Renata’s Kitchen Selected as New Operator at Trolley Portal Gardens

Renata’s Kitchen is opening in February of 2020 at 3940 Baltimore Avenue, the restaurant space within Trolley Portal Gardens. Kate Steenstra and Yasser Aiq, the co-owners of Renata’s Kitchen, have been serving the neighborhood for seven years, and bring with them their beloved brunch, catering, and eventually dinner and bar service to this new, larger location.

This is the third location for their business, after the original Café Renata at 43rd and Locust closed following a fire, before re-opening as Renata’s Kitchen at 4533 Baltimore Avenue in 2015. The restaurant will be open for brunch seven days a week, and will eventually extend their hours to include dinner service, plus a full bar with an inventive drink (continued on page 3)

Two Dedicated Community Leaders Gift Seed Money for Continued Beautification of Trolley Portal Gardens

Trolley Portal Gardens, our public space located at the intersections of 40th and Baltimore, received a huge boost this fall thanks to a $100,000 donation from long-time neighbors and community leaders Barry Grossbach and Mike Hardy. The money will establish an endowment for the continued beautification of the space, including upkeep of the flower mounds and planters, and Barry and Mike are hopeful their example will inspire other members of the community to contribute as well.

Whether or not you know Barry and Mike, if you live in Spruce Hill or the surrounding neighborhoods, you’ve definitely experienced their impact. They have been making a difference in University City since moving to the neighborhood in 1970, serving as leaders in various organizations including UC Green, Baltimore in Bloom, the University City Historical Society, and here at University City District. “What we decided early on,” says Barry about his and Mike’s service in (continued on page 10)
On Wednesday, December 4th, hundreds of guests attended our annual State of University City event at World Cafe Live. This year, the event focused on how the ambitious institutional dreams for the neighborhood from a decade ago have taken dramatic leaps forward. UCD Board Chair Craig Carnaroli, Councilperson Jamie Gauthier, and UCD President Matt Bergheiser spoke about the status of the neighborhood and presented details on recent milestones and plans for the future.

The State of University City event served as the official release of The State of University City 2020, our annual report made up of nearly 90 pages of charts, statistics, photographs, and stories demonstrating the development and progress within University City over the past year.

The publication also provides an in-depth guide to the development projects - academic, commercial, public, residential, and more - that are transforming University City, along with other critical economic development indicators. The State of University City is an important resource for those seeking to do business in the neighborhood.

To obtain physical copies of the publication, please stop by our office at 3940 Chestnut Street or email us at ucd@universitycity.org. You can also download a PDF at universitycity.org/publications.
Renata’s Kitchen (continued from cover)

list. Renata’s menu consists of the same mix of Mediterranean and American dishes, with a focus on fresh interpretations of classic brunch and lunch dishes from around the world.

“Seven years ago when we opened our Locust Street location, we never could have dreamed of the support, friendship, and love that we have received,” says Kate Steenstra. “We cannot wait to share this beautiful space with the community with the same great food and service you’ve come to know us for.”

Trolley Portal Gardens, developed by University City District and opened in September of 2018, serves as a beautiful gateway for West Philadelphia trolley passengers and a welcoming public space for neighbors. The site features lush landscaping, movable seating, and community events, with an emphasis on safety and comfort for the estimated 5,000 riders who board or exit trolleys at the Portal each day.

“The development of Trolley Portal Gardens was a labor of love for UCD in partnership with the community,” says UCD President Matt Bergheiser. “We’re thrilled to welcome a wonderful neighborhood business, which will thrive at this flagship public space and transit hub.”

Renata’s new, two-story home, owned by Ken Weinstein, President of Philly Office Retail, offers two dining rooms, a liquor license, coolers for take-out beer, an outdoor patio, and a state-of-the-art kitchen. "We are excited to welcome Renata's Kitchen to the Trolley Portal location at 40th and Baltimore," says Weinstein. "They are revered in West Philly and will be a wonderful steward for the carefully designed space we built last year."

