



CENTER CITY REPORTS

# OUTDOOR SEATING 2018

SEPTEMBER 2018

CENTER CITY DISTRICT,  
CENTRAL PHILADELPHIA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Sidewalk seating contributes to the vitality of Center City's streets, increases the number of customers a business can serve and encourages pedestrian traffic. Seating on sidewalks blurs the line between indoor and outdoor, encourages more customers to enter businesses, creates additional opportunities for public encounters and adds more eyes on the street that improve public safety.

Sidewalk seating is provided not only by cafés and restaurants, but also by non-food retailers. Center City's public parks and privately owned plazas have been adding outdoor seating. In the last decade, vacant and underdeveloped areas have been transformed into parks, plazas, and pop-up gardens, providing spaces for people to gather and interact. Sidewalks and public spaces have become destinations, rather than just places to pass through.

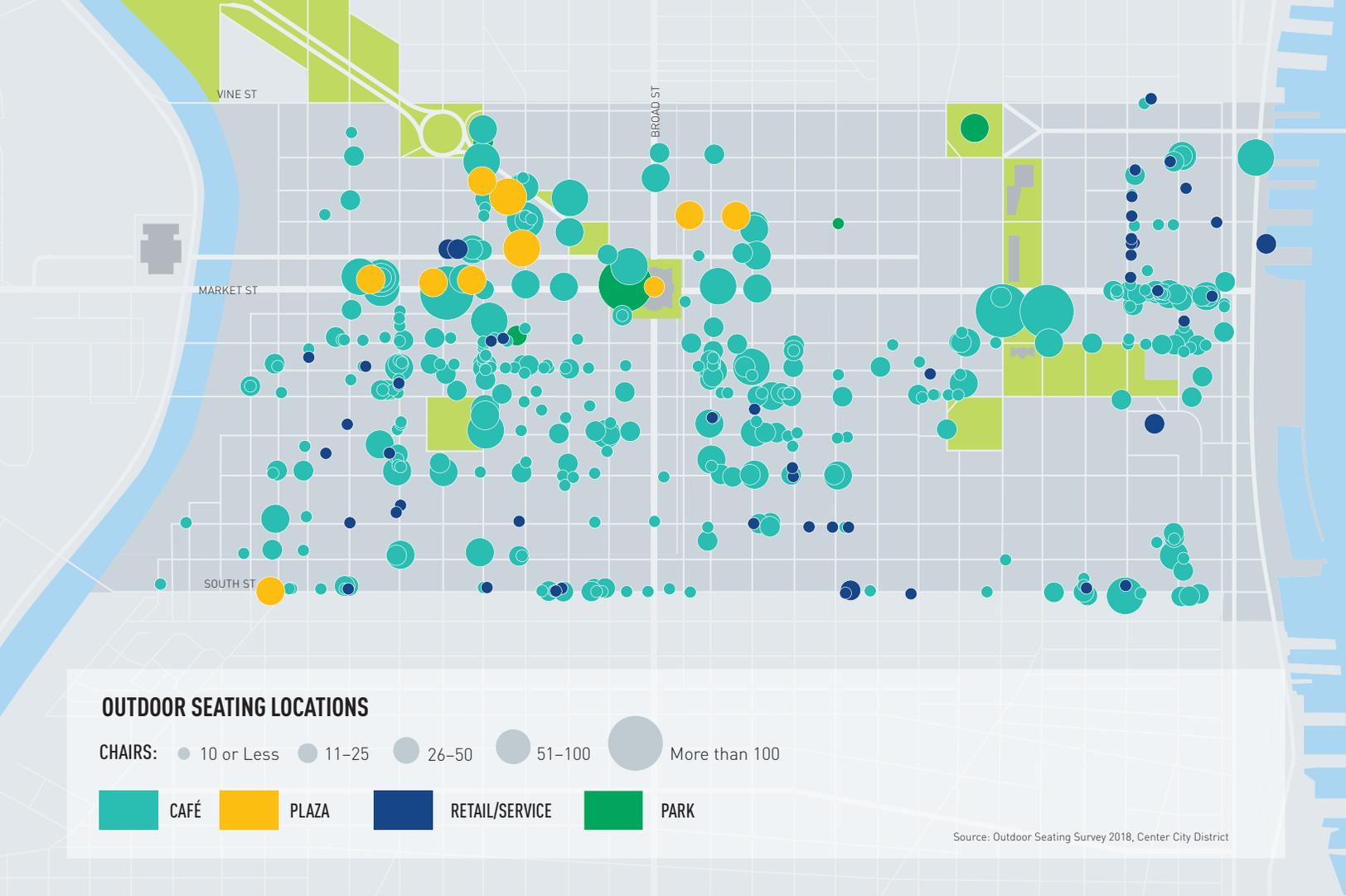
## GROWTH

Outdoor seating was authorized by a 1995 executive order by Mayor Edward G. Rendell. The first sidewalk cafés appeared outside Rittenhouse Square restaurants in the late 1990s and have continued to spread throughout Greater Center City. Restaurants, coffee shops, juice bars, retail establishments and office plazas have all contributed to the increase of outdoor seating from zero locations in Center City in 1995 to 428 in 2018.

