morning, I didn't understand the hype. I had heard them talk about this place for months, but I didn't understand what could be so special about a diner; diners are everywhere!

As soon as I walked up to Billy's, however, it started to make sense. The large windows – walls, essentially – prove for a sleek, modern appearance, giving diners a nice view of historic Allentown once seated. The décor, too, is extremely modern and upscale, yet comfortable. Billy's has a romantic, high-class feel that is simultaneously welcoming and extremely home-like. I was instantly assured that Billy's may be downtown and it may be a diner, but it is not your typical 'downtown diner'.

Billy's is open seven days a week from 7 a.m. until 3 p.m., serving their customers with only the best for breakfast and lunch. Each time I visit, I try to order something new, and each time that proves to be a difficult choice, as everything looks – and always proves itself to be – delicious. From their famous Billy Kristo breakfast sandwich to their quirky "Peeps"uccino (yes – a cappuccino with



a Peep in it), along with the Mindfreak Burger designed by famed magician/illusionist Criss Angel and Billy himself (they're cousins!), this dining destination never fails to please. Billy's slogan is "more than a diner", which, in my opinion, is an extreme understatement. Billy's is an upscale *experience* with delicious, homey food. The variety at Billy's is unbeatable, and I honestly feel like my words cannot do it the justice it deserves. Pop on in any day, and if you dare to underestimate this "diner," you'll be in for quite the surprise!



## Taste of Soul

931 Hamilton St. | 610-433-8937

[thecaringplace.org](http://thecaringplace.org)

By Alyssa Hertel, class of '18.



There are many different interpretations of what it means to be "the heart of the city." For some it could be the direct center, or usually the busiest part of the city; for others, it's where all the culture and diversity of a location are brought to life.

New life has come to the heart of Allentown with the rejuvenation of downtown, and one of those places is Taste of Soul at The Caring Place.

I came across Taste of Soul, located in center city and a five-minute walk from the shiny new PPL Center, one Wednesday night. The inside looks pretty simple, with white walls and white floors and a small bell by the door with a sign that reads "ring if you liked our food." There are a few scattered tables, slightly worn couches that are just so inviting to sit on, and a well-worn old piano that, if you're lucky, you'll hear someone playing.

What it lacks in eye-catching ambiance, it makes up for in taste. A perfect blend of home-style and Southern foods, it tastes like a famous barbeque restaurant dragged up from the South. The finger-licking fried chicken will leave you wanting more, and the homemade potato chips and macaroni and

cheese are better than any store bought brand. It's also inexpensive, which is helpful for college students.

What really made me fall in love with Taste of Soul was the people. Located on the bottom floor of The Caring Place Youth Development Center, the restaurant is completely operated by volunteers and children from after-school programs. They're not there because they have to be but because they want to be. They're genuine, kind-hearted, and just generally good people who are just trying to get back on their feet. There's something about the charm and integrity that go hand-in-hand with Taste of Soul that I couldn't find anywhere else. There are so many stories to be told by each individual person, and discovering those new stories is what keeps me going back; and it's places like this that make the heart of Allentown beat even stronger.



## Johnny's Bagels and Deli

640 Hamilton Street | 610-439-1122  
johnnysbagelsanddeli.com  
By Seth Fried, class of '17.



If there's one remarkable thing I've taken away from my adolescence on Long Island, NY – amidst the acclaimed standardized tests, national-level soccer team, and heartstring-jerking views off Montauk's squelchy edge – it's my impeccable knowledge of

all things bagel. Bagels and flatbreads dressed my daily commute with apt learning fuel, and I wondered how I might possibly live on without a daily dose of circular serenity. Luckily, as a Muhlenberg student, the campus is located a stone's throw (well, if the stone is thrown by the Muhlenberg baseball pitching staff) from Johnny's Bagels & Deli.