University City District and Renata’s first collaborated in 2015 during the Baltimore Avenue Dollar Stroll. Now Renata’s routinely sells out of $1 pieces of baklava, churros, chicken skewers, and other dollar offerings. UCD is very excited by the marriage of this brand-new restaurant space and a popular, locally-owned business, and future collaborations on community-focused events. The current Renata’s location at 4533 Baltimore Avenue will also remain open, serving lighter breakfast and lunch menus. Stop by and try it yourself!

Safety Ambassador Brianna Murray Commended for Brave Actions

UCD Safety Ambassadors receive extensive training and assist the public in many ways, whether it’s crime prevention, emergency first aid and CPR, walking escorts, vehicular services, or homeless outreach. This summer, UCD Public Safety Ambassador Brianna Murray went beyond the call of duty when she helped a neighborhood family evacuate before a fire reached their house. Her actions caught the attention of CBS 3, who profiled her on their local news broadcast. In December, Brianna received a special commendation honoring her fine service at the Penn Public Safety Commendation Ceremony. We’re proud of Brianna’s bravery, and the work our entire team does for the neighborhood.
Not everyone gets to combine their personal passion with a professional pursuit. For Palma Marinas, owner of the new self-serve pet washing business PHilthy Paws at 806 South 47th Street, the road to working with animals took nearly 40 years.

Palma grew up in the hospitality industry. Her father spent twenty years in the Navy working as a cook on submarines before he and his wife ran their first restaurant in South Jersey when Palma was 8. “By ten I was washing dishes and mopping floors,” Palma says. “By the time I was 13, I was waitressing.”

At home Palma had her pets. “I used to bring every stray home,” she says. “I’ve had fish, I’ve had turtles, my parents had birds.” While she was growing up caring for animals at home and helping out with her parents’ restaurants, she had front row seats for what it takes to run a business, and watched her father try lunch trucks and eventually open his own restaurant. Through her 20s she worked various front of house positions until deciding she needed a college degree. So, almost 30, Palma became a college student for the first time.

Palma earned an Associate’s Degree in Business, then a Bachelor’s in Hotel and Restaurant Management from Drexel University. “That’s how I ended up here,” she says, gesturing to the neighborhood surrounding her business on 47th, just south of Baltimore. “I went to Drexel and never left.”

After earning her degree, Palma bounced around several positions before ending up at Aramark’s corporate offices in Center City. Before she knew it, she had spent 17 years there. “You get comfortable,” she says. She enjoyed the health benefits and vacation time, but she felt like her career had veered off course.

The idea for her own business happened through serendipity. One day Palma got frustrated while giving her dogs a bath. She was trying to wrangle two dogs, including a 50-pound Chow Keeshond mix, and was having a tough time. Her back hurt, her tub was getting damaged. She complained to her husband who suggested she do something about it. “What am I going to do?” she responded. “Open a pet washing business?”

So that’s what she eventually did. Palma had several goals for her store. She wanted a place that felt like a spa for your animals; she wanted to differentiate from the pet chains who offer self-service washes as a way to get you to buy pet food and other items; and she wanted it to be in her neighborhood. “There are families here,” she says about the area around Baltimore Avenue. “It’s
a growing community. Most of the people who have businesses here live here. This is where I wanted to be.”

Palma spent six months searching for a space before finding the storefront at 806 South 47th Street. Located a few doors north of Vietnam Café, the long-vacant store had formerly housed a plumbing store. Although the store needed a lot of work, Palma thought the location was great, so she signed a lease and went to the zoning board for approval. And was rejected.

“I was heartbroken,” Palma says. All was not lost, however. The zoning board recommended she contact us here at University City District, so she could receive help navigating zoning, permitting, and more.

She reached out to us and was connected to Ryan Spak. As part of his role for UCD, Ryan offers assistance to local business owners as a member of our department of Planning and Economic Development. In Ryan, Palma found a fellow animal lover who also has a soft spot for strays—our office men’s room was once locked for an entire afternoon because Ryan rescued an injured kitten and housed her there until he could bring her home, nurse her back to health, and find her a permanent home.

