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Young Involved Philadelphia

November 2005 newsletter

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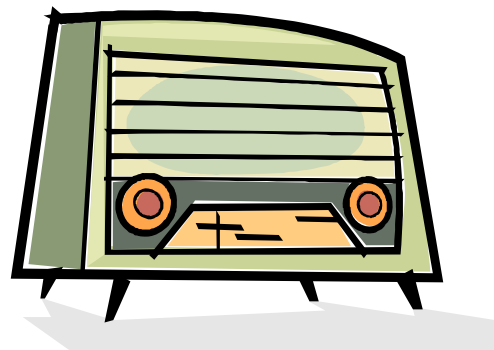
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Message from the Chair

Troy Madres, Chair, Young Involved Philadelphia

It wasn't so long ago that cities all over the country were suffering from white flight, the crack epidemic, and fiscal crisis. Philadelphia's city leaders faced a daunting task, but I think they sensed some relief when they compared their situation to that of New York City. At least it's not as bad as New York, they might have thought. Hey, its one thing to manage 1.5 million people - imagine 8 million of them!

Fast forward 15-20 years. It's a much different landscape. Cities all across the country, including Philadelphia and New York, have seen a resurgence in their downtowns. Crime is down, baby boomers are flocking back into the city, and the increased foot traffic is making Walnut Street and Fifth Avenue feel more cosmopolitan at all hours of the day.

However, two recent news stories have come to light that should put Philadelphia's leaders on task. One is that New York experienced only 398 murders through the end of September 2005, compared to 421 the year before. Second, New York sold its final group of vacant lots seized in the 1970's and 80's from landlords fleeing the city.

Compare that to Philadelphia. Currently we are on pace to reach nearly 380 murders this year, our worst year since 1997 (New York would need to have 2,090 murders to experience the same per capita murder rate). Despite lot clearing through the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, Philadelphia still owns thousands of vacant properties that very few developers want to develop.

What happened here? How is New York leading Philadelphia in these two areas and other when it is nearly five and a half times larger than us, deemed a generation ago as "the ungovernable city"? Philadelphia has made great strides forward: we do have a revitalized downtown; home ownership is some of the highest in the nation (especially among African Americans); we're the first large city to embark on a city-wide wi-fi project; and we have an enterprising school district that is financially balanced and producing rising test scores.

But, it begs the question: Why haven't we continued to reduce our murder rate even though that has been the national trend? And why aren't we turning tracts of vacant land into developable property? There are many answers to these questions: the abandonment of the successful COMSTAT accountability program, our incredibly high city wage tax rate, the monopoly of one-party rule for the past 50 years, to name but a few.

What does this mean for Young Involved Philadelphia? Well, for one, it should serve to anger some members. Why is Philadelphia falling behind when things looked so promising during the late Rendell and early Street administrations? Second, it should also focus the part of our mission that seeks to find and promulgate good policies that can improve our city. The good ideas are out there. It's our job to bring them to our elected officials' attention, and make it happen. The leaders in City Hall haven't been doing their job – its time to do ours.

[More news and events ...](#)



December Forum: The End of Radio As We Know It

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3025 Walnut Street

Featured panelists: Hannah Sassaman, Prometheus Radio Project, and Bruce Warren, WXPB

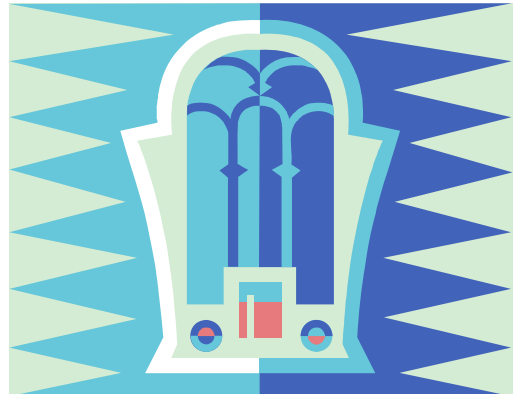
Radio has come a long way since Franklin D. Roosevelt's fireside chats. Consumers are driving monumental changes in the way we get our music, our news, and our laughs over the airwaves and the Internet.

Podcasts. Satellite radio. Low-Power FM. Commercial-free radio. All talk. No talk.

Yet the question remains: Will emerging technology strengthen radio or is it doomed to fade into silence?

Join Young Involved Philadelphia on Thursday, Dec. 8th at 7:00 p.m. for December's Civic Education Forum: "The End of Radio As We Know It." The forum will be held at Upstairs Live at the new World Café Live! on Walnut Street.

The stage will be set for a forum, but the tables are set for dinner and drinks, so feel free to have a snack from World Café's menu while you debate the future of radio. There will be a live local jazz performance immediately following the forum.



World Café Live! Is convenient to 30th Street Station, including regional rail and the Market-Frankford El. The 21 and 42 buses running through Center City on Walnut Street provide good access too. There is plentiful street parking and a lot below the Walnut Street bridge. See <http://www.worldcafelive.com/directioninfo.html> for details.

Updates from the Advocacy Committee

Ethics Reform

Thank you to YIP Advocacy Committee members who volunteered in the days leading up to Tuesday November 8th to get the word out about the ethics ballot question! By encouraging voters to vote "yes" to the ballot question, you told city officials to choose contractors who can get the job done in the most efficient and effective manner. You are also said that you want all qualified applicants to have the same opportunity to compete regardless of their political ties or campaign contributions.

Please see <http://seventy.org/reform/ethics/caic/index.html> to find out more about what this ballot question means for you and the city of Philadelphia in the future.

Smoking Ban Legislation

First, we had a lively discussion about the pros and cons of a smoking ban in Philadelphia workplaces at YIP's October Civic Education Forum. Next, we're going to add our voices to those advocating for the passing of smoking ban legislation. If you support the smoking ban, the time to act is now! Please contact YIP's Advocacy Committee Chair, Marlon Satchell, at marlon@pobox.com.

Become a member of YIP!

Dues are \$20 (\$10 for students). Fill out the membership form available at <http://clients.webproonline.com/yip/register.html> and send it, along with your check, to Young Involved Philadelphia c/o ISCV, Suite 702, 1218 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107.