

TESTIMONY ON COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU'S STREETERIES RESOLUTION

Members of City Council,

It is a pleasure to testify before you today on the opportunity to revisit Streeteries after the program languished since pandemic regulations were lifted.

This program should, and can, work. Philadelphia's restaurants are world renowned and are a source of pride for our citizens. At the same time, retail is struggling, and commercial corridors need a boost, which a successful outdoor dining program can provide. What is required to revise and implement such a program is leadership.

Leadership to navigate the city's agencies, bringing them together to find solutions that are more than a mere agglomeration of various agencies' requirements, but coordinated, common-sense regulations that represent best practice. Leadership to coordinate meaningfully with PennDOT to provide peace-of-mind to restaurant owners that their Streeteries will not be under constant, looming threat from an outside authority. Leadership to make this program a priority.

Councilmember Landau has taken the first step and now it is critical that other members of city council, and the mayor's office, show their support and prioritize the Streeteries program.

Outside of city hall, the will is there. Not just from restaurant owners looking for additional seating, but from communities eager for greater foot traffic and active street culture to provide more safety and a high quality of living while supporting other local businesses. And also, from Philadelphians and visitors who simply enjoy eating outdoors. The design community is prepared to support these efforts, as well. Whether the goal is standardizing design options; evaluating and modifying regulations to achieve best practice outcomes; or designing the most beautiful, interesting and welcoming structures for dining that meet the various regulatory criteria, such as providing accessibility, moving stormwater, allowing access to utilities, etc., the will is there.

As with any design, development, and construction project clarity and certainty lead to better, more consistent, outcomes. The Design Advocacy Group (DAG) is excited to offer our support and assistance with the review of both the design and regulatory requirements of the Streeteries program. DAG's Philadelphia Streeteries Visioning Guide, published in August 2022, represents months of research, outreach, public meetings, and design studies with city officials, restaurant owners, design professionals, community representatives, commercial corridor managers, and others. Throughout the process of developing the guide, it was reinforced again and again how much momentum was behind the program.

Sadly, we as a city have squandered that momentum. But with the leadership of city council and the mayor's office, we look forward to joining in a rejuvenated process that studies best practice precedents from other cities, both domestically, and abroad, and combines them with all the elements that make Philadelphia special, and challenging, to yield an actionable outcome that benefits the entirety of our city.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. DAG looks forward to continuing our support of this important program.

Eli Storch, AIA



Chair
epstorch@gmail.com

The Design Advocacy Group (DAG) is a public forum and advocate for design quality and equity in the planning, architecture, preservation and physical development of Philadelphia. <https://designadvocacy.org/>