

# City Avenue – The Past and the New Rebranding



By Sharla  
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Remember  
when City  
Avenue was  
thought of as  
the Golden  
Mile? After  
all, WCAU-  
TV was there

and live TV took place every afternoon. They produced a western TV show called “Action in the Afternoon” in the back lot on the Bala side of the street. Or when John Kennedy campaigned for president right here at the Bala Cynwyd Shopping Center? Then there was H & H, that landmark Horn & Hardart Restaurant on the corner of 54th and City Avenue? Remember?

Reminiscing is always fun. For me, it’s actually called work. Our firm represents City Ave Special Services District, which is undergoing changes and a rebranding.

According to **Joe Manko**, one of the founding members of the District and a senior partner of Manko, Gold, Katcher & Fox, LLP, the original goal for forming this unique multi-jurisdiction regional organization was to research how well the City of Philadelphia and the Township of Lower Merion police departments worked together. What he, **Michael Nutter**, **Lita Cohen** and **Jim Ettelson** – the team that launched City Avenue Special Services District – discovered is that the police departments were well-aligned but the property owners and businesses would be served well by forming a coalition. “We modeled our district association after Center City District, even though there was a large difference because we needed to align two municipalities and had Route 1 (City Avenue) running through it.” **Paul Levy** was very helpful in getting us started,” he explained.

That was in early 1999. At the time the founders had different roles than they do today. Lita I. Cohen was a Pennsylvania State Representative, Michael Nutter was a Philadelphia Councilman and Jim Ettelson and Joseph Manko were in the roles of past and present Lower Merion Commissioners in that order. It was the first multi-jurisdictional special services or business improvement district in the country. In a rare collaboration, the City of Philadelphia and the Township of Lower Merion combined efforts to enhance the quality of life for people who live, work and play in the region that once represented a divide between the city and suburbs.

The District extends along City Avenue from the Schuylkill Expressway to 63rd Street and Wynnewood Road. There are three main goals: to improve the image of the area, to influence positive growth and development in the area and to enhance public safety.

There has been an exciting revitalization of the area with the recent opening of Target, Commerce Bank, California Pizza Kitchen and Chipotle on the Philadelphia side of City Avenue between Presidential and Monument Avenues. In collaboration with the new Target store, pedestrian lighting has been added to the new complex, helping to improve the overall safety and image of the District. The District has partnered with St. Joseph’s University and the Brickstone Companies to create an enhanced streetscape along 54th Street and City Ave. And, speaking of development, St. Joe’s continues to expand along City Avenue and within the District, which is obvious with their acquisition of the Episcopal Academy property.

The District has long been the region’s center for radio and television broadcasting with television sta-

tions 6 ABC and NBC 10 situated on the corners of City and Monument Avenues and many radio stations broadcasting from studios within the District. Another sign of positive growth is the plans for 6ABC-TV to re-build and expand their studios at the corner of City and Monument Avenues.

## City Avenue. . .Not City Line

Only nine years in existence, the growth is very impressive and the potential is enormous. And, with it all, there remains one dilemma . . . the accurate name of that thoroughfare also known as Route 1. Throughout this article, I’ve referred to City Avenue. That IS the name. I hate to mention the “other” name which many people use for City Avenue. Okay, just once – City Line. Joe Manko says, “It was never City Line Avenue. It was always City Avenue but people remember City Line Center, City Line Movie Theater, City Line News and think that was the name of the street. Never,” he says emphatically.

**Terrence Foley**, CEO of CityAve Special Services District, comments. “It is so frustrating that people seem to be stuck on that word ‘line.’ From advertisers to business owners, they’ll sneak in “Line” thinking that’s the correct name of City Avenue. We even have a large well-lighted sign at the entrance of City Avenue as drivers exit the Schuylkill Expressway to remind people, but they forget. Our challenge is helping people remember so- we can keep our brand – City Ave – consistent.”

REMEMBER THAT THE  
FAMOUS THOROUGHFARE,  
ALSO KNOWN AS ROUTE 1, IS  
CITY AVENUE!

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