Ryan helped Palma through several iterations of her business plan, introduced her to members of the Spruce Hill Community Association and the Baltimore Avenue Business Association, and helped her apply for and secure a storefront improvement grant. Palma received a special exception from the Zoning Board in November of 2018, secured a contractor, and after a few delays and setbacks, opened in the fall of 2019.

“Right now we’re self-wash,” she explains as she shows off tubs of various sizes, including a huge one with a hydraulic system that can be raised and lowered to accommodate larger animals. “We supply the aprons, the towels, the shampoos. The water is already tempered for your pet so it won’t overheat, and the dryers are specifically pet dryers. We then have add-on services for nails, and teeth, and ears.”

Eventually, Palma would like to hire a full-time groomer and add additional services. “There are people who, as much as they love their pets, don’t want to bathe them. They want to drop them off and for someone else to do it.” She’d also like to expand to offer mobile grooming, doggy daycare, and dog walking.

First things first, though, she wants to build a loyal customer base. Although most of the clientele so far has been dogs, Palma wants people to bring in all types of pets. “You want to bring your bird, or your lizard? You can bring whatever animal you want!”

PHilthy Paws is open Tuesday through Sunday by appointment or for walk-ins. Visit their website at www.philthypaws.com for more information.

In the years since its debut in 2011, we have taken a deliberate and iterative approach to the amenities at The Porch at 30th Street Station. In recent years two pieces of feedback we heard from users were about a need for more shade and outlets to charge devices. In the fall of 2019, we addressed these concerns with the addition of the Pavilion at The Porch, a new spot for lounging and recharging designed and fabricated by Bill Curran Design Studio.

Located on the western edge of The Porch, the Pavilion is a collection of seating, plantings, wood decking, electrical outlets, and a canopy that provides additional shade during the day, plus bright LED bulbs to brighten up the evenings. We are excited for the return of warm weather in the spring so Porch visitors can take full advantage of this new amenity.
JP Morgan Chase has awarded a $1.5 million grant to UCD to support the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative, in collaboration with Temple University and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC). These partners represent communities experiencing significant economic growth – at West and North Philadelphia’s anchor institutions, and at the Navy Yard in South Philadelphia. In addition to deepening the Skills Initiative’s work in West Philadelphia, we will leverage its model to engage local employers, understand their hiring needs, and then work with partners to build talent pipelines in adjacent communities to advance workers into high quality jobs while addressing staffing challenges for organizations.

On Thursday, November 14th, the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative program was the recipient of a $125,000 contribution from Citizens Bank through their Citizens Charitable Foundation. Citizens Bank Mid-Atlantic President Daniel K. Fitzpatrick presented a ceremonial check to University City District staff, Skills Initiative participants, and Craig Carnaroli, UCD Board President and University of Pennsylvania Executive Vice President. The gift from Citizens will aid our efforts to extend our reach to employer partners throughout the city, targeting positions that have strong starting wages and robust career paths.

The Connelly Foundation has granted WPSI $450,000 over three years to support its expansion. Specifically, the funding will help WPSI pursue three separate and interconnected growth strategies: partnering with citywide employers that hire at scale; creating a neighborhood-based Skills Initiative network; and growing our employment-driven social enterprise. The expansion also includes work with Temple University’s Lenfest North Philadelphia Workforce Initiative (NPWI) and Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) to build a place-based network of employer-driven workforce programs in West, North, South, and Southwest Philadelphia.

The William Penn Foundation has committed $445,000 to support University City District’s commitment to economic opportunity and community placemaking. WPF’s support will enable a partnership between UCD’s Green City Works and the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation to improve conditions at five West Philadelphia parks while also establishing a new model for parks maintenance that creates and sustains growth-oriented jobs that pay living-wage for neighborhood residents. The grant will support Parks and Recreation’s Stewardship Team to deepen resident engagement and advance new research exploring the connection between resident involvement and maintenance.