Two eggs, three eggs, Ham I Am; and bagels with bacon scall...i-a-n? Amid the Dr. Seuss jokes, the perpetually happy faces at Johnny's Bagels serve up healthy options and healthy laughter for the active college student. College life is vigorous to say the least, and even with the incredible dining options on campus, the Muhlenberg signature bagel bombs simply can't compare to a real bagel sandwich Jimmy Buffett would applaud: the Cheese Johnny's in Paradise.

The moment you step under the green awning



you catch the unquestionable waft of fresh bagels. I always involuntarily hesitate a moment before I reach for the door, in a stop-and-smell-the-roses kind sort of way, each time justifying my decision to venture a few "MuhlenMiles" off campus for a more tranquil, nostalgic experience than the excitement of the campus dining commons. Anything you could want to purchase encompasses the fifteen-foot walk from the door to the counter: Recently packaged bagels, muffins, fresh fruit, cookies, chips, tea and coffee, cider and smoothies – efficiency. Johnny's understands the college student with two feet and two thousand obligations, of which I'm hugely appreciative.

The world doesn't need to be sold on accessible information – so I won't waste time in trying to sell you on the obvious. We Long Islanders and New Yorkers pride ourselves predominantly on our pizza and bagels, and Johnny's Pizza Bagel isn't half bad – it's half bread!

## Winston's West Indian & American Restaurant

619 North Seventh St. | 484-221-9682  
By Michelle Poole, class of '17.



If you're craving some fresh and authentic Jamaican food, you should definitely plan to make a pit stop at Winston's. The cozy restaurant is slightly off the beaten path but worthwhile if you're interested in great service and food that

doesn't disappoint. The bright and colorful exterior mirrors the atmosphere inside as well.

Reggae music plays inside while you wait for a seat. There is limited seating inside, probably three or four tables, but during the warmer seasons there is outdoor seating as well. Owner Winston Barnes and his staff are extremely welcoming and friendly from the second you walk in until you leave. Rarely seen at larger restaurants, I often see Barnes stopping to chat with his customers and getting to know them. He's been operating the restaurant since 2009.

The menu is modest in size, but what they do offer is flavorful and delicious. Their most popular dish is the braised oxtail, made with fresh spices and known for its rich flavor. Jerk chicken is my personal favorite, especially when looking for quality soul food. Other Jamaican specialties include curried goat, brown stewed chicken, curried shrimp, zesty escovitch made with red snapper or kingfish, and callaloo – leafy Caribbean greens – stewed with sausage. The platters are piled high with rice, veggies, and sautéed plantains, and the tender meats fall right off of the bone. On the American side of the menu, gooey mac 'n' cheese ranks as the perennial bestseller. Is your mouth watering yet?

The atmosphere is friendly and diverse. This is definitely a place that is overlooked but worth the trip. Winston's isn't a big sit-down restaurant, but perfect for stopping in and grabbing a quick bite to eat or ordering take-out. The platters are generous, and won't put a hole in my limited college budget. Whether you find yourself craving some Jamaican food or are just wandering around Allentown, look for the bold building bumping reggae music for a full stomach and wonderful experience.



# 2015 Downtown Events

Even a hard-working city needs to kick back and relax sometimes, whether that means grooving to live music, discovering fabulous foods or celebrating the season in the heart of the city.

By Lenora Dannelke, photography by Rodale Institute, Peter Gourniak and Hub Willson.

## Summer in the City

Bring a lunch, grab a seat and enjoy a free weekly concert – from folk and jazz to blues and rock – presented 11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m. at different downtown locales every Thursday from May 28 through September 24.

## Blues, Brews and Barbecue

Celebrate summertime at downtown's biggest annual bash from noon–10 p.m. Saturday, June 13. This eighth annual event rounds up top national and regional blues musicians and barbecue experts for a day-to-evening festival that features family activities and free admission.

## First Monday

Mix, mingle and lift a glass while making connections in a sociable networking environment at Chamber-hosted events that take place 5–7 p.m. at a different venue the first Monday of every month.

## Downtown Allentown Restaurant Week

With so many exciting new dining destinations complementing an array of long-time favorites, Restaurant Week is expanding to two annual events. In March and November, *prix fixe* menus will entice diners to sample everything from fine dining meals to casual pub fare and classic American to ethnic cuisine.