The Center City District began tracking sidewalk seating in 2001, focusing solely on dining establishments. In 2013, non-food retailers were also included, and in 2015, the "other" category was expanded to include outdoor seating unassociated with a specific business, but rather with a park, office building, or collection of businesses. Large office buildings, like the Comcast Center and Commerce Square, have considerable plaza seating within their footprint as an amenity for their employees, but available to the public. The CCD's survey of outdoor seating now includes all outdoor cafés, non-food retailers, service establishments, and parks and plazas between Vine and South streets, river to river. Three of the Center City District's four parks – Dilworth Park, Cret Park, and Sister Cities Park – have both café and park seating, while John F. Collins Park only includes park seating.

In 2016, 45 non-food retailers provided outdoor seating; in 2017 that number rose to 61 locations, increasing 36%; and in 2018, 67 non-food retailers – everything from clothing boutiques to barbershops – provided outdoor seating for their guests.

In 2017, there were 432 overall outdoor seating locations in Center City with 6,683 sidewalk seats, increasing from 2016. **There are now 428 establishments with 6,743 seats throughout Center City.** While the number of seats grew between 2017 and 2018, the decrease in the number of establishments is due in part to the fires that closed popular restaurants like the Little Lion and Bridget Foy's.



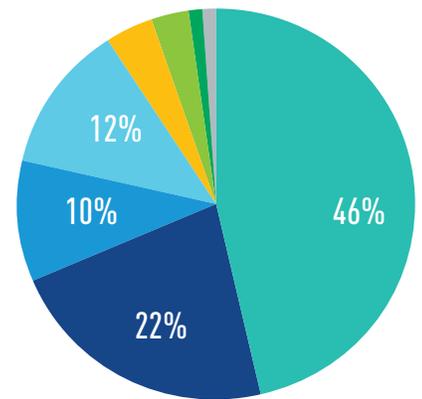
## SIDEWALK SEATING IN CENTER CITY HAS INCREASED 391% SINCE THE CCD STARTED SURVEYING IN 2001

Excluding non-food and beverage retailers, there are 361 establishments with 5,928 seats throughout Center City.

Full service restaurants and other eateries provide the majority of outdoor seating. Almost half (46%) of all outdoor seating locations are full service restaurants, and over three-quarters are cafés and food and beverage retailers. Of note, too, is the increase in quick-service establishments with outdoor seating; in 2017, they comprised 19% of all seating locations, and in 2018, jumped to 22%. As Philadelphia continues to grow as a national retail and dining destination, the increased presence of outdoor seating creates an inviting environment for patrons, attracts customers and increases the vibrancy of the streetscape.