In August of this year, the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey gifted us with $45,000 to support the operations of the Skills Initiative. United Way has been a longtime ally in our work to connect talented West Philadelphians to life-changing jobs at University City institutions and across the city of Philadelphia, and we are grateful for their continued support of our work.
Centre for Public Impact and Nowak Metro Finance Lab Release Comprehensive WPSI Case Study

In December, a new case study about the Skills Initiative prepared by Bruce Katz of the Nowak Metro Finance Lab and Megan Humes from the Centre for Public Impact (CPI) was released. The comprehensive report includes findings from a three-month look into our unique workforce development model’s positive impact on the neighborhood, and details key learnings that can be adopted by workforce development institutions in other cities. Crucial considerations from the case study include identifying strong anchor employers adjacent to underemployed populations, removing barriers to participation, and leveraging intermediary organizations. You can read the entire report at bit.ly/wpsicasestudy.

Thank You to WPSI's Sustaining Funders

Our West Philadelphia Skills Initiative would not be possible without the continued support of funders. Our thanks to the following organizations who have made substantial, enduring investments in our success:

- Bank of America
- Citizens Bank
- Lenfest Foundation
- Lincoln Financial Foundation
- LISC
- Pew Charitable Trusts
- United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey
- Wells Fargo Foundation

NEW BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

The retail, commercial, and hospitality landscape of University City is constantly evolving as more businesses seek to join our vibrant community. Below are some of the newly opened and forthcoming businesses in our area:

NOW OPEN

- **Al Bustan Seeds of Culture** • 3645 Lancaster Avenue
  Home for group rooted in Arab arts and language offering artistic & educational programming that enriches cross-cultural understanding and celebrates diversity

- **Andale, Andale** • 3632 Powelton Avenue
  Powelton Village authentic Mexican take-out

- **Bart’s Bagels** • 3945 Lancaster Avenue
  Traditional bagel bake house, smoked fish joint, & neighborhood coffee shop

- **Bonchon** • 3900 Chestnut Street
  Popular chain specializing in Korean fried chicken

- **Dizengoff** • 3401 Walnut Street
  Third location of Israeli hummus spot located within Franklin’s Table

- **Don Barriga Mexican Grill** • 4443 Spruce Street
  Family-owned Mexican restaurant

- **Everybody Movement and Wellness** • 4305 Locust Street
  Woman-owned community movement and wellness studio

- **Giant Heirloom Market** • 3401 Chestnut Street
  Second Philadelphia location for small market specializing in fresh produce and local flavors

- **Grindhouse (Coffee) x Crust (Bakery)** • 4314 Chester Avenue
  Two of Philly’s favorite vegan spots have joined forces for a new cafe

- **Hayashi Sushi Poke** • 814 S. 47th Street
  Sushi and poke for lunch and dinner

- **Making World Bookstore** • South 45th Street
  Community-funded bookstore and social center

- **OZ Collaborative** • 4818 Baltimore Avenue
  New architectural firm forged out of two existing firms, BWA Architecture + Planning and Olaya Studio

- **Panera Bread** • 200 S. 40th Street
  First University City location for the fast casual bakery café

- **PHilthy Paws** • 806 S. 47th Street
  Locally-owned self-serve pet wash

- **Renata’s Kitchen** • 3940 Baltimore Avenue
  New, larger location of popular Mediterranean-inspired brunch and lunch restaurant

- **Taco Taco** • 261 S. 44th Street
  Taco and burrito restaurant operated by former Honest Tom’s staff

- **West Philly Therapy Center** • 4732 Spruce Street
  Co-working space rented for therapists, psychologists & group therapy

- **Zed’s Gifts** • 4206 Baltimore Avenue
  New Location for the local gift shop

OPENING SOON

- **The Board and Brew** • 3200 Chestnut Street
  Board game café with full food and drink menu & expansive library of games