## Rodale Institute Organic Market on Seventh Street

A partnership with Seventh Street Development Committee brings certified organic produce and an expanding line of other goods to an outdoor market next to St. Luke's Church at 417 N. Seventh St., 10 a.m.–2 p.m. each Saturday from June through September. Visit [rodaleinstitute.org](http://rodaleinstitute.org) for more info.

## Halloween Parade

America's oldest Halloween Parade, launched in 1905, brings marching bands, colorful costumes and family-friendly activities to Hamilton Street on October 18.

## A Lehigh Valley Christmas in Concert

Outstanding regional performers will fill Miller Symphony Hall with festive holiday tunes – in genres ranging from classical and Celtic to pop and gospel – during the nineteenth annual edition of this cherished musical event, presented 7–10 p.m. Sunday, November 29.

## New Year's Eve Celebration

The downtown party scene on December 31 features live music and a "bell drop" countdown. The evening is capped by a dazzling fireworks display at midnight.



Find details on these and other events at [downtownallentown.com](http://downtownallentown.com).

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*Sea Change* (noun): A major or profound change; a marked transformation.

## On the Horizon

The wave of revitalization that swept across Allentown over the past year has kicked off the biggest transformation in the city since a retailer named Max opened a dry goods store and four brothers from New York decided to build trucks here. By Joe McDermott.

Mayor Ed Pawlowski has even taken some good-natured ribbing at ribbon-cuttings when he recounts the list of businesses and buildings that have opened in Center City since July 2014, because the list goes on and on. And on.

"One billion dollars in new or planned investment in Allentown is bringing a new heart to the city," the mayor says. "Nearly 170 new apartments will be occupied in 2015 at Four City Center and surrounding developments are drawing people from the Lehigh Valley back into the city, bringing a vitality that hasn't been felt in decades."

The last laugh, though, belongs to the mayor because he knows that tsunamis of change is far from over, and 2015 promises another inundation of coming attractions.

Three City Center, a seven-story office building at 515 Hamilton Street, will open in May and bring 600 more workers downtown.

Four City Center and the Strata Flats luxury apartments will be anchored by a Shula's Steak House, the upscale restaurant that is relocating from Center Valley to Center City, which will open in July.

The first Starbucks in Center City, at Two City Center (645 Hamilton Street), is set for a spring opening, to be followed quickly by Sorelli, a national fashion jewelry company from Kutztown and Minuteman Press, a full-service printing and

marketing services business that will open in the same building.

In addition, City Center Investment Corporation has announced plans to renovate buildings in the 500, 700 and 800 blocks of Hamilton Street and re-open the former Federal Grill at 536 Hamilton by July 1.

If that's not enough, City Center President J. B. Reilly has also introduced plans for the 15-story City Center Five, a mixed-use office and apartment building at Seventh and Walnut streets, and Alvin H. Butz Inc. plans to start construction this spring on a new addition to its Butz Corporate Center at Ninth and Hamilton.

Jaindl Properties says the prestigious Vault 634 wedding and event center at the former Lehigh Valley Trust Building, 634 Hamilton Street, will open by late 2015, and a new restaurant is slated for a summer launch at The Trifecta Building – the renovated and modernized Schoen's building – at 612 Hamilton.

And that's just downtown.

By midyear construction will begin on the long-awaited Waterfront, a 26-acre project that promises to transform the Lehigh River's west shore into a destination for fun, food and living, says Jaindl Properties' Chief Operating Officer Zachary Jaindl.

So don't blink. You may miss something exciting.



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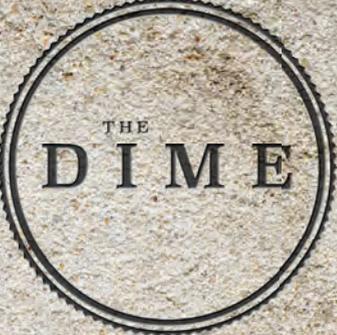
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