

Let's make Philly world class again

This is a story about a city.

Once upon a time, this unnamed city was the largest and most influential urban center in the western hemisphere. A quarter millennium before the present day it was an international destination and a major port. Not long after ward, a revolution took place there. As a result, the city became a beacon of freedom and liberty, setting an example that still resonates in the modern world. It grew into an industrial powerhouse, and for a century and a half, through both war and peace, it continued to be one of America's most prosperous cities.

But something happened along the way. Caught between the money center of the country, on the one hand, and the nation's capitol, on the other, our unnamed city lost its sense of primacy. By the year 2005, when it sought to be considered — just to be considered, mind you — as the site for the 2016 Olympic Games, its bid was lost before it even got to the starting gate. Why? Because by this time the city was simply not perceived as sufficiently global — an astonishing come-down in international eyes in so short a time.

In truth, the international assets of this city — which is of course Philadelphia — have never disappeared. Some have changed. Others have faded from general awareness. Our economic and demographic situations are different. But the real question is whether this remarkable Philadelphia of ours, as changed as it may be, has the will to reclaim its international prominence.

In 2010, a group of international organizations and globally minded citizens decided to do something about it. Acting together as a joint venture called the Global Philadelphia Association, they have come together to call our collective attention to the extraordinary array of international assets that this region has, to promote interaction among them, and radically to enhance Philadelphia's international profile, both here at home and overseas. The association (www.globalphiladelphia.org)



Guest Notebook

John Smith

is committed to helping the Philadelphia region recapture its role as a global actor. We invite you to join more than 40 institutional and business organizations, major universities, and individuals as a member.

The stakes are high. As a region, we are in an international competition for economic investment, export markets, job creation, tourists, conventions, international students, and cultural prominence — to name only a few things that are in play. It is nothing less than a competition to control our future and maintain our economic viability. Fortunately, we are blessed with many centers of excellence in these fields. All too often, however, their labors are isolated from one another. As a whole, the region is underperforming. Even where progress has been made, it is not recognized. Rankings of international cities show us to be somewhere in the undistinguished middle. Despite our wealth of world-class resources, the brutal reality is that Greater Philadelphia has achieved neither the recognition nor the effectiveness that is required if we are to prevail in the global competition.

Will we reassert ourselves on the world stage, or will we fail to meet the global competition and lose power, influence, tax dollars, cultural prominence, and economic relevance as a result?

The choice is clear. Let's join together to bring Philadelphia back to the forefront of the world's cities.

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