- **Chase Bank** • 4000 Chestnut Street
  First University City location of national bank

Want more information about businesses in the neighborhood? Visit our website to read our guide to spending 36 Hours in University City!
Construction on the Chestnut Street Bridge will continue through much of 2020 with closures to all through traffic. The bridge closure will result in increased traffic and traffic times for drivers during construction, but there are many other options connecting University City and Center City. Consider taking public transit, biking, or walking if you are able. There are also many Indego bikeshare stations in University City and Center City, including multiple stations within a short walk of the Chestnut Street Bridge. Additionally, the Market-Frankford Line, trolley routes 10, 11, 13, 34, and 36, and bus routes 21, 30, 42, 43, and 49 will all get you to Center City from University City.

From higher education to high rises, hospitals, and hotels, Route 49 connects University City to Strawberry Mansion, Brewerytown, Fairmount, Spring Garden, Logan Square, and Grays Ferry. It also serves Amtrak 30th Street Station and the Ben Franklin Parkway. Plus, riding public transit improves air quality & reduces traffic congestion!

**Key destinations along Route 49 include:**
- Amtrak 30th Street Station, connecting to Amtrak & SEPTA Regional Rail
- Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania (HUP)
- The University of Pennsylvania
- The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)
- Drexel University
- Ben Franklin Parkway museums and attractions

ISEPTAPHILLY.COM/ROUTE49
**UCD Staff Announcements**

**Diamond Poyer • Manager, Training and Evaluation, West Philadelphia Skills Initiative**

Diamond Poyer is the first Manager of Training & Evaluation for the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative following three and a half years of contributions to workforce development efforts in Philadelphia. Diamond was an Employment Specialist at a nonprofit challenging inter-generational poverty, and a Job Developer for a nonprofit helping youth and young adults prepare for their transition out of the dependent care system. Diamond holds a Masters of Education in Adult & Organizational Development (M.Ed), a graduate certificate in Training & Development, and a certificate in Strengths-based Leadership from Temple University.

**Tiffany Smith • Coordinator, Participant Services, West Philadelphia Skills Initiative**

Tiffany Smith joined University City District as the Participant Services Coordinator for the West Philadelphia Skills Initiative in August of 2019. At WPSI, Tiffany manages the operations of the participant experience and makes sure the classroom content and post-graduation offerings for WPSI alum are top notch. Tiffany is a Philly native, Wharton alum, and current graduate student in the Master of Liberal Arts program at the University of Pennsylvania. She is combining the fields of organizational behavior, social psychology, and film to explore her research interests on the experiences and professional identity development of under-represented minorities in the workplace.

**UCD Board Announcements**

**Angela Dowd-Burton**

Angela Dowd-Burton has joined our Board of Trustees as the new representative for Garden Court Community Association. Angela is currently a Senior Advisor to Econsult. Previously, she served as president of the Women’s Business Development Center and Women’s Business Enterprise Council PA-DE-sNJ. Dowd-Burton serves on the Drexel University LeBow College of Business Advisory Board, the Cabrini College Board of Trustees, the Women’s Leadership Forum Advisory Board, and the National Black MBA Association Philadelphia Chapter Advisory Board. Angela is a lifetime member of the National Black MBA Association and served as Vice President of Operations on the national board, Editor of the national newsletter, and President of the Philadelphia Chapter. Angela holds an MBA in finance and a B.S. degree in accounting from Drexel University.