## OUTDOOR SEATING LOCATIONS BY TYPE

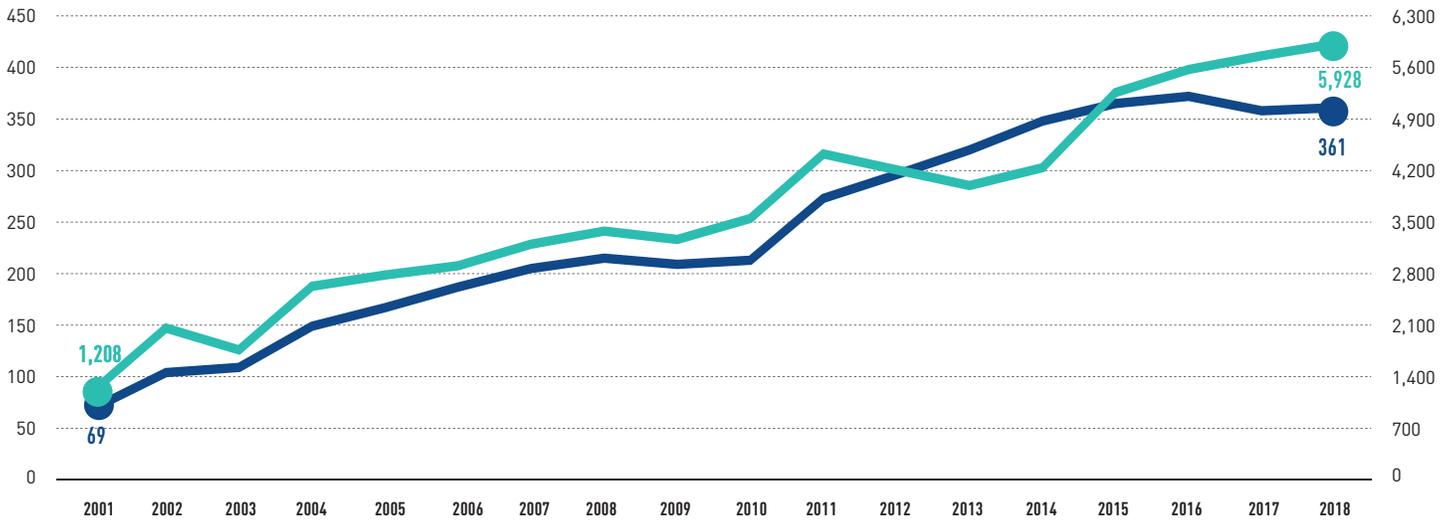
- 46% RESTAURANT - FULL SERVICE
- 22% SANDWICH/TAKEOUT
- 10% COFFEE SHOP
- 12% RETAIL/SERVICE
- 4% PARK/PLAZA
- 3% ICE CREAM/WATER ICE/ FROZEN YOGURT
- 1% BAKERY
- 1% BAR



Source: Outdoor Seating Survey 2018, Center City District

# GROWTH OF OUTDOOR CAFÉ SEATING, 2001 TO 2018

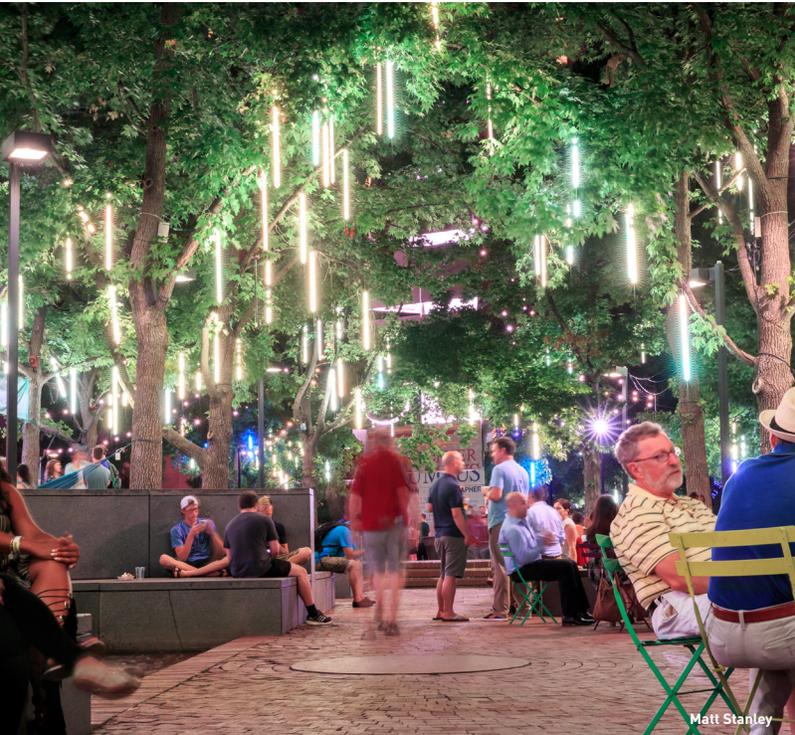
## OUTDOOR CAFÉS



Outdoor Seating Survey 2018, Center City District



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## POP-UPS

Seasonal pop-up gardens emerged during the past five years in Philadelphia, offering additional outdoor seating from April through October. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) started the trend in 2013 with two Center City pop-up beer gardens. By 2018, the number has grown to 11 pop-ups, with other operators joining PHS. Parks on Tap, a partnership between the city Department of Parks & Recreation and the Fairmount Park Conservancy, rotated between 23 locations citywide during the summer months, including two in Center City (at the Schuylkill River Banks and Matthias Baldwin Park). Most recently, the Boxcar Beer Garden popped up on private property directly below the Rail Park just weeks after the park's debut. These gardens transform formerly vacant lots and public spaces with al fresco dining, drink specials and a variety of events throughout the season, enhancing the vibrancy of many neighborhoods.