**Donald E. Moore**

Drexel Vice President of Real Estate and Facilities Donald Moore has joined our Board of Trustees as the new representative for Drexel University. At Drexel, Donald is responsible for providing strategic master planning, general management, and professional direction for all of Drexel University’s buildings and properties. He maintains oversight of real estate operations; environmental health and safety; planning, design, and construction; lease management; and transportation. Donald also serves as the President of Academic Properties, Inc., Drexel’s wholly-owned, non-profit real estate subsidiary. Donald has over 35 years of experience in facilities and operations management, master planning, real estate development, and executive leadership. He serves on the boards of several community and development organizations in the region aside from UCD, including Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia and the Urban Land Institute’s University Development & Innovation Council and Philadelphia Advisory Board. Donald earned a bachelor of science degree in Construction Management/Civil Engineering from Bradley University and an MBA from Stockton University.
the neighborhood, “Is because we were both interested in community work based upon our own experiences, there was no reason for us to be duplicating efforts by being involved in the same kinds of things. He was very interested in greening, and I was very interested in saving cities.”

In fact, this interest in urban development and perseverance is a major reason that UCD exists at all. Barry helped lead a trial project to offer neighborhood cleaning services in the 90s. Though short-lived, the program caught the attention of the University of Pennsylvania, who felt the results of the trial proved that a special services group could succeed in the neighborhood. A few years and many discussions later, University City District was formed with Barry as one of the original board members, a position he still holds today.

A few years into the start of the 2000s, when UCD’s cleaning and safety services were running smoothly, the UCD board began considering what other major projects they could undertake. “We started talking about doing something over at the Portal,” Barry says. “It was just a big space, and not attractive, and unutilized.” They flirted with the idea of a trolley museum at the site, or a restaurant. Plans were developed, and then shelved, and then resurrected by Barry and Andrew Wheeler, another devoted neighbor.

“The transformation of the Trolley Portal took years of coordination between UCD, planners, developers, the City, SEPTA, and neighbors, and was finally completed in the fall of 2018. “It turned out, from my perspective anyway, better than I had anticipated,” Barry says. “When people come out of a tunnel and they see attractive plantings, it says that people respect the area and the people who live there. I think that’s important. The Trolley Portal is a statement. It’s a gateway. It says something about how people regard University City.”

It’s for that reason that he and Mike decided to gift UCD the money to help with its upkeep. “People appreciate public spaces here,” Barry says. “This is a neighborhood where people do gardening, they have garden plots, they plant trees—so people would understand that. This [gift] is designed to create a fund that will sustain this public space. Our objective was always to put monies into areas that would benefit public spaces that people could appreciate and that would beautify the neighborhood.”

We cannot thank Barry and Mike enough for their support over the years. If you, too, would like to contribute to our efforts at the Portal or in the rest of the community, you can join the hundreds of your neighbors in supporting UCD by making a tax-deductible donation using the form on the next page, or online at universitycity.org/donate.
Dozens of free events, from the Baltimore Avenue Dollar Stroll to Movies in Clark Park. Transforming concrete places into vibrant public spaces. Connecting residents seeking opportunity with employers seeking talent. These are just a few of the great ways University City District works for you and this neighborhood we love, 365 days a year.

We ask you to join hundreds of your neighbors in supporting UCD by making a tax-deductible donation. UCD is a 501c3 organization - we’re funded through voluntary contributions from universities and health systems, local businesses, and individuals like you. Please respond with the form below or donate online at universitycity.org/donate.

Your gift is vital to helping us continue our work in the coming year. Thank you for your support!

## Donation Form

Circle one:  

- **$250**  
- **$100**  
- **$50**  
- Other: ______________________________

Dedicate my contribution to:  

- circle one  
- Trolley Portal Gardens  
- General UCD Services  
- Other: ______________________________

I have enclosed my check for ______ payable to University City District.

Please charge my credit card:  

- circle one  
- AmEx  
- MasterCard  
- Visa

Account Number __________________________

Expiration Date (MM/YY) __________________ Security Code __________________

We cannot process your donation without the security code!

I would like this gift to recur:  

- circle one  
- Monthly  
- Quarterly

Printed Name ____________________________

Company ________________________________

Address __________________________________

Phone ___________________________________

Email ____________________________________

Signature __________________________________

**Cut along the dashed line and mail to:** University City District, 3940 Chestnut St, Philadelphia, PA 19104

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